



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of Daniel

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DANIEL

Lesson on Hermeneutics

Does God expect us to understand the Bible? YES! All of it? YES! “The secret things belong to God but the things that are revealed (Hebrew, galah, “uncovered someone’s ears”) belong to us...forever, that we may do all the words of this law” Deut. 29:29; John 20:30–31. Jesus rebuked some of his disciples for failing to comprehend the OT prophecies of the Messiah. What will he say to the dullness of comprehension 21 centuries later? (Lk. 24:25). God expects us to “grow up” spiritually through understanding his word (1 Cor. 3:1-2; Eph. 4:14). God deplores ignorance when he has given a clear revelation (e.g., Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 10:6ff; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13; Rom. 11:23; 2 Cor. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:5,8; Heb. 5:11-14). God would not give a revelation of his will in human language, order humans to do it, threaten them with punishment if they didn’t keep it, and then make it unable to be understood! What kind of a God would give a revelation that couldn’t be understood? Who would trust him? Who would love him? Who would want to worship him? All other religions, even Islam, conceive of gods that can’t be understood!

Four fundamental principles of “hermeneutics”:

(a) The true interpretation is what the author intended to say! This applies in every piece of literature of whatever genre and in conversation where words are written or spoken, read and heard! It is absolutely foolish to read a book with the intent of understanding it from some personally, pre-conceived, wishes or preferences (see 1 Cor. 5:9-13). This principle involves the reader’s ability to project himself into the writer’s “frame-of-reference”—historically, culturally, mentally, emotionally, linguistically, etc., as much as possible! Accept the author’s stated time, purpose, addressees, language, context; assimilate the author’s background, claims and proofs of authenticity and credibility—AUTHOR, FIRST LAST, AND ALWAYS!!! (b) God’s word has one intended meaning—not many conflicting meanings. This does not mean, of course, that every word in the Bible is to be interpreted literally. Neither does this fundamental principle of one intended meaning, assume that every prophecy has only one point of fulfillment (see Hosea 11:1 and Isaiah 28:5-13, etc.). But it does mean that symbols and figures and just plain prose all are intended to mean one idea or principle in their own context and that one meaning is for all who read it to understand it alike. We must have rules by which language is to be commonly understood otherwise we have subjectivism, chaos, and no communication! (c) The third principle is, God is able to say what he wants to say and he knows to whom he is speaking! He spoke in order to be understood—God did not speak in order to be misunderstood or to confuse anyone! That means the Bible will be the absolute best instrument of communication known to man! The clearest, most available, most moral, most appealing, most applicable, most fluent, most artistic, most profound work of literature ever known to man (Psa. 19:7-10; 119:98-100). All of the so-called “great world religions” have incorporated portions of it—either from the OT or the NT or both—into their religions or “philosophies.” If people cannot

understand the Bible they really can't understand any other communication! (d) The fourth fundamental is: the language of the Bible is the language of human beings and is to be interpreted and understood by the rules for human language (see 1 Cor. 2:13). It is the language of "common" levels of humanity, not of specialized, technical levels (see 1 Cor. 1:18—2:16). The New Testament was written in what is called Koine Greek (Koine means "common"). Even the OT was translated from Hebrew into Koine Greek. It is known as the Septuagint and is the OT quoted by Jesus and the apostles. It is a communication which is most readily understood by children (or those with a child-like humility, see Matt. 11:25-30). It is received only by the honest-minded (see Lk. 8:15). God has to communicate the unknowable or un-experienced in terms of human experience. Human beings have no words to symbolize unseen and spiritual realities. So, God has to use human words (which are merely symbols of what human beings have experienced). Thus God often has to use the most bizarre words to symbolize the unknown and un-experienceable. God does not communicate to man in an "unknown" tongue. Communication happens only when people understand the words being spoken or read. The "unknown" tongues of 1 Cor. 14 were not "unknown." There is no Greek word for "unknown" in the original text of 1 Cor. 14. Those were human languages spoken by people who did not know that particular language, but understood by people who did (interpreters) (see also Acts 2:8-11). Man does not communicate to God with an "unknown" tongue, either!

"Rightly handling the word of truth" comes from the Greek words, ortho-tomounta, which mean, "correctly slicing" the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:16). So, it does make a difference with God how you "slice" the Bible! You'd better do it correctly! Ortho in medicine means "correction of a deformity," and "ortho-dox" in theology means or "straight thinking." Paul rebuked false teachers who mishandled the word (2 Cor. 2:17) and tampered with it (2 Cor. 4:2; see also 1 Thess. 2:3-8). "Slicing correctly" the word of truth takes hard work, called "study". Christians are not permitted the luxury of lazy-mindedness (Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:13—Peter said "gird up your minds" and it is an exhortation to "get to work with your minds"! See Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Pet. 1:3-11. For the Christian a continually increasing the knowledge of God's word is imperative!

Daniel (and Revelation) is saturated with symbolic words! A symbol is: (a) an emblem, a token, a typical word or thing (e.g., a flag, a logo, an event, even a word—all words are fundamentally, symbols); (b) the object of the symbol is not, itself the meaning, but is something that resembles the object (e.g., a "lion" resembles majesty and ferocity as with Babylon in Dan. Ch. 7, a "bear" resembles plodding power as with Persia, a "leopard" resembles swiftness, rapacity—Greece; (c) a symbol deliberately attempts, by its bizarreness, to stimulate the mind and the emotions; (d) symbols arise out of and are related to cultural, traditional, racial, religious and historical backgrounds; (e) some symbols are inventions of necessity—some are arbitrarily fixed—some are obsolete—some are universal and enduring.

Apocalyptic language is (exemplified in Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Revelation; Matt. 24:1-35; Mark 13:1ff; Luke 21:1ff): (a) a message-style for times of oppression and crisis. It is a form of expression to give people a "look" beyond the human circumstances to the Divine perspective. It helps human beings see circumstances in this world as God sees them. So, God uses highly symbolic terminology for times of

crisis; (b) a message-style suited to depict divine control and divine intervention in catastrophic and cataclysmic proportions. It represents the upheavals and revolutions of human empires and kingdoms as “the end of that generation’s world” (see the fall of Babylon depicted as “the end of the world” in Isa. 13:10ff); (c) a message-style that deals with the whole cosmic struggle. Thus its symbols are bizarre. Time periods are varied and esoteric (secretive) not literal (e.g., “thousand years” is not intended to be literal, but symbolic); (d) a message-style suited to reveal the divine frame-of-reference. In doing so, literalism is utterly inadequate to communicate the unseen realities because of (1) the brevity of the human attention span; (2) the need for making human minds curious; (3) the need for exciting human emotions; (4) the need for motivating additional study; (e) apocalyptic is a message-style portraying essentially the same message (only in different time-slots) whether in Daniel or Revelation. God is on his throne even when it looks like evil has taken over. God is sovereign in every historical crisis and catastrophe! (f) apocalyptic language intends to show that human history is not separated from heaven’s awareness, involvement, and sovereign purpose or control. Human history is the stage upon which the cosmic controversy between Almighty God and the rebellious prince of demons (Satan), who merely pretends to be the “god” of this world, is being conducted. The one certain fact of history, as God knows it and reveals it to human beings (in Daniel, Ezekiel, Joel, Revelation, etc.), is that his covenant people (his church) will survive all the devil and his cohorts can possibly do to stamp it out!

Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians (Heb. 5:11-14) that they should “have their (RSV) faculties (KJV senses) (Greek, *aistheterion*, “capacity to perceive”) trained (Greek, *gegumnasmena*, “gymnasium-ed” or “exercised”) for understanding in order to distinguish (Greek, *diakrisin*, “critique”) good from evil. He meant they should have studied the OT books thoroughly enough and compared them with the deeds and doctrines of Christ and the apostles thoroughly enough to have understood that the OT was to be fulfilled completely in the NT church. He meant that whatever the OT said, it was all to be understood as having been completed with the first coming of the Messiah. That is the same thing Jesus meant when he taught the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24)! Any interpretation that places a meaning on figurative or symbolic language of the book of Daniel that is contrary to the plain teaching of the rest of the OT or the NT is a false and evil meaning.

YES! God expects us to understand the book of Daniel. Jesus expected the Jews to understand Daniel (see Matt. 24:15ff). Daniel predicts the coming of the Messiah (Dan. 9:24-27), the coming of the church (Dan. 2:44-45), and the history of four successive great world empires (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome). We are to understand Daniel so we can understand the statements of Christ and the apostles about the Messiah and his kingdom! Christ expects us all to understand the book of Daniel alike! God did not reveal his word with different meaning for different people!

The book of Revelation “plugs right into” Daniel, chapter 7, and continues the explanation of what is going to happen to the fourth world-empire (Rome). The book of Revelation is almost all about the churches of Asia Minor and their coming “great tribulation” at the hands of the Roman empire from about A.D. 100 to about A.D. 500 when the Roman empire (the beast, false prophet, and harlot) is destroyed. Only the

last half of chapter 20 and chapters 21 & 22 in Revelation have to do with eternity. So, Revelation 1:1 through 20:6 is about the Roman empire and the church from A.D. 100-500. We have a clear signal that Revelation is mostly a continuation of Daniel 7 when we read Revelation 13:1-2 the same symbols of beastliness (only in reverse order to codify) are used as Daniel 7 uses for his "four" empires, the last of which is Rome. The first 3 (Babylon, Persia & Greece, i.e., the "lion, bear, and leopard") lived on in the fourth (Dan. 7:12). After the fourth world empire (Rome) is destroyed (ca. A.D. 450-500), there will never be another "one-world-empire" on earth except God's kingdom (the church) (see Dan. 2:44-45) which will be a "kingdom out of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9). This final, universal kingdom (the church) will be that way on this earth until Christ comes again to cast the devil and his cohorts (the beast, false prophet, and harlot and all those with the mark of the beast upon them) into the lake of fire where the beast already is in torments (Rev. 14:9-11; 19:17-21; 20:7-10).

DANIEL 1:1-21

Introduction

The name "Daniel" means "God is judge." He was one of the young "noblemen" of Judah (Dan. 1:3). He must have had strong, God-fearing and faithful parents who taught him well enough that his faith could endure severe testing. He was probably about 20 years old when he was taken away from his homeland into exile in Babylon. Apparently he never returned to his homeland but did as Jeremiah commanded, "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7). If Daniel lived through the 3rd year of the reign of Cyrus (Dan. Chs. 10-12), he lived to be about 90 years of age. He was made ruler over the province of Babylon; he was appointed chief of the governors and over the wise men under two Babylonian emperors. He was one of three "presidents" of all the satraps of Persia under Darius the Mede. He wrote his book around 536 B.C. (Approximately the same year the 50,000 Jews were permitted to return to Palestine. He was world-famous by the time he was 35 (see Ezek. 14:14,20; 28:3).

Although Daniel predicts some 600 years of history in minute detail, and is one of the most Messianic books of the OT, the Jews placed his book not in the "Prophets" but in the Hagiographa ("Writings"). Jewish rabbis after Jesus Christ was crucified, forbade the teaching of the book of Daniel to Jews. Rabbi Jonathan says in Sanhedrin, "Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end." Rabbi Jonathan ben Uziah claimed to be rebuked by a voice from heaven (the Bath Kol) because he "revealed my secrets" and he is prevented from teaching on the book of Daniel because "the date of the Messiah is in it." Josephus, Jewish historian, relates that the prophecies of Daniel were shown to Alexander the Great about 300 B.C. by the high priest Jaddua, and says that the Greek emperor was greatly pleased and encouraged by the prophecy concerning the overthrow of the Persian empire, which seemed so clearly to refer to himself. Alexander was so delighted that he offered to confer any favors on the Jews.

The book of Daniel is one of the most interesting books of the OT. It predicts the rise and fall of 4 successive world-encompassing empires beginning with Babylon. It predicts that in the days of the fourth world empire (Rome) the kingdom of God will be founded as the last universal empire on earth,,. It predicts the first coming of the Messiah, his death, and the destruction of Jerusalem. It "plugs into" the book of Revelation at (Rev. 13:1-2) the fourth "beastly" empire (Rome).

The captivity and exile of Judah, the end of the divided nation, was witnessed and experienced by Daniel. David's earthly kingdom had lasted 400 years. But the Babylonians wiped out the last vestiges of it. In 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Jehoiakim, and took the temple treasures and Jerusalem's royal noblemen (including Daniel) to Babylon (cf. 2 Chron. 36:6-7; Dan. 1:1-3). Daniel was "fortunate" in that he did not stay behind in Judah and suffer the extremities his countrymen

experienced for the next 20 years of being assaulted by Nebuchadnezzar. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar came again, and took the rest of the city's treasures, king Jehoiachin, and 10,000 of the princes, officers and chief men, carrying them to Babylon (2 Kings 24:14-16); Ezekiel was taken to Babylon at this time. Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.) was the last king of Judah (read his story in Jeremiah—Jeremiah lived through 20 years of Babylonian war against Judah. In 586 Nebuchadnezzar came again with his Babylonian hordes, burned Jerusalem, broke down its walls, leveled the Jewish Temple, put out the eyes of king Zedekiah, carried him in chains to Babylon, with 832 captives, leaving only a remnant of the poorest class of people in the land (2 Kings 25:8-12; Jer. 52:28-30). It took the Babylonians just a year and a half to overwhelm the city-fortress of Jerusalem. Many Jews starved to death, many were slain. Some Jews ate the flesh of their own children and the flesh of their parents to survive just as Moses predicted (Deut. 28:53-57; Jer. 19:9; Ezek. 5:10). Jerusalem was burned on the 7th day of the 5th Jewish month (our August). About 660 years later, in the same month, on the same day, in A.D. 70, the Romans burned the city and temple of Jerusalem and once again people ate human flesh in the Roman siege to survive. Although it took Nebuchadnezzar 20 years to destroy Jerusalem, he could have done it at first had he wished. But he only wanted tribute. Had the Jews surrendered as Jeremiah the prophet told them (Jer. 27:1-22), the city and temple would have been spared. In 581 B.C., 5 years after the burning of Jerusalem, the Babylonians again came and took 745 more captives (Jer. 52:30), after many Jews had fled to Egypt (taking Jeremiah hostage with them, Jer. Ch. 43, where Jeremiah probably died). The captivity of Judah by Babylon was predicted 100 years earlier by Isaiah and Micah (Isa. 39:6; Micah 4:10). It would last 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12; see also Dan. 9:1-2).

The city of ancient Babylon was the wonder city of that world. It was located near the cradle of the human race (the Garden of Eden). It was built south of modern Baghdad in Iraq. It was originally built around the "Tower of Babel." It was a favorite residence of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian kings, and even of the Greek, Alexander the Great. It was at the zenith of its grandeur and power in Daniel's day. The circumference of the city was 60 miles around by its walls. The walls of the city were 300 ft high, 80 ft. thick, extending 35 ft. below ground to prevent tunneling under, and built of bricks 1 ft square and 3 to 4 inches thick. There was a quarter mile space between the city and the wall all around it. The wall was protected by moats with 250 towers on the wall and 100 gates of brass. The city was divided by the Euphrates River, both banks guarded by brick walls with 25 gates connecting streets and canals. One bridge was one-half mile long, on stone piers and had drawbridges which were removed at night. There was a tunnel under the river, 15 ft wide and 12 ft. high. The great Temple of Marduk (a ziggurat—built somewhat like an Egyptian pyramid) contained a golden image of Bel and a golden table which together weighed 50,000 pounds. At the top of this ziggurat were golden images of Bel, Ishtar, 2 lions, a table 40 X 15 ft, and a golden human image (solid gold) 18 ft high. Babylon was truly a city of gold (Isa. 14:4). It had 53 temples and 180 altars to Ishtar. Nebuchadnezzar's palace, into which Daniel often went, was one of the most magnificent buildings ever erected on earth! Its walls were 20 ft. thick; surrounded by three successive walls, some 50 ft. thick. In the days of ancient warfare, the palace and the city were simply impregnable (the ancient Babylonians thought!). The "Hanging Gardens" of Babylon were one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. They were built by Nebuchadnezzar

for his homesick queen (Cyaxeres' daughter who had lived in the lush mountains and valleys of what is now northern Iran). They were built on several tiers of arches, one over another, each bearing a solid 400 ft. square platform with terraces and a roof covered with flowers, shrubs and trees, and a garden on top of the roof. These gardens and "forests" were watered from reservoirs at their tops to which water was raised from the Euphrates River by hydraulic pumps. Underneath, in the arches, were luxury apartments, pleasure grounds of the palace inhabitants. All this was built while Daniel was chief governor of the wise men of Babylon! The Great Processional Street, was entered through the Great Gate guarded by statues of two immense lions. It was the royal and sacred road, which entered at the north, gradually ascended, passed into the palace grounds, through the Ishtar gate, and high over the center of the city gradually descending to the southwest corner of the Tower of Babylon wall, turning directly west to the river bridge. On both sides of the Way were walls 20 ft thick, adorned with brilliant, many colored glazed bas reliefs of lions. (This makes us able to understand why Nebuchadnezzar's dream included a "lion" which Daniel interpreted as symbolizing the Babylonian empire). The street was paved with stone slabs 3 ft. square. Near the entrance to the palace the blocks are still in their place, just as they were over 2600 years ago when Daniel walked upon them.

Nebuchadnezzar (606-561 B.C.) was the greatest of all Babylonian emperors ("kings") and one of the mightiest monarchs of all time. He reigned 45 years. The Babylonian empire was largely his work. He extended the power of Babylon over most of the ancient world of his day. He took a great liking to Daniel, the Jewish prisoner-of-war, and made him one of his chief advisers! Daniel's position and influence, no doubt, must have eased the lot of the Jewish captives from what it might have been. Daniel's life in Babylon extended from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar through the reigns of five succeeding kings, past the fall of Babylon, into the Persian empire to the third year of Cyrus—from 606 B.C. to 534 B.C., about 72 years. The Babylonian empire lasted 70 years. The 70 years of Judah's captivity was exactly the same 70 years that Babylon ruled the world. When Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon (536 B.C.) he allowed all the Jews who wished to return to their own land in Palestine.

God had a remnant of faithful servants down in Babylon (i.e., Mordecai, Esther, Ezekiel and many others in succeeding generations). One of the most important of the "remnant" was in the very palace of an emperor that was overwhelmingly heathen and opposed to God's sovereignty. That remnant "star" was Daniel. His unwavering faith in God gave him power and great influence to serve God in preserving the Messianic promise. He had to suffer. Men slandered him, threatened him with his very life, but God used him mightily. Could God use you that way today? **MOST CERTAINLY!** The only requisite you must have is an unwavering faith willing to suffer and serve wherever opportunity beckons!

DANIEL 1:1-21

Daniel could be so docile about captivity because he believed the word of the Lord! The Lord gave Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:1-22; Dan. 1:2). Jeremiah also told the Judeans that after they were taken captive they were “to seek the welfare of the city where God had sent them into exile...for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7). Daniel probably heard Jeremiah make his prophecy or was told about it. Nebuchadnezzar became an instrument of the Divine will. God permitted Nebuchadnezzar to exercise his fury against Jerusalem (The Iraqis—and all other Arabs who descended from Ishmael--- have been fighting the Israelis and one another for centuries, Gen. 16:7-16; 25:7-18!). God allowed the captivity and exile of Judah for the good of God’s people (see Jer. 25:1ff; 27:5-7). Jewish captivity by Nebuchadnezzar was no accident! God removes kings and sets up kings (Dan. 2:21; 4:17,32) as he wishes. God used the king of Assyria to serve his redemptive plan (Isa. 10:5ff). God gave “dominion” to all the world empires (Dan. 7:3-7). Many of the Jews resisted to the death what Jeremiah had said was God’s commandment about surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar and some fled to Egypt. Those who fled to Egypt formed the great Jewish community at Alexandria, built a Jewish “temple” there and translated the OT into the Greek language which we today call the Septuagint. The Jews and Egyptians got along well together until the modern ruler Nassar came to power in Egypt).

It is not easy for God’s people to believe God when he says, “To this you have been called...Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps!” (1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1-19; Heb. 12:1-17, etc.) The suffering of the church of Christ throughout the world today is no accident! God delivered the Jews into captivity to nurture a “remnant” for his future use to bring Messiah to the world. God delivered the NT church into the hands of the “fourth beast” (the Roman Empire) to be “nurtured” through persecution (see Rev. 12:13-17). We must not be “surprised” or count it “strange” that God would act thus (1 Pet. 4:12). When God “delivers” Christians into severely restrictive places and circumstances they should “seek the welfare” of their surroundings and let God take care of the “politics” and “revolutions” that need to be made! **THAT DOESN’T MEAN A CHRISTIAN HAS TO COMPROMISE HIS FAITH OR MORALS.** It does mean a Christian must be prepared to suffer the consequences of remaining faithful to God and moral toward his fellow man!

The Lord delivered Daniel and other Hebrew young men into the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 1:3-4. Although Ashpenaz was an eunuch, there is no reason to think he made the Hebrew youngsters into eunuchs. Daniel probably had children (Ezek. 14:20). These Hebrew young men were already skilled in government. They were also chosen because of their physiques, health, and cultural poise. God doesn’t want sluggards in his “army” of servants carrying out his redemptive work in this world. The best trained and healthiest believers possible make better instruments for the Lord’s work. There is no substitute for “hewing with a sharp axe.” God had a great task for someone. Daniel, a man of great faith, coupled with the self-discipline

needed for excellence in training, was the man. There in the king's palace, these young Hebrew "noblemen" were enrolled in a program of Babylonian education. God allowed this. He could easily have delivered Daniel and all the other Jews from this exile had he wanted. BUT GOD WANTED THEM THERE—DOING WHAT THEY WERE DOING—TO PRESERVE THE MESSIANIC PLAN OF REDEMPTION! What would they learn? There was a library in Babylon (Ashurbanipal's Assyrian library) of over 22,000 volumes of religious, literary and scientific works of the ages (it included the Babylonian "Creation-Flood Tablets"). Babylonians invented the sexadecimal (counting by 60s) system of mathematics (hours & minutes, circle divisions, etc.). They practiced geometry, square roots, cubes and cube-roots. They had a knowledge of astronomy, charted the stars, predicted lengths of daylight and darkness, and the weather. They had certain medical skills in anatomy, and surgery (learned from reading animal entrails for religious purposes). They practiced taxonomy (classification of animals and plants), chemistry and metallurgy. In addition to this Daniel would be learning the Babylonian system of government and all the cultural niceties of Babylonian life which would not compromise his Jewish faith. One thing we know—Daniel refused to practice Babylonian religion (even though he learned about it)!

The "food" from the "king's table" undoubtedly contained some "foods" that had been part of an offering to an idol! It would be absolutely "unclean" for a Hebrew to partake. The Lord even allowed Daniel to be tempted with a daily portion of the rich food from the king's table, Dan. 1:5-7. The word "rich" is not in the Hebrew text or in the Greek text of the O.T. (the Septuagint). Both say simply, "a daily portion of food from the king's table." "Rich" is probably in contrast to the "beans and peas" Daniel requested later (1:12). The word *phathebbag*, translated "food" is not a Hebrew word—probably a Persian word, and may mean "delicacies." Daniel's resistance to it, however, was apparently more on religious scruples than any unwholesomeness of the food itself (see 1:8). Perhaps the king of Babylon hoped to start a subtle moral softening and weakening process in their lives by getting them to indulge in his "delicacies." The king's purpose was clearly pragmatic. "At the end of this softening and culturalization they were to stand before the king." The king would control them, and they would be thoroughly "Babylon-ized." He hoped, perhaps to enslave them to indulgent living. Godly people are to abstain from indulging in delicate pampering of the stomach lest they become enslaved to it (see Psa. 141:4; Prov. 23:1-3; Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 6:13; Phil. 3:19; 2 Pet. 2:17-22). These Hebrew "noblemen" were even given Babylonian names. By these names they would have to answer day after day. These names were even connected to Babylonian idols! Names were very important parts of people's religion and culture in those societies. It is nothing short of amazing that these godly Hebrew youngsters were able to accommodate themselves to Babylonian culture to the degree they received it and participated in it! Christians are free to follow the New Testament principle of expediency in any matter where Christ and his apostles have not clearly enjoined or prohibited. This is the teaching of Paul in Romans ch. 14-15 and 1 Corinthians, chs. 8-9-10. The apostle Paul, himself, said he was free to "become all things to all men that he might by all means save some...for the sake of the gospel that he might share in its blessings." But, to assume Paul would ever compromise the clear commandments of Christ or the moral standards of God's revealed word, is absurd. This same Biblical grace of God was the guiding principle by which Daniel lived.

Indeed, there are things “good” and “bad” in the 21st century culture which the Christian must sort out. The Christian has an advantage Daniel did not have—the Christian has the guide-lines of the principles taught in the New Testament scriptures (see Romans ch. 14 and 1 Corinthians chs. 8-9-10). But, Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself, 1:8. There are three aspects of Daniel’s heathen environment about which he had to make moral decisions; two in the area of expediency, one absolutely forbidden: (a) the acquisition of heathen wisdom—expediency; (b) the bearing of a “heathen” name—expediency; (c) the eating of heathen delicacies, undoubtedly formerly sacrificed to idols—absolutely forbidden. Daniel had Moses and Joseph as his examples of Hebrew men who lived in and learned heathen lore, and who served in high places in heathen political structures. They apparently were counted as men of godly faith, in spite of their contributions and accommodations to their heathen surroundings. IT DID NOT DESTROY THE FAITH OF MOSES AND JOSEPH. It would take a great deal of resolve on the part of Daniel to refuse the Babylonian king’s orders. The Hebrew text literally reads, “Daniel laid it upon his heart” not to defile himself. The pressure to accede to the king’s commands would be tremendous! To deny it would be a life-threatening risk! It is interesting that Daniel asked permission from the chief eunuch. He did not belligerently defy the order, at first. Even heathen are more susceptible to courtesy than to belligerency! Daniel trusted the Lord for providential deliverance (even as the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace later demonstrated, 3:17-18). Daniel expected the Lord to do his will in the matter and Daniel would abide by it. Probably the most significant point of the Lord’s “favor” to Daniel was Daniel’s training in graciousness which he expressed to the chief eunuch. Perhaps the Lord made it providentially possible for Daniel to approach the chief eunuch with his request. But it is doubtful that the Lord would supernaturally suspend any moral decision of the chief eunuch toward Daniel. The 21st century Christian resolves to keep from defiling himself by asking himself four questions: (a) Would what I am going to do (or say, or think) offend God and Jesus?—see the whole New Testament; (b) How does what I am going to do affect others (physically and spiritually)?—see Matt. 5:14; 7:12; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33; 1 Tim. 4:12; (c) How will my actions affect my health?—see 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; (d) How will my choice affect the church?—see 1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:11.

The chief eunuch was about to refuse Daniel’s request. He was scared to death! His face betrayed his fright (Heb. *peneykem zo’aphyim* became “gloomier and more sullen”). The chief eunuch probably feared the Hebrew “noblemen” would become ill or depressed if they did not eat heartily from the king’s splendid array of food—then the emperor would be in a rage! The emperor wanted these men to be in top-notch condition both physically and psychologically—cheerful, healthy and integrated into Babylon’s idolatrous religion and heathen political structure. Daniel’s rejection of the emperor’s “delicacies” was both reasonable and courteous, 1:11-16. He asked that he and his companions be fed *zero’im* which is translated “pulse” in the KJV and “vegetables” in RSV. *Zero’im* means “that which is sown” or “seeds”—probably lentils, beans, peas or some other vegetable which is produced from seeds. Common beans have more nutrients of all kinds than most people realize. They were to drink only water. This test was proposed for only 10 days. A time period short enough that the emperor would not be demanding to see proof of his “rich” food experiment. Daniel was willing to abide by the results of the test as he and his companions were to be compared to Babylonian trainees who had partaken of the emperor’s table. At the

end of 10 days the chief eunuch saw the Hebrew “noblemen” were better in appearance and “fatter” than all who ate the emperor’s food. The Hebrew word *beriyim* translated, “fatter” means, “fresh, lively, vital.” It comes from the Hebrew root word *bara* which is most often translated, “create.” Hebrew words which mean “greasy fat or obese” are *taphash* and *dashen*. So the emperor’s chief eunuch took away the king’s food and wine from the Hebrew “noblemen.” The primary problem with the emperor’s “delicacies” was that they were not kosher (“lawful”). They were probably some forms of “delicacies” which were contrary to the Mosaic law. The Christian knows that all things created by God are good if used to the glory of God (1 Tim. 4:1-5). There are no prohibited foods for the Christian, in a legalistic sense, only that which would bring shame upon God’s grace and love (1 Cor. Chs. 8-9-10). DANIEL’S REFUSAL TO EAT THE EMPEROR’S FOOD WAS FROM FAITH NOT FROM LEGALISM! It is always right to be kind and courteous to a fellow man. Daniel did! It is a matter of opinion and expediency about learning from the literature and culture of the world. Daniel used it to serve God and man. It is always wrong to blaspheme God by worshipping idols. Daniel refused even the appearance of doing so!

God gave these Hebrew “noblemen” knowledge and revelations, 1:17. All the “noblemen” except Daniel were given knowledge and wisdom (i.e., how to use knowledge). Daniel, only, was given revelations of the future (history for 1000 years) through visions and dreams. The only conclusion possible is that the knowledge and revelations were supernatural gifts from God. No doubt these “noblemen” applied themselves diligently so far as it was humanly possible to learn all they thought expedient. Then God divinely supplied what was lacking in human knowledge and wisdom. God still promises wisdom (i.e., ability to use knowledge, not knowledge per se) to any believer who will ask in accord with the will of God (James 1:5-27). Now that Christ has come and completed the divine plan of redemption, God does not give revelations beyond the New Testament. The Bible itself is supernatural wisdom guiding us how to use the knowledge we obtain from the Scriptures and experience. All a man has to do to have it is believe it! God gave them favor with the emperor and with his servants, 1:18-20. They were elevated to serve in the most sensitive positions—called to stand before the emperor (i.e., to advise him in moral and political affairs). Their advice was tested and found to be very much superior to all that the emperor’s own countrymen of the royal court gave. This sounds very unusual at first, but then think of other believers who found positions of great trust and influence in heathen governments—the “righteous Lot” (2 Pet. 2:7); Moses, Joseph, Mordecai, Nehemiah, Esther, centurions (Matt. :5-13; Acts 10:1ff); Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward (Lk. 8:-13; Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7-12); a Philippian jailer (acts 16:25-40); Erastus (city treasurer of a city in the Roman empire, Rom. 16:23); some of the Praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13); some of Caesar’s own household (Phil. 4:22); Jairus (a ruler of the Jews, Matt. 9:18-26); a “nobleman” (John 4:46ff); Zenas (a lawyer and co-worker of Paul, Titus 3:13; Philemon & Archippus (probably soldiers, Philemon 2). God will always reward conviction and commitment to the truth. God can always use mightily such persons as Daniel and his fellow “noblemen” as instruments of his mighty power to work for the redemption of the world. TO BE PERMITTED TO SERVE THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY IS A REWARD! God gave Daniel continuity, 1:21. “Daniel continued...” are simple words, but what a volume of tested faithfulness is revealed by these words. Amid all the intrigues, indigenous at all times in dynasties

of Middle-Eastern despotism, where intrigue hangs like the sword of Damocles over the heads of all men of king's courts; amid all the envy toward a foreign captive in high office as Daniel was. Amid all the trouble, incidental to the insanity of the emperor or to the murder of two of the emperor's successors, in that whole critical period for his people, DANIEL "CONTINUED." The amazing thing is that Daniel does not promote his own fame. We would not have any statement of his integrity at all except for the conspiracies against him by those foreign potentates. His reserve about himself is striking! He is a chief statesman for two of the most powerful and rich empires ever known (Babylon & Persia), but he has not recorded one word about his own trials, plans, and counsels of those 70 years in these governments. Nothing is said of any good he accomplished or evil which he hindered. Daniel gives all credit to God for everything he documents! This is precisely why God gave Daniel CONTINUITY. God is sovereign. He is Creator and Owner of all that is. Any man who will acknowledge this and serve the Sovereign rather than attempt to usurp his sovereignty with self, will find life with purpose, accomplishment, continuity, wholeness, and satisfaction.

POINTS TO PONDER

God gave the Jews into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Does God still operate in history in this manner? Would God deliver his church into the very environment of heathen viciousness? HE DID—READ HEBREWS, 1 PETER & THE BOOK OF REVELATION. In Revelation 12 God allowed the "dragon" to pursue the "woman" and her "offspring" and "make war" on them. That was the vicious Roman empire of A.D. 100-500. God thus allowed that the church be nurtured Rev. 12:14! And what about today? Doesn't the universal church of Christ, scattered all over the world, have to test its faith against many different kinds of temptation and seduction? Today the church is amid idolatry, persecution, materialism and carnality which has to be faced in varying degrees! Why doesn't God just isolate believers in a culture and nation all their own, supply all their needs and keep them from suffering? BECAUSE FAITH, TO BE TRUE AND REAL, MUST BE PUT TO THE TEST. FAITH MUST MAKE CHOICES. FAITH MUST MAKE COMMITMENTS AGAINST OPPOSITION, OR IT IS NOT FAITH! AND MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD CAN BE ON NO OTHER GROUND THAN FAITH!

When Daniel (and his companions) were taken as hostages of war to a foreign, heathen culture, he did not say, "I will never serve this heathen government; I'll do everything in my power to overthrow this idolatrous, unjust, inhuman, exploitative, totalitarian society." No! Daniel worked for that government, without compromising his conscience. In fact, Daniel even allowed himself to be specially trained and cultural-ized except where it compromised his faith to do so. Could you? Should you?

Does Daniel's experience prove to you that God can use skilled people ministering in

very different vocations other than preaching and missionary work? Where did Daniel receive his idea that he could serve God and work at a full time vocation of civil service, too? Should we be teaching this to our children at home? At church?

Could you trust the training you have given your children if they were suddenly thrust into the midst of a heathen, idolatrous culture as Daniel was—as a prisoner of war? Aren't our children thrust into a heathen, idolatrous culture? How is their faith standing the test? Is there more the home and the church could be doing to make their faith stronger and more vital? How about your own faith? Could it stand the test Daniel's did?

Would we be better servants of God if we were more particular about our diet? Does God expect us to connect diet to religion in the Christian faith? Is there any food that a Christian might eat or drink that would defile him?

DANIEL 2:1-49

Introduction

“Wise men” (magicians, sorcerers, enchanters, astrologers, also called “Chaldeans”) appear in Egypt (Gen. 2:12—5:15), and Persia (Esther 1:13, 6:13) as men “who knew the times”. Archaeology proves that the Babylonians were enthusiastic students of all the arts and sciences from very early times. Astrology was more respectable in ancient times than it is today. It was inextricably mixed with astronomy. Chaldeans had both the best science of the day, and the most humane religion outside of the most spiritual strain of Judaism. Ancient Babylonian “Chaldeans” (i.e., priests of their idolatrous religion) were both religious figures and political figures. Nebuchadnezzar would have been considered both emperor (civil ruler) and religious leader (high priest). Since he could not serve in every temple, scores of well educated and high born men were appointed as under-priests. Their functions were to prophesy, perform idolatrous rituals, and educate the populace in religion and politics. Their main function was divination (i.e., interpreting dreams, omens and oracles). They did this by hepatoscopy (divination by observing and handling the livers of animals). The liver was regarded as the seat of the mental life (the Hebrew word *kavad*, “liver,” is sometimes used in the OT for “mind, state of mind, or feelings”). The Chaldeans thought that at the time an animal (sheep or bull) was sacrificed, a god would take hold of the victim and the god’s thoughts would enter the animal’s liver. Thus, immediately after an animal was slaughtered for sacrifice, the body was opened and the liver taken out for observation and prophecies were made about military campaigns, economic policies, judgments of citizens, religious festivals, etc. Real livers were compared with clay models of former ones and pronouncements made. They studied the flight patterns of birds, the positions of the stars, the directions of the winds, birth abnormalities in humans and animals, eclipses and many other natural phenomena in order, they hoped, to predict the future or interpret the present. All this led incidentally and ironically to an increase in scientific knowledge. But even with all this learning and superstition, they could not foretell the future. **ONLY GOD KNOWS THE FUTURE!**

The Chaldean “wise-men” also had superstitions about demons. Babylonian religion was dualistic. They believed that the forces of evil and of good were equal. It was particularly important to them to have magical means of frustrating the forces of evil. All sickness was associated with evil and sin. Babylonian priests spent much time in trying to divine what sin a person had done in order to prescribe the correct magical formula to counteract it. All sickness was assumed to be the result of an evil god inhabiting the diseased person. Evil gods were sometimes implored to leave people by promising substitute habitations (animals). Other times evil gods were offered bribes in the form of gifts so they would leave their victim. Another technique was to drive the demon from his victim by medicines of nauseous and putrid substances given to the victim (eventually through this process of trial and error some medicines were discovered with real healing qualities). Sometimes evil gods could be tricked, they thought. One method to fool them was to place an animal on top of a sick man,

and going through certain rituals, the demon might be tricked into going into the animal and leave the human. AT THE TIME OF CHRIST AND AFTER, RABBINICAL JUDAISM WAS SATURATED WITH SUCH SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT DEMON-EXORCISM. The Jews picked up these superstitions from their assimilation of Babylonian and Persian culture when thousands of Jews remained in Mesopotamia after the exiles in 722 B.C., 606-586 B.C. Chaldean priests were usually dressed in red when performing their functions because red was supposed to be particularly potent in warding off evil spirits. They might also dress in a fish-like skin to emphasize their close relationship to the wise god, named Ea. Another of their functions was as chanters. Through chanting accompanied by large drums and lyres they allegedly “softened the heart of the gods.” The lyre was usually decorated with a bulls head, and the tone was like the bellow of a bull. Their chants were usually accompanied also with “the lifting of hands” in the attitude of prayer.

Biblical reality is that God spoke to godly men often in dreams (e.g., Jacob, Joseph, the prophets, Paul, etc.). God also spoke to persons outside the chosen people (e.g., Abimelech, Gen. 20:3; Laban, Gen. 31:24; to the butler and baker in Joseph’s Egyptian prison, Gen. 40:8-19; Pharaoh, Gen. 41:1-36; Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 2:1-45; 4:5-33). But God also severely condemned the unauthorized practice of divination through dreams or omens or contacting the dead (Deut. 18:9-22; 13:1-3; Jer. 23:25-32, etc.). Daniel demonstrated to Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean wise men that the pseudo magic and sorcery of Babylon could not be trusted to meet the basic problems of men or nations. God gave Nebuchadnezzar his dreams (and all the revelations to Daniel) to show unmistakably that the destiny of the world was in Jehovah’s will and deeds, not those of human potentates. Specifically, God chose to show that the destiny of the world was to be worked out through a kingdom belonging to God. First, through the Jews, until their time was over (at the end of Seventy-Sevens, 9:24-27). Second, through an eternal kingdom which would be established during the times of the “fourth kingdom” of men (Dan. 2:44ff; 7:1-28; 9:24-27, etc.). This is the one, fundamental, lesson taught from Daniel’s eschatology—NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS!

DANIEL 2:1-49

This was no ordinary dream! It came from Almighty God—Daniel’s God. It was so thought-provoking Nebuchadnezzar could not sleep for anxiety of spirit and soul. Nebuchadnezzar was “stricken” (Heb. pa’am, “strike, slam, hit with a blow”). This was unlike any other dream he ever had. He ordered the following experts into his presence: (a) “magicians” (Heb. kharetumim, “interpreters of hieroglyphics”); (b) “enchanters” (Heb. ‘ashaphim, “astrologers, contemplators of the heavens”); (c) “sorcerers” (Heb. mekashaphim, “witchcraft, incantation, wizardry, conjurers”); (d) “Chaldeans” “wise men” (Heb. Keseddim), from Chesed the ancestral progenitor of the Chaldeans (see Gen. 22:22).

HE ORDERED THESE “WISE-MEN” TO TELL HIM WHAT HIS DREAMS WERE!

The “wise-men” of Babylon were on the spot! They could not tell the king what he had dreamed. If they could not tell him WHAT the dream was, any interpretation they might give would be suspect! No one knows the mind or thoughts (or dreams) of another human being unless he reveals it (1 Cor. 2:11). They slyly asked the king to tell them what he dreamed and they would then give him the interpretation. The king was wiser than the wise-men. He demanded to be told both what he dreamed and what it meant. Nebuchadnezzar must have known these “wise-men” were fakes from mistakes they had made in the past. He was accustomed to hearing them make all kinds of flattering, patronizing, optimistic predictions and interpretations, all of which never completely came true. The emperor threatened them with dismemberment and defamation if they did not produce what he ordered. His threats should not shock, even today! It is completely in character with Mesopotamian monarchs of ancient times as well as of today (i.e., remember how Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Saddam Hussein killed their “wise men” when they told him what he did not want to hear)! Nebuchadnezzar refused to be flattered into forgetting their inadequacies. He knew they were stalling for time (2:8). They didn’t want to admit they did not know the dream—nor did they want to guess at what it was knowing they would probably be wrong! The emperor was not about to let those “wise-men” deceive him with lies and “hocus-pocus” and trick him into telling them what the dream was! So the “wise-men” infer the emperor was asking that which was unreasonable and impossible. They said, “only the gods” could tell what a person dreamed and “gods” did not dwell with men! But if “gods” entered into animal livers so they could predict and interpret, why could they not get information from the “gods” on the emperor’s dream? SO-CALLED, SELF-APPOINTED “WISE-MEN” AND “PROPHETS” ARE STILL BEGGING OFF ON REAL MIRACLES AND PROPHECIES IN THE SAME WAY TODAY! Modern-day “miracle-workers” and “prophets” have been tested and found to be fakes!

Daniel evidently had some kind of compassion for this heathen emperor (see Dan. 4:19). He also was under obligation from God to use the divine gifts God had given him. Interpreting the emperor’s dream could help blunt the emperor’s persecution of his Jewish prisoners of war. The emperor was furious with his so-called “wise-men.” He kept getting angrier by the minute until he was at the point of violence. These

wise-men had gained fame and fortune in his court and now, when the chips were down and the emperor wanted real wisdom, they could not produce. Furthermore, they had chastised the emperor for demanding the unreasonable. So, the emperor decided to rid himself of those pretending parasites, and ordered that all with the title “wise-man” be slain. That included Daniel and the other young Hebrew “noblemen.” Daniel answered the summons to death for all wise-men with (Hebrew ‘eta), “advice” and (Hebrew te’em), “reason.” Daniel’s advice was, wait, because murdering the wise-men would solve nothing. Daniel’s reasoning was, “My God will help” proven by God’s divine intervention in past times (see ch. 1). Daniel even dared to approach the king himself with promise of revelation and interpretation of his dream. Daniel asked others to pray with him that God would give him the emperor’s dream and its meaning. God answered this prayer and gave the dream and its meaning. Daniel then thanked God with one of the most significant prayers of the OT. We would do well to study Daniel’s prayers (see also Dan. 9:3-19). **THEY ARE SHORT, INTELLIGENT, REVERENT AND TO THE POINT!** This prayer in ch. 2 speaks concisely and eloquently of the divine sovereignty and immutability of the purposes of God in the events of earth’s history. God permits changes in cultures, in times and seasons. God permits kings to reign and removes them from reigning. Whatever God permits (and he permits everything) he permits for his own good purpose (Gen. 50:20). That doesn’t mean God inspires or motivates men to do evil—people choose to do evil, but God permits as much of it to be carried out as he wishes in order to serve his purposes. We will see this foretold and demonstrated time after time in Daniel’s predictions. God creates both “weal (good) and woe” (Isa. 47:5-7). God gave dominion to the king of Babylon, Dan. 2:36-38; Jer. 27:5ff and 70 years later God gave dominion to Cyrus, king of Persia (Dan. 2:39; Isa. 44:28—45:7; Dan. 7:5). Then, 206 years later God gave dominion to Alexander the Great (Dan. 2:39; 7:6; 8:1-8) and 268 years later God gave dominion (including Palestine) to the Roman Caesars (Dan. 2:40ff; 7:7ff). **GOD SETS UP RULERS AND TAKES AWAY RULERS. IF HE CAN PREDICT HISTORY, IN EVERY DETAIL, HE CAN FULFILL IT! GOD’S WORD GRINDS SLOWLY BUT EXCEEDINGLY FINE!**

Daniel revealed the king’s dream of the great image to him in exact detail (2:25-35). Daniel said, “the God in heaven will tell the king what will be in the latter days.” Nebuchadnezzar had been thinking, no doubt, about the future. Like all great potentates he probably had thoughts of fame and grandeur for himself and his empire. He probably thought his empire would last forever; the Romans did; the British did; the Nazis did; the Russian Communists did; some even think America will last forever! The Hebrew phrase literally means, “in the days hereafter.” The Septuagint (LXX) translated this Hebrew phrase into the Greek, *eschaton ton hemeron*, “the last of the days.” But Daniel’s whole book (including Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome) is pointing to the “latter days” of the Jewish system and the beginning days of the Christian System (the Messianic age) and the Christian system is the “last days” (see Acts 2:16ff; 1 Cor. 10:11). As we shall see, the three (3) empires that followed Babylon will be the last human empires permitted by God to rule all the civilized cultures of mankind. After that there will be only ONE universal empire—God’s church! God allowed man plenty of time (4 great world empires—600 years) to show that human government cannot, by one-world government (the United Nations, included) provide the ultimate needs of human beings. As is pointed out in the “bulletin insert” for this lesson, Daniel uses this phrase, “latter days” and “time of the

end” quite often, and each time it is in connection with the end of the Jewish system and the beginning of the Christian system (the Messianic age). DANIEL’S USE OF THE TERM “LATTER DAYS” HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE END OF THE WORLD!

Daniel interpreted the dream. He first named Babylon as the “head of gold”—not Egypt nor Assyria for they never dominated all civilization as Babylon and the three empires to follow did. God gave “all the sons of men” wherever they dwelt, “into the hand” of Nebuchadnezzar (see Jer. 27:1-11). The second “kingdom” is not specified by name, but there is enough symbolism and history to understand it to be Persia. The 2nd kingdom is parallel to the 2nd “beast” in Daniel 7. The word Hebrew keseph is translated “silver” (2:32) and also means, “money”—silver became the medium of exchange in the Persian empire. Taxation and hoarding of silver characterized the Persian empire (Ezra 4:13; Neh. 9:37). Daniel 11:2 characterizes Xerxes (4th king of Persia) as the richest of all. Persians needed massive treasuries to finance public works, military campaigns into Greece, and indulgent living. They were rich enough for Cyrus to give the Jews funds with which to rebuild the Jewish commonwealth after the return from exile. The third “kingdom” is not specified by name, but again, the symbolism of brass or bronze fits the Greek empire with precision. The Persian empire, built upon wealth, was overcome by the force of arms wielded by a brave, idealistic and free people—the Greeks. Greek warriors wore brass armor and wielded bronze weapons. Ezekiel 27:13 (about 580 B.C.) speaks of “vessels of bronze from Javan (Greece)” as a mark characterizing the Greeks. Daniel chs. 7 & 8, and the symbolism of the third beast, confirms that Greece under Alexander the Great is the third kingdom. The fourth “kingdom” not specified by name, is clearly, the Roman empire. Iron was very appropriate to symbolize Rome. Archeologically speaking with Rome we pass from the Bronze age of Greece to the Iron age of Rome. Roman soldiers carried the distinctively “Roman” weapon, the pilum, a sort of iron spear or javelin with a long iron neck fitted to a wooden shaft. The massive, destructive power of the Roman empire is symbolized by the fourth beast’s iron teeth. The Roman war-machine was hundreds of times more destructive than all its imperial predecessors. It crushed and assimilated all that lay before it. Rome’s ruthless severity is exemplified by her destruction of Carthage—by the war against the slaves under Spartacus when 6000 crucified slaves lined the Appian Way—by the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see Josephus’s account). Daniel 7:7 says this fourth “kingdom” was “different from all the rest.” 1 Maccabees 8:1-16 tells how the Jews were impressed with the “differentness” of the Romans from all other Oriental or Mesopotamia empires the Jews had known before. They were impressed with the unpretentious demeanor and power of the Romans. Rome was the “iron” kingdom also because it lasted 500 years (more or less) which was twice as long as any of its imperial predecessors. This dream was to inform Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, and the Hebrew people, and all generations, of humanity to follow, that at the first coming of the Messiah, pagan, beastly enslavement and domination of the civilized world would be overcome by a supernatural kingdom. The world-encompassing power of paganism would be broken and destroyed by something supernatural filling the whole world. WE DO NOT NEED TO WORRY THAT SOME “ONE-WORLD” GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO TAKE OVER THE WHOLE CIVILIZED WORLD—THE LAST UNIVERSAL “KINGDOM” ON THIS EARTH IS THE CHURCH!

Even the “iron” kingdom was vulnerable! Part iron and part clay symbolizes that Rome developed a division in itself which led to its fall. Although toes are mentioned, note, there is no specification of 10 toes—we may assume there were 10 and not 16. Later, the fourth “beast” of Daniel, ch. 7, will have 10 horns. Ten (10) symbolizes simply completion, not 10 specific emperors or some “Common European Market.” Rome would “mix with another in marriage,” or, as the original text says, “mixed with the seed of man.” This probably refers to the migration of Barbarian hordes which came in thousands from the Germanic forests and central Europe and intermarried with Roman aristocracy. This became a sort of melting-pot experiment by the Romans attempting to bring some inner unity to the empire as it absorbed many cultures through conquest. But that was what contributed to Rome’s downfall. Dictatorships cannot be built in “melting-pot” societies. The important thing to remember about this image is that all together it represents symbolically pagan, heathen, secular world-power in opposition to the kingdom of God (the church). It is man’s attempt to usurp the rule of God in people’s hearts and lives. Obviously secular governments are necessary. They are ordained by God as temporary expedients due to human sinfulness; they are necessary to restrain the lawless by force (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 1:8-9). But all secular government is at best totally unable to give man eternal life in fellowship with God, and at worst is in direct opposition to what God has purposed for people by regeneration, repentance and reconciliation or sanctification. The whole character of the image is dealt a fatal blow by the kingdom of God (i.e., the “stone”), beginning in the days of the kings of the fourth empire (i.e., Rome).

The final “kingdom” (the kingdom of God—the church) is to be established in the days of the fourth kingdom—Rome—the Roman empire follows immediately the Greek empire that had been divided (Dan. Ch. 8) into “four” empires. The final kingdom (the church) is of divine origin and eternal duration. It cannot, therefore, be a “millennial kingdom on earth” for the millennium is allegedly only 1000 years of literal duration. Daniel predicts that in the period of the fourth world-empire, Rome, which incorporated and embodied the character of the three preceding it (cf. Dan. 7:3-6 with Rev. 13:2). That would occur when the blow would be struck by God to destroy pagan domination and institute the last universal empire—the kingdom of God. That the church and the “kingdom of God” are one and the same cannot be denied by any careful Bible student (cf. Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 1:9)—the “kingdom” existed when the NT was written, and exists now! The “kingdom of God” has power to destroy strongholds and arguments and everything that is an obstacle to the knowledge of God, and power to take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). MONEY, FORCE, IMPRISONMENT ARE NOT OBSTACLES TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. THE ONLY OBSTACLE IS IDEA, THOUGHT, OR MIND; AND THE KINGDOM CITIZEN HAS THE POWER AT HIS DISPOSAL (THE WORD OF GOD) TO CAPTURE THAT! The “kingdom of God” was to come to pass “afterward” which is the same Hebrew word as that translated “latter days” in 2:28. It is not so much that God would destroy all human government, per se, as that he would destroy the false idea that human government was the “Utopia” humans could build for themselves on earth. This is the very thing Pilate could not understand when he asked Jesus, “Are you a king?” Pilate could think of “kingdom” only in terms of money, force, culture, human structuring and regimentation. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

Daniel's prophecy was written to strengthen the Jews of the exile—not to confuse them. God never wants human beings to be confused about his redemptive program! If people would only let the scriptures interpret themselves, they would not be confused! WE REPEAT—JESUS EXPECTED THE JEWS OF HIS DAY (600 YEARS AFTER DANIEL WROTE) TO UNDERSTAND WHAT DANIEL'S (esp. Dan. 9:24-27) PROPHECY MEANT (Matt. 24:15f; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20-24). See also Luke 24:25-26; 24:44-47. If Jesus expected people of his day to understand the OT prophets, and be strengthened in their faith in him by them, THEN PEOPLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY SHOULD UNDERSTAND THEM AND BE STRENGTHENED!

Points to Ponder

Why would God reveal his future for the world to a pagan emperor? Does God expect rulers of nations to conduct the business of their offices in harmony with his purpose for history? Is there enough revelation of God's will for governments and history in the NT that rulers should be able to abide by it? Is it possible to run a human government by Biblical principles?

What about all the "wisdom" of human beings trying to predict history by signs and omens—even today? How much of current events are interpreted by people today with some of the same trust in superstitions as those of ancient Babylon? Is there too much trust put today in statistical analysis, computerized projections? Doesn't God run the universe on some basis of continuity and law? But can God be limited to his own "natural" law? No! He can intervene with miracles and prophecies.

If Nebuchadnezzar's dream is of "latter days" to come even after our day as dispensationalists allege, what's the point in God making that "known to Nebuchadnezzar"? (2:28-29). Was God telling Nebuchadnezzar something he expected him to relate to and get a message from, or was God just telling Nebuchadnezzar something he would never understand or relate to about the so-called "1000 year millennium to come after the rapture and the 7 years of tribulation." Doesn't the interpretation of the dream, as explained in these notes, make more sense? Isn't that what the author of the book seems to be saying?

Does it excite you to know that God told Daniel (and Nebuchadnezzar) 600 years of history before it came to pass? Does it strengthen you to know that mighty, world-encompassing governments are all ultimately under the sovereignty of and serving the redemptive purpose of God and his people? Would you like to see 600 years into the future? Do you really need to in order to relax and put your trust in Christ? Man does not know his own times (Eccl. 9:12), but God has man's times in his divine hands (Psa. 31:15).

Do you see the church (i.e., the "kingdom of God") as sovereign over all human institutions? In what way is it sovereign? How is it to conquer? Why can the

kingdom of God do what human kingdoms never could do—incorporate many cultures, races, levels of knowledge and wealth and power? Or, put another way, why can't human kingdoms do that? Hasn't the democratic form of government done that?

DANIEL 3:1-30

Introduction

There are 13 words in the Biblical Hebrew translated “idol” or “idolatry”: (a) aven, “emptiness, nothingness, vain, false, wicked thing (Isa. 66:3); (b) emah, “an object of horror or terror (either because of the idol’s hideousness or the shameful acts of worshiping one” (Jer. 50:38); (c) el, name of the supreme god of the Canaanites (Isa. 57:5); (d) eilil, “a thing of naught, a zero” (Lev. 19:4; 26:1; 1 Chron. 16:26); (e) mipletseth, “a fright, a horror” (1 Ki. 15:13; 2 Chron. 25:16); (f) semel, “a likeness, semblance” (2 Chron 33:7,15); (g) atsab, “a cause of grief” (1 Sam. 31:9; 1 Chron. 10:9); (h) etseb, “a cause of grief” (Jer. 22:28); (i) otseb, “a cause of grief” (Isa. 48:5); (j) tzlem, “an image, a form, not the reality” (Isa. 45:16; Dan. 3:1); (k) bosheth, “a shameful thing (Jer. 11:13; Hos. 9:10); (l) gillulim, a term of contempt meaning, “shapeless, things of dung” (Ezek. 4:2; Zeph. 1:17); (m) shikkuts, “filth, esp. the obscene rites of idolatry” (Ezek. 37:23).

For an Israelite, idolatry was the most heinous of crimes. Idolaters practiced murder of innocent children and adults (as sacrifices to the gods), engaged in sexual perversions of all kinds, were guilty of intellectual ignorance, war, and slavery. Idolatry resulted in loss of human rights, human dignity, and economic prosperity. **IDOLATRY STILL PRODUCES THE SAME MISERY TODAY AFTER EXISTING FOR MILLENNIUMS IN THE HUMAN RACE!** Ancient Israel’s relation to God is represented in the Bible as a marriage bond (Isa.54:4; Jer. 3:14; Hosea chs. 1-14). Idolatry was, therefore, religious whoredom and spiritual prostitution! The penalty for idolatry for an Israelite was death (Ex. 22:20). To attempt to seduce others to idolatry was a crime of equal enormity (Deut. 13:6-10).

Jewish infatuation with idolatry goes back to Jewish beginnings! Abraham, although reared in surroundings of idolatry was not an idolater—in fact he left his homeland to get away from it. Jacob’s wife, Rachel, took her father’s “idols” with her to the land of Canaan (Gen. 31:19). In Egypt, the patriarchal family defiled itself with idolatry (Josh. 24:14; Ezek. 20:7). In the wilderness wanderings, Israel was guilty of idolatry with the “golden calf.” The whole book of Judges tells of successive idolatries. The prophet Samuel had to deal with idolatry. Solomon allowed his 1000 wives to set up worship to idols in the very shadow of the temple. The accounts of the Prophets document the fact that the Jews had outstripped many of the heathen in idolatry and the attendant defilements. The divided kingdom was founded on idolatry (Jereboam had golden calves built and worshiped). Jezebel and her daughter, Athaliah, were idolatrous queens. Manasseh, king of Judah, led his people in idolatry more than any other Jewish king. Judah, the southern kingdom, was guilty of taking idols into the very courts of the temple, Ezek. 8:14-15.

God began his great chastening and cleansing of idolatry among the Jews by delivering them into exile to be surrounded by idolatry in its most heinous form—Babylon or Mesopotamia. God delivered the 10 northern tribes (i.e., Israel) into

Assyrian captivity (721 B.C.) 115 years before he delivered Judah into exile (606-586 B.C.). As a consequence, there were many Jews already in the Mesopotamian area when the southern Jews (i.e., Judah) were taken in 3 increments into Babylon 606-586 B.C. God promised the southern kingdom, Judah, Daniel's native land, they would be in exile for 70 years (2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 25:11-12: 29:10). God also promised that a "remnant" would return to the land of Palestine after the 70 years and they would rebuild their commonwealth. Many hundreds of thousands of Jews stayed in Babylon and Persia the rest of their lives and their generations succeeded them there (cf. Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther). Many of the Jews married foreign, heathen spouses. Many of them were influenced by heathen superstitions and incorporated such into their practice of Judaism. Not even the captivities cured the Jews of their idolatrous tendencies. When Ezra went to Jerusalem from Babylon, he found, to his dismay, that many Jews had married foreign wives and the land was filled with abominations (Ezra 9:11).

God promised through Daniel that divine "indignation" upon the Jews for their idolatry would continue for seventy-sevens (490 years) from the re-establishment of the Jewish commonwealth which took place and was confirmed by the Persian government in 457 B.C. The Jews did suffer the imposition of heathen rule and control for centuries until the Roman empire destroyed Jerusalem and disenfranchised the Jewish people from the land of Palestine. These successive heathen empires kept the Jews in captivity and oppression attempted to heathenize the Jews. Many Jews allowed themselves to be heathenized, even turning back to idolatry. Daniel predicted this in Daniel 11:29-35. Some Jews, a faithful few, did not deny their love and faith for the Lord. We have a well documented account of some of this faithful "remnant" in Daniel's book—the three Hebrew young men of chapter 3 are among them—Daniel is one of them—Esther, Mordecai, Ezekiel and others were among them. Some of this "remnant" returned to Palestine in 536 B.C.—others stayed behind. God was using this exile and dispersion of a few who believed to prepare the world for the coming of the gospel of Christ. Paul and others would be received throughout the heathen world in Jewish synagogues because of this exile.

God used the exile of the Jews to introduce his sovereignty and will (even covenant terms) and his Messianic promises to the heathen. Some heathen became Jewish proselytes (Esther 8:17). Some heathen, though not becoming Jewish proselytes, apparently believed in Jehovah and were aware of the coming "ruler of Israel," the Messiah. The "wise-men" from the east who came to Bethlehem (Matt. 2) are probably some of these Mesopotamian "believers." The Roman historian Suetonius (born A.D. 69) wrote in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "An ancient superstition was current in the East, that out of Judaea would come the ruler(s) of the world. This prediction, as it later proved (this was Suetonius's interpretation of the 'ancient prediction'), referred to two Roman Emperors, Vespasian and his son Titus; but the rebellious Jews, who read it as referring to themselves, murdered their Procurator, routed the governor-general of Syria when he came down to restore order and captured an Eagle." God worked on Neuchadnezzar, and it appears the mighty king at least acknowledged the sovereignty of Jehovah (Dan. Ch. 4). God expected Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son, to have learned something about the God of the Jews and to have acted accordingly (Dan. Ch. 5). God worked on Darius, the Persian

emperor, to make a “believer” of him (Dan. Ch. 6). All this God was doing in order to reveal himself to those of the “coast lands” and the “islands of the sea” and the people of all nations and tongues (see Isa. 4:1-25; 49:1-6; 51:4-6; 66:18-23). That was God’s plan. He was wanting to work his plan through the Jews. **ONLY A FEW JEWS COOPERATED WITH GOD!** The other Jews, not cooperating and not fulfilling their Messianic calling, God could not save! **ALL MEN MUST BE SAVED THROUGH THE MESSIAH!**

DANIEL 3:1-30

The image was most likely that of Nebuchadnezzar. Heathen kings were accustomed to make such images of themselves and demand they be worshiped as “gods.” Isaiah 14:1-21 indicates the king of Babylon attempted to have himself worshiped as “god.” The “prince of Tyre” also deified himself (Ezek. 28:1ff). Nebuchadnezzar’s image was 90 ft. high—that’s 90 stories—and would be very imposing. The Colossus of Rhodes was only 70 ft. tall! The Plain of Dura was about 12 miles southeast of the city of Babylon. Archaeologists have found a rectangular brick structure 45 ft. square and 20 ft. high which may have formed the pedestal of this colossal image. The empire was divided into “provinces” over which “satraps” ruled. The Plain of Dura was in the “province” of Babylon and Daniel was one of the rulers (“satraps”) of this province. When the king sends an invitation, it is RSVP (repondez, s’il vous plait), “Please reply!” This was more than a “please”—this was an imperial edict—not to be rejected! Emperor worship was political at its base. It was always a test of one’s patriotism and allegiance to the political structure (does it not remind you of the late Saddam Hussein?). In this “event” Nebuchadnezzar was attempting to bind all the outlying provinces of his vast empire (which reached over into Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, part of Egypt, and part of Armenia) into a unit. Daniel, using Persian words, lists 8 different “provincial officials” who were “invited” to worship the image! A “satrap” was one who was next to the emperor; the other officials were probably listed by Daniel in ascending order. When the signal (a cacophonous din) every man, woman and child was to worship (i.e., Heb. sagad, “bow down or do homage”) to the image. This involved a ritual in which the worshiper called upon the image as a “god.” While the Hebrews could be ethically supportive of the Babylonian government (e.g. Jer. 29:4-9; and the books of Nehemiah, Ezra and Esther shows they were), they could not call an image a “god.”

Undoubtedly the Jews would associate a stigma to being “burned alive with fire” or incinerated as a “cursed” way to die. When God wanted to demonstrate his wrath upon human beings he often commanded the Hebrews to burn his enemies with fire (e.g., Gen. 19:24-28; Josh. 7:25; 1 Sam. 30:14; 31:8-13; 2 Sam. 23:7; 2 Kings 23:20; 1 Chron. 14:12; Jer. 29:22, etc.). Dying by fire has happened accidentally to untold numbers of human beings—many of them believers. There are no Biblical sanctions against cremation after the body is dead. Nebuchadnezzar probably never thought of the Jewish stigma attached to incinerating live people—he was just threatening with the worst torture he could devise, those who might have inclinations to disobey his order to worship the image! Nebuchadnezzar “raged furiously” when he learned of the disobedience of 3 of his trusted Jewish administrators. He would rant about their ingratitude, their seditious intentions, etc., etc. He felt a personal insult in their refusal to do homage to this image of the “Great god Nebuchadnezzar.” At least he was fair enough to call them in and let them answer for themselves the accusation. He is incredulous that they would not serve the “gods” of the country which had been so good to them! He offered them one more opportunity to obey his command to practice idolatry. The “fiery furnace” may have been built especially for execution since it appears other Jews may have been executed that way (Jer. 29:22). It may

also simply have been a commercial lime-kiln or brick-kiln where Babylon built its millions of bricks for its city structures. Eastern potentates were accustomed to practice methods of cruel punishment for the slightest disobedience to their commands—even burning the bones of their enemies into lime (ash) (Amos 2:1). A traveler only 3 centuries ago (A.D. 1671-77) by the name of Chardin went to the territory of Persia and witnessed two furnaces of fire kept burning for a month for consuming those who overcharged for food!

Where was Daniel? Probably away on some mission for the government. Had he been there, he would probably have been condemned to the furnace also, for he would not have “bowed down” to that image! Undoubtedly there were some of the Jews who worshiped the image to save their necks. Perhaps some of them even did so for other reasons. We know from the writings of the OT prophets (especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and Jewish historians (Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther) many of the Jews down in the exile did worship “strange gods” during their captivities, and actually brought some of them back to Palestine in the “restoration.” Much of modern Judaism is saturated with the mythology, superstition, idolatry and occultism of Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman religions and cultures! One has only to read the Kabbalah and the Talmud to know that is true!

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were singled out to be thrown into the fiery furnace because (a) they were Jews—foreigners, POWs of a sort; (b) they had been placed in positions of authority in the Babylonian government; (c) they refused to “bow down” to the image of Nebuchadnezzar—thus they were considered to be unpatriotic, ungrateful, dangerous and seditious. There was no need for the three Hebrew men to try to answer Nebuchadnezzar’s interrogation. He would not have understood their explanations about their laws against idolatry or polytheism. He would not have understood the spiritual aspects of their religion at all. If the 3 Hebrew men argued with Nebuchadnezzar and continued to do so it might jeopardize the entire Jewish population (as in the days of Esther and Haman). **THEY WERE SENTENCED TO DIE FOR THEIR FAITHFULNESS TO THE WORD OF GOD!** This has been the case ever since Cain and Abel! **EVERY CHRISTIAN** who would take up his cross (die to self) and follow Jesus has the promise that he/she will be persecuted for righteousness sake (Matt. 5:11-12; 10:34-39; John 15:18-25; Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 2 Tim. 3:12). Hundreds of millions of Christians have died because they refused to “bow down” to other “gods.” Every Christian ought to buy, read and keep for constant reference the book, *By Their Blood*, by James & Marti Hefley, pub. Baker. It records hundreds of accounts of modern persecutions and martyrdoms by Christians all over the world.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego stood silent. They were not cringing and cowering in fear, begging for their lives. Nebuchadnezzar believed there was no “god” capable of delivering these Hebrews (not even Jehovah, their own God) from his power and the fiery furnace. He had yet to see any “god” of any nation he had conquered with enough power to stop him from doing whatever he pleased. Nebuchadnezzar’s rage became “hot” (Heb. *chema*, “hot with venomous or poisonous anger”). He was almost as “hot” as the furnace at being disobeyed and refused homage in favor of some other God named Jehovah whom he was sure he

had defeated when he destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and took its people captive. His face was changed. The Hebrew word 'eshettanniv means, perverted, contorted. He could not contain his rage. It was causing his face to go into contortions. He ordered the furnace to be heated 7 times hotter than usual—to the exploding point. All their clothing was put upon them to fuel the flames around their bodies. Their arms and hands were bound preventing escape. Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers were so afraid of their emperor as they rushed headlong toward the opening of the furnace (in its top) to cast the Hebrew men in, they were burned to death themselves with the heat of the furnace. **NEBUCHADNEZZAR REMINDS US OF SO MANY POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL "LEADERS" IN THE WORLD TODAY WHO THINK THERE IS NO "GOD" POWERFUL ENOUGH TO STAND IN THEIR WAY OF DOMINATING THE WORLD WHICH JEHOVAH-GOD CREATED AND CONSTANTLY SITS OVER AS SOVEREIGN.**

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego finally opened their mouths. The statement they made stands etched in history forever! "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." Dan. 3:16-18. They believed Jehovah had the power to keep them from being burned up in the raging fire of the furnace (see Heb. 11:34). But they also believed God's will would be done one way or another—even should their physical bodies perish in the fire, they were determined to let God decide and exercise his will as they faced the threat of a horrible death! That's not "fatalism," **THAT'S FAITH!** Whatever the case, they trusted God. That is "gut-level" faith. Peter the apostle said it this way, "Let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator." 1 Pet. 4:19. This is what our Pathfinder (Jesus) did (Heb. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:23). **AND WE ARE TO "FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS."** The faithful Hebrew lads testified to the "name" of God. They wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know how much they trusted their God, whether they died or survived. They trusted Jehovah so much that they would not offend him even when it was almost certain they were going to give up their very lives (physically) in a most torturous incineration. So, what would you, dear Christian, give in return for your life? (Matt. 16:24-28). If you gain the whole world and forfeit your eternal soul, what are you profited?

Nebuchadnezzar stepped back to watch the 3 Hebrew men burn to death, anticipating their screams for mercy and deliverance. What he saw surprised and amazed him. He called for his counselors to confirm what he saw. **HE COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS EYES!** He had thrown 3 men in, but he saw 4 men in the furnace. Not only so, but they were loose, walking around in the midst of the fire, unhurt at all! The "fourth" man was like a son of the gods. The KJV translation, which says, "like the Son of God" is incorrect. What Nebuchadnezzar saw was a being with supernatural qualities and appearance. He was impressed and spoke with typical heathen reaction likening the "fourth" person to a "son of the gods." The Hebrew text, *revi'ya damech levar-elahiyyin*, does not have the definite article, "the" in it. Literally it would be translated, "the fourth is like a son of gods." The fourth person was undoubtedly an angel of Jehovah, perhaps Michael, the archangel, sent by God to protect the Jews in exile

(see Dan. 10:13,21). The fourth person was not Jesus the incarnate Son of God. For him to become incarnate here would rob his later incarnation of its uniqueness. Scripture plainly teaches that the appearance of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, took place uniquely at his birth by the virgin Mary (Jn. 1:1-18; Heb. 1:1-14). Heb. 1:1-14 tells of God's previous angelic ministry to the OT saints to emphasize the uniqueness of the ministry of the Son in "these last days" (i.e., the Christian dispensation).

Nebuchadnezzar has not yet come to deny or denounce his own polytheism, even though he acknowledges the power of the Hebrew God. He does not command that all Babylonians actively worship the Hebrew God as the only God. He does officially forbid any attack or denunciation of the Hebrew religion. That would leave the Hebrew people free to practice as much of their religion (without their temple) as they could. He does officially announce his defeat and Jehovah's power to be more than his in delivering people from death! These official decrees would go a long way in providing for the freedom of the Jewish religion to be practiced when the Babylonian empire was conquered by the Persians. Coming from the emperor, the decrees would also protect the Jews living throughout Mesopotamia from persecution by provincials. The Hebrew word used in 3:30, *tzalach*, means, "to prosper, to succeed." Nebuchadnezzar did not promote these 3 men to a higher position, but he supported and favored them so they succeeded in their positions and no doubt became wealthy. This action of the emperor would also serve the purpose of God in the Jewish exile. Jewish communities could be sustained, synagogues built, money made available for the Jewish scriptures to be copied, etc. GOD WAS NOT ONLY WORKING TO PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF THE GOSPEL THERE IN MESOPOTAMIA, HE WAS CONTINUING TO WORK ON THE MIND AND HEART OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND OTHER OFFICIALS OF THAT HEATHEN COURT TO BRING THEM TO REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN HIM! Read on in chapter 4!

Points to Ponder

Wasn't doing homage to the image of Nebuchadnezzar much like saluting the flag in America or singing songs of praise about America? If the Hebrews could learn the culture of Babylon, why couldn't they pay homage to its "image"? Is there a difference between "respect" and "worship"? What about countries today where people are told the "god" they are to worship is the State or some idol? Are there people who make Americanism their "god"?

Should believers expect the rest of the world to "respect" their beliefs? Should they expect "smooth sailing" in their jobs for their honesty and diligence to do the best job of workmanship possible? Will people be jealous and envious of a good man's successes? What is a believer to do—have no ambition to do a good job or succeed? Or perhaps one should protect himself by bringing accusations against his accusers? (See Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Pet. 2:18-25, etc.).

How much do you trust God? You trust him with a couple of hours on Sunday, maybe a few on Wednesday, or Tuesday—but do you trust him with your life's breath? Do

you trust him with your children? With your money? Are you willing to let him tell you what to do with these things you possess? If it came to a decision about keeping your physical life or disobeying one of his plain commandments, which would you choose?

How do you give testimony to your trust in God? When the subject of right and wrong comes up in your presence, do you speak up for God's word about it? When the subject of religion or life after death comes up, what do you say? Remember the quotation, "What we really believe, we do. Everything else is just so much religious rhetoric."—Jerry Ballard. DOES WHAT YOU DO TESTIFY TO YOUR TRUST IN GOD? (see Luke 6:46).

Do you believe in the ministry of angels? Do you think God would send one to help you if he considered it necessary? If God has created angels, what would he be using them for, if not for his kingdom citizens? Would you recognize an angel if one came to help you? (See Heb. 1:7,14). How would you recognize one—in what form would they come to you? (See Heb. 13:2). When you die in the body, who will escort you in spirit into the presence of Jesus (see Lk. 16:22)? Does the book of Revelation teach that Christ sent his angels to protect and assist the churches of Asia Minor in their struggle with the "beast"?

Does this entire account teach us anything about religion and the state? What happens when the two are combined? Should we be very careful to protect people's right to worship any god, and any way they wish—or none at all if they wish? How far does that freedom go?—in other words should there be some restrictions on religion by the state? What? Can belief in a religion or a god be forced? How does the Bible advocate bringing men to believe in the Father and the Son?

Should every believer expect God to deliver from all suffering? By miracle? Should believers be surprised at fiery ordeals? (1 Pet. 4:12ff). If the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial (2 Pet. 2:9), why doesn't he? If "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous" (1 Pet. 3:12ff), why does he allow them to be persecuted? (See 1 Pet. 3:13-22). Why did he allow other Jews to suffer and rescue the 3 from the fiery furnace? Did he fulfill a purpose in this? Does he do so in whatever you suffer for his name's sake? Would you consider it worthwhile to suffer if by it you might produce testimony of faith in God to a heathen ruler?

DANIEL 4:1-37

Introduction

The main focus of this lesson will be on the pride of Nebuchadnezzar. One would think that he had been sufficiently humbled after his confrontations with the God of the Hebrews in chapters 1-2-3. But human pride is the mother of all sins. It is the elemental, fundamental, basic root of all manifestations of spiritual rebellion (i.e., sin). Pride was the snare into which the devil himself chose to participate (1 Tim. 2:6-7). And Satan has been using all his expertise ever since to convince all other creatures of choice to assume the same posture toward their Creator—ARROGANCE, INDEPENDENCE, PRIDE!

Human political leaders are especially susceptible to pride. The late David Brinkley (TV commentator) once said: "A person running for political office is seeking power. Power as we know it corrupts. The excessive concentration of power in Washington D.C. is what caused all this (Watergate, under Pres. Nixon) mess." Pride is what motivates men to seek power. But that, again, is the devil's lie. Human beings cannot really gain power. The only power human beings ever have is by the grace and permission of God. This is what God intended that Nebuchadnezzar learn. All power, every power, any power, in the final analysis, is God's power. All God has to do is will it, and any or all human beings become absolutely powerless.

Pride is a vice not limited to the emperors of far-flung realms. Anyone, by comparing himself with those who have less talent, less success, or less popularity, can emerge with a feeling of egotism that is the very opposite of humility. Pride is all too common among God's people—though he warns them specifically that no one has anything to boast about, since all our gifts come from God (1 Cor. 4:7). Pride is stupidity! Paul writes that when Christians compare themselves or measure themselves with others in order to make themselves able to boast, they are without understanding (2 Cor. 10:7-12). So this lesson, although it deals with a man in the position of supreme human power (if there is human power)—which most of us will never attain—this lesson applies to EVERY HUMAN BEING, EVERYWHERE, AND ALWAYS!

DANIEL 4:1-37

Nebuchadnezzar could hardly contain himself! HE HAD A “LIFE-CHANGING” EXPERIENCE AND HAD TO TELL THE WORLD ABOUT IT! Chapter 4:1-3, in the Hebrew text, is made to be the conclusion of chapter 3 and forms verse 31 of the 3rd chapter. However, the statement (v. 2) “it has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has wrought toward me...” makes one think these verses are an introduction to what Nebuchadnezzar is going to relate about the dream of the “tree” and his subsequent insanity. In that case, this would be an anachronism, to some extent. Nebuchadnezzar is telling us what he concluded from his dream and insanity BEFORE he tells us his experience. Notice the all encompassing salutation: “...to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth.” Of course, Nebuchadnezzar did not know about the people who were living on the North American continent at the time or probably not even about people in western Europe. But he was addressing almost all of what we know as the Middle East and perhaps Egypt. This was the center of human civilization—from which all human culture emanated, and all major events of ancient history centered at that time. Nebuchadnezzar was ruler of the “world” as he knew the world then. This salutation would be almost incredible were it not for the fact that Jesus Christ substantiates the historicity of the book of Daniel (Matt. 24:15ff; Mark 13:14ff; Luke 21:20ff). It seems unbelievable that a pagan emperor would confess that the Most High God had shown wonders and signs, and, that this Most High God’s kingdom was one of everlasting dominion! But, you see, this confession is after his insanity and his “cure” as predicted by Daniel from the dream! THE EVIDENCE GIVEN TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR OF JEHOVAH’S SOVEREIGNTY COULD NOT BE DENIED!

Nebuchadnezzar apparently suspected the dream (4:15-17) was about himself as a “great tree” and the tree was “cut down” and the person (“tree”) became insane! THAT SCARED HIM! The mighty emperor was at rest which indicates he was feeling secure and free of any apprehension. His wars were temporarily over and his kingdom was tranquil and prosperous beyond human imagination. Everything was coming up “gold”—he was self-satisfied (4:30). The Hebrew word dachal means “fear” and the word bahal means “terrified.” Nebuchadnezzar was more than “upset.” The word in the Hebrew text translated “thoughts” or “fancies” is hirehurin and means “conceptions.” Nebuchadnezzar was really cogitating, thinking and postulating about this dream. All kinds of ideas about its meaning were going through his brain. What could it mean? He had already had one dream interpreted to predict the eventual overthrow of his empire (chapter 2)—this one was ominously like that one! He ordered that all the wise-men (i.e., “magi”) of Babylon be brought in before him to interpret this dream. He didn’t want to miss any possibility. Apparently, all the wise-men except Daniel came—Daniel came later (he may have been tied up in affairs of government somewhere). Daniel was known to the king by his Babylonian-given name, “Belteshazzar” (named after the Babylonian god, Bel). The king was almost ecstatic at the appearance of Daniel for he knew Daniel was the only one who truly had the power to interpret the meaning of his dream. Daniel had been elevated to “rab-haretumaya” meaning, “chief scholar” or “chief wise-man.” Nebuchadnezzar

knew he could trust Daniel to tell him the truth about his dream. Can you imagine the temptations that must have come to Daniel to deceive the king in order to “get back” at him for his destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and taking the Jews into captivity?

A tall, spreading tree (like the Sequoia of California) is one of the grandest sights in God’s creation. This “dream” would be even more impressive to a person living in a land of barren flat desert, and almost tree-less country. The Bible uses “tree” as a metaphor to symbolize majesty, strength, kingship (see 2 Kings 14:9; 19:23; Song of Solomon 5:15; Psa. 1:3; 29:4-5; 92:12; Isa. 2:13; 10:18-19; Jer. 22:7,23; Ezek. 17:1ff; 31:3ff; Amos 2:9, etc.). Even Jesus used “tree” as a figure of speech (Matt. 7:7-19; Lk. 23:31). Then, there is the “tree” of life (Rev. 22:2,14), and the kingdom of God grows from a mustard seed into a “great tree” (Matt. 13:32; Lk. 13:19). It is no wonder that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of himself as a “great tree.” He may have dreamed of himself as a “cedar of Lebanon”—the largest tree of that part of the world. They grow up in the Lebanon Mountains 6000 feet above sea level. They grow as tall as 80-100 ft. high, 40 ft. in circumference, and live 800-1000 years old. The impressiveness of the cedar lies in the wonderful lateral branches, providing shade and excellent habitat for birds. The cones were used by both man and bird for food while the tree itself was prized as fine building material. It was also considered a thing of beauty (Zech. 11:1-2). Nebuchadnezzar sees himself as a “tree” of strength, greatness, fame, attractiveness, affluence, and graciousness. In other words, he had it, the whole world knew he had it, and he did the world a favor by dispensing to the world what it needed! It is hard to be humble when you have all that!

Daniel has already displayed his compassionate nature for the Babylonian “wise-men.” Now, seeing the interpretation of the dream he is struck by the awesome terribleness of the humiliation and insanity that is to come upon Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was a man of God—a man of faith and a man of the word of God. Daniel had the “Spirit” of God in him. Daniel was loving, caring, compassionate and forgiving! Daniel cared for Nebuchadnezzar’s spiritual relationship to the One True God and knew Nebuchadnezzar was trying to believe in Jehovah. Daniel also would feel a sense of indebtedness to Nebuchadnezzar who had elevated him to high position in Babylon. So Daniel was hesitant to even give the terrible interpretation. Daniel wanted to be loyal to this emperor. But the king insisted that he was ready to hear whatever had dismayed Daniel. It is possible to translate Daniel’s statement in 4:19, “...this is a dream that would please your enemies for what it portends and they would rejoice to know was going to come upon you.”

Nebuchadnezzar couldn’t help having the dream, of course, since God gave it to him to let him know what God was going to do to him. But, as we see from 4:28, a year after Daniel interpreted the dream for him, Nebuchadnezzar was still so filled with self-importance and arrogance he apparently had disregarded Daniel’s warnings about his mind-boggling ego! One has only to read Isaiah 14:4-21, Jeremiah, chapters 50-51 and Habakkuk chapter 1, knowing it is predicting the “king of Babylon” (Nebuchadnezzar), to understand what was wrong with Nebuchadnezzar’s egotistical “dreaming” of himself as a GREAT TREE. Our dreams usually represent something (distorted and contrary to conscious order) that has occurred in our conscious

experiences. NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAD OFTEN THOUGHT OF HIMSELF AS ALMIGHTY GOD (Isa. 14:12-13). Remember what God did to Herod when he reveled in the acclaim that he was a “god” in Acts 12:20-23! What Daniel had interpreted about Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliating insanity literally came true. Two ancient historians, Berosus, a Chaldean priest in the temple of Belus during the days of Alexander the Great, and Abydenus (ca. 286 B.C.), a pupil of Berosus, states, as quoted by Eusebius: “Nabuchodonosor (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar), after he had begun to build the aforementioned wall, fell sick and departed this life...” “After these things (Nebuchadnezzar’s conquests) as it is said by the Chaldeans, having ascended his palace, he was seized by some god, and speaking aloud he said: ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, O Babylonians, foretell your future calamity, which neither Belus, my ancestor, nor queen Beltis, can persuade the destinies to avert. A Persian mule will come, employing your own divinities as his auxiliaries; and he will impose servitude upon you. His coadjutor will be the Mede...having uttered this prediction, he (Nebuchadnezzar) forthwith disappeared.’” Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher who declared, “God is dead,” and who boasted that the future world would divide the past into “Before Nietzsche” and “After Nietzsche,” became a raving paranoid, neurotic mad-man who could not make sense to another human being. He was committed to an insane asylum. Adolph Hitler, who idolized Nietzsche, boasted he was the Fuhrer (“guide”) for all mankind, and ended in his Berlin bunker, falling down on the floor, foaming at the mouth and chewing on the carpet in an insane rage against the German people for being cowards (The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, by William Shirer). Historians tell us also of Joseph Stalin’s paranoia that prompted him to do irrational things.

Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation (insanity and animalistic behavior) is to last for “seven times.” That could mean 7 years or 7 months, or 7 weeks—but it probably simply means a “complete or fulfilled time as determined by God.” Seven is the symbolic number of completeness. It certainly has nothing to do with the “times of the Gentiles.” The important thing is what Nebuchadnezzar is to learn from this experience (see 4:24-25). He must suffer this humiliation until he comes to know and acknowledge that the Most High is the Master (Hebrew, shalit) or Ruler in the kingdoms of men. The Most High gives human kingdoms to whomever he will (Jer. 27:5ff)—men do not take the powers they have—they are “given” to them by God! God’s preference is for humble and godly people in places of authority (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17, etc.). This is not just a dream or nightmare. It is more than a dream—it is a decree from heavenly beings! The word “therefore” in 4:27 is very significant—it indicates that what God did by warning Nebuchadnezzar in a dream of impending insanity was specifically to motivate him to change his life. We might translate 4:27, “On account of what is going to happen to you if you don’t (i.e., insanity), you had better break off your sins.” Note—Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar to break off sinning by “practicing righteousness.” Spirituality does not exist in a vacuum! God reveals specifics and principles for practicing righteousness—mankind does not have to guess or theorize about what is right! GOD HAS REVEALED ENOUGH ABOUT SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS EVEN IN NATURE SO THAT ALL MANKIND (INCLUDING “HEATHEN”) IS WITHOUT EXCUSE FOR PRACTICING SIN (Psa. 19:1-14; Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Pet. 3:3-7, etc.). God does hold heathen people (including heathen rulers) responsible for knowing and practicing as much righteousness as he has revealed to them (cf. Isa. chs. 13-23; Jer. chs. 46-51; Ezek.

chs. 27-32; Amos chs. 1-2, etc.). AND THAT APPLIES TODAY AND FOR AS LONG AS THIS WORLD WILL EXIST! God not only threatens through “nature,” “conscience,” and his “written word,” he also promises blessing for obedience to his will. God promised Nebuchadnezzar a “lengthening” of his tranquility—which probably means a lengthening of his sanity and rule of Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar had to obey God’s instructions through Daniel to avoid the threat and enjoy the blessing! SECULAR RULERS AND HEATHEN PEOPLE HAVE GOD’S COMPLETED WORD IN THE BIBLE TODAY—THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR THEM NOT KNOWING AND OBEYING GOD’S WORD!

Nebuchadnezzar continued to think of himself as impervious to any other sovereignty than himself (4:29-30). He had earlier admitted that the God of the Hebrews had “set at nought” his command for the death of the 3 Hebrew men in the furnace—but that was yesterday. Now Nebuchadnezzar is looking upon “great Babylon” which, he believes, everyone knows is the work of his own hands! His ability to build Babylon should prove just how great, majestic, wise, strong and powerful he is. That should prove he would never roam around like a dumb animal—that his kingdom would never be taken away from him. To read more about the boasting of the kings of Babylon, read Isa. chs. 13-14; Jer. chs. 50-51; Habakkuk ch. 1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR REACTED TO GOD’S CALL TO REPENTANCE THROUGH THE PROPHET DANIEL IN THE SAME WAY SO MANY UNBELIEVERS IN THE WORLD REACT TODAY—arrogantly, indifferently, and impenitently.

Nebuchadnezzar didn’t even get the opportunity to finish his bragging. God brought upon him what he had threatened through Daniel. God doesn’t always carry out his threats immediately—but he has carried out enough of them in the lifetimes of some to prove that he will eventually carry them all out! So, he became ill to some degree, “was driven from among men, and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws” (4:33). He lived out-of-doors with the animals, even at night, lost his powers to reason, and probably had to be led about with a chain or leash. He looked like the worst kind of “hippy” you ever saw! He probably had to be pulled into shelter at night. He would not be as physically strong as an animal and could probably not survive without constant care by other human beings. Can you visualize the abasement of this once proud and arrogant man who had exalted himself to divine status—thinking himself to be god—now he is the laughing stock of all who see him? (See Isaiah 14:12-21). God has done similar things to impenitent rulers and non-rulers through the ages and will continue to do so!

Yes! I believe Nebuchadnezzar had a “conversion experience” (Dan. 4:34-37). The text represents Nebuchadnezzar as being sincere in his praise of God—there is no reason for us to question it. He has learned again, this time the hard way, that Jehovah is sovereign. No human potentate, no matter how many “Babylons” he builds to glorify himself, can disobey God without doom! Nebuchadnezzar is convinced of the omnipotence of Jehovah! He believes that omnipotence is in both the seen and the unseen world. Many heathen will let God be sovereign in the unseen world, but not in the seen world. When God makes a promise, no one can keep him from fulfilling it. When God makes a threat, no one can keep him from

fulfilling it. It is not totally unusual for heathen people to come to believe in God and the Scriptures and repent. Jesus even mentions two such people in his sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4) to illustrate that God's mercy is available to and will be accepted by Gentiles. Then, there was Naaman, the Syrian army captain (2 Kings 5:15-19). Abraham believed in Jehovah as a Gentile before he was a Jew (Gen. chs. 12-15). God could justify Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar and the widow of Zarephath by their faith just as he did Abraham (Gen. 15:6). As a matter of fact, it was not Jewishness or the rituals of the Mosaic law by which any Jew was justified—it was by faith! Certainly Nebuchadnezzar was equally receptive and responsive to the will of God as the King of Nineveh was at the preaching of Jonah. To what extent God will accuse or excuse Nebuchadnezzar at the judgment is solely God's prerogative. **IT IS OUR BLESSED PRIVILEGE, 2600 YEARS LATER, TO PREACH THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION BY FAITH AND OBEDIENCE TO JESUS CHRIST IN A NEW COVENANT OF GRACE!**

Points to Ponder

Why do unbelievers tend to go to those who know God's word when they get into trouble and need help? Nebuchadnezzar (and later his son, Belshazzar), although they had not surrendered their lives to the guidance of the Hebrew God, when they came to something that bothered them which they could not solve, they turned to Daniel. Why is it that people who have not even paid attention to God, his word, his church, or his people, will, when there is a death in their immediate family, call upon the church for help? And, after they have received the help, why do they then turn back to their own egotistical, arrogant ways—like Nebuchadnezzar? Should the church go right on helping them, no matter how many times they do that? Daniel did for Nebuchadnezzar; Jesus did!

God does his best to teach men humility! God uses things great and small to teach all mankind humility. He uses the stars of the heavens; the human body; sickness; natural disasters; history; his word; physical death, and the inexplicable phenomena of nature. **THEN WHY ARE THERE SO MANY PROUD AND INDEPENDENT PEOPLE?** Because, while God wishes to teach people humility, he gives them the freedom to choose pride if they wish, and they must cooperate if they are to learn from him. A person must be honest with oneself—honest in his own mind and heart—if he ever learns anything. Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have been a man with a certain degree of honesty that made him admit God's power and his own limitations when they were shown. People will learn humility only if they want to!

Daniel had every reason known to mankind to be bitter toward this potentate—why wasn't he? Daniel helped the king because Daniel cared (4:19-20). Daniel might also have said to himself many times, "There, but for the grace of God go I!" Was Daniel practicing the "Golden Rule" before it had been stated by Jesus (Matt. 7)? So, do we need to make ourselves care? Yes! I said, make ourselves care! Daniel's kind of

caring was not from emotions or feeling—it was caring in spite of feelings. That is God-like love. That may have had as much to do with Nebuchadnezzar’s extolling the name of the Hebrew God as anything else. It certainly didn’t hinder Nebuchadnezzar’s belief!

Does God run the world through angels? Read Daniel, ch. 10! God’s angels were “watchers” (vigilantes), watching Nebuchadnezzar conduct his affairs. These “watchers” executed God’s orders to “cut down the tree” (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar) to size! Michael, the archangel, and other angels, were involved in “fighting” for Daniel’s people against the “princes” of Persia and Greece (Dan. 10). Angels ministered in the NT and OT to God’s people. They are undoubtedly ministering to Christ’s people today (Heb. 1:14).

Could inordinate egotism and pride drive one to insanity? Was Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity by direct intervention of the Lord or did the Lord simply let uncontrolled pride take its course? Many famous and many unknown people have gone insane from pride, egotism, jealousy, paranoia, e.g., King Saul, Herod the Great, Nietzsche, Hitler, and scores of other lesser lights who have claimed to be God. “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God! (Psa. 14:1)” The farmer who thought he controlled his destiny was a “fool” (Lk. 12). The one who denies the existence of God is a fool (Rom. 1:22). Those who allow their minds and actions to be unbridled, who do not control thinking and acting by the commands and principles of God’s word, and who deliberately exchange the truth of God for a lie, leave themselves open for insanity and actions worse than animals (Rom. 1:18-32; Isa. 1:3). Those who disbelieve in the resurrection of Christ and judgment are “out of their right minds” (1 Cor. 15:34).

Why is it that humility, of all things, qualifies men to rule other men? Men reason that self-assurance, independence, arrogance, “take-charge” attitude, ruthless indifference to individuals, and the “guts” to never admit defeat are “qualities” that make men qualified to lead or rule. But that is not God’s ideal for leadership. God wants men like David—humble, penitent, totally dependent on God and the prayers of others, compassionate, shepherd-hearted, self-sacrificing people to rule others. Has history proved God’s will for rulers to be wiser than that of unbelieving mankind? Those rulers who have done the most for mankind, who have left the greatest legacies to the world have been such men. Can you name some?

Is the threat of punishment a proper way for God to motivate people to righteousness and love? Did God’s threat to Nebuchadnezzar motivate him to do right? No, he went right on bragging and resisting God. But Nebuchadnezzar did repent when God carried out his threat! Do the chastisements of God in your life cause you to seek God’s will more perfectly? Or do they make you bitter and more rebellious? Does the fact that God has fulfilled his threats in history cause you to believe he will fulfill his threats in eternity? Aren’t we glad that it is the “love of Christ that constrains us” today (2 Cor. 5:14)?

Why would God say to Nebuchadnezzar that he must “break off his sins by practicing righteousness”? Can’t a person be pleasing to God if he simply quits doing bad? No! Spirituality and righteousness does not exist in a vacuum. A person must not only

hate evil, he must love righteousness (Heb. 1:9) to please God as Christ did. Righteousness, as God declares it, must be a godly person's ambition—his goal in life. Is righteousness a matter of maturation? It must be! Nebuchadnezzar could not at once become as righteous as Daniel. Righteousness is something that must begin at some point and grow, always with the complete righteousness of Christ as its goal and desire; no ambition short of that will be acceptable with God. But is God pleased with our righteousness at this moment, where it is? Does his grace supply what is lacking? YES!

Is there anything that can stop God? Can unbelief keep God from keeping his promises? No! Can death? No! Can the devil? No! Death had no hold over Jesus Christ. He was not a victim on the cross—he was victor! Nebuchadnezzar and all his power could not stop God. All the hydrogen bombs in the world will not stop God from keeping his promises. The world will not come to an end until God is ready for it to do so! And only he knows when that will be—he has not revealed it to anyone else! Until that time, the church will exist and the gospel will be preached. Some Christians may be persecuted, some may be deceived, some may give up their faith for materialism, but not all will. Powerful, proud and insane human rulers may rule on this earth—but only temporarily. God will eventually debase those who walk in pride!

Did Nebuchadnezzar have a conversion? What constitutes “conversion” in OT times for a non-Jew? Did they have to practice the Jewish religion to be acceptable to God if they were Babylonians? What does a person have to practice today to be considered “converted”?

DANIEL 5:1-31

Introduction

By inscriptions, artifacts, in-the-hand scientific historical data, archaeology has confirmed in exact detail the 5th chapter of Daniel. It is important for the teacher to read the following introductory material and summarize it for his Bible School pupils. Since Daniel and many other OT books are substantiated to be historically (i.e., scientifically) accurate to the nth degree, what right do thinking, reasoning people have to deny the authenticity and historicity of Genesis and Exodus (creation, the flood, the Hebrew enslavement in Egypt and deliverance)? NONE! To deny the Bible's historicity is to fly in the face of scientific fact and therefore must be motivated by some moral agenda in opposition to the Bible's doctrines. DENIAL OF THE BIBLE'S HISTORICITY & AUTHENTICITY IS UNABLE TO BE MADE ON ANY SCIENTIFIC BASIS!

Nebuchadnezzar died about 562 B.C. and Belshazzar and the fall of Babylon did not occur until 538 B.C. when Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians assaulted the city, overwhelmed it and slew Belshazzar. That's a difference of about 24 years. Belshazzar could have been Nebuchadnezzar's son, but more likely he was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Clay tablets discovered in ancient Babylon list Jehoiachin (see 2 Kings 25:27-30) as receiving the payment of certain food rations. About the middle of the 19th century (i.e., 1850), a great number of clay tables were excavated in the region which was ancient Babylonia. Dr. Theophilus G. Pinches, prominent Assyriologist of London examined the tablets. Three of these clay tablets contained the name Belshazzar, referred to his lineage and some business done in his name. The tablets date Belshazzar in the same time as the book of Daniel (605-539 B.C.)!

DANIEL 5:1-31

Belshazzar made a “great feast” (Heb. lechem rav). It was not a religious feast, but a banquet dedicated to self-indulgence. It was dedicated to entertainment. It was given by Belshazzar to make a show before his subordinates. The text does not specifically mention fornication as occurring, but it does indicate the king’s many wives and “concubines” were there for the indulgence, the show and entertainment; lewd dancing probably took place. It would have been much like the sexual display the Persian king Ahasuerus (i.e., Xerxes 485-465 B.C.) intended for his “queen” Vashti (see Esther ch. 1). The word for wine is an Aramaic word, *chamera* meaning, “old wine.” It was the best aged wine, fit for a king. The picture is one of extravagance, fleshly gratification, and frivolity. Everyone was having a “big time.” After drinking some of the wine, Belshazzar thought up a way for bringing more hilarity to the festivities. He called for the holy vessels of the Hebrew temple to be brought and everyone took a drink from them, in honor of their own idols. This was clearly an act of arrogance and open defiance, calculated to insult the Hebrew’s God whose temple the Babylonians razed in Jerusalem. It may have been intended to defame and degrade Daniel in the eyes of some of the Babylonians. It was a deliberate, blasphemous challenge to the God of Heaven. Belshazzar had every opportunity to know better than this (5:22ff). Insolence and blasphemy are but a step from pride. Belshazzar had certainly seen inordinate pride in his ancestor, Nebuchadnezzar, but he should have also learned the lessons of humility Nebuchadnezzar learned! God had his “watchers” and they were aware of what Belshazzar was doing just as they did when Nebuchadnezzar arrogantly defied God. Jeremiah’s prediction of Babylon’s judgment was, “the land of the Chaldeans is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel” Jer. 51:5. The Sunday School teacher should read Jeremiah chs. 50 & 51 at this point. Babylon became a symbol of the decadence, cruelty, and blasphemy that the apostle John used some 700 years later to symbolize Rome in the book of Revelation. In one night of dissipation and blasphemy, Belshazzar lost what his ancestors had worked and sacrificed for 70 years to attain. A typical brat, who has had everything handed to him on a silver platter; the ungrateful profligate, Belshazzar, wasted away what others worked hard to get. What a tragedy that people like Belshazzar are those whom many others wish to emulate. It is frightening that so many millions of unthinking people idolize the “playboys,” the profligates, the wasters, the blasphemous, indulgent and useless “artists” and “politicians” of our modern world. These carousers and “swingers” are takers—they feed on society, they exploit the stupid, they never give anything good to society. **GOD IS AWARE! SOONER OR LATER, HE WILL VINDICATE THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO FOLLOW HIS WAY OF LIFE BY EXPOSING AND JUDGING THEIR PROFLIGACY.**

Just at the moment these arrogant blasphemers lifted the sacred vessels of God in mockery, **A HAND APPEARED.** It was in the form of a human hand; it had fingers; it was probably larger than the normal human hand. It began to write on the plaster wall of the banquet room. The banquet room was approximately 60 ft. by 160 ft. according to archaeological excavations (i.e., about as wide as a modern football field and almost twice as long). It is possible that the lampstand referred to was one taken from

the Jewish temple by Nebuchadnezzar; the temple had ten such lampstands (1 Kings 7:49). This heathen king saw the hand of God who wrote on Moses' tables of stone forbidding idolatry now writing the certain doom of those who flaunted their idolatry in mocking him. The color drained from the king's face. He began to shake so violently that his hips seemed to go clear out of their sockets and his knees knocked together so violently they could be heard by those standing near him. The Hebrew words, *gare' bechayil* mean literally, "he screamed." If the king did not believe in the Hebrew God, why did he become so terrified? Conscience is an inescapable witness that ALL people have knowledge of a Creator, a Superior Moral Judge to whom all mankind is responsible (cf. Rom. 2:12-16). All men know there is a God. The fact that some attempt to circumvent their responsibility to him by calling him by some other name or image does not prove they lack evidence—it simply proves they have made a moral decision to ignore him! Belshazzar already perceived that what was being written was bad news before the interpretation came—**HIS CONSCIENCE WAS STRICKEN!** Belshazzar not only forgot the lessons his grandfather learned, he forgot that Daniel was the only wise-man who could interpret such things. He forgot deliberately! So, Belshazzar called for the Chaldean wise-men and promised anyone who could interpret the meaning of the words a position of third in the kingdom. Nabonidus (heir to Nebuchadnezzar's throne, but absent on some mission) was first, Belshazzar was king "pro tem," and the person who could interpret the "handwriting on the wall" would be third.

The Chaldeans could no doubt read the words *mene mene tekel upharsin* but they did not know who was "weighed," or what "wanting" meant, or whose "balances" were going to do the weighing, or what "Persia" (i.e., *peres*) had to do with it all. The Babylonian "brain-trust" could not answer the king's "scream." The king began to get hysterical and his color changed again! His drinking-buddies, the noblemen, were in a state of wild-eyed confusion and fear. Things at the ballroom were coming apart. The words on the wall were in Hebrew and the Chaldean "wise-men" would know the words but not their fulfillment! Only Daniel would know the mind of God and be able to predict the "who, what, when, and where" of this terrifying, prophetic-warning.

I believe Belshazzar knew Daniel had the power to interpret "divine" messages. It would be very unusual if he did not know! This was apparently the "queen-mother." She was Belshazzar's mother; wife of Nabonidus, his father. Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar's grandfather or great-grandfather (even though he was called his "father"). Queen-mothers held a very significant position in ancient Mesopotamian courts, even more authoritative than that of the reigning queens. She entered the banquet hall of her own accord and without pausing to obtain the king's permission—this shows her authority! She spoke to Belshazzar as if he would have known about Daniel's relationship to his grandfather, and of Daniel's abilities. One wonders why Daniel did not come in when Belshazzar called for all his wise-men. Perhaps Belshazzar had deliberately passed by Daniel when he put out the order, not particularly wanting Daniel to see what he had been doing with Jehovah's sacred vessels. It may also be that Belshazzar deliberately did not order Daniel in because he did not want to promise Daniel third position in the kingdom. Belshazzar did finally call Daniel in and request his interpretation and promised him (before all his noblemen and probably the queen-mother) "third in the kingdom" if he would tell what the writing

meant. Another thing the king should have known was that Daniel did not speak the word of his God for rewards of men. The king probably lived by the philosophy, "Every man has his price," or, "Enough money will buy anything I want." Whatever the situation, Daniel makes it clear that Belshazzar knew more than he was living up to (5:22).

Daniel wants it clearly understood that he and his God are above the mercenary greed of others who give advice only for human reward. Daniel wants the king to know he cares enough for the truth, for God's people, and for the king himself, he will tell the writing without need for payment or reward. In offering to do what the king wishes without seeking reward he sets out to convict the king's conscience of moral failure, even more than it is already stricken, in hope that the king will change his mind (repent). Daniel reminds Belshazzar of the greatness of the power of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, and how God was able to humble him. If God could humble so great a one as Nebuchadnezzar, the "founder" of the Babylonian empire, how much more is humility in Belshazzar (who had no such greatness) all the more appropriate! All Belshazzar had, was handed to him without his need to sacrifice or work.

It was Belshazzar's responsibility to know all that had been done by Jehovah-God through Nebuchadnezzar. He should have known and should have acted accordingly. God holds all secular rulers, ancient and modern, morally responsible for ruling according to the divine will as it has been revealed (Amos chs. 1-2; Isa. 10:5ff; Jer. 27:5ff; Isa. chs. 12-23; Jer. chs. 50-51; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17, etc.). By means of events in nature and history, God reveals his existence and his character or will (in a limited way, of course) (cf. Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-23; Psa. 19:1ff), and all men everywhere are expected to learn what God approves and disapproves as far as secular government is concerned. I believe God also expects secular rulers to read his written word and know what is expected of them in their governing (Deut. 17:14-20)! After all, God didn't put the Bible into human language (with a multitude of human translations) just for believers! God interjected his propositional, written word into human experience, in human language, for the purpose that ALL MANKIND should know it and obey it! Mankind ignores it and disobeys it at its own peril!

The "balances" were Almighty God's moral requirements or standards for heathen rulers (whatever that might be at any one time). Daniel tells Belshazzar that the "hand came from the presence of God" whom Belshazzar had "not honored." He wanted Belshazzar to know this was no seance; it was not a hand from some Babylonian "god"—it was not a dream—it was reality! DANIEL KNEW, AND HE WANTED BELSHAZZAR TO KNOW WITHOUT A DOUBT, THAT THE HAND WAS FROM ALMIGHTY GOD! Mene is the passive participle of menah. It means not only to count, but also "to fix the limit of." Belshazzar's days are numbered, fixed, limited. God knows they are short (see Psa. 31:15; Isa. 38:1-6). All human beings should "learn to number their days" (Psa. 90:9-12)! Tekel, also a passive participle, is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew word shekel, and means, "weighed." Belshazzar's life has been put in the balance of God to see if it "balances" with God's standard (cf. 1 Sa. 2:3; Job 31:6; Psa. 562:9; Prov. 16:2). Belshazzar does not balance! Peres or Upharish is the plural form. "U" is the customary form of the conjunction, "and;" it means "to break or divide." Peres or paras undoubtedly means, "Persian."

Belshazzar's kingdom is to be broken up and divided by the Persians. The Persian empire was at first a Mede-Persian coalition—the Medes (under Cyrus the Great) were predominant at first, then the Persians became pre-eminent.

According to ancient historians and archaeological excavations, Daniel's interpretation of the "handwriting on the wall" came to pass exactly as Daniel said it would. Jer. chs. 50-51 indicates the great city of Babylon (thought by the Babylonians to be impregnable) would be conquered by a strategy connected with her water-defenses. Herodotus wrote that Cyrus the Mede diverted the waters of the Euphrates by digging a huge ditch outside the city walls so that his troops could march into the city on the bed of the main stream when the water was shallow. The city fell when a festival ("great feast") was being celebrated! Xenophon also mentions the diverting of a stream which flowed through Babylon. The entrance was actually made by Gobryas (or Ugbaru), one of Cyrus' generals. Ugbaru entered the royal palace and slew the wicked king Belshazzar. The "Nabonidus Chronicle" also documents the fall of Babylon as occurring in the reign of Belshazzar. This "Chronicle" is one of the multitudinous clay tablets found in Assurbanipal's library by Rassam and Layard. The record of this chronicle breaks off at the burial of Belshazzar and the installation of Ugbaru as his successor. Whitcomb suggests Ugbaru was the mysterious Darius the Mede of Daniel 5:31ff. All the ancient "chronicles" agree with the following summary: A preliminary battle between the Mede-Persian coalition and the Babylonians was fought a short distance from the city; the king's son, Belshazzar was slain and his body thrown out for the carrion to consume (not buried); the attack on the palace was led by Ugbaru (or Gobryas, or Darius); Cyrus the Great held a great reception after the capture of Babylon, after which the Babylonian populace flocked around him in overwhelming numbers. Thus did fall perhaps the richest, most magnificent empire of antiquity. The siege, after the preliminary battle was fought, was not a bloody one. The Babylonians had retreated within their walls and continued their busy commercial life, scoffing at the efforts of their besiegers, who, under pretense of raising up an earthen wall of siege encircling the city, were steadily and thoroughly preparing the strategy of diverting the river which enabled them to gain an entrance into the part of the city still unconquered. Cyrus's attempts to conciliate the inhabitants of the city was successful and except for the one night of bloody carnage at Opis, when the impious Belshazzar was slain, life went on inside Babylon much as it had before, only under new management—Darius the Mede! For more detailed historical and archaeological data on this chapter, see Daniel, 3rd edition, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press.

Points to Ponder

America has had its own "playboy" rulers. We have had Presidents who were guilty of adultery while in office—taking mistresses right into the White House. We have had Senators give drunken parties for mistresses and friends, and be involved in "accidents" which killed people. We have had Senators and Congressmen who were drunks, debasing themselves in public; some are openly homosexual. We have had Presidents who were liars, who cursed, who cheated and stole tax-payer's money.

We continually have judges, congressmen and bureaucrats who pervert justice, take bribes, have connections with organized crime, and boast about it! WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF OUR NATION—MEN LIKE GEORGE WASHINGTON, JOHN ADAMS, JAMES MADISON & ABRAHAM LINCOLN. George Washington, at the end of the War of Independence, when he was resigning his commission as General of the Army before the new American Congress, said, “I consider it an indispensable duty to close this last solemn act of my official life by commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, and of those who have superintendence of them to His holy Keeping.” There is nothing wrong with having rulers of a nation who are Christians! Of course, no nation by political power can force their religious persuasions on those citizens who do not wish to believe those ideas. The Bible nowhere advocates the perpetuation of Christianity by political power! BUT GOD DOES EXPECT POLITICAL RULERS TO RULE AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST’S WILL—NOT THEIR WILL, OR EVEN THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE IF IT IS NOT IN HARMONY WITH CHRIST’S WILL (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). The Bible, interpreting history, declares that Almighty God will not for long tolerate political leadership after the example of Belshazzar! And any people who allow it to continue brings the condemnation of God upon them.

How prone humans are to forget! Belshazzar had the experience of his grandfather as a memory, yet he exalted himself even more blasphemously in arrogance against God. Sin is so seductive we are impervious to wagon-loads of admonition and good advice. We never seem to learn until we have to suffer the consequences of our failures. Most people appear to believe the consequences of sin that befall others will not fall on them! And when it does they attempt to blame their parents or their circumstances or “society” at large as if they had been “victimized” by others.

Have you noticed how the book of Daniel has stressed self-control? Not only in eating and drinking, but in temper, anger, retaliation, etc. SELF-CONTROL is part of the fruit (production) of the Holy Spirit in us. Your fellowship in the will of God through the Holy Spirit is to produce temperance or self-control in all areas of living. Freedom depends on self-control. The men or women who do not rule fleshly appetites (food, sex, ego, temper, etc) will be ruled by these “fleshly” urges. Godliness has to do with the whole of life (1 Cor. 10:31). Edmund Burke once said: “Men are qualified for civil liberties in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains (self control) upon their own appetites. Society cannot exist unless there is a controlling power upon human will and appetite, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.” (I underlined for emphasis).

Conscience. Every human being has one (Rom. 2:14-15). No one can escape having one! It can never be completely silenced. Its very existence proves all men know they are morally responsible to a Higher Power. The function of the conscience is not to tell people what is right or wrong—only to tell them that they are guilty of doing wrong or approved for doing right. God has revealed right and wrong in a revelation of himself (through his creation and through his Son and through his written word). The human conscience also has executioner powers. It often punishes for

doing wrong and rewards for doing right. People should thank God for conscience. What if humans had none? It would be like those pitiful people who have no sensory receptors in their skin and cannot feel it even when they are being burned or wounded. The human conscience is there for God's people to stir up action in good works in others and in themselves through studying and preaching the word of God.

It is amazing how much people will pay for human wisdom or advice but will not even take the trouble and exert the effort necessary to get the ultimate wisdom and advice from God's word! People are "ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). That is because what they are learning never makes sense until it is subordinated to the guidance of the final authority of God's word. What people learn in science, medicine, philosophy, politics, art, music, mathematics, craftsmanship, space technology, is all incomplete, inadequate, illogical and frustrating unless it is brought under the moral and intellectual control of the Bible. That is not a simplistic concept! It is not anachronistic; it is not repressive. It has been proved over and over in all ages, in all cultures, and in all classes of mankind.

"Playboy-ism" has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. God's word, the absolute standard, points out from the beginning of time that human beings were created for something higher and more satisfying and more ennobling than gratification of the flesh. Humans who live only on fleshly instinct are not better than dumb animals (2 Pet. 2:1-22). Jesus told a parable about a Prodigal son who wound up living like a hog. Human experience also confirms God's word. Seneca, Roman philosopher said: "No man is free when he is a slave to his flesh." Shakespeare wrote, "If all the years were playing holidays, to sport would be as tedious as to work." Leo C. Rosten said: "I know of nothing more demeaning than the frantic pursuit of 'fun.' No people are more miserable than those who seek desperate escapes from the self, and none are more impoverished, psychologically, than those who plunge into the strenuous frivolity of night clubs, which I find a form of communal lunacy. The word 'fun' comes from the medieval English 'fon' meaning fool." Sidney Harris said: "It is the way in which we choose our pleasures that largely determines the kinds of calamities that befall us." BELSHAZZAR FOUND THAT TO BE ONLY TOO TRUE!

God has standards by which he "weighs" human's actions and intentions. If we wish our life to balance in God's scales, it must conform to God's standards—no one else's. God's standards for us are: (a) grace on our part in exchange for grace on his part (Jn. 1:16); (b) love on our part because he first loved us (2 Cor. 5:14-21; 1 Jn. 4:19); (c) faith in him because he has first been faithful to us (Heb. 11:1ff); (d) obedience to him because he obeyed on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Heb. 1:14ff; 5:7ff). God's standards are plainly revealed and written by his Holy Spirit in his eternal word, the Bible. DO NO FRET ABOUT MEN'S STANDARDS (1 Cor. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:7-12)—EXAMINE YOURSELF BY GOD'S STANDARDS! (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).

DANIEL 6:1-28

Introduction

Around 1500 B.C., Aryan (Indo-European or Nordic) peoples first moved into the high plateau region to the east of the Tigris River and to the south of the Caucasus Mountains near the Caspian Sea. These people were descendants of Japheth, son of Noah. This constitutes the northwestern part of a large country known since 1935 as Iran (from "Airyana" or "land of the Aryans"). The two principal Aryan tribes were the Medes and the Persians. The Medes lived to the northeast, and the Persians lived to the southwest. The first secular notation concerning the Medes and Persians is in the Assyrian records of 836 B.C. where it is recorded that Shalmaneser II received tribute from the kings of "Parsua" and reached eastward to the lands of the "Mada." One of the first Biblical notations concerning the Medes is in 2 Kings 17:6 & 18:11 where it is recorded that the king of Assyria carried the Israelites away (the northern kingdom "Israel") into exile "in the cities of the Medes." Isaiah mentions the Medes (Isa. 13:17) as well as predicting in chs. 44-45 the rule of Cyrus II (Cyrus "the Great" 745-695 B.C.) almost 200 years before Cyrus's birth!

This ancient Medo-Persian territory (east of what was then Assyria and Babylon, and is now Iran) was bordered on its eastern frontier by the fearsome Scythians (from the steppes of Russia and the Ukraine). The Medo-Persian territory, in its earliest years was composed of various tribal "war-lords" vying with one another to control the entire territory. It was not until 559 B.C. that the territory became a united "empire" when Cyrus II, (i.e., "Cyrus the Great") began a coalition with Nabonidus, the new king of Babylon, and conquered the other "tribes." In 546 B.C. Cyrus defeated Croesus, the fabulously wealthy king of Lydia (Asia Minor, now Turkey). In 539 B.C. Cyrus the Great turned toward the Babylonian "empire." Realizing that danger was near, Nabonidus (emperor of Babylon) came to the city of Babylon (where Belshazzar ruled for Nabonidus) for the New Year's festival of April 4, 539 B.C. and began to bring the images of Babylonian divinities into the city from surrounding areas. But it was all to no avail. Toward the end of September, the armies of Cyrus under the command of Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, attacked Opis on the Tigris and defeated the Babylonians. On October 10 Sippar was taken without a battle and Nabonidus fled. Two days later Ugbaru's troops were able to get into Babylon while Belshazzar, completely oblivious of the doom that awaited him was engaged in a riotous banquet within the "impregnable" walls of the city. The fateful day was October 12; in that same night Belshazzar was slain. Not long afterwards Nabonidus was taken captive.

Cyrus entered Babylon on October 29, 539 B.C., and presented himself to the people as a gracious liberator and benefactor. He permitted the gods whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon to be carried back to their respective cities, and pursued a benevolent policy toward various captive peoples who had suffered under the rule of Nebucadnezzar and his successors. The Jews (who were in exile) were favored with a special decree permitting them to return to Palestine and rebuild their ruined temple (Ezra ch. 1). The same day that Cyrus came to Babylon, Gubaru (this is the "Darius"

of Daniel 5:31 and chapter 6), the new governor or “satrap” of Babylon and the region beyond the river, began to appoint sub-governors to rule with him over the vast territories and populations of the Fertile Crescent. On November 6, Ugbaru, the conqueror of Babylon, died; and in March the mother of Belshazzar (Nitocris, wife of Nabonidus and daughter of Nebuchadnezzar) died in Babylon and was publically mourned for five days. Cyrus turned the administration of the huge satrapy of Babylonia over to Gubaru (Darius) and left for Ecbatana toward the end of his accession year. Kings of the Medo-Persian empire are as follows:

Cyrus the Great (539-530 B.C.)—conqueror of Babylon

Cambyses (530-522 B.C.)—stopped work on the Jewish temple (Ezra 4:7, 11, 23)

Gautama, (a.k.a. Smerdis, or Bardiya—a few months in 522 B.C.)

Darius I (a.k.a. Darius Hystaspes) (521-486 B.C.)—authorized completion of the Jewish temple (Ezra 6); the emperor who had the Behistun Rock inscription carved into the side of a mountain in three languages which became the key to the ancient Accadian (Babylonian, Assyrian) languages—not the “Darius” of Daniel, chs. 5 & 6

Xerxes (486-465 B.C.)—Esther’s husband—famous for wars with Greece; Mordecai was his “prime-minister”

Artaxerxes I (a.k.a. Longimanus) (464-423 B.C.)—very benevolent to the Jews; authorized Nehemiah, his cupbearer, to rebuild Jerusalem

Xerxes II (424 B.C.)

Darius II (Nothius) (423-405 B.C.)

Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) (405-358 B.C.)

Artaxerxes III (Ochus) (358-338 B.C.)

Arses (338-335 B.C.)

Darius III (Codomanus) (335-331 B.C.)—defeated by Alexander the Great (331 B.C.) at the famous battle of Arbela, near the site of Nineveh. This was the fall of Persia, and the rise of the Greek empire. “Empire” passed from Asia to Europe!

DANIEL 6:1-28

Darius (a.k.a. Gubaru), although not the emperor of the entire Medo-Persian empire, was ruler of the eastern portion which included what was formerly Babylon. He appointed 3 “presidents” (Hebrew, sorkyin, “chief overseers”—“satrap” is from a Hebrew word meaning, “prince” and a lesser office than “president”) to administer funds in the territory he ruled. They had to be men who had proved they could be trusted. They would be responsible for collecting and depositing taxes, etc. Daniel is one of these 3 “presidents.” Daniel is not really a Persian, but a Jew (imagine a Jew being appointed to a high position today in the government of modern Iran!). Evidently, Daniel had taken the words of Jeremiah 29:7 to heart—“seek the welfare of the city where you dwell.” Daniel was appointed because of his “excellent spirit.” This has little or nothing to do with his miraculous gift to interpret dreams! It was a result of the moral integrity and compassion he had shown. It was also a consequence of the expertise he had manifested in serving the Babylonian kings, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Daniel had built a reputation of honesty, skill, courage, and consistency. Daniel was always honest—even when he was threatened with harm and where there was no advantage to him in being honest. This “excellent spirit” included a spirit of self-control; a spirit of humility; a spirit that strove for excellency; a spirit that put priorities on spiritual matters. As a result, Daniel became distinguished above all the chief assistants to the king. Review Daniel’s circumstances and you will find his irreproachable integrity little short of incredible! Brought to Babylon against his will; forced to learn its culture; threatened with his life a number of times; surrounded by a culture of materialism and depravity that would shock his sensibilities as a faithful Jew; requested to serve a government that was idolatrous, ruthless, and cruel; faced with many temptations daily; **YET HE REMAINED HONEST AND TRUE AND HELPFUL!** Daniel had two alternatives when the king made an edict against praying to any god other than the king himself. He could continue to pray to his God and be prepared to suffer the consequences, or he could submit to the decree of the king and save his life but dishonor his God. Daniel chose the first alternative! **THAT IS FAITHFULNESS! THERE IS A GOD ABOVE ALL “GODS” AND HE IS THE ONLY TRUE GOD!** Daniel believed with all his heart that allegiance was owed Almighty God before any other allegiance to any human ruler or person! Daniel, like the faithful apostles of Christ, threatened with their lives by the Jewish Sanhedrin, said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 4:19; 5:29). Daniel, like the faithful saints a thousand years after him (during the Roman persecutions of the NT church) “loved not (his) life even unto death” (Rev. 12:11). For Daniel, there was only one choice! Any other choice was not even to be considered! The practice of Jews praying toward Jerusalem probably originated in 1 Kings 8:27-30 and 8:46-48. Many Jews continue this practice even today!

Daniel’s honesty was impeccable, irrefutable, and absolutely consistent. It doesn’t take jealous enemies much time or effort to “trump up” or concoct flaws in nearly every man’s character or actions—even our “friends” can often do that! But not even the envious schemers of Persia could find fault with Daniel’s responsibilities to his king. This does not mean Daniel was without sin—it simply means there was no open

departure from righteousness which could justly be brought against him. They couldn't even find grounds for complaining! They knew they would have to find some fault with Daniel in his religious views. Little did they realize that the personal integrity of Daniel was a result of his intolerance of the falsehood of idolatry and belief in the One True God. If Daniel could not be destroyed by faulting his character, how did they think they could destroy his basis for that character? True believers have been persecuted through the centuries for their "strange" view on religion (and culture). Usually, believers are never persecuted for dishonesty or immorality, but for their intolerance of anything that dishonors Almighty God and Jesus Christ! Peter wrote that Christians are not to be surprised at that. They should expect it and be satisfied that it is really a testimony to their saved relationship to Christ (1 Pet. 4:12-19). The heathen "presidents" and "satraps" came thronging (Heb. hareggishu, "clamoring") to the king. Apparently they saw an opportunity to convince the king an emergency edict was in order. Change of governments in ancient times often led to religious riots because of the change in religious systems and demands for worshiping new gods, etc. Their suggestion was for a moratorium for 30 days during which no one was to petition or pray to any gods, Babylonian, Hebrew, Persian, or any other—except to king Darius. This lull would give the new Persian administration a safeguard against unrest and rebellion. OF COURSE THESE RASCALS KNEW FROM DANIEL'S PAST BEHAVIOR HE WOULD NOT ABIDE BY THIS EDICT. This may explain why Darius signed the edict hastily, even before consulting with his most distinguished "president," Daniel. Those who claim to worship Almighty God and his Son, Jesus Christ, must be honest with everyone, including themselves, even when others are dishonest with them (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25). There may be times when a Christian should not volunteer information (in times of war, danger to life, etc.) and such cases are clearly sanctioned in the Scriptures. But God is unyielding that human beings should not "bear false witness" to one another. IN SITUATIONS OF COURT-TRIALS, BUSINESS DEALINGS, MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS, NEIGHBORLINESS, HONESTY MUST REIGN SUPREME!

Human rulers do NOT have the right to make an edict such as Darius made—i.e., that petitions to any god but a human ruler cannot be made! The American Declaration of Independence, which got its ideas from the Bible, states, "life, liberty, and proprietorship are unalienable rights" (i.e., "rights which no human can take from another human). "Liberty" would include the "right to worship" the One True God, any god, or no god. God created all human beings with the awesome right to choose allegiances and ideas. This awesome right may not be infringed upon by any human individual or group of individuals. Actions, when they are destructive of social peace and order, may be controlled by force through governing authorities (e.g. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-17, etc.), but freedom to think, to choose, to speak are unalienable rights which Almighty God has decreed belong to every human being. THESE RIGHTS ARE GUARANTEED, NOT BY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, BUT BY THE WORD OF GOD! God has ordained that human governments may be formed (of whatever political ideology) in order to protect these rights. In fact, according to Scripture, that is the primary function of human government. Human governments are not to be paternalistic, or dictatorial, they are simply mandated to protect human beings as they exercise their "unalienable rights." Darius DID NOT have the right to forbid Daniel or any other citizen of his kingdom to pray to whomever they wished, or to not pray at all, if they wished! God

clearly demonstrated to him when he saved Daniel from the lions (and to the world for all time) that human rulers do not have God's authority to prohibit worship! When human rulers DO make God-forbidden laws, or make laws forbidding what God has clearly commanded in the Scriptures, believers (Christians) must obey God rather than men, and be prepared to suffer the consequences of their choice to obey God. IT IS THAT SIMPLE—IT IS THAT UNEQUIVOCAL!

The laws of the Medes and Persians could not be revoked, once they were declared by the king! NOT EVEN THE KING COULD CHANGE THE LAW, ONCE IT WAS "ON THE BOOKS!" Such inflexible, rigid jurisprudence seems, in the 21st century, to be tyrannical and fascist! It would sound to some today to be like a dictatorship. There are numerous disadvantages to that kind of "law." BUT THERE ARE ALSO SOME ADVANTAGES! (a) It makes the law above everyone, including kings. That is true justice when everyone is subject to every law equally, without revocation, from the top of the governmental hierarchy to the lowliest citizen; (b) It forces those in authority to make laws without equivocating or hedging to protect an elite group while tyrannizing by laws those without power to which the authorities have excluded themselves or make it possible to rescind the laws for themselves or their favorites. (c) In such a system laws do not change according to the whims of those in power or to those who can manipulate the powerful. Can you visualize what life would be like in a nation or locale where the fundamental laws of governance were changed every time a new "administration" came to power, or every time someone in the "administration" who had the power to do so (without the consent or vote of the populace) wished to do so? AMERICANS SHOULD THANK GOD EVERY DAY THEY HAVE A CONSTITUTION THAT CANNOT BE AMENDED WITHOUT THE VOTE OF THE CITIZENS!

The king realized he was "between a rock and a hard place." He was about to destroy his own best, most trustworthy, assistant. So the king set his mind to think of loopholes in this case by which to deliver Daniel from certain death in the lion's den. He probably searched documents for precedents; he probably argued with his assistants that they had tricked him; he probably argued with his own conscience about Daniel's innocence. He apparently had decided to rescind the edict he had made which would be in direct violation of "the law of the Medes and Persians." But to do so would jeopardize not only his rule, but his very life! The accusers of Daniel came "thronging" to the king again reminding him of the irrevocable nature of Persian law. They may even have threatened to report him to Cyrus (like the Jews did Pilate at the trial of Jesus). The king was a fool, too, for he gave in to the pressure and violated "self-evident truths" and "unalienable human rights." He knew he had done wrong. His conscience would not let him eat or sleep. THE BUILT-IN "JUDGE" (CONSCIENCE) HAD DECLARED HIM "GUILTY!" Conscience is the "judge" God has put within the psyche of every human being—but "conscience" is only as good as it is educated by the truth in the mind! Daniel feared God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell—but Daniel did not fear him who is able only to destroy the body. There is not a word indicating Daniel pled for his life. No indication that Daniel cursed the king or his accusers for being wrong; not even a plea as to his innocence.

The king undoubtedly ran to the lion's den, hoping in his heart that Daniel would be alive. Perhaps the king thought if he found Daniel had somehow survived, he would

be exonerated from the guilt of having violated the truth. But Daniel's survival only proved Daniel's innocence and God's faithfulness—it did not exonerate Darius from what he had done in committing an innocent man to death. Daniel was preserved by angelic ministry. Angels are busy creatures! Daniel was delivered because God had more work for Daniel to do! Daniel was delivered because he was “blameless” before God! But does this mean all “blameless” people before God will be delivered from death by lions or wicked men or disease? Not in this world! What about John the Baptist? Jesus? God is able to deliver from this world's tribulations, but whether he will or not must ever be left in his “hands” to decide. When Daniel's work for God was finished, he was given his “rest” (death) (Dan. 12:9-13). **NO HUMAN BEING IS GOING TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD FOREVER!** Even if Jesus came today, we would have to shed this human body and this material world for the great judgment day. Those who are saved go to the “bosom” of Jesus when they shed this mortal body; those who are not saved go to “torments” (hell) when they shed this mortal body.

The king was exceedingly glad that Daniel was unhurt. Was he glad for his own conscience or really concerned about Daniel? We don't know, but he did change his mind about the “law of the Medes and Persians!” He rescinded Daniel's sentence and sentenced the people who were really threats to order and justice in the Persian government. It is not those who are honest and worship the God of all truth who threaten civil order and human progress—it is those who are dishonest, slanderers, and unbelievers who are the threats. The king issued an edict. As we have said before, truth is not protected by human force, but by being lived and proclaimed. It is doubtful that every one in Darius' (Gubaru's) domain kept his orders about trembling before Daniel's God! But at least the decree of Darius would offer encouragement to all the Jews in Persia (and perhaps to those who had probably returned to Palestine by this time—536 B.C.). They would be encouraged that Persia would not be persecuting them for their religion. It would be hasty to think Darius had come to full-fledged worship of Jehovah to the exclusion of his pagan gods. He probably was just acknowledging that the nation should worship Jehovah along with other gods of the land. We do know that 50 years after this, in the days of Xerxes and Haman (when Esther, the Jewess was queen), the Persians tried to commit genocide against the Jews (the book of Esther documents it). Darius' edict did not last long! We also know that a certain amount of pagan superstition and occultism was incorporated into Judaism during the exile and was apparent in Jesus' day (as the Talmud and other Jewish apocrypha attest—even the four Gospels attest to the corruption of Judaism by ancient Mesopotamian culture).

Points to Ponder

It is not enough to reject the worship of idols—one must positively worship God. Daniel might have obeyed Darius's edict for 30 days and forgot about praying to God until it was again safe to do so. He might have justified his actions by bragging that he had not worshiped idols. God is interested in more than mere ritual—he wants the

unqualified loyalty of human beings.

Testing for the believer never eases with age. Daniel was about 80-90 years old as he faced the lion's den! He could have said, "I've served my time in the trenches, I'll just ease up now and not make waves." He could have said, "God owes me one, so I shouldn't have to go through this trial—I'll take the easy way out and compromise my convictions just a tad." The exhortations of the Bible are that believers must be faithful until death.

"But they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him." What a splendid epitaph to write on the end of a life given to God's service. Not even enemies who were looking for fault could find it! How much is a good name worth? Is it worth sacrifice? Is it worth humiliation? Is it worth being honest? Is it worth hard work? Is it worth being persecuted? IS IT WORTH LIFE?

Does the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution allow the Christian religion to be propagated in public schools? A public school is, by civil law, a captive audience. To forcibly (i.e., because children are forced by law to attend public schools) teach Christianity in public school would be a violation of amendments 9 and 14 of the U. S. Constitution. Christians should stand for a "qualified" separation of church and state that is careful not to destroy all sense of responsibility that political leadership and structure must be guided by Biblical truth. The Bible is the heart and mind of all truth. To disregard it, even in government agencies, produces anarchy, chaos and ruin. The Bible is the guarantee of all the liberties mankind enjoys—those for Christians and non-Christians alike (see article in Christianity Today, February 4, 1972, entitled, "Church and State—A Relation in Equity."). Daniel was right in disobeying the king's edict because freedom to worship God is an unalienable human right. No king or government or public school has the right to take that away from any person! Students in public schools (elementary, secondary and higher education) should have their right to voluntarily gather and worship protected so long as such an activity does not infringe on other school rules.

What is faithfulness but consistency! It certainly is not super-spirituality only at certain times and under special circumstances. It is spiritual-mindedness and behavior in all places, times and circumstances! Daniel was the same in trial as in prosperity, trusting God in darkness as in light. He served God as a "president" taking care of Darius's money as much as he did when worshiping against the king's edict! Even when no one was watching him, Daniel was honest and true.

Fools think to obtain character by slandering others. The other "satraps" thought to gain a reputation by trying to take Daniel's reputation away from him. That is not the way Jesus gained his reputation. Other fools think that side-stepping the issues of truth (Darius did) will somehow escape responsibility and divine judgment. But the very fact of conscience should prove to every person the truth cannot be ignored—TRUTH DEMANDS TO BE OBEYED!

That someone does not "get hurt" by our violations of God's truth does not exonerate

us. Daniel did not get hurt, but that did not exonerate Darius. Sexual behavior (or any other behavior) not in keeping with Biblical commandments, even though others “do not get hurt” will not be excused by God. Conscience proves that!

DANIEL 7:1—8:27

Introduction

Psalm 2:1-11: “Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

I will tell of the decree of the Lord. He said to me, You are my son, today have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling kiss his feet, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

This is a prophecy about the Messiah (Jesus Christ) and his kingdom—there can be no doubt about that for it is applied this way in the New Testament (Acts 13:33; Heb. 5:5). Essentially it is predicting the futility of humanistic government in rebellion against God. There is only one kingdom adequate for the ultimate needs of human beings and which will last forever—the kingdom of God—the church of Christ. Those who are wise will embrace God’s kingdom because everything that exists belongs to it. All that is not in harmony with God’s kingdom is to be destroyed.

This is the idea taught in the remaining chapters of Daniel (7 through 12). Out of the raging tumult of humanity in rebellion against God, while human beings are setting up one “kingdom” after another, God quietly but inexorably established his kingdom on earth through his Son. The kingdom (dominion, sovereignty) was to be given to the “saints” (sanctified ones, i.e., Christians, Dan. 7:18,22,27). **GOD KEEPS PROMISES—NOTHING HUMAN BEINGS CAN DEVISE WILL STOP HIM FROM FULFILLING HIS WORD!**

Daniel, chapters 7 and 8 were written (about 555 B.C.) some 50 years after the opening verses of chapter 1. In the interim of those years Daniel had seen and experienced not only the persecution of his people but also the fragile favors of reigning monarchs. Babylon was about to fall, and the period of the captivity foretold

(70 years) by Jeremiah was about 3/4 past. What awaited the people of God? In this following section (Dan. 7-12) the prophet warned his people to expect renewed antagonism from the worldly powers which were yet to come onto the scene of history. Daniel's experience in chapter 6 (which in time follows chapter 5 by about 15 years or more) emphasizes continued antagonism from the world for God's redemptive program.

DANIEL 7:1—8:27

Daniel's revelation shows where human governments originate. "Sea" or "waters" symbolizes the mass of humanity in constant motion and commotion and especially the Gentile masses in hostility toward God (cf. Isa. 8:7ff; Isa. 17:2ff; 27:2; 51:9; 57:20,21 Ezek. 29:3; 32:2; Jer. 46:7-9; 47:2; Rev. 13:1,11; 17:1,15;). "Winds" symbolize the passions of men that lash the "seas of humanity" into angry agitation, driving them into great conflict. "Winds" symbolize emotions of anger, greed, pride and all other emotions or false teachings that stir humanity into social and civil strife and war. The devil is the original anarchist and rebel. He is usually the source of all in human governments that sets itself against God's sovereignty over humanity (cf. Rev. 13:2). Therefore, humanism, expressed in human governmental structures, is beastly and animalistic in character. Daniel saw four great beasts coming up out of the sea, different from one another in some instances, and succeeding one another. These empires are beastly, because: (a) they are cruel; (b) they are animalistic—they have as their only concern the fleshly aspects of mankind; (c) they victimize mankind by preying upon the weak and powerless; (d) they dominate by "tooth and claw" methods like animals. Human governments and rulers do not see themselves as God does. They dream about themselves as "great images" (Dan. 2) made of precious and enduring "metals." They dream about themselves as huge trees (Dan. 4) reaching to heaven, providing sustenance and protection for the whole world. They see themselves as "queens" (Isa. 47:5-9; Rev. 18:7). God sees them as BEASTS and HARLOTS. They rend and tear; they seduce and prostitute what God has made "good." It is in keeping with sound hermeneutics to state that Daniel's dream of the "four beasts" of Dan. 7 parallels the "four metals" in the "great image" of Dan. 2. Thus, the "lion" symbolizes Babylon; the "bear" symbolizes Persia; the "leopard" symbolizes Greece, and the "terrible, dreadful, exceedingly strong" and indescribable "iron" beast symbolizes the ancient Roman empire (especially that of 44 B.C. to A.D. 450).

Yes! God Almighty ALONE permits great empires to rise and fall and "devour much flesh" in the process. God alone gives human governments dominion (cf. Jer. 27:5-7; Dan. 2:20-23; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Yes! God gave Russia, China, the United States and all other "governments" their "dominion." Babylon is the "lion with eagle's wings." She is portrayed as a "lion" in Scripture (Jer. 49:19; 50:17,44) and an "eagle" (Jer. 4:7; 48:40; 49:22; Ezek. 17:3,12). Babylon was a majestic "king of beasts," pouncing on smaller and weaker nations grinding them in its teeth, also swift and powerful as an eagle, "the king of birds." Babylon is to have her wings "plucked," thus turned into a more "human form," and even given "the mind" of a human. This undoubtedly refers to the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4) when he became more humane (as Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar in Dan. Ch. 5). Medo-Persia is the slow, plodding "bear" to distinguish it from the swiftness of the other "animals" in the dream. This "bear" is "raised up on one side" which represents the raising up of Persia over the Medes in the later history of this great empire. "Three ribs in its mouth" symbolizes the three empires it devoured, i.e., Babylon, Asia Minor (or Lydia), and Egypt. It is "told to rise and devour much flesh" which

symbolizes its leading by God to conquer vast territories of Asia (cf. Isa. 44:28—45:7; Jer. 50:3,9; 51:11,28). Persia was much more voracious in its lust to devour and conquer and thus it was almost twice as vast as the Babylonian empire in territory. It even tried to “devour” Macedonia and Greece. Greece is the “leopard with four wings” which represents the extreme swiftness with which Alexander the Great conquered from Macedonia to India (including Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, southern Asia, all the way to the Indus River). “Four heads” symbolizes the four-way-division made of Alexander’s empire which eventuated after his untimely death at age 32. Cassander received Greece; Lysimachus received Macedonia and part of Asia Minor; Seleucus received Asia Minor, Persia and Syria; Ptolemy received Egypt. Later wars between the Seleucids and Ptolemies for control of Palestine (i.e., the “glorious land”) is predicted in Daniel chs. 11-12. “Dominion was given to” the “leopard” representing clearly that what Alexander the Great accomplished, he did so by the permission of almighty God, to serve God’s purposes (probably to spread Greek culture and language into the world anticipating the coming of Christ and the New Testament which was written in Koine “common” Greek). According to Josephus, when Alexander came through Palestine, the Jewish high priest showed Alexander this prophecy of Daniel about him and Alexander asked the Jews to make a sacrifice in their temple for him. The “fourth beast symbolizes Rome, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong...(with) great iron teeth...devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet.” No beast in all the animal-world was sufficiently fierce and powerful enough to symbolize this “fourth” beast. Its “iron teeth” and “grinding feet” are appropriate metaphors to symbolize Rome because Rome ground up all other cultures and stamped them into submission to the Roman way of life. “Ten horns” represent the first ten recognized emperors of Rome, beginning with Augustus (i.e., Octavian), then Tiberius, followed by Caligula, Claudisus, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus. The “little horn” (not the same little horn as the one in chapter 8) arises out of the ten of this fourth empire—it is Domitian who was emperor when John wrote the book of Revelation! DANIEL CHAPTER 7 PLUGS INTO JOHN’S REVELATION AT REVELATION CHAPTER 13. We will have more to say about this later. The “three plucked up by the roots” are the 3 “barracks emperors” not in the royal Julian line (i.e., Galba, Otho, Vitellius) who were assassinated. “Eyes like a man, mouth speaking great things” represents that Domitian was a man, not a god, and not invincible as those in John the Revelator’s day thought (see Rev. 13:4,18). No matter how blatantly blasphemous his claims to be “Lord and God,” (Dan. 7:24-25), he was “human” (Rev. 13:18—John “had his number” and it was “human”). Domitian (A.D. 81-96), and his successors, were undoubtedly the “beast” of whom John wrote in Revelation!

God Almighty prolongs the “rests of the beasts” by allowing the “beastliness” of the first three, Babylon, Persia and Greece, to live on in the “little horn” (Domitian, emperor of Rome) of the “fourth beast.” Ferocious as the “fourth” beast is, it is the throne of God that reigns sovereign over all creation. This same idea is portrayed in the book of Revelation. “Ancient of days” in the Hebrew language is literally, “the One from eternity,” none other than God the Father (see Micah 5:2), the one who lives forever, the mighty Creator (Rev. 4:10,11). “Raiment white as snow” symbolizes absolute purity; “hair like wool” symbolizes “(eternality, wisdom); “fiery flames” symbolize judgment, consuming power; “wheels burning fire” symbolize the omnipresence of God “riding” through the earth, dispensing judgment through

secondary, human, or “natural” agents (see Ezek. 1:15-21; 10:1-22; Zech. 6:1-8), bringing “rest” to the earth so that God’s redemptive program may be carried on; “thousand-thousands, ten thousand times ten thousand” represents all the creatures at God’s command to carry out his orders. God needs only one angel to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (Isa. 37:36) and he has millions and millions of angels to do his will. The phrase “the court sits in judgment” symbolizes that all gathered around the one throne of God will execute his judgment on the “fourth” beast and the “little horn;” “books opened” symbolizes that God records the actions of all men, especially his enemies (Isa. 65:6; Jer. 17:1; Malachi 3:16; Luke 10:20); Rev. 20:12ff). The “little horn” (Domitian) spoke “great words” (7:25; cf. Rev. 13:5-6) proclaiming himself to be Lord, God, Savior, ordering the world to worship him. This “little horn” (Domitian) of the “beast” (Rome) is slain and his empire destroyed and burned with fire (thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, Rev. 19:20-21). Before it is slain, however, the “three beasts” (Babylon, Persia and Greece) had their lives and character “prolonged for a season” in the fourth beast (Rome). This is in exact agreement with Revelation 13:1-2 which shows Rome to be a composite of the “leopard, bear and lion.” Rome combined all the idolatrous, cruel, humanistic, despotic culture and character of the three previous world-wide empires! In connection with the fall of the “fourth beast” and little horn, the Son of man (Messiah) enters the scene—this is none other than Christ, the Lamb, the incarnate Lion of David. The “Son of man” (which is the Messianic title by which Jesus always referred to himself) comes to the Throne-occupant (Ancient of Days) and is given dominion. This coincides exactly with the Lamb being given the “scroll” (Rev. 5:1-14) and dominion over history and redemption. The Son was the only one worthy to receive divine sovereignty and dominion having earned it through his incarnate accomplishment of redemption. The “Son of man” is given universal dominion over a universal kingdom (i.e., the church) made of every nation, tribe, people and tongue (cf. Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-14; 7:9-12). The “beast’s” (Rome’s) reign is not nearly so universal and everlasting as that of the Son of man’s kingdom.

The “saints of the Most High” would receive the kingdom and possess it forever and ever. THIS IS THE MAIN POINT OF THE WHOLE VISION! That is precisely what God did when He established the church in the days of the “fourth beast” (Rome) by the work of Christ (cf. Luke 12:32; 22:29, etc.). The kingdom, the church, will abide forever—it will not die—not even death (“the gates of Hades) cannot prevail against it. The “kingdom” is the church—not some 1000-year-millennial reign of Jesus and the Jews in Palestine.. Daniel was alarmed when he first received this revelation (7:15) because it appeared there was going to be a great struggle of God’s covenant people. Perhaps the Messianic destiny of God’s program was even in doubt. God was revealing that there was, in fact, going to be centuries of struggle for the Messianic people before the “kingdom” came to earth. The “little horn” of the “fourth beast” would: (a) seem greater than his fellows; (b) seem to prevail over the saints, until the judgment of God fell on him; (c) speak words against the Most High; (d) would think to change times and the law (assume divine sovereignty); (e) “wear out the saints” of the Most High; (f) and the “saints” would be “given into his hand” for three-and-one-half-times. This graphically describes those emperors from Domitian to the fall of the Roman empire—the era from A.D. 81- to A.D. ca. 500 (about 450 years, or 3 ½ times) in which it appeared Rome would wipe out the church by persecution. Domitian became sole Censor of Rome (one who determines whether a law is right or wrong);

he changed many Roman laws, and assumed the right of first vote in the Senate so that anyone voting differently from him endangered his life. He issued his letters and edicts with the salutation: "Our Lord God Domitian instructs...." and demanded that anyone addressing him call him "Lord, God, Savior." He renamed September and October as Germanicus and Domitianus. He demanded to be hailed as Jupiter's son and heir, the earthly embodiment of the "King of the universe." His profligacy and cruelty were greater than Nero's. One historian says: "Domitian is the emperor who has gone down in history as the one who bathed the empire in the blood of the Christians." The most crucial time for the infant church of Christ (especially in Asia Minor since most of the Christians were there) began during the reign of Domitian and lasted until the fall of the Roman empire. **THAT IS WHY GOD REVEALS THIS CRUCIAL TIME TO DANIEL!** That is why Christ revealed the visions to John in the book of Revelation and addressed it initially to the churches of Asia Minor. From Domitian for about 350 years it appeared as if the "fourth beast" (esp. the "little horn"—Domitian) was invincible (Rev. 13:4) and could not be withstood even by God. Thus Daniel is shown the eventual rise of the Roman empire and that its great, cruel power for an extended time (350 years), but not eternal, would eventually be brought to an end. Daniel is shown that the kingdom of God (the church) would prevail against the ultimate power the world could bring to bear against it. It is significant that the Son of man was put to death during the Roman empire (see notes on Daniel 9:24-27), by a Roman procurator—and that was the absolute-ultimate that could be done to stop God's redemptive program. But God caught his Son up (Rev. 12). God, in fact, used the death of his Son to accomplish man's redemption, raised him from the dead, and exalted him to have control (the scroll, Rev. 5) over the destiny of the world and his church. When God caught his Son up, the devil began to try to swallow up the church with a "flood" of persecution, false teaching, and fleshly seduction (i.e., the "beast, the false-prophet, and the harlot) (Rev. 12:13-17). But the church was rescued. The devil did not give up, however, in his attempt to make war on the church, and he continues to do so to this day—but he is "bound" (his sphere of influence has been restricted). These verses (7:19-28) are the crucial section of Daniel. They must be interpreted in the light of DANIEL'S (the author's) purpose. His purpose is to reveal to the people of his day and those Jews who would come after him until the Messiah came, that God's covenant would prevail over four successive world empires. **THAT IS DANIEL'S THEME ALL THE WAY THROUGH HIS BOOK.** He is not aiming at the 2nd coming of Christ, but the first coming of the Messiah. (Dan. 9:24-27). He is aiming at predicting the long centuries of testing and trying of the "saints" of God (both OT and NT saints) until the kingdom is given to them, and they become victorious over the "fourth beast" (Rome). This 7th chapter of Daniel cannot be referring to the end of the world, because the kingdom is given to the saints in conjunction with the judgment upon the "fourth beast" and that is ancient Rome! Furthermore, the "kingdom" was "given" to the saints at the first coming of Christ (cf. Luke 12:32; 22:29; Rev. 1:9, etc.). Why would it necessitate the fall of Rome before the kingdom could be "given" to the saints? **THE ANSWER—SO THE CHURCH COULD REALLY MOVE OUT OF ASIA MINOR AND GREECE TO THE "UTTER MOST PARTS OF THE EARTH"** (cf. Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8). Domitian was assassinated by one of his wife's servants and his body was cremated by his nurse and the ashes deposited in the temple of the Flavian family. The Roman Senate denounced him, had his images and the votive shields engraved with his likeness smashed to pieces, decreed that all inscriptions referring to him be effaced and all records of his reign

obliterated. Domitian's dominion was "destroyed to the end." Then, in A.D. 313 Constantine issued the Edit of Toleration which made Christianity legal and it was able to "conquer" the beast through missionary the work which began in earnest about A.D. 500 to the "utter most parts of the earth." How was "dominion" given to the saints? IT DEPENDS ON WHAT ONE CONSIDERS "DOMINION!" What is the most important "dominion"—is it territory? NO! (See points to ponder at the end of this lesson). The kingdom of God, the church, has outlasted all other kingdoms—and the resurrection of Christ proves it will be eternal. Not even death can wipe it out! It is able to "bring every thought captive in obedience to Christ in people from all tribes and nations and peoples and languages (Rev. 7). IT CONQUERS CULTURES, RACES, AND ALL OTHER BARRIERS TO TRUTH!

The "ram" is Medo-Persia; the "goat" is Greece! THAT IS HOW THIS VISION WAS INTERPRETED BY THE ANGEL TO DANIEL (8:20-21). There can be no question about it! Why is it important that God reveal to Daniel the struggles between Persia and Greece? Because both empires were to have tremendous effect on the Messianic "remnant" of Jews. The "Ram's" or Persian's associations with the Jews would produce assimilation of Jews into far reaches of civilization. Persia's liberality toward the Jews put them into high places, made synagogues available, preserved Jewish scriptures, etc. Persia's "magnification" of itself far and wide made all this preparation for the "kingdom of God" to come (the church) possible. Two horns symbolize the two parts of Medo-Persian coalition. The "taller" horn came up last (Persia). The ram is symbolic of princely power (Ezek. 34:17). The ram likes to butt things, yet there is something of staid and sober character to it—not as flamboyant as an he-goat! Persian conquered a very large territory to the west, south and north of its own location but did not conquer east because it already controlled as far east as India. The Persian empire lasted 200 years—it gave the world: (a) the longest peace in history until Rome; (b) opportunity for great commercial exchange; (c) an "international" language in Aramaic; (d) rapid communications and good roads; international coinage; (e) great human freedoms to many different religions and cultures under its domain. Persian respect for truth and honor, and their humane and chivalrous character, was the secret of their nations's successes. Later "play-boys" like Xerxes (Ahasureaus, see the book of Esther) frittered many of these successes away by not protecting the human rights their royal predecessors had cherished. The Persians were the founders of religious freedom on a world-wide basis. The Jews speak well only of the Persian empire. That is interesting in the light of the hatred today between Jews and Iranians (all due to the Muslim religion which took over Persia from A.D. 632 onward). It's also interesting to know that many "Jews" today have Iranian (Persian) genes in their bodies and Iranians have Jewish genes. Under Darius-Hyastaspes, the Persian government even helped bear the expense of erecting Israel's new commonwealth and temple. Isaiah 44 and 45 predicted Cyrus, the Persian, would become God's "anointed" (the Hebrew word in Isaiah is, "messiah") to return a "remnant" to Palestine and start the Messianic program moving again. Isaiah predicted Cyrus would bring about the peace to the world necessary to accomplish this. The magnanimity of the Persians was a real test for the Jews—the majority of them decided to stay in Persia—only 50,000 returned to Palestine. "He-goat" is a fitting symbol for Greece's ruggedness and power, sure-footedness and quickness. Alexander the Great swept across the world stage literally "flying" from west to east, hardly stopping, and conquered the "world" in less than 10 years.

Having reached India, he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. The “conspicuous” horn was Alexander. He had such impact on civilization that cities and Buddhist idols bear his image to this day. Greek conquests introduced the world to Aristotelian logic, Greek architecture, Koine (“common”) Greek language (the original NT documents were written in Koine Greek). Western culture coming with Greek conquests prepared the world for a spread of OT scriptures even more widely into the West (and later for the NT faith). The Hebrew OT was translated into Greek about 300-250 B.C. and is known as the Septuagint because it was translated by seventy (LXX) Hebrew-Greek scholars at Alexandria, Egypt. “Great anger points to Alexander’s motive for attacking the Persian empire because the Persians had so often attacked Greek city states, sacking and burning them under Xerxes and his successors on the Persian throne. Alexander won an empire that covered more than 1.5 million square miles. “Four horns” coming up in place of the great horn are parallel to the four heads of the “leopard” of chapter 7, and symbolize the four-way division of Alexander’s empire at his death when he was 32 years old. Daniel will focus on only one of those four in this chapter, because it will have much to do with the future of the Messianic “remnant.” Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) is the “little horn” here. He comes out of the Greek empire (actually from the Seleucids, later known as Syrians). All the Seleucid rulers before this “little horn” are not mentioned until Dan. Ch. 11—the one which had most to do with tribulations for the Jews was Antiochus IV. This “little horn” is NOT the same as the one in ch. 7. The “glorious land” is Palestine, Canaan, the “land of promise.” “Host of heaven” symbolizes God’s covenant people (cf. Ex. 7:4; 12:41; Jer. 33:22; Dan. 12:3). They are also referred to as “stars.” Antiochus IV brought some of God’s covenant people down by seducing them to violate their holy covenant relationship to God (cf. Dan. 11:32). He would grow exceedingly great toward the Jews and subject them to many indignities and persecutions. The four-way division of Alexander’s empire was: (a) Cassander received Macedonia and Greece; (b) Lysimachus Armenia and part of Asia Minor; (c) Seleucus received most of Asia Minor (incl. Syria) and Mesopotamia; (d) Ptolemy received Egypt. **ONLY EGYPT AND SYRIA WERE OF CONCERN TO DANIEL** (cf. Chs. 8-12). Antiochus IV magnified himself, “even to the prince of the host” (i.e., even to the High Priest of the Jews). Antiochus IV arrogated to himself prerogatives that only the Messiah or God himself would assume. Antiochus considered himself equal to God and ordered a likeness of himself to be placed in the temple of the Jews and worshiped as God (1 Maccabees 1:21-25). He forbade the Jews to offer their regular sacrifices (1 Macc. 1:44-47)—“took away the continual burnt offering.” He robbed the Jewish temple, offered a sow (pig) upon the altar, and ordered the Jews to stop circumcising their children and to offer swine’s flesh in the temple, also (Josephus, Antiquities, XII:V:4). Great numbers of the Jews made “covenant” with Antiochus IV (1 Macc. 1:12-16). He burned Hebrew copies of the OT and killed those who were found possessing them, 1 Macc. 1:57-62; Josephus, *ibid.* “truth was cast down to the ground.”

The length of Antiochus IV’s devastation upon the Jews is revealed from heaven to Daniel. It is 2300 “evenings and mornings” (Dan. 8:14). This would be understood by a Jew as 2300 days (Genesis ch. 1, an evening and a morning is a day). It is probably to be understood as a “round number” and not exact. However, Antiochus IV began all this sometime in 171 B.C. (i.e., persecuting the Jews) and it terminated at his death sometime in early Spring, 164 B.C.—6 years, 3 months and 20 days would

be about 2300 days (365 days per year, 30 days per month). The phrase “then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” makes it very plain that what is really marked by the 2300 days is the period of the desecration of the Jewish temple. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE END OF THE WORLD! Antiochus IV was to “prosper” until the “time of the end.” This vision was meant to be understood even by Daniel! It is not a secret! Now what “time of the end” would Daniel be looking for? The end of the Jewish dispensation and the beginning of the Messianic age, of course! THAT IS REVEALED TO DANIEL IN EXACT YEARS IN DANIEL 9:24-27! This has nothing to do with the 2nd coming of Christ because Jesus said plainly 8 times (Mt. chs. 24-25 and parallels in Mk. 13 & Lk. 21) no one would know that time! The OT prophets were totally concerned with the FIRST coming of the Messiah and always spoke of it in apocalyptic (i.e., “crisis-literature”) terminology! All the “last days” and “time of the end” phrases of all the OT prophets concerns the FIRST coming of the Messiah because when Messiah came it would be the “last days” of the Mosaic dispensation! To bring the law of Moses to its end (i.e., fulfillment) would be psychologically the “end of the world” to a Jew. The time of the end and the 2300 evenings and mornings has to do with what Daniel calls “the latter end of the indignation” (8:19) and the end of Antiochus IV (8:25-26) which would come close to the end of the Jewish age when John the Baptist came (see Lk. 16:16) and Christ completed the work of redemption (see Acts 2:14-21; 15:12-21; Col. 2:8-15; Heb. 8:13; 10:1-18, etc. etc.). God’s “indignation” will end. All that Daniel is seeing pertains to the “latter end of the indignation” (8:19). The term “indignation” refers to God’s wrath upon sin (Isa. 10:5,25; 26:2, etc.). God’s indignation on sin did not end until the Messiah came and atoned (cf. Dan. 9:24-27). The return from the captivities was NOT the end of God’s indignation upon sin. The important thing to remember is from what kind of “indignation” the Messiah was to deliver. The Jews (and many misled Christians) have interpreted the Messianic deliverance as something political, earthly, and physical. BUT THAT IT IS NOT PHYSICAL IS PLAN FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT. Christ’s kingdom is “not of this world.” The “Indignation” Daniel predicted would end at a specified time in connection with the last days of Persian and Greek domination of the world.

God did not want Daniel to be mistaken about when God would bring all the terrible testing of the Messianic “remnant” to an end. God did not want the Jews to give up when Antiochus came on the scene with his attempt at Jewish genocide! So, God painted an even more exact and terrible picture of Antiochus IV and called him “a king of bold countenance” (Dan. 8:23-26) (this is even more detailed in chapter 11). This “king of bold countenance” is the same “contemptible person” of Daniel 11:21. When the persecution of Antiochus and the Maccabean revolt came (ca. 175-164 B.C.), centuries after Daniel’s prophecy, it produced the effect God wanted—it produced a great Messianic longing in the hearts of the faithful Jews. There was going to be a “fourth” beast after the “ram” and the “he-goat” and the “contemptible little horn” (i.e., Rome). During the time of this “fourth beast” (Rome), the Messiah would come. But Daniel leaves the wickedness of the “fourth beast” to be detailed by John in the book of Revelation. During the time of the “fourth beast” God would revoke the “chosen-ness” of the Jewish nation (Dan. 9:24-27) and test the saints of the New Testament.

This “contemptible one” of Daniel 8 and 11-12 (i.e., the king of bold countenance) was

to be brought to an end himself. His end will be “by no human hand;” i.e., it will appear to be by the direct intervention of Providence that this “contemptible one” would fall. God would have a hand in his end. We will comment more precisely on this in chapter 11. Daniel was to “seal” this prophecy. This does not mean Daniel was to hide it or make it unknown. It means Daniel was to confirm, preserve, and authenticate it as true to keep it from being tampered with. God did want the Jews to know when the Messiah would arrive. Jesus called two Emmaus disciples “foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets” said about the Messiah when they did not recognize him (Luke 24:25-26). Jesus expected the Jews to recognize what kind of kingdom the Messiah would initiate! **THEY WERE TO UNDERSTAND THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL!**

Points to Ponder

All human governments are, to varying degrees, beastly—even the U. S. A. That is, they all emphasize the earthly, animalistic part of man and de-emphasize the spiritual. They all survive, like beasts, by force and by preying (if only by taxation and military conscription) upon man’s rights and freedoms. Some are more beastly than others. Some human governments are humane but only when they acknowledge the sovereignty of Almighty God (as the U.S.A. does in its constitution and laws) as Nebuchadnezzar did and Darius did. The only way to keep human governments from becoming like raging, cruel, blood-thirsty animals is to keep them acknowledging the Lord God’s sovereignty over men. We do not expect that American government will ever become legally “Christian” but we hope all Americans might become Christians!

If that is the case, why do we have to have human government at all? Because Jesus pointedly declared that “few” will ever find the “narrow road that leads to life.” We must have human governments because all men not born again into the kingdom of God will not do what is right in this world without the application of force (see 1 Tim. 1:8-9; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 1:13-17). Human laws that are not enforced, are not laws. Society cannot survive without law and enforcement of laws in a world where there are wicked, lawless people. Satan is behind all anarchy (attempts to overthrow government by law). The Christian must be the kind of person who does not have to have force brought to bear on him to get him to keep good and true law—to live righteously (Rom. 12:18). The Christian obeys what is right because that is his nature to do so, because he loves truth and goodness. But sinners do not love truth and goodness—they hate it. Therefore, they have to be forced to behave righteously and justly!

Human governments derive their dominions from God. Daniel makes that very plain in his predictions. And all these human dominions are allowed by God for the ultimate purpose of preparing for and spreading forth of God’s kingdom, the church! That was true of the OT empires and Rome, and it is true of human dominions today! Thank God, the early Americans believed this—note this belief as preached in a sermon of the 18th century American, David Tappan: “Let us beware that we do not impute these signal divine appearances in our favor to any peculiar excellence in our national

character. Alas, the moral face of our country effectually confutes such a vain-glorious statement. Crimes of the blackest hue, countless multitudes of abominations, mark the visible character of this great, this highly favored community, and still provoke the great displeasure of heaven...Let us remember that for His own sake, He hath done these great things, not for any righteousness in us...But that his own name might be exalted, that His own great designs...extending the kingdom of His Son, may be carried into effect." Those words were from a sermon during the American War for Independence (i.e., the American Revolution) by David Tappan, Newbury, Massachusetts, 1777. So spoke many great preachers and statesmen (John Adams, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, even Thomas Jefferson the Deist) in those days! God shed His grace on America in order to further His kingdom in the world! MAY IT CONTINUE TO BE SO!

God gave Daniel a vision of the majestic, sovereign throne of God and the Son in order to give the divine perspective to history. The human, finite, limited perspective of history is what makes men pessimistic existentialists who say, "Life is never more absurd than at the grave," or, "There is meaning only in meaninglessness" (e.g., Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, Ernest Hemingway, etal). The terrible tragedies, the instabilities, the aimless recycling of human nature one generation after another, would turn any thinking person into despondency and despair if that person viewed history only from the past and the present. Once a person knows there is a God, outside of history, exercising supernaturally wise, good and truthful control over it as he brings it to a conquest of the holy, good, true and just purposes he has decreed, he becomes a faithful optimist conforming himself to the nature of this Sovereign God!

God's kingdom obtains its sovereignty through the incarnation of the Son. The Son became flesh and conquered sin in the flesh, thus providing the impetus of grace, love and faith. God does not have his dominion by force, but by grace and by love and by faith. Of course, God has the power to banish from his presence forever those who do not wish to willingly surrender to his rule. And God has promised that he will do just that! But to dwell in his presence will not be by force. If you do not want God, do not fret, he will not force himself upon you! God did not force himself upon Nebucadnezzar or Belshazzar or Darius.

The saints are given dominion. But that is not territorial dominion in this earth. It is not the land of Palestine, or the European Common Market, or America, which God gives his saints. Their dominion is much greater than all this. It is dominion over sin (Rom. 6:1-23). It is conquest—yea, more than conquerors—of all that can keep us from the love of God (Rom. 8:1-39). It is dominion over the power of the devil (Heb. 2:5-16). It is dominion over our circumstances for we can be content no matter what they are (Phil. 4:4-12). Sin, rebellion against truth, is the ultimate trap, the eternal enslavement. The truth makes free, even when the body is imprisoned. God gives the saints dominion over falsehood!

The court of heaven has authority to judge all human endeavors. And it does, indeed, pass judgment and dispose and impose upon mankind any circumstances of history it deems advisable. The Roman empire called itself "eternal" but it lasted only 400 years in its western form. Today it exists only as ancient history! The court of heaven

sits reviewing America's case today. Her judgment is inevitable. The time for America's banishment is uncertain as far as man is concerned, but the fact of it is inevitable (1 Cor. 15:24-28; 2 Pet. 3:8-10). All human philosophies and systems have been "weighed in the balances and found wanting." Every man seems to have his own ideas about what God will do with individuals and masses. Most men expect God to make his judgments according to their ideas. **BUT GOD'S JUDICIAL SYSTEM HAS ALREADY BEEN DECIDED, REVEALED, WRITTEN DOWN, AND CONFIRMED.** "Whosoever does not obey the Son is condemned already" (Jn. 3:36).

God sifts and tests people to prepare them for his kingdom. He will have no untried, untested, unproven people in his heaven! God told the Jews that the wilderness wanderings were to "test" them (Deut. 8:1-20; Heb. 3:8). He told them the Babylonian captivities were to "sift" them (Amos 9:9). Jesus told Peter that he was going to allow Satan to "sift" him (Lk. 22:31). Daniel predicted the days of Antiochus IV were to "test" the Jews (Dan. 11:35). Peter said Christians were to be "tried" by persecutions (1 Pet. 4:12). The book of Revelation represents the great tribulations of the Roman empire as "testings" of the saints (Rev. 3:10). Jesus was tested—met the test by faith—and was anointed God's Son by meeting the test (Heb. 5:5-10). God tests your faith in order to produce steadfastness in your commitments (James 1:3). If he didn't test it, you would lose your ability to endure and thus lose your inheritance (Heb. 10:32-39).

God knows the future. Names change, territories change, but the divine purposes and principles remain the same. Great nations struggle, lock horns, attack God's redemptive program, but out of all the agony, destruction, apostasy, and human arrogance, God's immutable purposes roll on, inevitably, inexorably, and men are given the opportunities to make moral and mental choices which will determine their eternal destinies as they fit into God's immutable program. Men and their pronouncements come and go; human "stars" rise and fall; **BUT GOD'S BOOK HAS PROVED ONCE FOR ALL THAT GOD KNOWS, SEES, OVERRULES AND USES HISTORY TO HIS OWN GLORY FOR THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM BY CHOICE!** All mankind will have its day before the court of heaven. What each individual does about heaven's decrees determines that individual's eternal existence!

DANIEL 9:1—10:21

Introduction

This is the heart of Daniel's prophetic ministry! Daniel 9:24-27 is the categorical focal point of Daniel's prophecies and all of O.T. prophecy! Sir Isaac Newton, one of the greatest scientists the world has ever known, wrote a commentary on the Prophecies of Daniel and the book of Revelation. He described Daniel 9:24-27 as "the foundation stone of the Christian religion," because centuries in advance it gave the exact time of the appearance of the Messiah and the date of his death, as well as a comprehensive description of his saving work in heaven and earth! The prophecy likewise tells what would be the fate of the Jews upon their rejection of the One (Messiah) whose coming they had long anticipated. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was history's testimony that the offerings and services of the sanctuary had met their fulfillment in the coming of the promised Anointed One (Messiah). Everything else Daniel predicts is secondary and preparatory for what he predicts in this chapter (9). The time of this prophecy (chapters 9-12) was in "the first year of Daruis (a.k.a. Gubaru), about 536 B.C. (The 3rd year of Cyrus). Daniel was about 80-90 years of age. The release of the Jews from captivity to return to Palestine had just occurred. Reports of troubles were coming back to Daniel. Many so-called "great" events of history were happening about this time. Many of the alleged "great" world religions were being formed about this time (e.g., Buddhism, Taoism, Janism or Hinduism). Greek democracy was beginning to reach its peak as well as Greek science and philosophy. But the most important event was that some 50,000 former Jewish exiles had been released to return and begin the process of fulfilling Daniel's prophecy of 9:24-27! Much testing and tribulation (pressurizing) of this "Messianic" people would come before the fulfillment of Daniel 9:24-27. Christians ought to study this prophecy thoroughly and repeatedly! Jewish rabbis forbade the teaching of Daniel 9:24-27 because it meant Jesus Christ was the Messiah. In the Talmud Ketubot (written about A.D. 300), Rabbi Jonathan ben Uziah was prohibited from teaching on the book of Daniel "because the date of the Messiah is in it"—quoted in *The Hebrew Christian*, summer 1980. Daniel 9:24-27 is incontrovertible evidence that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. There is no better evidence in all the Old Testament! Josephus writes of Daniel: "The several books that he (Daniel) wrote and left behind him are still read by us till this time (ca. A.D. 70-80) and from them we believe that Daniel conversed with God, for he did not only prophesy of future events as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time of their accomplishment" *Antiquities*, X:11:7. The unbelieving critics want to date the book of Daniel at the time of the Maccabeans (164 B.C.) to get away from fulfilled prophecies! Daniel was confirmed as a prophet of God in Ezekiel 14:14,20; 28:3, 500 years before the Maccabeans.

DANIEL 9:1—10:21

Daniel confesses that the exile (captivity) of God's people is due to their stubborn rebellion (see also Isa. 30:9-10; Jer. 6:16-19; Ezek. 2:1—3:11, etc.). It is exactly what Moses warned against in Deut. Ch. 28. Daniel admits his sin and that of his people and admits they deserve nothing but God's wrath. He observes that God promised to end the captivity after 70 years (in Jeremiah's writing, Jer. 25:11-12), and apparently assumes that will be the end of God's wrath. Or, perhaps he is confused from the earlier revelation he received (Dan. Chs. 7-8) about "troubled" times to come upon the Jews in the far distant future. The prophets and their followers were uncertain about the "who and when" of messianic prophecies (1 Pet. 1:10-12)! Daniel's main concern in this prayer is to implore God to keep the Divine name clear of any taint of unfaithfulness by going back on his promise to provide forgiveness for the Jews. Daniel prayed for better circumstances for his people—his prayer is for spiritual deliverance, but he heard of their troubles back in Jerusalem and had doubts as to whether God has forgiven their sins of idolatry or not! Understanding this is important in understanding the angel's answer to Daniel's prayer in 9:24-27! The angelic answer is: Complete withdrawal of the "indignation" of God is NOT at the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth but was to be centuries away, at which time the Messiah would come, atone once for all for sin, impute everlasting righteousness to believers, and Judaism as the way to God would be abrogated!

Apparently, Daniel thought the captivity or "indignation" was about to be prolonged on account of the sins of the people, so he prayed for the mercy of God. And he was correct. God still needed to purge the Jewish nation down to a "holy stump" and even down to a "holy seed" (see Isa. 6:13; 10:20-23). Jesus Christ was that "seed—singular" (Gal. 3:16-18). The 500 years of tribulations, after Daniel, would accomplish that purging. God needed a small remnant ("like a mustard seed" Mt. 13:31-32, "sown in a field," i.e., Jesus, the Messiah) which would produce a spiritual deliverance. So, Daniel made confession. The word in Hebrew is *today* and means, "to acknowledge." In other words, Daniel "acknowledged" and said the same as God said about Judah's sinfulness. They had sinned openly, willingly, deliberately and shamefully. The Hebrew word *bosheth*, translated "confusion" means shame. Daniel's prayer is one of complete humility. He expresses the attitude that even after almost 70 years of captivity the Jewish people were still sinners. They had not gotten so holy during their exile that deserved anything from God but his wrath (9:13). Daniel acknowledged or confessed God's justice in their punishment. Acknowledging God as the only Absolutely-Holy, Just, Fair, Faithful Being is imperative. It is not optional that we acknowledge God's Absoluteness! God must keep his name Absolute. He must be trusted to be righteous in everything he does. Man is not given the prerogative of disagreeing with God's ways! God confirmed his word as absolutely inviolable when he took the Jews captive. What God promises and warns, he surely fulfills! Ultimately, all human beings will surrender in obedience to the word of God (Phil. 2:9-11). They may go to heaven—or they may go to hell—but obey him they will surely do!

Daniel makes his prayer on the basis of God's faithful nature. And God is not only faithful to judge his enemies, he is also faithful to deliver those who trust in his promises. So, Daniel appeals to God to deliver his people on the basis of God's actions in the past (i.e., Egyptian exodus from bondage, the times of the Judges, David's kingdom, etc.). In delivering those who trusted him then, God made a name for himself in his great works of power. The Jews had become a "byword" as (Moses predicted in Deut. 28) because they had so completely heathen themselves and turned away from their "roots" and their God. If the Jews were a "byword," so was their God! His name was not respected because of them (see Rom. 2). Daniel is concerned about the reputation of God. God's reputation must be vindicated and established, once and for all. Thus, Daniel prays first and foremost, that everything God should do, he do for HIS NAME'S SAKE! He begs God to restore the temple and Jerusalem so that the world will know the power and majesty and faithfulness of Jehovah. So long as the temple and Jerusalem are in ruins, the heathen world will pass by and mock and ridicule Jehovah. That must not be! Not if the world is going to have anything certain by which to be saved. GOD MUST CARRY OUT HIS MESSIANIC PROGRAM OF REDEMPTION AND HE PROMISED TO DO IT IN JERUSALEM, THROUGH THE "REMNANT." But Jerusalem is destroyed and the Jews are not a nation! Enemies are opposing them and trying to keep them from rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple. Daniel is not interested in restoration of the temple and the city of Jerusalem for Jewish pride; he is not interested in a change of circumstances just for ease and comfort (in fact most Jews were more comfortable in Persia—return to Palestine meant more suffering as Daniel already had predicted). There is an emphatic repetition throughout this prayer insisting that God's glory be vindicated in everything. Sinning man deserves only judgment. If the Jews are delivered at all it will be entirely due to the very nature of God—mercifulness. This is the whole point of any prayer—God seeks contrition and penitence in prayer in order that he may do for man what he has made up his mind he wants to do for man all along! Prayer is NOT to get things from God—prayer is to get YOU for God. Prayer is to get the believer in the right "frame of mind" to receive what God has decided before the prayer to give if the believer will just receive it in the proper mental and spiritual attitude. Man changes—GOD ACTS. Prayer does not change things—prayer changes people! Daniel's prayer that God will act in the interest of his Own Perfect Will. That was the attitude God wanted from Daniel and his Jewish countrymen. That way, whatever God does with the Jewish people will be received as a blessing—no matter what God decides to do! God only wants us to build a stronger faith. But he knows that this can only come about when we acknowledge God's sovereignty in our lives. God acts to glorify his name, not out of selfish egotism, but in order to bless his creation (cf. Ezek. 20:9,14,22,33; Isa. 48:9-11). The inevitable result of God acting to glorify his own name is that the person who accepts and acts in accordance with this is thereby made a partaker of God's glory (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3-11). When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he said, pray first, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The reason God could give Daniel the revelation of such terrible testing of the Jewish nation is because Daniel was a man of total surrender to God's will. Daniel did not go to God with a long list of "get-wells, give-food-to, save-from-persecutions." God wanted Daniel to depend on him for everything not simply to be relieved of difficult circumstances. Right in the middle of his praying, Daniel is approached by the angel Gabriel in human form, to deliver God's answer to his prayer. Yes! God was going to

deliver his Messianic redemption through the smallest remnant of believing Jews—one Man, Jesus Christ, “Messiah.” (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:1-7; 11:1-16; Micah 5:2-4; Dan. 9:25-26). BUT IT WAS GOING TO BE 490 YEARS LATER, AFTER MUCH SIFTING AND TESTING AND PURIFYING UNTIL THE “HOLY SEED” (SINGULAR) WAS BORN! God knows what his beloved need before they even ask and is able to answer before they get through praying! God also knows that our greatest need is to seek his glory. As long as people are self-confident and self-dependent they are in no position, morally, intellectually, or spiritually to receive what God has for them (building their character into the image of Christ). People resisting the will of God demand and spend whatever comes their way to assert what they suppose to be their own autonomy. Be assured that the “things” you pray for are no problem to God. He can give you exceeding abundantly above all you can possibly imagine or ask for, if you utterly, totally, unreservedly trust him! The problem is not what you need—THE PROBLEM IS YOU!

The Hebrew text is literally, *shaveyim shiveyim*, or “sevens, seventy of them.” This has been understood by conservative commentators (even Jews) to mean “seventy weeks of years” or 490 years. The 7-day week = 7 years theory or “day-year” theory of interpretation is confirmed by the Bible (cf. Num. 14:34; Lev. 25:8; Ezek. 4:6). It would be difficult to exaggerate the alleged significance of this passage (v. 24-27) to dispensationalists and premillennialists. It is appealed to by them as proof that their alleged entire “church age” is supposed to occur during the events listed in v. 24-26; and, according to the dispensationalists, the 27th verse of this chapter concerns the “7 years of tribulation” just before the “millennium.” The fact (based on NT teaching) that the 6 items of 9:24 are Messianic settles the question of where the 70 weeks are to end. Dan. 9:25-26 even designates in the Hebrew language “Messiah” (translated in English, “anointed one”). They are to end in connection with Messiah’s first coming. When Christ ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2) there remained not one of the 6 items of v. 24 that was unaccomplished. In verse 9:25 we are told where the 70 weeks are to begin. They are to begin with “the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem.” There are only 4 events to which this phrase may refer: (a) the decree of Cyrus, 536 B.C. (Ezra 1:2-4); (b) the decree of Darius, 518 B.C. (Ezra 6:1-5); (c) the decree of Artaxerxes, 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:12-26); (d) the decree to Nehemiah, 444 B.C. (Neh. 2). The decree of Cyrus did not permit them to fortify their city as foretold in Gabriel’s message. The decrees of Darius allowed them to continue the work of Cyrus’ decree, but did not grant freedom from taxation or allow them to appoint magistrates, give them self-rule, or authorize them to establish a “commonwealth.” Clearly, the decree of Artaxerxes, 457 B.C., is the one from which the 490 years are to begin! Another terminating point is given by Daniel —“to the coming of Messiah” (9:25). The Hebrew text in 9:25 reads, *‘ad—mashicha nagid*, and the article is missing altogether, thus it should be translated, “to Messiah, Prince.” *Mashicha* is Hebrew for “Anointed One.” Christ is the Greek word in the NT for “Anointed One.” The Septuagint, i.e., Greek translation of the Hebrew O.T., translates 9:25—“until Christ the Prince, seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks.” This is the only text in all the OT where the word Messiah (i.e., *mashicha*) is specifically used to indicate the TIME when Messiah would appear. Taking Daniel’s passage (9:25) and all the other passages describing the Messiah’s coming and nature, there should have been no excuse for the Jews mistaking Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. There should be no period (i.e., “.”) after “seven weeks” in 9:25. It should read, “to the

coming of Messiah, Prince, there shall be seven weeks, then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again.” The 7 plus 62 go together as one unit of time making 69 weeks of years (i.e., 483 years). During this 69 weeks of years, Jerusalem will be rebuilt but during “troubled times.” That is exactly what Daniel predicts in chapters 10-12, the “troubled times” of Jerusalem. Ezra 4:7-16 (which chronologically should be between Ezra 20 and Nehemiah 1) tells of these “troubled times” also!

These 490 years are determined (Heb. chatak, “apportioned, divided) for Daniel’s “people”----i.e., the Jews. God would use the Jews as a nation and a religion only 490 years more after Daniel’s prophecy begins to take effect. After that, their time was up! They resisted, we know, and God had to destroy their temple and their nation. The only time God had left for the Jews was this 490 years. He has nothing left as Jews for them now or ever. The only thing left for the Jew is New Israel, the church (cf. Gal. 6:15-16). When the times of the Gentiles are completed (at the end of the world), then all New Israel (i.e., those who have covenanted with Jesus Christ) will be saved (Rom. 10-11). Everything said by Daniel in this passage is fulfilled in Christ and the destruction of Judaism. The “promises” made to the sons of Abraham are fulfilled in “Seed” (singular) not in “seeds” (plural)—and all who are in Christ are sons of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:15-29). “All the promises of God find their Yea (Amen, “So be it”!) in him (Christ)” 2 Cor. 1:19-20!

(a) finish the transgression—the Hebrew word is chalah, “bring to completion, fill-up-full, finish a thing or a task.” This is clearly talking about the filling-up-full the cup of Jewish iniquity. The Jews would reject the Messiah, they would kill the Son of God!. They had sinned terribly in their idolatry and killing of the OT prophets, but the full height and depth of their evil was yet to be shown when they would “kill the heir” (Matt. 21:33-45; 23:32-39). As a result God’s “wrath came upon them to the end” (Greek, telos, “to completeness, finally”) by destroying their nation (see 1 Thess. 2:16). God’s wrath is still upon them if they are outside of Christ. Because they “cut off” the “Anointed” (Messiah), God’s end came upon them as a flood (Dan. 9:26);

(b) put an end to sin—in the death of Messiah God would triumph over man’s rebellion and declare sin atoned for and give man the power, by faith, to overcome sin. By sovereign decree of grace, God punished all sin in his incarnate Son (2 Cor. 5:17ff). All sin, even that done from Eden onward, was done away in the death of Christ (Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 9:15-28). Sin no longer has dominion over those who trust in Christ’s blood; people have access into God’s grace by faith (Rom. 5:3);

(c) atone for iniquity—Christ’s death not only ends sin, it atones and reconciles God to man and man to God. God had to be appeased through a “Man” before he could be reconciled to avowed enemies (Rom. 5; 2 Cor. 5:14-21); Messiah (Christ) became God’s curse for us (Gal. 3:13);

(d) bring in everlasting righteousness—this is one of the things the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the apostles, was to do in the world, i.e., “convince men of sin, or righteousness, and of judgment to come” (Jn. 16:7-11). God imputes righteousness to us, unearned, through faith in his Son; we practice righteousness relatively by the prompting of his love for us and our trust in his word (2 Cor. 5:14-21);

(e) seal both vision and prophet—with the accomplishment of the work of the Messiah in fulfilling God’s prophesied plan of redemption and the end of the Jewish dispensation, OT prophecy was confirmed, fulfilled, validated and thus sealed—done! Paid in full! (cf. Acts 3:24; 1 Pet. 1:10-11; 2 Pet. 1:16-21; Rev. 19:11);

(f) anoint a most holy—actually the Hebrew text reads, “anoint (messiah) holy, holies.” It is arguable as to whether this applies to the anointing of Jesus by his resurrection from the dead, as the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah (i.e., “today have I begotten you, today thou art my Son”), or, whether it applies to the holiest of holies,” the church (see Acts 10:38-43).

In the 70th week (after the 62 plus 7 or 483 years) the Messiah was to be “cut off” (Hebrew word for “cut off” is *korath* which the Greek LXX translates *exolothreuthesetai*, “destroyed”) and have nothing. Compare this with Isaiah 53:7-9! We learn from Dan. 9:27 that his “cutting off” will be in the middle of the last week (or middle of the last 7 years of the 490 years) for that is when the Messiah shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease (by his perfect atonement). Jesus was born 4 B.C.; began his ministry at age 30 in A.D. 26; was crucified mid-A.D.30; the gospel was sent mainly to the Jews for the next 3 ½ years—then Paul turned to the Gentiles mid-A.D. 34. THAT WAS THE END OF 490 YEARS FOR THE JEWS. God, in grace, allowed the nation to continue another 35 years, then destroyed it (A.D. 66-70). The “Prince” can be none other than the Messiah, Jesus Christ! To whom else would the preceding eight accomplishments be attributed?—not to Moses, not to David, not to Solomon, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or any of the prophets! Isaiah predicts the Messiah will be called, among other things, “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Ezekiel refers to the Messiah as “Prince” (Ezek. chs. 44-48). “And the people (Jews) of the Prince (9:26) who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary,” etc. Some say this refers to the Romans since they are referred to as God’s “army” in the parable of the Marriage of the King’s Son (Matt. 22:7). Other say this refers to the Jews themselves who wrought great destruction of the city of Jerusalem, setting fires large segments of the city themselves, before the Romans ever started their assault. WE PREFER THIS LATTER INTERPRETATION! Some dispensationalists insist that all these eight (8) things have not yet been accomplished. They insist all this is to come after their alleged “tribulation and during their millennium.” They say, for example, “to make an end of sins” means to “eliminate moral evil completely from this world.” They contend that the 70th week is still future, thus the first 69 weeks must be also future or else we have a gap of over 2000 years between the 69th and 70th weeks. They believe that if the things listed above were completed with Jesus at his first coming, the first 69 weeks are past—and that can’t be according to their eschatology. The dispensationalists believe that the 69th week has lasted now for over 2000 years while we await the fulfillment of the 70th week. So, since the 70th week must be future to our day (according to the dispensationalists), then we must be living in a huge gap of 2000 years during which God must be calling “time-out” for the fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27! This is absurd and unrealistic!

Jerusalem is the “city” that is to be “destroyed!” And the Jews will destroy their own city (aided by the Romans in A.D. 66-70). According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, the Jews did more destruction of Jerusalem than the Romans! The

destruction of Jerusalem and the nation mentioned here is not to be included in the 490 years. As far as God was concerned, Jewish time ended when the gospel had been preached thoroughly among the Jews by A.D. 34 (Acts 13:46-47). As far as God was concerned, sacrifice and offering ceased when the Messiah was crucified and arose. He was through with the Jews, as Jews, in the program of redemption at the cross (see the books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews in the NT). During the last 70th, the Messiah will “make a firm covenant with many.” During the 3 ½ years of Jesus’s public ministry he was in favor with the multitudes—they heard him gladly. The rulers had him crucified. Then for 3 ½ years more, until A.D. 34, the covenant was confirmed among many Jews as thousands became obedient to faith in Christ and his New Covenant. After his crucifixion, the latter of the 70th, because he had atoned for sin “once for all” (as the writer of Hebrews attests), sacrifice and offering was no longer efficacious. Of course, sacrifice and offering were forever abrogated at the cross, but in this passage we are dealing only with 490 years—and nothing beyond that except the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus stated that “the desolating sacrilege” to come upon the Jewish temple and nation was predicted by Daniel (Matt. 24:15; Lk. 21:20). Daniel writes, “upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator” (Dan. 9:27). This probably refers to the Romans since Luke says it would be when Jerusalem was “surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near” (Lk. 21:20). The Romans built up a siege wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem and let the Jews do most of the destruction themselves for about 3 years. When the Jews were dying of starvation and had killed thousands of their own people, the Romans attacked, tore down the walls, desecrated the temple, tore it down and burned it, killed thousands more of the Jews and took almost a half a million captive and sold them into slavery. Jerusalem lay in ruins for years until the Romans built a heathen temple on its grounds and worshiped Jupiter there. Finally, the end came upon the “desolator” (i.e., Rome) itself. The apostle John predicts the end of the Roman empire in the book of Revelation. Of course, Daniel has predicted the end of Rome in his book in chs. 2 and 7. Thus ends one of the most amazing and significant prophecies in all the Bible! The OT predicts its own abrogation—its end (see also Isa. 66:7-24; Jer. 3:15-18; 31:31-34; Amos 9:11-15, etc.). God’s finish with the Jews was no accident. He planned it ages and ages ago. When the stubborn and unbelieving Jews would not acknowledge it, God had to use drastic measures to impress his plan on the world. But, amazingly, there are some Christians who will not acknowledge this today!

Three years after the revelation in chapter 9, Daniel receives another revelation which helped him understand chapter 9. This message came to Daniel through an angel of God—a messenger. The angel appeared in human form, but the angel was so majestic in appearance everyone close was terrified. Some with Daniel did not see the angel or hear the message but approach of the angel terrified them. Daniel fainted at the sound of the angel’s words. What did he hear that caused this—was it the loudness of the voice that caused him to faint? I believe it was the content of the message that made Daniel faint. He is told things about the history of the world that other men did not know. What he is told is not guesswork nor fantasy. It is brilliant, staggering TRUTH! It involved a “millennium” (1000 years from 600 B.C. to A.D. 400)

of warfare and struggle against the forces of hell for Daniel's people. What the angel told Daniel is detailed in Dan. chs. 11 and 12. What Daniel was to hear was all the gory details of a Jewish holocaust as terrible as that of the Nazi's holocaust 2500 years later. The angel announces that he (the angel, God's servant and messenger) had been "fighting against" the "prince of Persia" 10:20 on behalf of Daniel's people, the faithful "remnant" of the Jews. The "prince of Persia" had withstood the angelic assault for "21 days" (i.e. 21 years, about the length of time the Jews were in captivity in Persia before Cyrus let the first increment return to the Holy Land about 536 B.C.). The angel was going to return and "finish" his assault upon Persia (and Cyrus would confess that the God of the Jews had ordered him to send the Jews back to their land see 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). Then the angel would turn his attention to assaulting the "prince of Greece" (Dan. 10:20). Daniel is dumbfounded. It is more than he can stand, mentally and emotionally. How can all this be—will my poor people be able to endure all this struggle against supernatural powers out of hell? The angel gives Daniel strength. The angel's question is rhetorical—"You do know why I came to you do you not?" The angel came to "make Daniel understand what was to befall his people" (10:14). The angel came to inform Daniel that great tribulations were coming on the Jews; that God would be with them and help them with power from heaven (in the person of ministering angels (cf. Heb. 1:14, etc.). God would be with them from heaven all through the "latter days" (i.e., the last years of the OT dispensation). These "princes" of the kingdoms of Persia and Greece are not simply mortal kings—no mortal could have so successfully opposed an angel of God for a period of 21 years or more (since one angel could smite 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night, Isa. 37:36). These "princes" must be evil spirits straight from hell allowed by these heathen rulers to influence their thinking and acting in opposing God's redemptive program in the earth. The demonic spirits were influencing Persians like Haman (in the days of Esther) and Antiochus IV (in the days of the Maccabees) to eradicate the Jewish people in genocidal warfare. In their downward plunge away from truth and righteousness the Gentile nations chose to worship and seek the fellowship of demons (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; 1 Cor. 10:20ff; Rev. 18:1-3) and so came under hell's direct influence. It would not necessarily mean bodily demon-possession such as the phenomena in the gospels where demons actually lived in the bodies of human beings. It could very well be evil spirits influencing the minds of pagan rulers through false teachings. That activity continued on into the Roman empire. After Rome was defeated, the devil's activity in such wide-spread pervasiveness was restricted (i.e., "Satan was bound for a 1000 years"). The TRUTH went out to the far reaches of the world after Rome fell and had tremendous influence on culture, government, etc. Of course, the devil and his "princes" are still at work, but they cannot deceive as many people as before because THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD CAME AND DISPELLED THE DARKNESS! If you do not think this is a correct interpretation, you would change your mind if you had to live back in the days of Haman, Antiochus IV, or the Caesars of Rome! Life in the major portions of the world (even in atheistic countries) is much better than it was before Christ came into the world.

Points to Ponder

Daniel was a man of the Word! He knew God's Book. Here is this man who had been receiving direct revelations from God and angels, but he is studying the writings of a former prophet, Jeremiah. His revelations did not make him an egomaniac. He did not think what the Lord told him was all the Lord said. In fact, he was probably reading Jeremiah to see if what he had received squared with God's Book! Personal experiences, no matter how mystical or spiritual they may seem, must be tested by God's Book—not the other way around.

Prayer should be first and foremost a confession of sins! Any man who says he has no sin makes God a liar and the truth is not in him at all (1 Jn. 1:8, 10; 2:3-5). Daniel's first concern in approaching the Lord was to confess his sin and the sin of his people. Confess means, "to say the same as" God says about sin. God says we are morally, deliberately, by choice, responsible for our sin. God is not responsible for our sins. We are! God says we deserve absolute, final, complete banishment from his presence for sin. We must admit that. God says he will forgive our sin if we love him and keep his commandment about trusting in Christ and being loyal to him with all our being—we must confess ("agree with") that!

Until people are willing to admit they deserve God's wrath, they are not in a position to be delivered from it. Until people are willing to admit they deserve God's wrath, they are not willing to accept his forgiveness by the free gift of grace through Christ's atonement in their place. Daniel was willing to admit this and thus, was willing to admit that all mercy and forgiveness belonged to God.

God extends his mercy through the Word of his prophets and messengers. Daniel confessed that he and his people were being punished because they did not listen to God's message or messengers. God's message is in his commandments—not in our subjective fancies.

Daniel prayed confessing that God's people (and thus God's name) had become a byword because of their sinfulness. In a very real way, God's reputation depends on the actions of those who claim him as their God (cf. Rom. 2:24). In another sense, God will be God and be true even if every person is a liar and a hypocrite (Rom. 3:4). God will always be God, but how most people first conceive of him depends to a large degree today on the actions of Christians. After their first conception of Christianity, they need to be indoctrinated with the Bible.

Prayer is to change people—not God. God had already decided to return the Jews to Palestine before Daniel prayed. He had even revealed that to Daniel. But Daniel needed to pray to prepare himself for service by believing what he had been told and humbly surrendering to it (i.e., the "troubled times" to come upon the Jews, even after their return). The return of the Jews after the exile would involve centuries of trials and testings. A man has to be brought to his "knees" in complete surrender to accept what God has already decided he wants to give him. God doesn't have to have our

prayers any more than he has to have our money. WE NEED TO GIVE UP, GIVE IN, AND GIVE OVER. Daniel prayed, "For thy sake—for thy name's sake." THY WILL BE DONE!

Did you know the Gospel was in the law and the prophets? Rom. 3:21 says it is! You can find it in Daniel 9:24 (among other places in the prophets). Where else is it? How about Isaiah 9:1-7; 11:1-16; 53:1-12; Jer. 31:31-34; Micah 5:2-4. What excuse then did the Jew have for rejecting the idea of salvation by grace through faith—justification by faith and not by works of the law?

The time of Messiah's coming was precisely predicted. So was the time of destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Why did so many seem confused or ignorant of Jesus' Messianic claims? Were there some who were looking for the Messiah at about the right time? How about Simeon (Lk. 2:25-35), Anna the prophetess (Lk. 2:36-38) and Joseph of Arimathea (Lk. 23:35). Why was John the Baptist, who even had direct revelation, confused? If Daniel 9:24-27 is so precise, why are Jews so ignorant of all this today? Why are non-Jews so difficult to persuade that Jesus is the Messiah of God? Did Jesus expect people of his day to know from the prophets that he was the Messiah (see Lk. 24:25ff)? Did Jesus expect his disciples to know from the book of Daniel when Jerusalem was going to be destroyed (see Matt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14; Lk. 20:21).

Did the death of the Messiah really bring an end to OT sacrifices and offerings (see Heb. 10:1-18). What would God think of anyone trying to find atonement for sin today through animal sacrifices or human self-righteousness when his Son has been offered for atonement (see Heb. 5:11—6:8)? Would he excuse it? Would he accept it? Or would it be blasphemous? Why are there Christian people talking about the rebuilding of the Jewish temple and reinstating Mosaic sacrifices and priesthood as if it were the will of God? Did God know in Daniels' time the Jews would have to be destroyed as a nation to give his redemptive program opportunity to go into all the world?

Chapter 10 of Daniel clearly teaches that what we see on earth in the struggles between Biblical belief and unbelief is simply a carnal manifestation of a much greater spiritual struggle going on in the unseen world! The fight for justice, truth, and love is not confined to man's limited sphere—it is cosmic—off out, millions of light years away, in eternity. What the Christian involves himself in when he become a follower of the Lord Jesus has to do with powers and realities beyond this transitory world (cf. Eph. 6:10ff; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). Does that excite you? Does it frighten you? Does it convince you to get serious about your involvement in God's redemptive plan? What God revealed to Daniel (and to us in even more certainty in Christ and the NT) is that the forces of righteousness are more powerful than the forces of evil. God, the Invisible, supplies invisible, supernatural assistance from heaven for his redemptive people. But all who are not his have not only invisible, supernatural enemies, but by choice become accomplices of that invisible wickedness. What if God were to roll back a big opening so you could see into the spiritual world—the invisible world—and take a look at the power, deceptiveness, utter ugliness and wickedness of all that disagrees with God's Book, the Bible? WOULD YOU GET SERIOUS ABOUT LIVING

WHAT THAT BOOK SAYS IS GOOD AND PURE AND LOVELY? HE HAS LET YOU SEE! THROUGH DANIEL'S EYES—THROUGH JOHN'S EYES (IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION)!

DANIEL 11:1—12:13

Introduction

What is going to happen to the Jews for “seventy-sevens” (i.e., 490 years)? The outlined answer to that question was given Daniel 9:24-27—as well as in chapters 7 & 8. Daniel had prayed for an answer to what seemed to him as a problem concerning God’s reputation. Daniel understood and agreed with the captivity as punishment for the sins of the Jews in their idolatries, etc. He did not approach God arrogantly, but in deep humility asking not on the basis of any righteous merit of his or the Jews, but jealous for God’s holiness. Since 536 B.C. God had been delivering a remnant (about 50,000 in all) back to Judea, but they were still having “trouble.” Daniel apparently thought that deliverance from exile should signal God’s total forgiveness of his people. If they had been forgiven, why should they be facing trouble back in Judea? This is the same problem a lot of Christians have about their lives not being all “roses” after they have been baptized. God answered Daniel’s prayer about the “end of the desolations of Jerusalem” (9:2) in the brief resume of 9:24-27. But it was very brief, leaving out a number of details. The detailed answer to Daniel’s problem or question is given in Daniel 11:1—12:13. God knows every detail of this world and its inhabitants before these details come to pass in the time-frame. God knows everything! Everything that happens is NOW in relationship to God. There is no beginning and end with God. He is not a provincial God. Not just the God of the Hebrews, but of all creation, of all time. He is not a God of generalizations (like false gods). On the other hand he does not give man every minute detail of every day of history, but what man needs, God will give. The Jews could never have reason to doubt God’s sovereignty, God’s redemptive purpose, or God’s faithfulness, because he gave Daniel 490 years of detailed explanation of their future. Why is this going to happen for 490 years to the Jews? Daniel had prayed that God act, for God’s sake, to keep God’s name (or reputation) invulnerable and invincible. God had already promised that everything he would do with the Jews would be for the sake of his name. God would “try them in the furnace of affliction” for his sake (Isa. 48:9-11). God delivered them and punished them for his sake (Ezek. 20:9,14,22,44). God acted to keep his name’s sake invincible, impartial and faithful so those who were willing might know that he was Lord. God’s fulfillment of his plan to redeem creation and a people for himself depends on people knowing him and trusting him. The enjoyment of that redemption by human beings depends on the exaltation of God’s name.

DANIEL 11:1—12:13

After the Cyrus-Darius (i.e., Gubaru) rule over Persia and Babylon there would be four more kings of Persia who would have effect on testing the Jewish people. They would be, in order, Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius-Hystaspis, Xerxes (or, as the Bible calls him in the book of Esther, Ahasuerus). While some of the Persian kings were benefactors to the Jews, others were not. While Persian kings tried to conquer the world, the Jews, as well as the rest of the world, suffered. The Jews who had returned to Palestine in the third year of Cyrus met continual trouble from the Samaritans and other Arabs which Persian kings helped stifle occasionally (but not always). Xerxes (Ahasuerus) permitted by his indifference, the attempted genocide of the Jews by Haman in the days of Esther and Mordecai. You may read of the Persian-Alexandrian years in the Bible (Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah; Haggai and Zechariah), and in Josephus's Wars and Antiquities. Two-hundred years later when Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) conquered the world, his intention was to Hellenize (Greek-ize) all cultures of the world. This presented great problems for the Jews. Many Jews gave in to the pagan culture of the Greeks; the Jewish high-priesthood became corrupted. The release from the exile did not bring the Messianic age as some of the Jews anticipated—that would be 490 years later. So, God started telling Daniel all the details of the “troubled times” that would come while the Jews waited for the Messiah. The first phase of history Daniel relates in Dan. 11:1-4 is from 536 B.C. to 323 B.C. (213 years between Cyrus's allowing the Jews to return to Judea to Alexander the Great's death).

Xerxes was the Persian who “stirred up all against the kingdom of Greece.” The “great king” of 11:3 is Alexander the Great. Daniel has already predicted his “dominion” in 2:39, in “the third kingdom,” in 7:6 and the “leopard,” and in 8:1-8 in the “he-goat.” Alexander's “dominion” did not “go to his posterity” because the only son he had was murdered by ambitious underlings of Alexander. Alexander the Great died at the age of 32-33 in 323-322 B.C. When he died he “willed” his vast empire to be reigned over by 4 of his trusted army generals. We have dealt with that division of the Greek empire in Daniel chapters 2 and 7. Daniel 11:5 begins a prophecy concerning the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria and generations of wars against one another to gain control of the land of Palestine (a very strategic territory in the ancient Mediterranean world). Palestine was situated so that all the commercial and military activities had to go through it from the East to the West. That would be so even in the Roman empire from 60 B.C. to A.D. 450.

The Ptolemies (i.e., “kings of the south”) were Greeks (descendants of one of Alexander's generals, named Ptolemy) who ruled Egypt for approximately 200 years until Julius Caesar (ca. 48-44 B.C.). Greek cultural influence on Egypt was so strong it may even be seen in modern Egypt. The Seleucids (i.e., “kings of the north”) were Greeks (also descendants of one of Alexander's generals, named Seleucus) who ruled Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), and Syria for the same 200 years as Ptolemy ruled Egypt. Again, the Greek cultural influence on these areas is still strong today—Greek culture in these areas outlasted Roman culture.

The tremendous power of these two warring empires, with Palestinian Jews in between them, forced constant pressure on the Jews to be assimilated into Greek culture. A minority of Jews maintained their holiness and their Messianic identity under this great pressure only at the cost of great personal faith and sacrifice (see 1 & 2 Maccabees). Palestine became a constant battlefield—a “no-man’s land” buffer-zone between Egypt and Syria—as these two empires fought one another for control of strategic Palestine. Jewish crops were ruined, cities and villages plundered and destroyed, and many Jews were killed. The empire which controlled Palestine levied heavy taxes upon the Jews to pay for their wars and re-build their devastated homelands. It was the “time of trouble” which Daniel had predicted in 9:25. It was a time of great national crisis for the Jews—they would become vassals of Egypt for a while, then Syria for a while, then Egypt, then Syria, as these two empires fought one another in Palestine. These two empires and their kings continually robbed the Jewish temple of its treasures to finance their wars.

Some of the Jews (“violent men” 11:14) joined in with the Seleucids in their wars upon the Ptolemies. There were also Jews who favored the Ptolemies. So the Jews were divided in their loyalties to these two empires which continually caused the Jews trouble. It was during these times when it appeared the majority of the Jews were willing to lose their exclusive identity as a “people set apart to Jehovah,” that a small minority of Jewish people formed what was called the Hasidim (i.e., “holy ones”). The Hasadim later became the Pharisees (i.e., “separated ones”) of Jesus’ day. So, it is again, that Daniel gives the Jews detailed information about a long period of time of “trouble” for them before they could expect the Messiah (Anointed One) to appear—a period of at least 317 years between 323 B.C. to 6 B.C. But the worst of the “troubles” was yet to come beginning about 171 B.C. Antiochus IV became ruler of Syria. He called himself, “Antiochus Epiphanes” (i.e., “Antiochus The Illustrious”). The Jews called him, “Antiochus Epimanes” (i.e., “Antiochus Mad-man”). He gained the throne of Syria through deceit, murder and intrigue. He was not the rightful successor (Daniel predicts, “royal majesty has not been given”). He is called by God, the “contemptible one” (Dan. 11:21). He took the rightful high priest of the Jews off his throne and put that priest’s brother, Jason (Greek name for Joshua) in office because Jason loved Greek culture and promoted it for the Jews. Then to solidify his control over the Jews, Antiochus deposed Jason and put Menelaus (of the tribe of Benjamin—not supposed to be high priest at all) in the office of high priest. Menelaus paid a big bribe to Antiochus to get the office. Antiochus stationed a garrison of heathen Syrian soldiers right in the temple precincts of Jerusalem. This outraged the holy Jews. Antiochus IV attacked Egypt three times during this early part of his reign. Fighting Egypt, Antiochus IV found himself fighting against some of his nephews due to all the intermarrying of Selucids and Ptolemies which Daniel also predicted 200 years before they took place, Dan. 11:5-7; 11:17. In all this intermarrying Antiochus IV and some of his relatives in Egypt were trying to unite these two empires so there would be no more warring between them. But it did not come to pass because it was not yet time in the schedule of God for these struggles to cease—just as Daniel prophesied, “for the end is yet to be at the time appointed” by God Dan. 11:27. While Antiochus IV was trying to subdue Egypt and the Ptolemies by war, the Jews who followed Jason tried to attack Jerusalem and depose Menelaus from the high priesthood. But Jason was defeated and Menelaus turned all the temple treasury over to Antiochus IV, to keep his support. Antiochus IV returned to Syria to take care

of some pressing political affairs. But he knew that Judea was a boiling pot of revolt, so he had his heart set on grinding the Jews into submission. He hated them with malice because they (the minority of the Hasidim) kept agitating their fellow Jews to throw off the heathenism he tried to impose.

Again, Antiochus IV tried to subdue Egypt by war. This time a Roman legate met him at Alexandria and ordered him to return to Syria and leave Egypt alone. Rome was powerful enough at this point in time (ca. 168 B.C.) to have subdued most of the Mediterranean world (including Greece). Rome had made an alliance with Egypt to protect her against any enemies. The Roman legate, Popilius Laenas, drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus IV and told him he must make up his mind before stepping out of the circle whether he would withdraw from Egypt or fight Rome! Antiochus IV decided “discretion was the better part of valor,” and withdrew (“ships of Kittim” Dan. 11:30, refers to western regions of the Mediterranean, i.e., Rome). Antiochus IV had lived in Rome as a young man when he was taken there as a hostage and knew the Roman power. Enraged (Dan. 11:30), Antiochus IV turned back toward Syria. But he took out his rage on the Jews (i.e., “the holy covenant” 11:30). Thus began one of the darkest nights of Jewish history. Some of the Jews (the majority) forsook their Jewishness and did as Antiochus IV demanded. Antiochus IV decreed that all Jews must worship Greek idols. He had a statue of Jupiter made (in his own likeness) and set it up on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem. He robbed the temple of its holy vessels broke them, and melted them down. The Syrians put up idolatrous altars all over the temple and land, and practiced fornication with their “priestess”-prostitutes right in the temple courts. Pigs were sacrificed in on the Jewish temple altar and all over Palestine in heathen temples. Swine were “unclean” animals to the Jews. The worship of Bacchus (god of wine) was decreed compulsory—accompanied by drunken orgies. Jews were forbidden by threat of death to circumcise their male children. Some did and were hacked to pieces along with their children. All copies of the Hebrew Scriptures which the Syrians could find were burned and those who tried to protect them were killed, burned alive with the books. Antiochus IV forbade the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath. Those who tried were caught, their children tied about their necks and flung off the highest pinnacle of the wall of Jerusalem. Some Syrian soldiers made the temple their barracks. One heart-rending incident bears noting: 2 Maccabees 7:1ff records it. Seven brothers, with their mother, were ordered to eat swine’s flesh. When they first refused, they were tortured with whips and scourges. When they persisted in refusal the eldest son was scalped, his tongue cut out, his feet and hands cut off, and all this along with the rest of the boy was fried to death in a huge, bronze, frying pan! One son after another, seven in all, were done this way while the mother was forced to watch. This mother never gave in to the Syrians, but exhorted each son that God would raise him from the dead, because they held the law of God dearer than their physical life (see Heb. 11:35-38). THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY OF SUCH HEROES OF THE FAITH! However, many of Israel consented to this and sacrificed to idols, profaned the Sabbath (1 Macc. 1:45,55), turned upon their own people with the Syrians and drove the faithful Jews into caves, deserts and hills. Antiochus IV determined to stamp out the Jewish religion completely. He took away the “continual burnt offering” (Dan. 11:31). Thousands and thousands of Jews were slain by the Syrians (Dan. 11:32-33). Jews who were “wise” (probably who had read Daniel’s prophecies and believed them) understood what this was all about. Second Maccabees states: “Now I

beseech those that shall read this book (2 Macc.) that they be not shocked at these calamities, but that they consider the things that happened, not as being for the destruction, but for the correction of our nation” (2 Macc. 6:12ff). The hasadim raised up a band of Jewish “freedom fighters” and helped protect their brother Jews who wanted to resist paganism—they killed even those of their own countrymen who practiced paganism (1 Macc. 2:42ff; Dan. 11:34). This is when the “house of Mattathias” (of the family of Hasmonean) organized the great “Maccabean” revolt. Judas was the first, nick-named “Maccabeaus” (which means Judas, the “Hammerer”).

The Jews were to be “refined, cleansed and made white until the “time of the end” which was yet to come after the Syrian holocaust. The “time of the end” as has already been thoroughly established by Daniel, is the end of the Jewish dispensation and the coming of the Messiah during the Roman Empire (Dan. 9:24-27). The “time of the end” will be more explicitly established in Daniel, chapter 12, as the end of the Jewish dispensation (12:7). Antiochus IV believed in no gods at all! He believed only in himself—there was no one greater than he—not even the gods of his own people. Antiochus was contemptuous of the God of the Hebrews. He had no respect for the Jewish religion or any other religion. His power to demonstrate contempt for everything and everyone but himself would “prosper” until the “indignation” is accomplished. We have already learned that the “indignation” would not be ended until time for the Messiah to come and do the 6 things of 9:24-27. More specifically, the vision of the “little horn” out of Greece—Antiochus IV—was for the “latter end of the indignation”—see Dan. 8:9-26. Antiochus IV believed in war! His Greek forefathers, like Alexander the Great, used war, but believed in intellectualism, the mind, logic, philosophy—culture. Alexander planned to create Utopia by infusing the world with Greek wisdom. But Antiochus IV believed in war (like Nietzsche and Hitler and Lenin and Stalin and Osama ben Laden—Communists and Muslims believe in war, don’t think they don’t!). Antiochus IV preferred the Roman gods of war. He considered the temples of all other religions as opportunities for robbery and financing of his wars. Antiochus IV was strong and terrible. He eventually controlled the largest of the 4-sections of Alexander’s Greek world. His control was based wholly on force, war, terror, and ungodliness. That attitude about life has the seeds of destruction already sown in itself. “Those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword.” Human beings who have any faith in God cannot be or will not be enslaved forever. The truth, known and trusted, will always drive those who trust it toward freedom! Antiochus’s ungodly contempt for truth, justice, and goodness soon precipitated the Hasmonean revolt under the Maccabean brothers. Those Jews who committed themselves to God’s Word and were willing to sacrifice their lives, freed the Jewish people from the Syrian enslavement. In 165 B.C., Antiochus IV received alarming news from Parthia (Iran) and Armenia about a revolt in his empire. He withdrew the largest part of his troops from Judea to take to Parthia. Judas Maccabeaus inflicted such a defeat on the remaining Syrian troops they fled from Judea. On Chislev (December) 25th, the Maccabeans cleared the Temple in Jerusalem of all pagan idols, etc., and re-instituted Jewish holy services there. This date has been observed by all Jews from that time forward to now as Hanukkah (i.e., Feast of Dedication, of Feast of Lights). Antiochus IV, having suffered some defeats in war, retreated to Babylon, moved from there to Tabae in Persia, where he died “by no human hand” (Dan. 8:25), i.e., of a sickness the book of Maccabees calls “worms” and others think

was “consumption.” Whatever, his death was exactly as God predicted it and not, considering his being hated by so many, by assassination or slain in battle. The heroic Maccabean struggle lasted another 30 years. Many Jews sacrificed much to gain their freedom from Syria. In 134 B.C. they were free. But about 70 years later (64 B.C.) Pompey, the Roman general, invaded Palestine and placed the Jews under Roman rule. Sixty years after that (ca 6-5 B.C.) the King of the Jews—the Messiah—Jesus Christ was born. Seventy years after that (A.D. 66-70) the destruction of Jerusalem began. Antiochus IV lasted from 171 to 164 B.C. God did not let his redemptive program become extinct. He fought for his people through his servants such as Michael. It may have appeared to human beings that all of the Messianic future was lost. In fact, there was to be a “time of trouble” such as never had been since there was a nation till that time. Antiochus IV’s threat to the Messianic destiny was more severe than the Egyptian bondage, the time of the Judges, the divided kingdom, and the exile (721-536 B.C.). But God would bring that also to an end. “This too shall pass!” When Antiochus IV came to his end, God delivered all his people written in the “book of life” (Dan. 12:1). This is looking forward to the Messianic deliverance—not the physical deliverance under the Maccabeans! **THIS DELIVERANCE IS SPIRITUAL, NOT POLITICAL!** God revealed to Daniel it would be spiritual in Dan. 9:24-27 (and other places like Dan. 2 & 7, etc.). This deliverance is interpreted as spiritual and to be accomplished through the Messiah in the New Testament (see Lk. 1:32-33; 1:47-55; 1:68-79, and all the rest of the NT). It delivers from sin all the faithful saints of God from Abel and Enoch to this very day (cf. Heb. 9:15; Rom. 3:25). Many saints of God have already died (Moses, Abraham, David, etc.) but will be resurrected to life through the deliverance to come in the Messiah (Dan. 12:1-4). The “troubled times,” used wisely (12:3), would turn many to righteousness. The whole point of the terrible times of Antiochus IV, as God was using them was to “refine (a Jewish remnant), cleanse and make white, until the time appointed for the end” (Dan. 11:35). Many would, if they were “wise” (12:3) purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined (12:10). “It is a sign of great goodness when sinners are not allowed to go on in their ways, but are punished—therefore God never withdraws his mercy from us (or Jews) but he chastises his people with adversity and does not forsake them” (2 Macc. 6:13-16). The “troubled times” (Dan. 9:25) would confirm God’s word as trustworthy and would cause many to “run to and fro” and increase their knowledge of it (12:4). “Seal the book” (12:4) does not mean to hide it— it means, let it be confirmed that what has been predicted is true! This would be definitely confirmed when the predictions came to pass in the days of Antiochus IV. Josephus depicts many Jews turning to the writings of Daniel when the days of Antiochus IV came. They did so to see what God’s Word had to say about those times. “Troubled times” would presage (foretell) the end of the Jewish dispensation. “When the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished” 12:7b. Daniel had already predicted this in 9:26-27. Jesus expected people of his day to understand the Jewish dispensation was to end with the Messiah’s coming (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). The writer to the Hebrews (NT epistle) expected the Jewish Christians to have understood that, and thus not be pressured to return to Judaism, e.g., “...when you see the Day (Roman siege of Jerusalem, Lk. 21:20ff) approaching” Heb. 10:25 is the end of Jerusalem and Judaism, and “In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” Heb. 8:13 is predicting the soon to come destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism. The end of the

Mosaic dispensation would accomplish ALL that Daniel wrote about (except for the struggle of the church with the “fourth beast” in Dan. ch. 7) amplified in the book of Revelation and has also been fulfilled). THERE IS NOTHING LEFT IN DANIEL’S PROPHECIES TO BE FULFILLED. Those who use and abuse Daniel’s prophecies to make them yet future to the 21st century are not as careful as they should be in the application of accepted hermeneutic principles and rules. The proper way to look at Daniel is to consider chapters 7-12 as one unit. These chapters are inseparably connected. Jesus confirmed that Daniel’s prophecies “of the end time” were connected directly to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21).

Points To Ponder

What if you were told the precise details of future history for the three or four generations of your family and it included “troubled times” as Daniel was told? Would you make every effort to emphasize spiritual priorities?

What if the USA became a constant battlefield between Canada and Mexico as Palestine did between Egypt and Syria? How would you survive? Why does war brutalize some and soften others as it did the Jews of the times of the “kings of the north and south”?

The Ptolemies and Seleucids compromised practically every accepted ethical standard of mankind—robbing, killing, lying, using women as pawns. Does the end justify the means? In Christian evangelism? Christian fund-raising? What is a church profited if it gain funds and forfeits its soul?

Is God “contemptuous” of some human beings? Why would he call Antiochus IV “the contemptible one”? What makes a person “contemptible” with God? Remember Elymas (Acts 13:10)? Will God really show his contempt of all who do not know him and do not obey the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

If you had to endure a holocaust like that of Antiochus IV would your faith survive? What if someone burned all your Bibles, dismembered your children and burned them alive—would you encourage them to hope in the resurrection? A Jewish writer named Rubenstein said, “After Auschwitz (Hitler’s holocaust) to trust in Providence in the traditional (Biblical) sense is immoral as well as impossible, since it turns God into an accomplice of Hitler, deliberately willing the slaughter of the chosen for no other reason than the crime of being chosen.” Linda Breder, another Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, said, “there was no God in Auschwitz. There were such horrible conditions that God decided not to go there. We didn’t pray because we knew it wouldn’t help. Many of us who survived are atheists. They simply don’t trust in God.” (See Auschwitz, p. 298, by Laurence Rees, 2005, pub. Public Affairs).

Many Jews in the days of Antiochus IV joined themselves to paganism rather than suffer. Many Christians in the days of the Roman empire's persecutions renounced their faith, betrayed fellow Christians and worshiped the emperor rather than suffer. How committed are you to Christ? What would you be willing to endure for him? Do you have a point beyond which you would not go in professing your faith and living it?

Antiochus IV worshiped war. Why do some think war is the only way? Why do some think the U.N. will bring an end to war? Will it? Are Christians right to insist that only the kingdom of God produces peace among men?

God brought an end to Antiochus IV—but look how long it took! What is your time-quotient with God's promises to you? Can you wait upon the Lord? What if it doesn't come in your lifetime (see Heb. 11:32-40).

What kind of deliverance do you expect from God? Do you know you have spiritual deliverance? Is this your first priority in life? What if you had to live in a time like those days of Antiochus IV?

Are you "wise"? How many have you turned to righteousness? The wisest person in the world is not the sharp financial investor, Nobel Prize winning scientist, but the Christian who converts others.

If the Jews were expected by God to be "wise" and understand the obscure, symbolic, prophetic writings of Daniel and turn people to righteousness, where should you and I be in wisdom, understanding spiritual purification from the fulfillment of all the OT in Christ and the NT?

If Daniel was to conceal ("shut up and seal") what was in his book until the end of time, how come so many prophecy experts know what he is saying, now, before the end? The Hebrew phrase would read literally, "until time of an end." There is no definite article with "end" in Dan. 12, indicating an indefinite end, i.e., not the final end of the world. Daniel's prophecies are for Antiochus's end and Judaism's end.

God told Daniel to go about his task until his end and then he would "stand in his allotted place." Do you think God has an "allotted place" for you, individually, personally, at the end of your task on earth. If God is in charge of our "allotted places" at the end, is there any reason for us to compete with one another for a place? Do you think of heaven as a place where everyone is recognized or "placed"—or do you think of it as a place of mass confusion and where there are no longer any responsibilities or work? What will it be like?

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

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