**Daniel Commentary**

**Daniel Chapter 1**

Dan 1:1

**“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah.”** At first blush, Daniel 1:1 seems to contradict Jeremiah 25:1-9. Here in Daniel 1, in the third year of Jehoiakim of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar had already attacked Judah and taken captives, and Daniel was one of them (Dan. 1:2-6). In contrast, Jeremiah says it was Jehoiakim’s fourth year and Nebuchadnezzar had not even attacked yet.

Actually, both Jeremiah and Daniel are accurate. What the reader must know is that when dates are given in the Bible, they are usually, but not always, given from the point of view of the one who is writing. Jeremiah, living in Judah, was dated using the Judean Nisan year (the Judean year started in Nisan in Judah, just as our modern year starts in January). In contrast, Daniel, a captive in Babylon, was using Tishri dating, starting in the month Tishri, which was 6 months different (in this case, later) than Nisan. So when Nebuchadnezzar started his first year, it was the third year according to Daniel’s Tishri year dating, but it was already the fourth year of Jehoiakim according to Jeremiah’s Judean dating system.[[1]](#footnote-11301)

Dan 1:2

**“Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.”** The conquest of Judah by Babylon was in 605 BC, and that is the year that Daniel would have been taken captive to Babylon.

**“articles of the house of God.”** The “house of God” is the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple had lots of different kinds of gold and silver vessels. Some were used to keep and or transport water, oil, wine, and blood. Some vessels were used in butchering the animals and offering them as sacrifices. Also, the priests got to partake of some of the offerings, so some were used by the priests when they ate and drank. It was some of these holy vessels that Belshazzar had brought to his banquet hall to drink from when God wrote on the palace wall and pronounced his doom and the doom of his kingdom.

**“into the land of Shinar.”** “Shinar” is the ancient biblical name for lower Mesopotamia, where the city of Babylon was located. By the time of this prophecy, the country of Babylon was huge and included all the territory that Nebuchadnezzar had conquered. By saying “the land of Shinar” instead of “the land of Babylon” the Author gives us a much more accurate understanding of where Daniel was taken. It is also possible that using the word “Shinar” links the Neo-Babylonian empire with the ancient empire of Nimrod, whose capital was in the land of Shinar (Gen. 10:8-12).

Dan 1:3

**“Ashpenaz the commander of his eunuchs.”** At this time in history, the word “eunuch” was used of both literal eunuchs and high officials. That seems to be due to the fact that many high officials were eunuchs, so the word “eunuch” was used generally of both literal eunuchs and high officials. Given that, there is no way to tell whether Ashpenaz was a eunuch himself, although he was in charge of some and may have well been a literal eunuch. Also, although some people believe Daniel and his friends were made literal eunuchs, that is likely not the case.

**“the people of Israel.”** The Hebrew phrase, “*ben yisrael*” (מִבְּנֵ֧י יִשְׂרָאֵ֛ל) is literally “sons of Israel,” but it is usually translated “children of Israel.” It refers to the people of Israel, who were the “children” (descendants) of Jacob, who was given the name “Israel.” Translating *ben yisrael* as “children of Israel” in this context would be misleading because most people would think that all the people that Nebuchadnezzar brought from Babylon were young people, which is not what the text is saying. “Children of Israel” means “people of Israel” or “Israelites.” Historically what happened was that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and brought Israelites from there to Babylon. Although he brought many people, Daniel 1 focuses on Nebuchadnezzar’s special request to have intelligent young people brought that might become valuable to him, and among those young Israelites were Daniel (Belteshazzar), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego).

Dan 1:7

**“Belteshazzar.”** The commander of the eunuchs for Nebuchadnezzar changed the names of the young men from Judah to Babylonian names. Changing a person’s name was a cultural way to show authority over someone else. In this case, changing the names not only showed authority, but since the young men were in training to have positions in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom, the Babylonian name would help them fit better into that society (for more on changing someone’s name, see REV commentary on John 1:42).

Arriving at the meaning of a biblical name is not exact, because the names are often composed of word roots or combinations of word roots, but how those were understood in the real life of the person usually cannot be determined with certainty. The NET text note on Daniel 1:7 says: “The probable etymologies are as follows: Belteshazzar means “protect his life,” although the MT [Masoretic Hebrew text] vocalization may suggest “Belti, protect the king” (cf. Dan 4:8); Shadrach perhaps means “command of Aku”; Meshach is of uncertain meaning; and Abednego means “servant of Nego.” Assigning Babylonian names to the Hebrew youths may have been an attempt to erase from their memory their Israelite heritage.

Dan 1:17

**“God gave them knowledge and skill.”** The Bible does not specifically say that God put his spirit upon Daniel and the others like it often does in other places (cf. Num. 11:25; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13; 2 Chron. 15:1), but the fact that the text says “God gave them knowledge” shows that He had put His holy spirit upon them.

[For more information on revelation, what it is, and how God gives it, see commentary on Gal. 1:12.]

Dan 1:21

**“even to the first year of King Cyrus.”** This verse is not saying that Daniel’s life and ministry stopped during Cyrus’ first year; that would contradict Daniel 10:1. It is saying that Daniel still continued up to that point, when the Babylonian Empire came to an end, which was an amazing feat in those days. Daniel was taken into captivity by the Babylonians when he was in his mid-teenage years, and yet was not only still alive, but was still performing his ministry when Cyrus the Great of Persia (c. 600-530 BC) began to reign over Babylon (the conquest was October, 539 BC). Daniel would likely have been around 85 years old when Cyrus conquered Babylon.

**Daniel Chapter 2**

Dan 2:1

**“In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.”** God gave Nebuchadnezzar his dream which resulted in the elevation of Daniel (Belteshazzar), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) to top positions in Babylon. In those positions they were able to considerably influence the religious and political climate of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar himself reigned 44 years, and with this incident began to honor Yahweh, the God of Israel. He honored other gods as well, but he clearly recognized Yahweh as a most important, perhaps even the most important, God.

Dan 2:3

**“my spirit is troubled.”** This is one of the places where “spirit” refers to thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. Nebuchadnezzar’s thoughts and emotions were troubled by the dream he had the night before.

Dan 2:5

**“This is what I have decided.”** This portion of Daniel is in Aramaic, and the idea of the texts is that a command had “gone,” or “gone out” from the king. With rare exception, all modern versions, including the New King James Version, say something like what is in the REV, that King Nebuchadnezzar had made a firm decision about how he was going to handle the situation. In order to be sure that the wise men of Babylon were accurate in their interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar had decided that they were to tell him what the dream was as well as the interpretation. The older versions of the Bible such as the Geneva (1599) or the King James Version (1611), are worded as if Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the dream, but that is not what happened.

**“you will be cut in pieces.”** The text is more literally, “you will be made limbs” or “you will be made pieces.” This was not an idle threat, Nebuchadnezzar was fully capable of inflicting such a punishment. John Collins writes, “The dismemberment of enemies is attested in ancient Mesopotamia, but see also the late cases of the death of Antiochus III as reported in 2 Macc 1:16 and the dismemberment of an informer in the time of Herod (Ant 15.8.4; 289).[[2]](#footnote-29700) Because the text can be understood in different ways and the punishment delivered different ways, and the word “limb” in the text, some English versions read that you will be “torn limb from limb,” but the word “piece” or “limb” only occurs once in the text.

**“dunghill.”** It is hard to know exactly what Nebuchadnezzar had in mind here, and his punishment might even have varied according to the severity of the crime. The word can refer to a ruins after the house has been demolished, a garbage dump, or a public latrine. Given his emotional state at the time, that he would suggest that the houses of people who spoke against God would be made into public latrines is quite likely.

Dan 2:9

**“until time has changed things.”** There are a number of things that could change with time. Nebuchadnezzar may lose interest in the dream and focus on other things in his life or kingdom, or he may have another dream that modifies this one, or something might happen that would make the wise men very valuable and he might relent on his threat.

Dan 2:11

**“except the gods.”** We can see why Nebuchadnezzar would become so furious at this answer. The wise men usually claimed to know the will of the gods, most often by divination, but also by visions and dreams. So to claim to be able to tell the will of the gods but also claim to not know what the gods could reveal about this dream made them look like frauds. As the story develops, we see that Daniel did know Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and he got that knowledge from Yahweh, the god (actually, “God”) of Israel.

Dan 2:12

**“violently angry.”** As John Collins points out, this is the figure of speech hendiadys in the Aramaic text, “enraged and angry,” which basically means “violently angry.”[[3]](#footnote-31009)

[See figure of speech “hendiadys.”]

Dan 2:15

**“urgent.”** The Aramaic word can also mean “harsh,” but in the context, the fact that Nebuchadnezzar thought the wise men had conspired to make up lies about his dream would explain the harshness, but why the need to act so hastily? What had gotten the king so stirred up? Daniel did not ask the death sentence be reduced if it was warranted, but rather that the speed of executing the decree be modified and that he be given some time to seek God.

Dan 2:25

**“I have found.”** Arioch was experienced enough not to miss this chance to make himself seem more important to Nebuchadnezzar. In a culture where the favor of the king could make or break a person’s future, what Arioch said could pay huge dividends down the road. Of course, if Daniel was wrong, it could mean Arioch’s head, so he must have really trusted Daniel.

Dan 2:28

**“there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets.”** This statement by Daniel could well be the key to understanding why Nebuchadnezzar was so zealous about having people bow down before his statue. He knew that he had had a dream from God and what he built represented God’s revelation to humankind. There is no indication in the text that Nebuchadnezzar made a statue of himself or for his own glory, especially when the revelation from God was that his kingdom would come to an end and be replaced by other kingdoms that would come after him. Contrast this revelation of his empire coming to an end with the revelation that Nathan gave to David that his dynasty would last forever (2 Sam. 7:13, 16, 25-29).

Dan 2:31

**“statue.”** Although many English versions read “image,” that gives the wrong impression to the reader. The Aramaic word is *tselem* (#06755 צֶלֶם), and what Nebuchadnezzar saw was not an “image” in the modern sense of an image in a mirror or in one’s mind, but an “image” of something in the sense that an idol is an “image” of a god, a physical representation of a god. What Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was a statue, in this case, a statue—a physical representation—that represented the timeline of future kingdoms.

Dan 2:34

**“it struck the statue on its feet.”** It has been historically believed that the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay in Daniel’s vision refer to the Roman Empire. There are a number of reasons why people believe this; for example, Rome was divided into two parts, Western and Eastern Rome, which at first glance seems to match the two legs of the image. Furthermore, Westerners tend to focus on Rome. However, the Bible never says the fourth kingdom is Rome, and there are a number of reasons why the Roman Empire is not the best choice. There is evidence that the Islamic “kingdom” (“empire”), the Caliphate, is much more likely than Rome (by the way, the Islamic Empire is also divided into two major parts).

One of the reasons Rome cannot be the fourth kingdom is that the vision was given to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and Rome never controlled Babylon. In the vision, Daniel was explaining to Nebuchadnezzar the “kingdoms” that would arise after him (we often refer to these “kingdoms” as “empires”). Thus, the vision focuses on kingdoms that were in the area of Babylon. Many ancient empires arose around the world that were arguably as great as Babylon, but they were not part of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision because they were not in the area of Babylon. Thus it seems that Rome, to the west of Babylon, was one of those empires not included in the vision. The empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece all controlled Babylon and were the first three empires of the vision—the head of gold, chest of silver, and belly and thighs of bronze.

Another reason that Rome is not a good candidate for the fourth empire in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision is that this fourth empire, or “fourth beast,” is specifically said on three different occasions to be “different from all the others” (Dan. 7:7, 19, 23). It will devour, crush, and trample all the other kingdoms. But Rome was not different from the kingdoms that came before it, and it did not devour, crush, and trample the kingdoms it conquered. On the contrary, Rome assimilated the kingdoms it conquered and adopted much from them, including art, music, athletics, religion, language, and more. In fact, the most widely spoken language of the Roman empire was Greek, not Latin. But the Islamic empire is different from the kingdoms that came before it. Islam is so strict that no other worship is tolerated, Arabic is the dominant language, and almost everything in the culture from dress, to art, and even to personal sexual behavior, is strictly limited to what Islamic law allows. The countries that have been conquered by Islam have quickly succumbed to its strict regulations.

Another reason that the Roman Empire is not a good candidate for the fourth kingdom is that the fourth empire will exist when Christ fights the Battle of Armageddon and conquers the earth (Dan. 2:44). But the Roman Empire does not exist now, and it seems quite impossible that it would arise in these last days. The great empire that arose in the area of Babylon after Greece, and that will almost certainly exist at the time of Christ’s return, is the Islamic Empire.

Some defenders of the Rome theory say that the fourth empire will be the Roman Catholic Church, but that does not fit with the details given in the Bible. The fourth empire in Daniel is an actual empire that conquers others and crushes and smashes them. But the Roman Catholic Church is not that kind of empire. Many different religions and cultures exist even where Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion. Furthermore, the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are moving in the opposite direction of Daniel’s prophecy. Instead of being vehemently against other religions and crushing them, the Catholic Church is becoming more welcoming of other religions and beliefs, even to the point of Pope Francis saying he would baptize aliens if they came to Earth (May 2014).

Another thing about Nebuchadnezzar’s vision is that during the time of the fourth empire, “a stone was cut out, but not by *human* hands” and it smashes the fourth empire (Dan. 2:34). The “stone” is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and he will destroy the fourth empire, which at that time will be ruled by the Antichrist. Yet Daniel goes on to say that when that fourth empire is destroyed, all the empires before it will be destroyed also (Dan. 2:35). This has caused some commentators to suggest that all of the four empires exist together, but it is clear that they do not, they succeed one another (Dan. 2:39; 7:4-7). How then are they all destroyed when the Messiah conquers the earth and smashes the fourth kingdom? The answer is that although the Islamic Empire covers the land area of the Babylonian Empire before it, here on the earth there are still vestiges of all the ungodly earthly kingdoms that have existed until now. Some remnants of those kingdoms are small, but they are still there. Furthermore, and more to the point, the spiritual influences that have existed from one ungodly kingdom to another still exist. The Devil and his demons, who promote things such things as idolatry, strife, sexual perversion, and general ungodliness, continue to exist and persist in kingdom after kingdom. But when Christ conquers the earth and sets up his kingdom, it will fill the earth (cf. Ps. 2:8; 66:4; 72:8-11; Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:14; Zech. 9:10), and the evil influences of the Devil and his demons will be done away with (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). The ungodliness that has characterized all earthly kingdoms will all be swept away when Christ conquers the earth.

In closing, we should address an issue that has been pointed out by those commentators who wish to defend that the legs of iron are Rome. Those commentators generally assert that the point of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision was the control of Jerusalem, not the control of the area of Babylon. We would first point out that the Bible never says that; it is only an assumption made because in general Israel and Jerusalem are major topics of prophecy. Besides, it does not appear that Israel was of great concern in Nebuchadnezzar’s mind when he had the vision, especially not at that early time in his life. However, if Jerusalem is in mind in the vision, the Islamic Empire still makes more sense as a fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision than the Roman Empire does, and for a couple of different reasons.

For one thing, the legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue do not match the history of Rome. The Western Roman Empire started long before the Eastern Roman Empire and ceased to exist long before the Eastern Empire ceased to exist. The Western Roman Empire started in 27 BC (although the conquest of Israel by the Roman Republic was in 63 BC). Western Rome declined for years, but formally ended in AD 476. The Eastern Roman Empire, usually referred to as the Byzantine Empire, started in AD 330 when the Roman emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from the city of Rome to Constantinople. The Byzantines lost control of Israel in 638 when the Muslims took control of it. Thus, it is hard to see how Western Rome and Eastern Rome can be portrayed as two legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s image when historically they only co-existed for less than 150 years. The image would be standing first on one leg, then on the other leg. In contrast, the division of the Islamic Empire into two major sects started in the first generation after the death of Mohammad, and continued throughout the Caliphate and still exists today. If the fourth beast is the Islamic Empire, then the two legs are equal and appropriate.

Also, the Islamic Empire would be a better fit for Nebuchadnezzar’s vision because it has controlled Jerusalem longer than Rome did. The Romans conquered Israel in 63 BC when Rome was still a Republic. Then starting in 27 BC the Western Roman Empire, based out of Rome, and then later the Eastern Roman Empire, based out of Constantinople, controlled Israel until AD 638, when the Muslims took control of it (there had been a minor disruption of Roman control, from AD 614 to 629, when the Persians controlled Jerusalem). However, the Muslim control over Jerusalem, starting in AD 638, was considerably longer than Rome’s control.

Although Jerusalem was ruled by Muslims from Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and Turkey at different times, Israel was under Muslim control from AD 638 until the Christians conquered Jerusalem in AD 1099, in the First Crusade. However, the Christians who organized and led the Crusades were not from Eastern Rome, they were from places like Belgium, France, and England, in what had once been Western Rome but was no longer Western Rome, so they were not technically “Romans,” even though some people from Eastern Rome joined that crusade. The Christians and Muslims exchanged rule over various cities in Israel for almost 200 years through the nine distinct Crusades, and when the Crusaders were in control of Jerusalem, it was called “the Kingdom of Jerusalem” or sometimes “the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.”

The time the Christians were in control of Jerusalem and the time the Muslims were in control of it was pretty evenly split during the time of the Crusaders, with the Christians dominating the first half of the time, and the Muslims dominating the second half. Then, in AD 1291, the Muslim ruler Saladin gained and kept control of Israel. In 1798 Napoleon entered Palestine, and although he captured a few cities, he never ousted the Muslims from Jerusalem or most of Israel, and he withdrew to Egypt the following year. The Muslims kept control of Israel until 1917 when the British took control after World War 1.

Thus, although Western and Eastern Rome controlled Israel for some 700 years, the Muslims controlled Israel for almost 1,200 years. So, if Nebuchadnezzar’s vision is about Jerusalem, the Islamic empire is still a better choice than Rome, especially given that the fourth empire will be around and in control of Jerusalem when Christ conquers the earth. Islam is indeed well-positioned to take control of much of the world. David Garrison writes: “The House of Islam, *Dar al-Islam* in Arabic, is the name Muslims give to an invisible religious empire that stretches from West Africa to the Indonesian archipelago, encompassing 49 nations and 1.6 billion people. Dwarfing the size of any previous earthly kingdom, Islam directs the spiritual affairs of nearly a quarter of the world’s population.”[[4]](#footnote-14626) If the Antichrist gains control of that empire, he will be powerful indeed.

Dan 2:35

**“filled the whole earth.”** The coming Kingdom of Christ on earth will be worldwide. In the future, Christ will come back to earth, fight the battle of Armageddon, and conquer the earth. Then he will set up his kingdom and rule over the whole earth, just as Psalm 2:8 says. It is because Christ’s Kingdom will be on earth and fill the earth that in the Sermon on the Mount Christ said, “Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5) and that Revelation says God’s people will “reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10). There are a number of verses that say Christ’s kingdom will fill the earth (cf. Ps. 2:8; 72:8-11; Dan. 2:35; 7:14; Mic. 5:4; Zech. 9:9-10).

[For more on the coming Kingdom of Christ on earth, the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Dan 2:38

**“birds of the heavens.”** The phrase means “the birds of the air.” This is an example of a place where “the heavens” refers to the air above the earth.

**“into your hand.”** This is an idiom for “under your authority.”

Dan 2:43

**“they will mix themselves with the seed of men.”** The most common understanding of this is that it is idiomatic for intermarriages among the different groups, but even so, the groups will not combine but will remain separate. The kingdom that will be iron mixed with clay is not the Roman Empire of the past for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it was not shattered by Christ. The kingdom in Daniel 2:43 that is iron and clay is the future kingdom of the Antichrist, and that kingdom will be powerful but internally divided, as we can see by reading Revelation and noting the number of “kings” who have power in it and the fact that they war against each other. It seems from the prophecy in Daniel that these future kingdoms (nations) that make up the kingdom of the Antichrist will try at different times to unite with each other but try unsuccessfully.

Dan 2:46

**“prostrated himself before.”** The act of prostration was an act of worship, and the word is sometimes translated “worship,” especially when it is used in relation to God or a god (see Word Study: “Worship”; here in Daniel the Aramaic word for prostration is used, not the Hebrew word).

Dan 2:49

**“Daniel...gate of the king.”** This designates Daniel as one of the royal officials (cf. Esther 3:2). It was customary for kings and officials to sit in the gate and judge the people of the city and conduct business (e.g., 2 Sam. 19:8; 1 Kings 22:10; 2 Chron. 18:9; Esther 2:21; Jer. 38:7; Dan. 2:49), and also the elders of a city would sit at the city gate (Gen. 19:1, 9; Deut. 21:19; 22:15; 25:7; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:11; 1 Sam. 4:18; Esther 2:19, 21; 3:2; Lam. 5:14).

[For more on the elders at the gate, see commentary on Ruth 4:11; and for Wisdom being at the city gate, see commentary on Prov. 1:21.]

**Daniel Chapter 3**

Dan 3:1

**“an image of gold.”** The statue would not have had to have been pure gold to be considered “an image of gold.” It was almost certainly overlaid with gold.

**“whose height was 60 cubits, and its width six cubits.”** Given the standard 18-inch cubit, the statue was about 90 feet (27.5 meters) high and 9 feet (2.7 meters) wide. These are not normal human proportions, so it is likely that the statue measurement included some kind of base for the human-like statue.

**“in the plain of Dura.”** This location has never been specifically identified, and there were several different places that had that name. It makes sense, however, that this “plain of Dura” was located close to Babylon. Also, a statue of this size would be very possible. There were other tall statues in the ancient world. For example, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world was the Colossus of Rhodes, which was a huge statue of the god Helios that stood at the entrance to the harbor at Rhodes, and it was said to be 70 cubits tall (105 ft or 32 m), and so it would have been even taller than Nebuchadnezzar’s statue.

Dan 3:4

**“commanded.”** The Hebrew verb is the common word *amar* (#0560 אַמַר), which just means “said” or “say,” but it is used in many contexts and sometimes takes on the meaning of “command,” as it does here in Daniel 3:4, or often it is used with the connotation of “promise.” What the king said to do was a de facto command.

Dan 3:5

**“horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltry, harp, pipe.”** The exact nature of some of these musical instruments is not known, and some of the Aramaic words seem to be loanwords from ancient Greek.

**“worship.”** The Hebrew could also be translated “pay homage to” (cf. NET, YLT).

[For more on kneeling down in homage or worship, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

Dan 3:6

**“the same hour.”** This event was fairly early in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, and as king over a large, diverse, and growing empire, he had to rule with an iron hand or rebellions would pop up like mushrooms. In this case, he would move quickly against any defiance of his command.

**“be cast into the middle of a burning fiery furnace.”** Death by burning is well documented in the ancient Near East, even in the Bible. Judah was going to burn Tamar for sexual promiscuity (Gen. 38:24). A priest’s daughter who engaged in prostitution was to be burned (Lev. 21:9), and some forms of incest were punished that way (Lev. 20:14) (it must be noted that it is possible the person was killed first then the dead body burned. that was the case with Achan and his family, cf. Josh. 7:15, 25). There are records attesting that the Assyrian king, Ashurnasipal II, burned some prisoners alive. Also, the ancient Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, dating from the early Babylonian empire, stipulates death by burning for various crimes. Also, Jeremiah 29:20-23 tells of two false prophets who Nebuchadnezzar burned in the fire.

Dan 3:7

**“all the peoples, the nations, and the languages.”** This refers to all the people in the area of Babylon who came from different nations and who spoke different languages, all bowed down and paid homage to the statue.

Dan 3:8

**“Chaldeans.”** Originally Chaldea was the name of a small territory to the north of the Persian Gulf and going south into the Arabian peninsula. It was a difficult and inhospitable area, and so the Chaldeans were somewhat independent. As Assyria grew, and then with the dominance of Babylon, in some contexts “Chaldea” became synonymous with Babylonia, however, that does not seem to be the case here. In this context, the “Chaldeans” are likely from the area of traditional Chaldea and ancient Babylon and were likely jealous of the Jews and the power and prestige they had under Nebuchadnezzar, something that shows up in their malicious slander against the Jews.

**“brought an accusation against.”** The literal Aramaic text—and Daniel was written in Aramaic, not Hebrew—is “ate the pieces of” the Jews, which is a graphic idiom for malicious slander. The Chaldeans ate the pieces of the Jews, they slandered them.

Dan 3:14

**“answered and said.”** The original text of the Old and New Testaments has the phrase, “answered and said” more than 100 times in the Bible, and it can sometimes be confusing because “answered and said” is often used when no one asked a question. The phrase is an idiom, so it gets its meaning from the cultural use and not the specific meanings of the words in the phrase, but in this case the idiom has a literal overtone behind it. The person who “answered and said” may not have been answering a direct question from someone, but they were answering and addressing the situation that was presenting itself before them. For example, in this case, Nebuchadnezzar was answering to the situation that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had not bowed down before Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image.

Dan 3:15

**“Now if you are ready...to fall down and worship the image that I have made….! But if you do not...you will be cast the same hour into the middle of a burning fiery furnace.”** Nebuchadnezzar never completes his first sentence, he just stops mid-sentence, letting the hearers imagine what will happen to them if they obey Nebuchadnezzar. The sudden silence is the figure of speech aposiopesis (see commentary on Luke 19:42).

Dan 3:17

**“If our God whom we serve exists.”** The NET text note has this explanation: “The Aramaic expression used here is very difficult to interpret. The question concerns the meaning and syntax of ) אִיתַי'*itay*, ‘is’ or ‘exist’(.” There are several possibilities. (1) Some interpreters take this word closely with the participle later in the verse ) יָכִל*yakhil*, ‘able’(, understanding the two words to form a periphrastic construction (‘if our God is…able’…(2) Other interpreters take the first part of v. 17 to mean ‘If it is so, then our God will deliver us’ (cf. KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB). However, the normal sense of *'itay* is existence…The statement may be an implicit reference back to Nebuchadnezzar’s comment in v. 15, which denies the existence of a god capable of delivering from the king’s power.” Both the NET and CSB have the idea of “If our God whom we serve exists.”[[5]](#footnote-19312)

**“and he can deliver us.”** The form of the verb “deliver” (“deliver,” “save,” “rescue”) can either be an imperfect and thus “he will save,” or a jussive, “may he save” (or “let him save”). The context calls for the jussive, because in the next verse, Daniel 3:18, they say that they might not be saved, but even if not they would not worship Nebuchadnezzar’s image. Also, there is no evidence that these three youths knew beforehand they would be saved, and it is unlikely that they would have directly challenged Nebuchadnezzar that way even if they knew they would be saved. Simply saying that their God could save them would be enough.

Dan 3:19

**“form of his appearance.”** In this case, this refers to the expression on Nebuchadnezzar’s face.

Dan 3:25

**“I see four men.”** The “fourth man” was an angel who appeared in the form of a human (Dan. 3:28). Angels often appeared as human beings, and many times the people who interacted with them were not even aware they were speaking to an angel. Although it is commonly taught that this “fourth man” was Jesus, that is only tradition, there is no evidence for it.

[For more on Jesus not being God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

**“the appearance of the fourth is like a son of a god.”** In Hebrew, the last phrase is *ben elohim* (לְבַר־אֱלָהִֽין), but *elohim* is a noun that is always plural in form, and it can refer to “a god,” “gods,” or “God” (see commentary on Gen. 1:1). Because of the large number of potential meanings of *elohim*, the word has to be translated from its context and the culture of the speaker. In this context, we know that Nebuchadnezzar worshiped a number of Babylonian gods, and at this time did not recognize Yahweh as an important god. In fact, just a couple of minutes earlier, when the three young men defied him, he denied the power of Yahweh and said, “who is that god that can deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan. 3:15). Only when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could be seen to be alive and unhurt in the fire did Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge their God as the “Most High God” (Dan. 3:26).

Dan 3:28

**“And they changed the king’s word.”** The shift to the plural verb here, in contrast to the singular verb “delivered” earlier in the sentence, marks the shift from speaking about God and His angel to speaking about the actions of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was those three, by their actions and faithfulness to their God, Yahweh, who changed Nebuchadnezzar’s word.

Dan 3:29

**“will be cut in pieces.”** See commentary on Daniel 2:5.

**“dunghill.”** See commentary on Daniel 2:5.

**Daniel Chapter 4**

Dan 4:12

**“the animals of the field found shelter under it.”** The Aramaic can also be translated as “shade,” but “shelter” is a good translation and is more general.

Dan 4:16

**“mind.”** The Hebrew word is often translated “heart,” but in this context, it refers to the thoughts, thus the translation “mind.”

**“seven times.”** The exact amount of time that this represents is debated.

Dan 4:17

**“the decree of the watchers.”** God has an inner divine council of spirit beings who help Him administer His creation, and Daniel 4:13-25 gives us some excellent insight into that divine council. In Daniel, members of God’s divine council are referred to as “watchers” and “holy ones.” From the context of Daniel and with the help of the scope of Scripture, we can see that “the watchers” are spirit beings who help to watch over God’s creation and make and enforce decrees. The word “watcher” is unique to Daniel, and is a good example of how God works with a person in the terms of his understanding. In this case, due to Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian upbringing and culture, he would have already believed in some sort of heavenly council, or “council of gods,” but he would have viewed any such council in pagan terms, not the way the divine council is revealed in Scripture. So God, in typical loving fashion, gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream in a way that he could understand it, but that still fit the truth of the Scripture. It showed that God worked with other “gods” (high-ranking spirit beings), but was still ultimately in control of the situation and the final decision maker.

Nebuchadnezzar tells Daniel, “I saw in the visions of my head on my bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven” (Dan. 4:13). Daniel then interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and mentions that what is about to happen to Nebuchadnezzar is “by the decree of the watchers” (Dan. 4:17), but is also a “decree of the Most High” (Dan. 4:24). That the decree is by both the watchers and the Most High God shows that God is working with a council of spirit beings to make and enforce decrees. The picture being drawn in Daniel is of a council that works together to agree upon a decree, but ultimately it is “the Most High” who rules the council, which then carries out His will.

[For more information about God working with a divine council, see commentary on Gen. 1:26.]

**Daniel Chapter 5**

Dan 5:5

**“opposite the lampstand.”** The wall of the palace opposite the lampstand would be the most well-lit spot in the room. God wanted everyone to see what He was doing and what the fingers were writing.

Dan 5:6

**“the king’s face became pale.”** The literal Aramaic is more like, “the king’s brightness changed in him.” The idea is that the natural face is bright and flesh-colored or reddish-colored, and perhaps more so when the person has been drinking, but now the king is so frightened that the blood drained from his face such that it turned pale.

**“the joints of his loins were loosed.”** This could refer to the fact that Belshazzar’s body was so shaken that his knees freely struck against each other, and the word “struck” implies that they struck hard, basically pounding each other. Some scholars think that his loins being loosed refers to Belshazzar losing control of his bowels and defecating on himself (cf. CSB), but that may be assuming too much about the situation.

Dan 5:7

**“purple.”** Purple dye was rare and very expensive (see commentary on 2 Chron. 3:14).

**“the third ruler in the kingdom.”** What we learn from Babylonian history is that Belshazzar was already the second ruler in the kingdom, acting as de facto king. The actual king was Nabonidus, but he was away from Babylon at this time and had been away for a number of years, so Belshazzar acted as king in his absence, and so is rightly called “king” in the book of Daniel. That Belshazzar himself was the second ruler in the kingdom explains why the best he could offer to anyone who could read the writing was to be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Dan 5:24

**“sent from him.”** The text is idiomatic and more literally, “sent from before him,” or “sent from his presence,” but the meaning is “sent from him.”

Dan 5:27

**“weighed on the scales.”** In the ancient world, when people were buying or selling, or determining the value of something, things were weighed on scales. The “scales” were most often a cord that was tied to the middle of a stick, and at the ends of the stick were cords that went down to small dishes. In buying or selling grain, for example, the merchant would hold the scales up by the cord in the middle of the stick, and then some grain was placed in one dish while weights, usually made of stone, were placed in the other dish (cf. Prov. 11:1; 20:23). When the scales balanced, the weight, and thus the value, of the grain was known. In Daniel’s description of Belshazzar, he is put in one dish while God’s value of a godly human being is put in the other dish. Sadly, Belshazzar had been such a miserable example of a human being that he did not have enough weight to balance the scales; hence his fate was sealed and he was doomed to die.

There is a Judgment Day for every human, at which time each person will be “valued,” and it will be determined whether or not the person is saved and will live forever, or is condemned and will die in the Lake of Fire. The Bible is very clear about that, and every person should be aware of it and thus should take their life seriously and get saved through Jesus Christ by obeying Romans 10:9. Then, wise believers go on to obey God’s commands to have rewards in the next life.

[For more on how to be saved, see Rom. 10:9. For more on what the future holds for those who are saved, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the rewards that obedient Christians will receive, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10. For more on the fate of the unsaved, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Dan 5:28

**“the Persians and the Medes.”** Media had been a powerful nation but had been conquered by the Persians. Nevertheless, they had much in common, including some ancient laws. For more on the country of Media, see the REV commentary on Jeremiah 51:11.

**Daniel Chapter 6**

Dan 6:8

**“the law of the Medes and Persians.”** Media had been a powerful nation but had been conquered by the Persians. Nevertheless, the two nations had much in common, including some ancient laws. For more on the country of Media, see the REV commentary on Jeremiah 51:11.

Dan 6:10

**“his windows were open toward Jerusalem.”** It was customary among the Jews to pray toward Jerusalem (see commentary on 1 Kings 8:30).

**“three times a day.”** The first and last of these times was most likely the time of the morning and evening sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem, although for much of Daniel’s life there would not have been a Temple because it had been burned down by Nebuchadnezzar.

Dan 6:11

**“petitions and supplications.”** The Hebrew words are singular, “petition and supplication,” but it is a collective singular for a lot of different ones, thus the plural in English.

Dan 6:17

**“signet.”** Here it seems that the “signet” was a signet ring, which was a ring that was engraved with special letters and/or characters that identified the owner of the ring.

[For more on signet rings and cylinder seals, see commentary on Gen. 41:42.]

**Daniel Chapter 7**

Dan 7:2

**“four spirits of heaven.”** The word “spirits” is *ruach* (#07308 רוּחַ), and *ruach* has many definitions, including “wind,” “breath,” “spirit” in the sense of the spirit life of a person or animal (Eccl. 3:21), and also “spirit” in the sense of an angel or demon. When great movements of people occur, there is spiritual power and influence involved. Merrill Unger writes: “However, in the realm of human government the unseen personalities of the evil supernatural sphere are just as real and active as their visible human agents, and any deeper interpretation of human history, tracing in it a divine purpose and goal, must take into account the invisible yet very real realm of spirit.”[[6]](#footnote-24909)

**“were stirring up.”** The Aramaic can also be translated “broke forth upon” (cf. CJB, JPS). Both meanings have validity, because the great sea is people, and when spirits (angels or demons) move masses of people they move quickly and powerfully, but then keep stirring the people up to action.

**“Great Sea.”** The common Old Testament name for the Mediterranean Sea. That the term “great sea” is a hypocatastasis and can be representative of many nations, which is the case here in Daniel, is made clear in Revelation 17:15. However, it is most likely the case that in this vision Daniel actually saw a vision of a Great Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and not a sea of people. But he would have understood the prophetic vision and how the sea was used in biblical prophecy and that it represented a great mass of people. Daniel would certainly have understood that, as is clear from reading the book of Daniel.

[For more information on “great sea,” see commentary on Rev. 17:15, “Peoples, and multitudes, and nations.” For more information on hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

Dan 7:4

**“like a lion.”** This first “beast” is the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The fact that before its demise a man’s heart was given to it likely refers to the change in Nebuchadnezzar at the end of his life (cf. Dan. 4:1-37).

Dan 7:5

**“a bear”** The bear is the Medo-Persian Empire, and it is raised up on one side because in the confederation of Persia and Media, Persia was always the dominant power.

**“three ribs were in its mouth.”** The three ribs represent the three kingdoms that the Persians conquered: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.

Dan 7:6

**“a leopard.”** This is the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, and the four wings represent great speed. Alexander became king in 336 BC, and had conquered from India to Ethiopia before his death in 323 BC. When he died, his kingdom was divided into four smaller kingdoms, the four heads of the beast. His generals Antipater and Cassander ruled Macedon and Greece; Lysimachus ruled Thrace and Asia Minor (Turkey); Seleucus I ruled Syria; and Ptolemy I ruled Palestine and Egypt.

Dan 7:7

**“fourth beast.”** This fourth beast is the kingdom of the Antichrist in the book of Revelation. Although many scholars think that the start of the beast was the Roman Empire, which will morph into the kingdom of the Antichrist, that is debated. The fact that this fourth kingdom in Daniel “was different from all the beasts that were before it” is evidence that it could not have been the ancient Roman Empire. The Romans, like many of the kingdoms before them, did not destroy the kingdoms they conquered but incorporated those kingdoms into the Empire. For example, when the Persians conquered Babylon, they kept Daniel in a position of leadership. The Romans often even let the indigenous government remain in place as it did when Rome conquered Israel and allowed Herod the Great to remain as king. It seems likely that in Daniel’s vision, the Roman empire was skipped and the list of empires went from Greece immediately to the empire of the Antichrist.

Dan 7:8

**“came up…a little one.”** Daniel 7:8 shows us that the antichrist will have a small and unimpressive beginning, but he will grow (thus “came up”) and eventually have more power than all the other horns. We learn more about the Antichrist by his parallel, his type, who is Antiochus Epiphanes, who is also called a little horn in Daniel 8:9-12.

**“eyes like the eyes of a man.”** The “eyes” and “mouth” of this little horn alert us to the fact that this is a person, not a kingdom. In the biblical culture, “eyes” were a primary instrument of learning, and in this context, the fact that the little horn had eyes like a man points to both humanity and intelligence and insight. The antichrist will be smart and cunning.

Dan 7:9

**“thrones were set in place.”** On Judgment Day people will be judged according to what they have done on the earth. Scripture indicates that on that day angels will assist in some way with the judging of people. That “thrones” are set in place indicates more than one throne and likely more than a few. These thrones are likely the thrones of the angels who are also referred to as “elders” in Revelation 4:4, 10 (cf. Luke 12:8).

**“Ancient of Days.”** Daniel 7:9 introduces us to a new title for God, Yahweh, which is “the Ancient of Days.” This is one of the times in Scripture when God is shown coming into concretion in a human form. He does this many times in the Bible, starting in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), when Adam and Eve heard the sound of Him walking in the Garden. This is the only verse where God has the title “Ancient of Days,” but it is very appropriate, especially in light of the biblical culture which honored the aged. The fact that God is the Ancient of Days helps qualify Him to be the Judge of all the earth; He would have great experience and wisdom and could render a righteous verdict.

[For more on God coming into human form, see commentary on Acts 7:55.]

**“the hair of his head was *white* like pure wool.”** This is likely to symbolize age and wisdom (cf. Prov. 20:29).

**“and its wheels burning fire.”** We were shown the wheels of God’s cherubim chariot-throne in Ezekiel 1:15-21 (see commentary on Ezek. 1:15). These may be different wheels, however. In any case, the idea that God and His throne move from place to place is not just here in Daniel.

Dan 7:10

**“river of fire.”** When fire appears in Scripture in connection with God, sometimes it is associated with light and protection (Exod. 13:21), or with the blessing and acceptance of God (Lev. 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38). At other times, however, fire is associated with judgment (Lev. 10:1-2; Num. 16:35; Rev. 20:10; 20:14-15). God’s presence is often associated with fire (Exod. 19:18), and God’s presence, while a blessing, is often dangerous and mysterious. God is portrayed as a jealous God and a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24). Here in Daniel 7 there is a river of fire, sometimes translated as “fiery stream” coming forth from His throne, and since the scene is a scene of judgment, it reminds us of the fire that destroys the enemies of God. Like Aslan the lion in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, God is “righteous” and “just,” but He is not necessarily “safe,” and He is not to be trifled with.

God standing in heaven, or sitting on His throne in heaven, occurs several times in Scripture. In Genesis 28:13 Yahweh is standing in heaven, but what He is standing on is not described. Isaiah 6:1 shows God seated on a throne in heaven, but what it is sitting on is not described. In Exodus 24:10 God is standing on, or seated on a throne on, a pavement like a sapphire (or lapis lazuli). Ezekiel 1:26-28 shows God on a throne, and the throne is like sapphire (or lapis lazuli), but the pavement it is on is simply referred to as an “expanse,” “dome” or “platform.” When Stephen sees God, He is apparently seated on His throne, because Jesus is “standing” at the right side of God (Acts 7:56). However, in Stephen’s vision, neither the throne nor the pavement it is sitting on is described. In Revelation 4:2-5:13 we see God on His throne, along with 24 other thrones. Lightning and thunder come from God’s throne (Rev. 4:5), and before it (and perhaps under it) is a pavement like a sea of glass like crystal. The sea of glass, but this time mixed with fire, occurs in Revelation 15:2.

Daniel 7 portrays a scene of judgment, and Daniel 7:9-10 shows God on a throne, and his throne and its wheels were ablaze and flaming with fire. Furthermore, something unique to Daniel is that there is a river of fire flowing from God’s throne. The fire in these verses is significant, because it is the fire of God that destroys the enemies of God (Heb. 10:27), and the unsaved are burned up in a lake of fire and burning sulfur (Rev. 19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

In contrast to God’s throne in this judgment scene, in the Millennial Kingdom, after Jesus conquers the earth and sets up his kingdom, a river of life will flow from God’s Temple in Jerusalem. Ezekiel 47:1-9 shows the river that flows east from the Temple into the Dead Sea. Zechariah 14:8 shows that the river actually flows both to the west to the Mediterranean Sea and to the east to the Dead Sea. So there is a huge difference between the river of fire that flows from God’s throne during the time of judgment and the river of living water that flows from the Temple in the Millennial Kingdom.

It is speculation, but it is perhaps possible, that the “river of fire” that flows from God’s throne at the time of the Judgment in Daniel 7, which is associated with the end of the Tribulation, eventually forms the Lake of Fire. The river of fire has to flow somewhere, and there is no indication it burns out on its own. Furthermore, there is no mention of the Lake of Fire any time before this river of fire comes from God’s throne here in Daniel. There is no lake of fire mentioned anywhere in Scripture before the Tribulation period, and no one, no human or demon, was thrown into the fire before the Battle of Armageddon. Therefore Scripture does not express a need for the Lake of Fire before this judgment in Daniel 7 and the Battle of Armageddon. But if this river of fire formed and flowed into the Lake of Fire mentioned in Revelation, that would explain where the Lake of Fire came from and why it is not mentioned before the book of Revelation. There will be a need for the Lake of Fire immediately after the Battle of Armageddon, because the Antichrist and false prophet will be thrown into it right after being defeated in the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:20), and then very shortly after that the people who lived through the Tribulation period but whom Jesus judges as unrighteous in the Sheep and Goat judgment will be thrown into the Lake of Fire as well (Matt. 25:41, 46). Eventually, all the unsaved will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and annihilated.

[People in the Lake of Fire do not burn forever; they burn up. For more on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire”.]

**“stood before him.”** It was a common custom that rulers sat while the subjects of the rulers stood before them. (See commentary on Isa. 14:13, “sit”).

**“the court was seated.”** God has an inner circle of spirit beings who help Him administer His creation, and these spirit judges seem to be part of that divine council. Here in Daniel 7, God gave Daniel a vision of the Last Days, and Daniel 7:10 and 7:26 portray the heavenly court that will convene at that time, headed up by “the Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9), who is God. In Daniel 7:8, the man known as the “Little Horn,” one of the biblical titles for the person commonly known as the Antichrist, is speaking arrogantly against God. During those Last Days, God will sit with other spirit judges, likely His divine council or part of that group, and give judgment concerning the Antichrist.

This heavenly court and its judgment of the Antichrist is shown again in Daniel 7:26: “But the court will sit, and his [the Antichrist] power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.” Since this court will judge the Antichrist who will be defeated in the Battle of Armageddon and thrown into the Lake of Fire immediately following that battle, it is likely that this court in Daniel is the same judges who sit on thrones in Revelation 20:4 and judge those who get up in the First Resurrection (and it seems logical that the judges in Daniel 7:10 are not only the judges in Rev. 20:4, but the “elders” in Rev. 4:4).

[See commentary on Rev. 20:4 for more information on the judges in that verse; and commentary on Rev. 4:4 for information on the 24 spirit elders.]

We see in Daniel 7:9 that God is not the only one who has a throne. There are other thrones for other judges. The Aramaic word translated “court” in Daniel 7:10 and 7:26 is *divn* (#01780 דִּין), and in this context, it refers to a council of judges.[[7]](#footnote-27319) God could rule and judge on His own, but He does not want to operate that way; He works in cooperation with His created beings to maintain order in the universe.

[For more on God’s divine council, see commentary on Gen. 1:26.]

Dan 7:11

**“and it was given over to be burned with fire.”** The little horn (Dan. 7:8) is the Antichrist, and he will be defeated at the Battle of Armageddon and thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20).

Dan 7:12

**“their dominion was taken away.”** This verse refers to the dominion of the demons who serve Satan—the demons’ dominion will be taken away. The demons who serve Satan will be defeated in the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21) and thrown into the Abyss along with Satan. They will be there in prison during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (Rev. 20:1-3). Revelation 20:1-3 does not mention Satan’s demons—it focuses on the leader, Satan—but the scope of Scripture along with verses such as Daniel 7:12 and Isaiah 24:21-22 show us that the demons are also imprisoned with Satan. They are imprisoned in a god-prison technically referred to as “Tartarus” in 2 Peter 2:4, but also called “prison” in 1 Peter 3:19, “the Abyss” in Revelation 20:1, and the “pit” in Isaiah 24:22.

God could have thrown the demons into the Lake of Fire immediately after the Battle of Armageddon, but instead, he had them imprisoned with Satan during the 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom, and this is why the text says these demons “were granted an extension of their lives for a season and a time” (see commentary on Rev. 20:7). At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan and his demons will be released, and the demons will help Satan gather an army to fight against God’s people. But Satan and his demonic army will be defeated in the Final War of Revelation 20:9-10, and then they will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:7-10) (see commentary on Isa. 24:21).

The “beasts” that will be imprisoned and thus granted an extension of their lives are the demons behind the scenes controlling the kingdoms of the earth. As Daniel’s vision opens in Daniel 7:3, there are “beasts,” kingdoms, that come out of the “sea” (the “sea” is the masses of Gentile people; cf. Rev. 17:2). But those kingdoms did not arise spontaneously, there were four spirits that stirred up and influenced the rise of those kingdoms, and they would have had help from other demons as well. However, in Daniel 7:12, the “beasts” are not kingdoms or earthly kings, but are the demons who were behind the scenes influencing what happened in the kingdoms. The “beasts” of Daniel 7:12 cannot be earthly kings or earthly kingdoms because all earthly kingdoms are destroyed by the Messiah at Armageddon (Dan. 2:34-35, 44) and all earthly kings and armies are killed in that battle (Rev. 19:19-21). After the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ will rule over the whole earth (cf. Ps. 2:8; 72:8-11; Dan. 2:35; 7:14; Mic. 5:4; Zech. 9:10), and the Antichrist and satanic systems on earth will be destroyed (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20). No evil or satanic “kingdom” or “nation” will be on earth during the Millennial kingdom, and “kingdom” cannot be imprisoned, so the fact that these “beasts” will be granted an extension of life during that time shows that they are demons. Demons will be imprisoned in Tartarus during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth.

[For more on Tartarus, see commentary on 2 Pet. 2:4. For more on the demonic army, see commentary on Isa. 24:21. For a better understanding of the chronology of the End Times, see commentary on Matt. 25:32, “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”]

Dan 7:13

**“son of man.”** The phrase “son of man” is a Semitic idiom for a human being, and the phrase occurs in both the Hebrew and Aramaic sections of the Old Testament (some parts of the Old Testament are written in Aramaic). In Hebrew the basic phrase translated “son of man” is *ben adam* (cf. Num. 23:19), while in Aramaic (cf. Dan. 7:13), it is *bar enash*. The phrase occurs in different ways, “son of man,” “sons of man,” “sons of men,” etc., but the meaning is basically the same: it means a human or humans. When it occurs in the Greek text of the New Testament, the Semitic idiom is simply imported literally into the Greek. When the phrase occurs in more literal translations of the Bible such as the King James, it usually appears like “son of man,” but when it is translated in gender-neutral Bibles such as the NRSV it is usually translated as “human,” “human being,” “mortal,” “one/anyone,” etc.

The phrase “son of man” occurs throughout the Old Testament, and interestingly, the first time it occurs is when Balaam the prophet said that God was not a “son of man,” that is, a human (Num. 23:19). In Deuteronomy 32:8, we see that God divided “the sons of man,” the humans, into their respective nations. In 2 Samuel 7:14, God speaks about Solomon via the prophet Nathan and says that if Solomon sins then God will punish him with blows “of the sons of men,” that is blows by humans (cf. NET, NIV), which is indeed what happened to Solomon. In Jeremiah 32:19, the ways of the sons of man, i.e., humans, are all open to God. In Joel 1:12, due to the foretold destruction of the land, joy among the sons of man, the people, withers away. Also, in Daniel 10:16 an angel is referred to as being in the “form” of a son of man, that is, in the form of a human being. There are many other clear references to “son of man” referring to humans (cf. Job 25:6; Ps. 144:3; 146:3; Isa. 51:12; 56:2; Jer. 49:18; Dan. 8:17). God addresses Ezekiel as “son of man” over 90 times. Although it seems clear that God is referring to Ezekiel as a human being, there are other reasons for that as well.

The meaning of “son of man” became more complicated when the book of Daniel was written because the phrase took on a second meaning. In Daniel 7:13, “one like a son of man” was used to describe the Messiah, and so “son of man” became a messianic title. Thus, as we enter the New Testament era, “son of man” had both meanings: “human being” and “Messiah,” and that was confusing to many people. We see that confusion in verses such as John 12:34, when the crowd said to Jesus, “…how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up?’ Who is this Son of Man?”

The “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7:13 is not specifically called the Messiah, and that has led to many theories about what it refers to, including the nation of Israel itself. John Collins wrote about how Daniel 7:13 has been interpreted, starting in the early centuries after Christ:

“The messianic interpretation prevails in rabbinic literature and remains the majority opinion among the medieval Jewish commentators…Early Christian interpreters assume the identity of the ‘son of man’ with Christ and usually read Dan. 7:13 as a prophecy of the second coming. …In summary, the traditional interpretations of the ‘one like a human being’ in the first millennium overwhelmingly favor the understanding of this figure as an individual, not as a collective symbol. The most usual identification was the messiah…. [But] Since the rise of critical scholarship, diverse explanations of the one like a son of man have been set forward. They may be classified in three categories: (1) an exalted human being, (2) a collective symbol, (3) a heavenly being.”[[8]](#footnote-16672)

As Collins points out, in the centuries after Christ, both Jewish and Christian scholars thought Daniel 7:13 was speaking of the Messiah, but in the last century or so that has shifted, and many modern scholars do not think that “one like the son of man” refers to Jesus Christ, a fact that is reflected in many of the modern commentaries. Conservative Christian scholars, however, still conclude that the “son of man” in Daniel 7:13 is the Messiah.

The context and scope of Scripture, and Jesus’ own use of the phrase “son of man,” strongly support the conclusion that the son of man in Daniel 7:13 is the Messiah. One of the strongest examples from Scripture is Mark 14:61-62, when Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin. It says, “Again the high priest asked him [Jesus], and says to him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’” Here, Jesus equates “the Christ” with “the Son of Man” and refers those two titles to himself. Also, Daniel 7:13 is the only Old Testament reference of anyone besides God coming in the clouds of heaven, which Jesus said he was going to do.

Daniel 7:14 then shows God giving the “son of man” dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom in which all people serve him. In all of Scripture, there is only one being who fulfills that prophecy, and that is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Many Old Testament scriptures indicate that the Messiah will rule the earth (cf. Ps. 2:8-12; 72:1-17; 110:1-5; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; 42:1-7; 49:5-7; 55:1-5; Ezek. 37:24-28; Dan. 2:35, 44; and see also Rev. 21-22).

Further evidence that the son of man in Daniel 7:13 refers to the Messiah is that in the New Testament, the phrase “son of man” is used only of Jesus Christ and not of any other person or entity. So the biblical evidence leads to the conclusion that in Daniel, “one like a son of man” is the Messiah.

We also get some insight from the New Testament as to why the text of Daniel says, “one like a son of man.” The word “like” can refer to what Daniel saw, i.e., someone who looked human, and that would certainly be true. But more than that, when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, comes in his new glorified body, he will be fully human just as he always was, but his new, spiritually powered everlasting body will only be “like” the flesh body we humans have now, and thus the statement “one like a son of man” perfectly fits the glorified Christ.

It is worth noting that Daniel says that the Messiah comes “with the clouds of heaven.” The bright glory that surrounds God is often described as a cloud (Ezek. 10:3-4), and we see it in Moses’ Tent of Meeting and Solomon’s Temple (Exod. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14; 7:1-3), and at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34). Sometimes the cloud could be dark and threatening, as it was on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:16-18; 24:16-18). It is appropriate that when the glorified Messiah comes as God’s Son and regent, he also is described as coming in the clouds because it points to his glory and power due to his being “Lord and Christ” (Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Rev. 1:7).

Another implication of Jesus’ “coming in the clouds” is that he is coming in judgment. In the Old Testament, God came in the clouds to fight and judge His enemies (Ps. 18:6-14; 97:1-3; Isa. 19:1; Nah. 1:3-6). Similarly, when Jesus comes in the clouds it will be to fight the Battle of Armageddon and judge the earth (Matt. 24:29-31; 25:31-46; cf. Rev. 19:11-21). Then, after Jesus conquers the earth, he will set up his kingdom on it as Scripture says.

[For more on the cloud that often surrounds God see commentary on Ezek. 1:28. For more on Jesus’ kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on Jesus Christ being fully human, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on why God addresses Ezekiel as “son of man,” see commentary on Ezek. 2:1.]

**“coming with the clouds of heaven.”** We today know from the New Testament that this refers to Jesus Christ coming down from heaven, but in the Old Testament and Gospels the people did not know that. They did not know about the ascension, and it caught even Jesus’ apostles by surprise (Acts 1:9-11). They had just asked him if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel and all he told them was it was not for them to know the timing of that (Acts 1:6-8). At the Last Supper, Jesus told the apostles he was going away, but he never told them that meant into heaven and they were very clear that they did not know where he was going. Thomas said, “Lord, we do not know where you are going” (John 14:5), and Jesus never told them anything except, “I go to the Father” (John 14:28), but they still did not know what that meant. We must keep in mind that even at the Last Supper the apostles did not really understand that Jesus was going to die, so they certainly did not understand the ascension.

Not only does the Old Testament not speak of an ascension, the text here in Daniel does not explicitly tell us whether this son of man is moving up, down, or sideways. Competent scholars have argued for both upwards from earth to heaven and downwards from heaven to earth. The clouds of heaven are generally above the earth, but sometimes the cloud of glory associated with God was on earth and moved along with Him (cf. Ezek. 1:4, 28. See commentary on Ezek. 1:28).

The major reason for confusion about this verse, and the reason that the apostles were so caught off guard by the ascension, was the fact that in the entire Old Testament there is no verse about the Messiah ascending to heaven to be with God. The Messiah is born on earth (Isa. 9:6) and conquers evil and rules the earth (cf. Ps. 2:6-8; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 61:1-3; Mic. 5:2-4; Zech. 9:9-10; Mal. 3:1-3; 4:1-3).

There are Old Testament scriptures about the Day of Yahweh and the great tribulation associated with it but the Messiah is not there in that tribulation, which we today know is because he ascended into heaven and is not on earth during that time (see commentary on Dan. 12:1). Isaiah 63 portrays the Messiah conquering the nations, and even the ancient rabbis knew that Isaiah 63 referred to the Messiah.[[9]](#footnote-29353) However, when Jesus comes and conquers the nations as portrayed in Isaiah 63, he does not come down from heaven, he comes from the southeast of Israel, from Edom, and how he got there is never explained. Also, Zechariah 14:3-5 speaks of Yahweh fighting His enemies, which He would do through His Messiah, and standing on the Mount of Olives. It is assumed by some teachers that the Messiah will land on the Mount of Olives, but the text never says that. Putting Isaiah 63 together with Zechariah 14:4, it is more likely that the Messiah comes into Israel from the south and reaches the Mount of Olives.

In conclusion, we today with 20/20 hindsight can see that Daniel 7:13 is about Jesus coming down from heaven, conquering the earth, and taking dominion of it, but that was unclear until New Testament times.

Dan 7:14

**“to him was given dominion.”** In Daniel’s vision, the Messiah “is given” dominion and the kingdom. This is accurate. God, by his power, and because of who He is, gives rulership of the earth to His Son.

**“all the peoples…will serve him.”** Jesus’ future kingdom on earth will fill the earth (cf. Ps. 2:6-8; 66:4; 72:8-11; Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:13-14; Zech. 9:10).

[For more on the coming Kingdom of Christ on earth, the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Dan 7:15

**“within me.”** The text, which is in Aramaic in this part of Daniel, reads, “in the midst of *its* sheath,” thus making the body like a sheath for the spirit, which is the thoughts, attitudes, emotions, etc.

[For more on the meaning of “spirit,” see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’”]

Dan 7:18

**“holy ones.”** Here in Daniel 7:18, the “holy ones” are the people who obey God. The text is traditionally rendered “saints,” but it refers to people who obey God, not to the Roman Catholic concept of “saints.” Both angels and God’s holy people are called “holy ones,” which makes sense because they are both holy before God. The reader must be sensitive to the context to see if the text is referring to a person or an angel (compare Dan. 7:18 with Dan. 8:13). In fact, many versions translate the Hebrew as “saints” when it refers to people and “holy ones” when it refers to angels, but the wording in the Hebrew text is the same.

**“will receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom.”** For more on the kingdom, see commentary on Daniel 7:22.

Dan 7:21

**“holy ones.”** These are the people who obey God and live holy lives. See commentary on Daniel 7:18.

**“prevailed.”** Daniel 7:21 (also Dan. 7:25) foretells what is also prophetically spoken in Revelation 13:7, that during the last half of the seven-year Tribulation, when the Antichrist is in full power, he will wage war against God’s people and overcome them (cf. Rev. 13:7, 10; 14:12-13).

Dan 7:22

**“holy ones.”** God’s holy people. See commentary on Daniel 7:18.

**“and the time came that the holy ones took possession of the kingdom.”** The “holy ones” are the believers, and the “kingdom” they take possession of is the 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom of Christ, when Christ rules the earth. After the Rapture of the Christian Church, there will be terrible wars, plagues, and more, and eventually the Antichrist will rule the earth and persecute and kill believers. This time is called by Christ a time of “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14). The Great Tribulation will end when Christ comes from heaven, fights the battle of Armageddon, conquers the earth, and sets up his kingdom on earth, which many scholars refer to as “the Millennial Kingdom” because it lasts 1,000 years (Rev. 20:2-6).

[For more on the coming Kingdom of Christ on earth, the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the duration of the last half of the Tribulation, as well as the days of Judgment following Armageddon, see commentary on Dan. 12:11. For more on the terrible death and destruction in the Great Tribulation and Armageddon, see commentary on Dan. 12:1. For more on the first and second resurrection, see commentary on Acts 24:15. For more on how the future will unfold from this present age to the Millennial Kingdom to the Everlasting Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 25:32 and Rev. 21:1.]

Dan 7:23

**“The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on earth that will be different from all the other kingdoms, and will devour the whole earth, and will trample it down and crush it.”** It has been commonly believed that this fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire, but that cannot be the case. For one thing, the Roman Empire was not different from all other kingdoms. It conquered them the same way, and in many cases ruled them in basically the same way. Furthermore, it did not devour and trample and crush the whole earth, but in fact, much of the earth prospered under Roman control. Also, although most Christians are aware of the Roman persecution of Christians, the fact is that during the Roman dominion over Christianity, Christianity actually grew and spread. That will not be the case when the antichrist controls the world: the believers will suffer greatly (Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 13:7; 14:13). Also, the dominion of this beast over the holy ones will last 3 1/2 years (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5-7), whereas the official Roman persecution of the Christian Faith lasted for over 250 years (64 AD to 312 AD).

Dan 7:25

**“wear down.”** This is an Aramaic word, *bela* (#01080 בְּלַא), and it is a *hapax legomenon* in biblical Aramaic, meaning it only occurs here in the Old Testament. However, the cognate word in Hebrew means “to wear out [like a garment],” or “wear away,” and thus by extension, “harass” (continually harass) or “oppress.” The English versions translate it somewhat differently: “wear out” (ESV); “wear down” (NAB), “exhaust” (CJB); “oppress” (HCSB); “harass” (NET), and the point is well made that the Great Tribulation will be a very difficult time for believers. This is further information as to how the Antichrist will “prevail” against believers (Dan. 7:21).

Daniel 7:25 is saying that the Antichrist will put constant pressure on the believers—a constant persecution—and no doubt some will get worn down and give in to his pressure. Jesus knew this and warned his followers about the troubles they would have to endure in the Great Tribulation, including some being tortured and put to death (Matt. 24:9, 13; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:12-19; cf. Rev. 2:10; 13:7, 10; 14:12-13). By forewarning his disciples of the coming tribulation, Jesus prepared them to endure the tribulation. Revelation 13:7 says that when the antichrist comes to power he will “overcome” the believers.

**“the holy ones.”** God’s holy people. See commentary on Daniel 7:18. The text simply says “they,” but it refers to God’s holy people being handed over to the dominion of the antichrist for the last half of the Great Tribulation; that is, for 3½ years, which is “a time, times and half a time.” During that time there will be terrible persecution against the believers, and many will be tempted to renounce their trust in God and Jesus (cf. Rev. 13:7, 10; 14:12-13). No wonder Revelation 14:13 says, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” Those believers who maintain their trust in the Lord during that terrible time and are martyred for it will be greatly rewarded.

[For more on the Great Tribulation, see commentary on Dan. 12:1.]

**“will be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time.”** This time period is 3½ years. It is the last half of the Great Tribulation, the time of trouble spoken of in Daniel 12:1. The period of great tribulation spoken of in Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21 will be seven years, starting with the covenant made between the Antichrist and Israel, and ending with the Battle of Armageddon, when Jesus defeats the Antichrist (called “the beast” in Rev. 19:19-20). We learn about the seven years from Daniel 9:25-27, which speaks of a “week,” which in that context is a week of years, or seven years.

The last half of the “week,” the seven years, the Antichrist himself is exercising great power on earth. The length of this 3½ year period is recorded in different ways: it is recorded as “a time, times, and half a time,” that is, “a year, [two] years, and half a year” (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14); it is also recorded as “42 months” (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), and also as 1,260 days (Rev. 12:6). All these time periods equal 3½ years.

This 3½ year period will be especially hard for believers because there will be a terrible persecution against them, as Daniel 7:21 and 7:25 say (cf. Matt. 24:9; Rev. 14:13).

[For more on the seven-year Great Tribulation, see commentaries on Dan. 12:1 and 12:11.]

Dan 7:26

**“the court will sit *in judgment*.”** This court likely is, or is part of, God’s divine council. See commentary on Daniel 7:10.

Dan 7:27

**“his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.”** That is, God’s Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, ruled—as we learn from Scripture—by God’s regent, Jesus Christ.

**Daniel Chapter 8**

Dan 8:1

**“vision.”** This vision occurred in the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, so it was after Daniel 4 but before Daniel 5, the end of Belshazzar’s reign. It is in fact possible that this kind of prophecy about the end of the Babylonian empire was a reason that Daniel was no longer a top-seated administrator in Babylon and may have even contributed to Belshazzar’s anger against Yahweh and why he would want to have a drinking party using vessels from Yahweh’s Temple (Dan. 5:2).

Dan 8:2

**“palace-fortress.”** See commentary on Esther 1:2.

**“I was by the Ulai Canal.”** Although some commentators think that Daniel really was by the Ulai Canal and away from Babylon on some kind of mission, the more natural reading of the text is that it was part of his vision that he was by the Ulai. The reason that God took Daniel to Susa and the Ulai Canal in the vision is not stated, but we know that Persia conquered Babylon and Susa was eventually one of the capital cities of Persia (Esther 1:2). So it seems likely that Daniel was made to understand that even as the vision God gave him portrayed the fall of Babylon to Persia, so Daniel was taken to Persia to emphasize that point.

Dan 8:3

**“a ram.”** This is a picture of the Medo-Persian Empire. “A ram was a fitting symbol of the empire, for according to Ammianus Marcellius (10.1; fourth century AD), the Persian ruler carried the gold head of a ram when he marched before his army.”[[10]](#footnote-15812)

**“high.”** Many versions read “long,” but the text reads “high” and thus makes a cultural reference to being exalted and honored. The horn that was “higher” than the other was more exalted and honored (and powerful) than the other.

Dan 8:5

**“conspicuous horn.”** The Hebrew text is “a horn of vision,” that is, a horn that could easily be seen. This is Alexander the Great, the first great ruler of the Greek Empire.

Dan 8:8

**“four conspicuous horns.”** For who these four horns are, see commentary on Daniel 8:22.

Dan 8:9

**“Out of one of them came a little horn.”** The little horn that came from one of the Greek Empires was Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the eighth ruler of the Seleucid kingdom. He is the most profound type of the Antichrist in Scripture, so much so that we learn about what the Antichrist will be like by studying Antiochus. The parallel between the Antichrist and Antiochus Epiphanes even shows up in the name Antiochus gave himself, “Epiphanes,” which means “god manifest” or “god visible,” in other words “the visible manifestation of god” or even “the visible god.” When the Antichrist shows up, he will go into the Temple and portray himself as a god (2 Thess. 2:4). The “little horn” here in Daniel 8:9 is Antiochus, and the “little horn” in Daniel 7:8 clearly refers to the Antichrist.

The little horn here in Daniel 8:9 is Antiochus Epiphanes, who is a type of the Antichrist, gives us another important piece of information about the Antichrist that historians and biblical commentators have mostly been wrong about. It has been assumed for generations that the Antichrist would come from the ancient Roman empire, but there are serious problems with that, one of them being that the little horn here in Daniel 8:9 is an Easterner, and does not come from Rome. Although a type of the Antichrist does not have to match the Antichrist in every way, just as a type of Christ does not have to match Christ in every way, this particular mismatch has been a problem for scholars.[[11]](#footnote-30113) This is actually more evidence that the fourth beast in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream vision was not Rome, but the Islamic Caliphate.

It should not surprise us that we learn about the Antichrist by studying a biblical figure as ungodly as Antiochus. In the same way that Jesus could say, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), if we have seen the Devil’s people we have seen the Devil. Thus, for example, when Jesus was speaking to the very evil religious leaders of his time, he said, “You are of *your* father the Devil, and you want to do the desires of your father” (John 8:44).

**“toward the south, and toward the east**.” This is historically accurate concerning Antiochus Epiphanes, who had great military success in Egypt to the south, as well as to the east, where he had victories in Persia, Parthia, and Armenia. Also, he conquered Palestine, “the glorious land.”

**“glorious land.”** That is, the land of Israel.

Dan 8:10

**“army of heaven…stars.”** This language helps us see that Antiochus was a true type of the Antichrist, challenging God Himself, but in its historical context, the army of heaven and the stars are God’s holy people. We have not yet made the jump to verses that speak strictly of the Antichrist.

**“trampled on them.”** The horrible persecution of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes is well documented by historians.

Dan 8:11

**“Commander of the army.”** In this context, this refers to God, which is why the text refers to “his” burnt offering and sanctuary. Antiochus had no regard for God at all. He showed his disdain for God and the Jews in many ways, including trying to force the Jews to abandon the Law, demanding that the Jews worship him and the Greek gods rather than Yahweh, desecrating Yahweh’s Temple, and also persecuting the Jews and coldly murdering thousands of them.

**“brought low.”** Antiochus did not destroy the Temple, but he desecrated it. All the practices that elevated the Temple such as the daily sacrifices and priestly services were stopped, and horrific insults to God were made, such as offering a pig on the altar, setting up an altar to Jupiter in the Temple, and destroying every scroll of God’s Word that could be found, and killing anyone found hiding one.

Dan 8:12

**“because of transgression.”** The sins of the Jews were many both before and after the Babylonian Captivity, and here God tells Daniel that the sins of the Jews will again cause them to be vulnerable to Satanic attack. The book of Maccabees (in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha) shows this to be true (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:11-15), fulfilling Daniel’s prophetic vision.

Dan 8:13

**“holy one.”** This is an angel. Both angels and God’s holy people are called “holy ones” (see commentary on Dan. 7:18), which makes sense because they are both “holy ones.” The reader must be sensitive to the context to see if the text is referring to a person or an angel. Here in Daniel 8:13, the “holy one” is an angel.

**“How long.”** Although one angel asked this question to the other angel, it appears he did it for Daniel’s sake because the answer was given directly to Daniel (Dan. 8:14).

Dan 8:14

**“For 2,300 evenings and mornings.”** The Old Testament always reckoned time by “evening and morning,” not by “morning and evening” as we do. This makes perfect sense because the Hebrew day started at sunset not at midnight like our Western days do.

[For more on the hours of the day and watches of the night, see commentary on Mark 6:48.]

The period of time covered by 2,300 days is six years and almost four months. This is longer than the Antichrist will have his full power in the book of Revelation (he will wield his full ungodly power for three and a half years). Daniel 8:14 gives us the end of the 2,300 days, which is when the sanctuary is restored. Historically, that was in December of 164 BC. The likely start date of the 2,300 evil days was when a legitimate High Priest of Israel, Onias III, was murdered. The cause of the murder was jealousy and suspicion between Menelaus, the High Priest who had come to power by bribing Antiochus, and Onias, and after Onias was murdered the relationship between Antiochus and the Jews went quickly downhill.

There are scholars who think that the 2,300 evenings and mornings refer to 2,300 sacrifices, one in the evening and one in the morning, which would occur over a period of 1,150 days, but this is short of the three and a half years the Antichrist will be in power in Revelation (but it can be made to fit events in Antiochus’ reign). Nevertheless, to us the stronger position is that the 2,300 evenings and mornings means 2,300 days.

Dan 8:15

**“*mighty*** **man**.” The Hebrew word for “man” is *geber* (#01397 גֶּבֶר), referring to a strong man, a mighty man, a warrior. This was a powerful angel, and we learn from Daniel 8:16 it was Gabriel.

Dan 8:16

**“Gabriel.”** Means, “God is my strength.”

Dan 8:17

**“the time of the end**.” This phrase has been the cause of much scholarly debate. There are a few major positions possible. One is that “the time of the end” refers to the end of the time of the prophetic picture being presented, not “the end” of time before the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Scholars have shown that “the end” is used in many ways besides the end days; and similarly, the “last days” have been occurring now for many centuries. Another is that “the time of the end” refers to the time of the Antichrist in Revelation. In that case, Daniel 8:23-26 refers to the Antichrist, not Antiochus Epiphanes. Still another position is that this prophecy is one with a double fulfillment and thus while it was fulfilled by Antiochus, it will be again fulfilled in many ways by the Antichrist. This is the safest conclusion. Usually when “the time of the end” is mentioned, it does refer to the time before the Millennial Kingdom. Furthermore, the parallel between Antiochus and the Antichrist is so close that in seeing Antiochus and his activities we are in fact seeing the time of the End, and the person and actions of the Antichrist.

Dan 8:18

**“deep sleep.”** In contexts such as this one, when God is revealing truth, the Hebrew phrase can mean a state of sleep or a deep sleep-like state. God often reveals things to people when they are asleep, but also when God communicates directly to people they can be in a sleep-like state. That Daniel was in a sleep-like state is likely the case here and also in Daniel 10:9.

Dan 8:21

**“first king.”** This is Alexander the Great.

Dan 8:22

**“four kingdoms.”** Alexander the Great had two sons, but both of them were murdered, so it happened that after Alexander the Great died, his kingdom was divided up among four generals, who each started kingdoms. The four were: Cassander, who ruled over Macedonia and Greece, the traditional homeland of Greece. Lysimachus, who ruled over Thrace, Bithynia, and most of Asia Minor (mostly today’s Turkey). Seleucus, who controlled Syria and the lands east of it including Babylonia; and Ptolemy, who took control of Egypt. He also controlled Palestine and some of south-eastern Arabia, but those areas were not firmly in his control and they were fought over and went back and forth between being under Seleucid control and Ptolemaic control.

Dan 8:23

**“kingdom.”** The Hebrew can also be “reign,” “rule.”

**“have reached their full measure *of sin*.”** The Hebrew text is more literally, “when the transgressors have finished,” but it refers to completing their sin, which must refer to some measure of sin at which point God had had enough. The HCSB expands the text to read, “when the rebels have reached the full measure of their sin,” which gets the sense of the phrase.

**“an insolent king.”** The Hebrew text is more literally, a king “strong of face” or “of fierce face,” which is an idiom that can mean insolent, shameless (cf. Prov. 7:13), bold, and of firm conviction. This is a shameless and insolent person who will not be deterred from what he sets out to do by morals, laws, or shame.

**“skilled in intrigue.”** The Hebrew reads more literally, “understanding riddles” or “discerning unclear things,” but it is also an idiom in this context because the biblical culture was one that loved riddles and sayings that were unclear. This man is not a riddle solver or puzzle master; he will be a master of understanding what to do in difficult situations and understanding how to manipulate and control people. Thus, he is “skilled in intrigue” (HCSB, NAB, NASB); a “master of intrigue” (NIV, NLT); “understanding stratagems” (JPS); “deceitful” (NET); and “understanding hidden things” (YLT).

Dan 8:24

**“but not by his *own* power.”** The Devil gives the Antichrist his power. This fact is alluded to in prophecy here in Daniel 8:24, but it is not as clearly stated here as it is in 2 Thessalonians 2:9. Then in Revelation 13:2 it is stated again.

**“he will destroy.”** In Daniel 7:25, the believers are given into the power of the Antichrist, and here in Daniel 8:24, Antiochus and, by foreshadowing, the Antichrist, will destroy God’s holy people.

**“the holy people.”** The literal Hebrew is “the people of the holy ones.” There are two suggestions as to how to understand and translate this. The genitive can be a kind of genitive of possession and mean “the people belonging to the holy ones,” where “belonging to” means something more like “protected by.” In that case, the “holy ones” would be angels as they are in Daniel 8:13. However, the idea that the holy people are protected by God’s holy angels is not a common theme, and therefore the more likely possibility is that the genitive is a genitive of apposition, and the text means, “the people, that is, the holy ones,” or we would often just say, “the holy people” as in the REV.

[For the designation “holy ones” referring to God’s people, see commentary on Dan. 7:18.]

Dan 8:25

**“By his cunning he will cause deceit to prosper under his hand.”** In order to understand how the Antichrist will succeed, we must see the semantic range of some of the words in this phrase and also see the idiom involving “hand.” The word “cunning” (*sekel* #07922 שֶׂכֶל) can also mean “understanding” or “insight,” and it certainly means that here, but when used in a negative situation it also means “cunning,” “craftiness” (CJB), and even “treachery” (cf. NET).

The phrase “under his hand” (more literally “in his hand”), refers to both his own power and also his authority as exercised over others. Biblically, to be under someone’s hand is to be under their authority or power. So a very free and expansive translation of this verse could be something like: “The Antichrist will succeed in his purposes due to his understanding and insight and by virtue of the fact that he is cunning, deceitful and treacherous, and he will use his own power to accomplish his will and also accomplish his evil purposes through those he controls.”

**“in his *own* mind.”** The Hebrew is “in his heart,” but in this context, it refers to his mind, what he thinks. The Hebrews did not know the function of the brain and assigned thinking to the heart.

[For more on the use of the word “heart” in the Bible, see commentary on Prov. 15:21.]

**“in a time of peace.”** The Hebrew is difficult due to the cryptic nature of the phrase, which is simply, “and in peace will destroy many.” This has led some translators to say something like, “He will destroy many in a time of peace” (HCSB). However, there are other translators who think the phrase refers to the fact that the people are deceived into not expecting attack and thus are at peace themselves. So, for example, the NASB has, “And he will destroy many while they are at ease.”

It is likely that both meanings are true. The Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel, and that covenant no doubt promises peace (Dan. 9:27). But he breaks the covenant and will attack without warning “in a time of peace.” However, during that time of peace, the people unwisely feel peaceful and safe but are attacked without warning (1 Thess. 5:3). Given that people are usually feeling peaceful and at ease in a time of peace, the REV reads “in a time of peace,” which certainly is true. The suddenness and ferocity of the attack is the reason that the ESV reads “without warning,” and while that is certainly true, that translation omits that it will be a time of peace, which we felt was important.

**“but not by human power.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “without hand he is broken” (YLT). In this context, the idiomatic use of “hand” refers to human power. The Antichrist will be broken, but not by any kind of regular earthly fighting; not by human armies. We learn from the New Testament that the Prince of princes will use the spoken word to destroy the Antichrist and his system (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:15, 21).

Dan 8:27

**“exhausted.”** This Hebrew word is unclear, but this seems to be the general meaning of the text, and most translators agree (cf. “fainted” JPS, KJV; “weak” CJB, NAB; “overcome” NLT, NRSV). Exhaustion and weakness is also a natural human reaction to emotional shock and mental stress. To us today, Daniel’s vision was mostly of ancient events that are long past, but to Daniel, those events were coming upon the world and his people, the Jews, and as we now know from history, would have a great impact upon them. Besides, although the vision included successive empires, there was no portrayal of the restoration of the Jewish nation. There would be centuries of heartache before then.

**“could not understand it.”** This seems to be a natural understanding of Daniel’s situation, although some scholars think the Hebrew is more like, “there was no one to explain it.” But even so, that would result in Daniel’s not understanding the vision.

**Daniel Chapter 9**

Dan 9:2

**“70 years.”** This is written in Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10. This is not a round number. It is the time that the Temple vessels were captive in Babylon. It is an amazing testimony to the trust that one prophet of God had in the words of another prophet of God that Daniel would read the book of Jeremiah and know the truth of the situation of the Babylonian Captivity that God revealed to Jeremiah. Christians would do well to learn from Daniel, and spend time reading and studying the Word of God. God only authored one book, and yet it is amazing how few Christians read it faithfully and the even fewer number that actually take the time to learn the history and customs to be able to understand it. The Father, God, authored a book; His children should read and understand it.

Dan 9:3

**“set my face.”** An idiom which here means “gave my attention to,” “set my focus on,” and we can see that Daniel was very serious when he did this because he prayed and fasted in sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth is like our burlap; rough and scratchy. It was very uncomfortable clothing, and what Daniel did was designed to show God that he understood that God’s plans and purposes were more important than Daniel’s personal comfort, and that he was very serious about getting his prayers heard.

Dan 9:11

**“for we have sinned against him.”** The “him” is Yahweh. It is not uncommon for the Hebrew text to go back and forth between the second and third person for God, and that is the case here.

Dan 9:13

**“sought the favor of Yahweh.”** The Hebrew text is idiomatic. More literally it is “appeased the face of Yahweh.” Daniel is admitting that the Israelites had never appeased the face of God by turning from their sin. Seeing this in Scripture could be very comforting to people who have been caught up in sin. They cannot undo the past, but they can appease God and receive His mercy and grace by turning from their sin and following His ways.

Dan 9:16

**“your holy mountain.”** Jerusalem was at least in part on Mount Zion, God’s “holy mountain” (see commentaries on Ps. 48:1 and 48:2).

Dan 9:17

**“for your own sake, Lord.”** The Hebrew reads more simply, “for the Lord’s sake,” but the REV nuances that reading to make the English read more clearly as do some other English versions (e.g., ESV, NAB, NET, NLT).

**“your sanctuary that is desolate.”** At the time Daniel was praying, the Temple of God in Jerusalem had been burned to the ground.

Dan 9:21

**“the man Gabriel.”** Gabriel is an angel, but Daniel calls him “the man…whom I had seen,” because Gabriel had appeared in the form of a man. It is clear from the context that even Daniel did think Gabriel was a human.

**“previously.”** The Hebrew reads more literally, “in the beginning,” but the Hebrew uses “beginning” more loosely than we typically do in English, and in this case, it would be confusing to translate it literally. The reference is to an earlier vision and seeing Gabriel (Dan. 8:16).

**“came to me in my extreme weariness.”** The Hebrew phrase is difficult. Scholars are divided as to whether the Hebrew comes from the root “to fly,” or the root “to be weary.” Some scholars and translators favor “to fly,” and then the verse refers to Gabriel flying quickly. Others favor the root “to be weary,” and then the verse refers to the fact that Daniel was tired or tired out when Gabriel came. We think the phrase refers to Daniel’s physical and mental state, which was weak because of Daniel’s circumstances, the intensity of the spiritual battle, and the weight of realization and responsibility that the visions put upon him, something that shows up in several verses (cf. Dan. 7:28, 8:27; 10:8-9, 16-17).

**“about the time of the evening offering.”** Daniel was still telling time by the offerings in the Temple at Jerusalem even though that Temple did not exist anymore. The evening offering would have been roughly 3 PM, depending on the season of the year.

Dan 9:24

**“everlasting righteousness.”** In this context, “righteousness” is doing what is right and just to other people and in the sight of God. There are many people today who are not treating God or other people very well, but that will change when Christ is king.

[For more on “righteousness” having the meaning of doing what is right or just (“justice”), see commentary on Matt. 5:6. For more on Christ’s future Millennial Kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Dan 9:25

**“that from the going forth of the commandment.”** Part of the problem with knowing the time frame that Gabriel is speaking about is that we today do not know when that commandment occurred. There were different commandments given, and the subject is hotly debated.

**“the Anointed One, the ruler.”** This refers to Jesus Christ.[[12]](#footnote-19308) The Jews today, along with many other scholars, do not think that the Anointed One in Daniel 9:25 is the Messiah, and the evidence is that most of them at the time of Christ did not think that either, although some of the more spiritual among them certainly could have.[[13]](#footnote-16756) But the purpose of Scripture is to point to the Messiah, and many conservative scholars agree that the Anointed One is Jesus Christ.

**“be 7 weeks, and 62 weeks.”** The 7 weeks (49 years) and 62 weeks (434 years) add up to 69 weeks (483 years). But the angel had said “70 weeks” (Dan. 9:24), so in this counting the last “week” is missing. It is also important to note that the 69 weeks are broken into two periods, 7 weeks and 62 weeks, with the 62 weeks coming last. This verse is one of the great keys leading to the conclusion that the “weeks” are not just common 7-day weeks, but “weeks” of years, and thus the total time period is 483 years. The “Anointed One” is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He will be “cut off,” killed, at the end of the 69th week.

The 70th “week” is the seven years of the Tribulation, and it is counted separately from the 69 weeks. There is no explanation for this separation given in the Old Testament, but we today know that between the year the Messiah was killed and the year that starts the 7 years of the Great Tribulation, God placed the “Administration of Grace,” which was a secret time (Eph. 3:2-6, 9). There is quite a bit of information about the Great Tribulation written in the Bible (see commentary on Dan. 12:1).

Dan 9:26

**“after the 62 weeks.”** Jesus Christ will be killed at the end of the 69th week, after the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks, likely at the very end of, the 69th week.

**“Anointed One.”** That is, the Messiah (see commentary on Dan. 9:25).

**“cut off.”** This phrase is commonly used for being put to death, which Jesus Christ was. It is used of the death of the Messiah in Isaiah 53:8.

**“and will have nothing.”** The Hebrew text reads, “and there is nothing to him,” which is exactly what happened to Jesus Christ when he died. He got nothing of what we would expect with the death of the Messiah and a king. He died as a criminal and his body was treated as if he were a criminal, and he was not even buried in a family tomb, but in a borrowed tomb of a non-family member. After he was buried and the tomb shut, Nicodemus came and buried him with spices, but even his family and closest disciples did not know that had happened. When Jesus died, “he had nothing,” as this text in Daniel says.

[For more on his family and disciples not knowing he was buried with spices, see commentary on John 19:40.]

**“the ruler who will come.”** This ruler that will come is the Antichrist, though he is not often called that in the Bible.

**“the city and the sanctuary.”** That is, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in it. There will be a Temple built again before Jesus builds the Temple portrayed in Ezekiel, which he will do early on in his Millennial Kingdom. The materials for building that Temple have already been gathered together in Israel. That is the Temple spoken of in Revelation 11:1-2, and the Temple into which the Antichrist, “the man of sin,” enters to show he is God to the people (2 Thess. 2:4).

**“its end will be with a flood.”** This is not a flood of water but a flood of people, a massive attack. The image of a flood is used several times in Scripture for an attack by an enemy (e.g., Isa. 8:7; 59:19; Jer. 46:7-8; 47:2; Nahum 1:8). Just as a flood sweeps over the land and devastates it, so a massive army devastates the land.

**“Desolations are determined.** This statement is not connected to any one specific “desolation,” and the fact that the verb is plural means it refers to more than one desolation. There is no reason to believe that these desolations do not involve the city of Jerusalem, the Temple (the “sanctuary” of Dan. 9:26), people at the time of the Antichrist’s rule (cf. Dan. 9:27), and even the Antichrist himself.[[14]](#footnote-30416)

Dan 9:27

**“And he will.”** The “he” is the “ruler that will come” (Dan. 9:26) who is the little horn of Daniel 7:8, 11, 20, and 7:21, who will wage war against God’s people and prevail against them for 3½ years (Dan. 7:21, 25). We generally refer to this ruler as the Antichrist, and he will make a covenant of peace with Israel, but the fact that the text says “with many” shows that not all Israel will agree to the covenant. However, enough of the leadership will agree to it that the covenant will be made.

It is important to realize that Daniel 9:27 does not follow chronologically after Daniel 9:26, but is giving details that will occur during the time of the Antichrist. When Daniel 9:26 says, “the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary,” that is a summary giving the end result of what will happen after Israel makes a covenant with the Antichrist, and some of the details of that covenant are given in Daniel 9:27. So Daniel 9:26-27 need to be read together and fit together to get the full picture of the situation.

**“make a firm covenant.”** The making of the covenant starts the seven years of the Great Tribulation. This covenant is future, and from the scope of Scripture, we can see that it is the seven years of the Tribulation most clearly described in the book of Revelation. This is not a covenant made sometime in the past. There has never been a covenant between any great world ruler and Israel that was for, or only lasted for, just seven years. It is a future covenant and is between “many” in Israel and the Antichrist.

It is sometimes taught that the seven-year Great Tribulation starts with the Rapture of the Christian Church, but that is not true—there is no verse that says that. There is very good evidence for a pre-tribulation Rapture, but the Rapture is not the event that starts the countdown of the seven years of tribulation, the treaty between Israel and the Antichrist is. There is apparently a short time period between the Rapture and the covenant between the Antichrist and the leaders of Israel, but the length of that time period is never stated in Scripture.

The verb translated as “make…firm” in the phrase “make a firm covenant” is *gavar* (#01396 גָּבַר), in the *hiphil* aspect. The root of *gavar* is *gbr*, which is related to being strong or mighty. The only other use of *gavar* in the *hiphil* aspect is in Psalm 12:4 (Ps. 12:5 in Hebrew), ““With our tongue we will prevail (*gavar*).” The aspect of strength or might is why many translations say “make a firm covenant” (ASV, CSB, JPS, NAB) or “make a strong covenant” (CEB, CJB, ESV, NRSV, RSV). The idea of strength of might, combined with the word “covenant,” thus can mean “to make a strong covenant.” More literally, the translation would read, “shall cause a covenant to be strong.”

The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament says, “In Daniel 9:27, the Hiphil of *gbr* is used in the expression, “to make a firm agreement with the multitude of the people.” …Sometimes the verb must be translated more freely, especially when it is used figuratively. This happens frequently, but one must keep in mind in translating that the element of strength or superiority is always present.”

Although some English versions say “confirm a covenant” (NASB2020, NET, NIV; cf. KJV), it is unlikely that the Hebrew text is indicating that there was a prior covenant that is now being “confirmed.” For one thing, the Hebrew text says “a covenant,” whereas if there had been an earlier covenant, we would expect the text to say “the covenant.” Also, it is more likely that the Antichrist (the “he” in Daniel 9:27) would make a new covenant with “the many” rather than try to amend and enforce an older one.

**“with the many.”** It is important to notice that Daniel says “with the many” and not just “with many” or “with Israel.” From Daniel 9:24-27, the subject is Israel, not the Gentile nations. In the context, “the” many are the many of Israel. The case could even be made that the Antichrist represents the Gentile nations and that they, represented by the Antichrist, are making a covenant, a treaty, with “the many” of Israel. This covenant will be after the Rapture of the Christian Church (see commentary on 2 Thess. 2:2), and will be made with many of the Jews in the Tribulation period, in keeping with Daniel 9:24, in which the angel says to Daniel that 70 weeks are determined for “your people” (the Jews) and “your holy city” (Jerusalem). Those many Jews will include the leaders in Israel, because for a covenant to be made and be effective for the Jews in general, that “many” would have to include the leaders of Israel even though all the Jews did not agree to it. The use of “the many” shows that there will be Jews who will not agree with making such a covenant, and it seems certain that many of those will be Jews who come to believe in Christ during the Tribulation period. To better understand “the many” of Israel in modern terms, it must be known that Israel has a government of many factions, and that laws almost always have to be passed by different factions forming “coalitions” that then have the majority vote. That being the case, we can see that it is almost certain that any treaty made between Israel and the Antichrist will not be looked upon with favor by all the Jews, but rather by “the many” in Israel.

**“for one week.”** The prophetic “weeks” in Daniel are weeks of years, that is, seven years. This describes the duration of the Great Tribulation; seven years. The natural and supernatural disasters spoken of in the book of Revelation begin to unfold when or soon after the covenant is made between Israel and the Antichrist.

But in the middle of the “week,” in the middle of the seven years, thus after 3½ years, the Antichrist will begin to fully exercise his satanic power and oppress God’s people. For example, here in Daniel 9:27, we see he will cause sacrifices and offerings to God to cease being made. The last half of the Great Tribulation, the 3½ years when the Antichrist is fully exercising his power, will be very difficult for anyone who believes because believers will be relentlessly persecuted, and that time period is described in four different ways: half of the “week” of years, 42 months, 1260 days, and “a time, times, and half a time.” The description, “a time, times, and half a time” would not be clear if it were not for the other time periods that describe it, but because of those other descriptions, we can see the phrase means, “a time [a year], times [two years] and half a time [1/2 year] for a total of 3½ years.

The description “42 months” occurs in Revelation 13:4-5 and describes the time when the dragon, Satan, gives power to the “beast,” the Antichrist, for 42 months, which is 3½ years. That same time period is described in Daniel 7:25, which says believers will be handed over to the antichrist for “a time, times and half a time.”

But Israel will not be totally destroyed by Satan and his Antichrist. Revelation 12:6 says that during that time of persecution, God protects Israel, which is portrayed as a woman, and the time of protection is given as 1260 days, and Revelation 12:14 shows that Israel is protected for “a time, times, and half a time,” and both those time periods are 3½ years.

**“And on a wing *of the Temple* he will set up an abomination.”** The Antichrist will set up a great abomination on a wing of the Temple in Jerusalem. For this understanding of the text, see the NIV84 (cf. HCSB, Douay-Rheims, NJB). The wording of the text in Daniel is obscure and debated, but thankfully it is somewhat clarified by Jesus Christ, because he spoke of the abomination that Daniel spoke about, pointed out that it was something that people could see, and that it would be in the Temple, the Holy Place (Matt. 24:15). This is an important verse for Christians today because it confirms that before the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon that the Jews will build a Temple in Jerusalem.

Interestingly, Matthew 24:15 also adds the phrase, “let the one reading understand.” It is possible that the phrase about the wording in Daniel was added because the text was already being corrupted and the Hebrew text and the Septuagint that was available during Christ’s time already differed.

The word “abomination” is plural in the Hebrew text, but that is likely the plural of emphasis because it was going to be a great abomination, much like “blood” is pluralized to “bloods” in Genesis 4:10 because Cain’s murder of Abel was so heinous. Jesus certainly thought the “abomination” was singular when he spoke about it.

**“that causes desolation.”** The verb “desolation” is *shamem* (#08074 שָׁמֵם) and it occurs twice in Daniel 9:27 and is the same verb as in the last phrase of Daniel 9:26 (“Desolations are determined”). The specific “desolation” that is caused by whatever it is that the Antichrist sets in the Temple is not specified. However, because the Antichrist will rule over the world’s financial, military, and religious systems, it would relate in some way to the “desolation” of God’s people who are tortured and killed under the reign of the Antichrist (cf. Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 13:7, 10; 14:12-13).

The Bible indicates that the majority of believers, but not all of them, will die or be killed during the Great Tribulation, and especially during the last half of it. That some believers will live through the Tribulation and Armageddon explains why, when Jesus conquers the earth and sets up his kingdom, there will still be believers, “sheep,” left on earth to enter his kingdom (Matt. 25:31-34). Also, Jesus himself said that some believers would survive the Great Tribulation (Matt. 16:28).

[For more on Jesus’ coming kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth. For more on the Sheep and Goat Judgment, see commentary on Matt. 25:32.]

**Daniel Chapter 10**

Dan 10:1

**“third year of Cyrus king of Persia.”** Therefore 536/535 BC.

**“word.”** This is the biblical use of “word” as a message, not just a single “vocabulary word.” Christians typically use this language today, such as, “I have a word [message] from the Lord.”

**“whose name was called Belteshazzar.”** See commentary on Daniel 1:7.

**“And he understood the word, and had understanding of the vision.”** This is a summary statement explaining that Daniel understood the vision once it was explained to him by the angel (Dan. 10:10-14). From the time Daniel first got the vision until the angel came to him, he went through the actions of mourning, which would include not washing, and a limited diet, as well as perhaps doing other things, all designed to get God’s attention and favor so his request would be granted (Dan. 10:2-3). He acted in a state of mourning until the angel came and explained God’s vision to him.

Dan 10:3

**“I ate no pleasant bread.”** How Daniel was in a state of mourning—acting as if he was mourning a death—is described here in Daniel 10:3.

Dan 10:4

**“the Tigris.”** The Hebrew text in Daniel reads “Hiddekel,” which is one of the names of the river that is more commonly known as the “Tigris.” The Tigris River is also called Hiddekel in Genesis 2:14.

Dan 10:9

**“I fell on my face into a deep sleep.”** See REV commentary on Daniel 8:18.

Dan 10:13

**“But the leader of the kingdom of Persia.”** The “leader” of the kingdom of Persia is a powerful demon who would not allow the angel God sent to answer Daniel’s prayer and deliver his message to Daniel. This demon is referred to as a “leader” (the Hebrew can also mean “ruler” or “commander”), and he had other demons with him. Later in the verse, they are all referred to as “the kings of Persia.” These are the demons who controlled the territory of Persia.

**“Michael, one of the chief leaders.”** Michael was a ruling angel. When God created the spiritual world with different spiritual beings, He made some of His angels to be ruling angels, “archangels.” The ruling angel Michael is specifically called one of the “chief princes” (or “primary rulers”) in Daniel 10:13. Similarly, Revelation 10:1 and 18:21 mention “strong” angels who are more powerful than others. So, like people, God’s angels have different abilities and responsibilities. Daniel refers to Michael as one of the “chief leaders,” that is, one of the top leaders of God’s angels.

[For more information on ruling angels and the spiritual world, see the REV commentaries on Jude 1:9 and Gen. 1:26.]

**“because I was detained there.”** The Hebrew is perhaps more literally, “because I was left there” or “because I remained there,” but in this case the reason that the angel remained there was that he was detained by the “leader” of Persia, the demon who controlled the area (cf. NIV, JPS; “detained”).

Dan 10:16

**“sons of men.”** The Hebrew reads “sons of man,” that is the sons of “mankind” (or “humankind”), i.e., human. The angel was in human form.

**Daniel Chapter 11**

Dan 11:1

**“in the first year of Darius the Mede.”** Making Daniel 11:1 the first verse of Daniel 11 instead of the last verse of Daniel 10 makes the chronology of Persia unworkable. Daniel 11:1 should be the last verse of Daniel 10, not the first verse of Daniel 11. The chapters were put in the Bible long before archaeologists and historians pieced together an understanding of Persian history, and in this case, the chapter break between Daniel 10 and Daniel 11 was put in the wrong place: Daniel 10 was ended one verse early.

The Bible was originally written with no spaces, punctuation, verses, or chapters. An entire scroll was just one solid string of letters. So, for example, if the original Bible was in English, John 11:34-36 (RSV) would be: ANDHESAIDWHEREHAVEYOU LAIDHIMTHEYSAIDTOHIMLORD COMEANDSEEJESUSWEPTSO THEJEWSSAIDSEEHOWHELOVEDHIM.

Chapters: The Jews began dividing the Old Testament into “sections” (not chapters yet) before the Babylonian Captivity in 586 BC. Our modern chapter divisions in the Old Testament came from Stephen Langton, a professor in Paris engaged in editing a Latin version of the Bible in 1205. These chapter divisions were added to the Hebrew text in 1330. The chapter divisions in the New Testament began to be made much earlier, before the Council of Nicea in AD 325, but today’s chapter divisions were not finished until the Archbishop of Canterbury did so in about 1227.

Verses: After the Babylonian Captivity of 586 BC, the Jews started to occasionally add spaces to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament before what to them was the start of a new thought, and some of those spaces later became verse divisions in our modern English Bible. However, our modern verse divisions in the Old Testament were standardized much later, about AD 900.

When it came to the verses in the New Testament, the first systematic verse divisions were added by Robert Stephanus to his critical Greek text of 1551. Those verse divisions were then used by William Whittingham in 1557, a major translator of the Geneva Bible of 1560; and thus the Geneva Bible of 1560 was the first English Bible to use standardized chapter and verse divisions. The Geneva Bible was the Bible used by William Shakespeare and John Bunyan (author of Pilgrim’s Progress), and was also the Bible brought across to America on the Mayflower by the Pilgrims, who used that version, not the King James Version. It should be noted, however, that even today scholars occasionally differ on where to divide a verse and thus even modern versions still occasionally differ a little (see commentary on Ps. 36:1).

The standardization of the chapter and verse divisions by 1560 was both a good and bad thing. On the good side, it allowed for much easier and more accurate communication about the Bible, because one person could write to another and comment about a chapter and verse and they both could then communicate about the same verse.

On the bad side, however, was the fact that there was a lot about Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and also about biblical history, that was not known in the 1500s. As a result, many chapters and verses in the Bible are broken in the wrong place, often causing confusion or misinterpretation of the Bible, or at least a loss of the proper emphasis of what the Bible is saying.

The traditional chapter break in Daniel 11:1 is one of the places where the chapter is in the wrong place. This is well understood by conservative scholars, but not easily seen by the English reader who is not familiar with Persian history. “The people who divided Scripture into chapters have not done this accurately at all times. Thus the first verse of this chapter [Dan. 11] should have been the last one of chapter 10.”[[15]](#footnote-20748) “Nothing could be clearer than that this verse [Dan. 11:1] still belongs to what was just considered [in Dan. 10].[[16]](#footnote-10650) “…it is clear that it [Dan. 11:1] should be considered with the statement in 10:21 concerning the reciprocal aid between Michael and the interpreting angel.”[[17]](#footnote-16066) Daniel would be easier to read and understand if Daniel 11:2 had been correctly marked as Daniel 11:1.

Dan 11:2

**“Now I will show you the truth.”** The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) translates this sentence as, “What I am going to tell you now is true,” which, while not a strict translation, catches the meaning very well. Daniel 11:2 should actually have been numbered Daniel 11:1, see commentary on Daniel 11:1.

The verses that follow include a thumbnail history of Persia, Greece, and the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires. Obviously, not every historical detail of that time period can be covered; that would take a huge book, but enough detail is covered that we get a general overview of many major events. The record of the events in Daniel 11, however, does not cover the Church Age.

Due to the short and thumbnail-like overview of the events, there are some descriptions in the prophecies that are either unclear or that do not seem to exactly match history. That is to be expected for several reasons. One is that God is not trying to give us the exact history of every event, but a general overview, especially from His perspective, of events. It often occurs in prophecy that what we get is a “take-home message,” not a blow-by-blow narrative.

Another reason is that not everything we find in the ancient records is accurate. Historians know this, and ancient histories are constantly being rewritten as new research reveals that what used to be thought as true has been found to be false or “not exact.” For example, kings were notorious for doctoring records to make themselves look favorable, and also, while God can reveal people’s hearts and motives, human historians cannot.

Another reason is that we often do not know the accurate translation of a word, or especially an idiomatic phrase. One only has to read an older version of the Bible such as the King James Version (1611) and compare it to a much more modern version such as the English Standard Version (last revised 2016) to see that the modern translations often differ greatly from the older versions.

Daniel 11 is broken into two major sections. Daniel 11:2-35 starts out by very briefly covering events in the Persian Empire, then the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, and four of his generals. After that, it launches into a much more detailed account of the empires of two of Alexander’s generals and the two dynasties they start: the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties. Then there is a time gap that includes the Church Age, and then Daniel 11:36-45 deals with the time of the End, a time that is still future when the last Gentile ruler, whom we know as the Antichrist, rules the earth and meets his end: “he will come to his end with no one to help him” (Dan. 11:45).

Although Daniel saw the vision and wrote it down in 536/535 BC (Dan. 10:1), the events described in Daniel 11:2-35 happened many years after that. For example, Alexander the Great reigned from 336-323 BC, 200 years after Daniel wrote, and the wars between the Seleucids and Ptolemies described in Daniel 11:5-35 took place over many years and many rulers, and ended some 350 years after Daniel wrote. Yet Daniel’s prophecies are so incredibly detailed, and so well documented in history by ancient authors such as Josephus (c. AD 37-100), that historians who do not believe in God and prophecy deny that Daniel wrote them, asserting instead that they are so accurate they had to be written after the fact.

For example, The Interpreter’s Bible says, “Once we have accepted the second century BC as the time of writing rather than the seventh century BC, we have a book that is religiously significant. …The book [of Daniel] is not magical foretelling. It deals with a contemporary situation, which removes it from the realm of suspicious superstitious magic to the realm of faith.[[18]](#footnote-29644) To us, this kind of interpretation is double talk. Why would a history written after the fact be more “religiously significant” than one written by revelation before the events happened? Indeed, why would writing a history after the fact be in “the realm of faith” at all? Furthermore, if God is real then surely He can reveal future events without that being “magical” foretelling. There is no “magic” involved. The believer accepts Daniel at face value, as Jesus did (cf. Matt. 24:15), and realized that God told Daniel what would happen before it happened.

It is proper to ask the question, “What was God’s purpose for giving such a detailed history of events involving the Jews so many years before the fact?” The answer is “hope.” The Jews could have hope in the midst of their difficult situation because they knew God had His hand upon them and their future is bright—even though it was still in the distant future. Furthermore, the hope God gives us from these limited vignettes of history should give us hope for all of history. The fact that God shows us that He has His hand on a small section of history is meant to teach us that He has His hand on all of history. Not that God controls history, He doesn’t. The earth is still a war zone between Good and Evil, and people still have free will, but God can still influence the way history will develop, and He will bring things to a righteous and godly solution in the End.

To the Jews living through the Seleucid-Ptolemaic wars, those wars likely seemed endless, but the Jews who believed knew there was an end in sight, so they knew to stay faithful to God. Similarly, today and during the Great Tribulation in the future, believers going through those times may think the End is never coming, but reading Matthew 24, the book of Revelation, and chapters about the Tribulation in the Old Testament should give them the stamina, courage, and hope to stand and speak what is right (cf. Matt. 10:16-23).

**“three more kings.”** The current king was Cyrus (Dan. 10:1). The three more Persian kings were Cambyses (530-522 BC); Pseudo-Smerdis (also known as Gaumata) (522 BC); and Darius I (522-486 BC). Historians debate the exact dates, but these are very close.

**“the fourth.”** The fourth king of Persia after Cyrus was Xerxes I (486-465 BC). It was Xerxes I who stirred up his people against Greece, and then led against the Greeks one of the largest armies ever to be amassed in the ancient world consisting of hundreds of thousands of men. But the attack was a disaster and a great loss from which Xerxes never recovered. Thus, Daniel’s vision now moves on to Greece.

Dan 11:3

**“a mighty king.”** This is Alexander the Great. The Bible’s description of him is accurate: he had a vast empire, was an absolute ruler, and did what he pleased. But, as we know from history, he died prematurely and his kingdom was divided up and ruled by four of his generals. He had a huge impact on history. For example, his conquest of Egypt led to Egypt being ruled by Greeks (“Cleopatra Queen of Egypt” was actually a Greek), and to the development of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Dan 11:4

**“will be divided...but not to his posterity.”** After Alexander the Great died, his sons were murdered and his kingdom was eventually divided up between four of his generals: Cassander, who ruled over Macedonia and Greece, the traditional homeland of Greece. Lysimachus, who ruled over Thrace, Bithynia, and most of Asia Minor (mostly today’s Turkey). Seleucus, who controlled Syria and the lands east of it including Babylonia; and Ptolemy, who took control of Egypt. He also controlled Palestine and some of south-eastern Arabia, but those areas were not firmly in his control and they were fought over and went back and forth between being under Seleucid control and Ptolemaic control, as we see here in Daniel 11.

Dan 11:5

**“king of the South.”** This is Ptolemy I Soter (323-285).

**“one of his commanders.”** This is Seleucus I Nicator (312/311-280 BC). Seleucus was appointed satrap over Babylonia but had to flee from a rival general, Antigonus. He fled to Ptolemy in Egypt and served under him, but when Antigonus was defeated in 312 BC, Seleucus returned to power in the north and eventually became more powerful than Ptolemy.

Dan 11:6

**“After some years.”** The Hebrew is an idiom; the text more literally reads, “At the end of years.”

**“the daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the north.”** There were continual periodic clashes between the Seleucids in the north and the Ptolemies in the south, in Egypt. After the death of Ptolemy I in 285 BC, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC) took the throne in Egypt, and about 250 BC made a peace treaty with the current Seleucid ruler, the grandson of Seleucus, who was Antiochus II Theos (261-246 BC). Under the peace treaty, Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, was to marry the Seleucid king, Antiochus II, and then after Antiochus II died, the Seleucid throne would be given to a child of theirs. The phrase “come to” in this context means for a woman to go live in the man’s house; i.e., marry the man (cf. Josh. 15:18).

The plan failed. In order for the treaty to work Antiochus had to divorce his wife, a powerful woman named Laodice (or Laodiceia), and exclude his two sons by her from the throne. But Laodice managed to have Antiochus, his new wife Berenice, and their child, all killed. Thus, Berenice did not retain the “strength of her arm,” that is, her power, and neither did Antiochus, who strengthen her in those times. Furthermore, Berenice’s father, Ptolemy II, died about that same time.

Dan 11:7

**“But from a shoot from her roots one will arise.”** The phrase, “from her roots,” means from the same family stock as she was from. After Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC) died, his son, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BC; “Euergetes” means “benefactor”) came to the throne in Egypt. He was the brother of Berenice, and he amassed a large army and attacked the Seleucid kingdom to avenge his sister’s murder. The war lasted from 246-221 BC, and Ptolemy had great success. He even successfully entered and looted the Seleucid capital city, Antioch. A monument erected to him claims he subjugated Mesopotamia, Persia, Susiana, Media, and all countries as far as Bactria.[[19]](#footnote-15983) He also apparently put Laodice to death.

Ptolemy carried the Seleucid gods into Egypt as a sign of their total defeat. This was often done by victorious nations (see commentary on Dan. 11:8).

Dan 11:8

**“Also their gods.”** It was a common custom for a conquering nation to take back home with them the gods of the defeated nation (cf. Isa. 46:1-2; Jer. 48:7; 49:3; Hos. 10:5; see commentary on Hos. 10:5).

Dan 11:9

**“will come into the realm of the king of the south.”** The Seleucid king of the north, Seleucus II Callinicus, tried to mount a counterattack against Ptolemy (c. 240 BC), but he was soundly defeated and returned to his own land.

Dan 11:10

**“But his sons will continue the war.”** Seleucus II Callinicus had two sons: Seleucus III Ceraunus (ca. 227-223 BC) and Antiochus III the Great (ca. 223-187 BC). They waged war on Ptolemy in Egypt.

**“his sons…he…he.”** This is very historically accurate. Although the sons of Seleucus II Callinicus started to make war on Ptolemy together, the elder son, Seleucus III Ceraunus, died in a war and the younger son, Antiochus III “the Great” took over. The verse represents this by changing from the plural to the singular.

Antiochus III “the Great” was successful in restoring the territory of Phoenicia and Palestine to Seleucid control as far south as Gaza, which was strong and well fortified, and thus aptly referred to as a “fortress.”

Dan 11:11

**“The king of the south.”** This king of the south is Ptolemy IV Philopator (reigned ca. 221-204 BC).

**“the king of the north.”** This is Antiochus III the Great (reigned ca. 223-187 BC). Both Ptolemy and Antiochus amassed huge armies. “According to Polybius, Ptolemy’s forces consisted of 70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 73 elephants; whereas Antiochus’ army had 62,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 102 elephants.”[[20]](#footnote-19922) Despite the fact that the armies were closely matched, Ptolemy IV Philopator won a decisive victory and basically wiped out the northern army, with Antiochus barely escaping into the desert.

**“who will set forth a great multitude.”** The text is “and he will,” and it is referring to the king of the north. The king of the north will set forth a multitude, that is, Antiochus III will be the aggressor; however, that multitude will be given into the hand of the king of the south, Ptolemy IV Philopator, who will defeat Antiochus.

Dan 11:12

**“his heart.”** This is now referring to the king of the South, Ptolemy IV Philopator.

**“lifted up *with pride.”*** Ptolemy’s heart was lifted up with pride, which caused him not to press his advantage and head north and completely conquer the Seleucids, especially since he still controlled Phoenicia and Palestine. This would turn out to be a huge mistake because the Seleucids grew strong again, and thus Ptolemy “would not prevail.” While Ptolemy was basking in the glow of his victory, and generally not being of a warlike character anyway, Antiochus III the Great focused on conquests in other areas, and gathered his troops and was very successful. From 212-204 BC he moved east as far as India, and as far north as the Caspian Sea. Meanwhile, the Egyptian king, Ptolemy IV Philopator, died in 204 BC, and his young son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes, who was four to six years old (the age is not exactly known), was crowned in 203 BC.

Dan 11:13

**“For the king of the north will return.”** With these words, Daniel 11:13 marks a shift in the back-and-forth conflicts in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties. During the time covered by Daniel 11:13-35, it is the Seleucid dynasty that has greater power.

**“after some years.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic, and literally reads: “at the end of years.”

**“he will come on with a great army.”** In 202 or 201 BC, Antiochus III the Great mounted another attack on the holdings of the Ptolemies, taking full advantage of the death of Ptolemy IV Philopator and the fact that Ptolemy V Epiphanes was only a child. Antiochus attacked and conquered Phoenicia and Palestine, and captured the fortress of Gaza by 201 BC.

Dan 11:14

**“the violent ones.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “the sons of violence.” This is a general idiomatic term for unlawful men such as robbers or bandits. It is not making a distinction between people who are “peaceful” and people who are “violent.” It is saying that some of the lawless among the Jews joined in the war.

**“among your people will lift themselves up.”** This vision is being given to Daniel, so “your people” refers to the Jews. A number of violent Jews joined with Antiochus III in his war against the young Egyptian king, Ptolemy V Epiphanes.[[21]](#footnote-16438)

**“but they will fail.”** The more literal Hebrew is “but they will fall,” but it refers to them failing. This is a very accurate piece of history because although Antiochus III the Great had great success against Ptolemy, and gained much territory, and was joined in the war by some violent Jews, the Jews suffered for it. Although the Egyptian forces of Ptolemy led by the general Scopas, ultimately lost the war, it was not before he “punished the leaders of Jerusalem and Judah who rebelled against the Ptolemaic government.[[22]](#footnote-15756)

Dan 11:15

**“the king of the north.”** This is Antiochus III the Great. In the wars between Antiochus III and Ptolemy V Epiphanes, the army of Antiochus engaged the southern army led by Ptolemy’s general Scopas who eventually ended up in the fortified city of Sidon. But after a siege, Antiochus took Sidon in 198 BC and Scopas surrendered. This victory resulted in Antiochus controlling Palestine down to Gaza, as well as Phoenicia and even some areas on the coast of Asia Minor (now Turkey) that had been under Ptolemaic control.

**“the forces of the south will not stand.”** This seems to refer to the fact that Egyptian forces sent north to support Scopas at Sidon failed to turn the tide of the war and thus give the Ptolemaic general the victory.

Dan 11:16

**“But he who comes against him will do as he pleases.”** This is to be understood as “But he [Antiochus III the Great] who comes against him [Ptolemy V Epiphanes] will do as he [Antiochus III] pleases.

**“and he will stand in the glorious land.”** The “glorious land” is Israel. The Seleucids had controlled Israel for a brief time before this, but now Antiochus III had undisputed control of Phoenicia and Israel, and this control would last. This set the stage for the control of Israel by the son of Antiochus III the Great, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was the infamous person who did so much harm to the Jews and who was the clearest type of the Antichrist in the Bible, and who is the subject of Daniel 8:9-14.

**“and in his hand will be destruction.”** This is idiomatic for Antiochus having the power of destruction. Israel was under his firm control.

Dan 11:17

**“set his face.”** This is a Hebrew idiom for “resolve,” “firmly decide.” Antiochus III the Great decided to make a treaty with Ptolemy rather than face possible conflict with the growing power of Rome.

**“terms of an agreement and will perform them.”** Instead of pressing on to an even greater military victory after defeating the forces of Ptolemy V Epiphanes in Sidon, in 197 BC, Antiochus III the Great opted to force a peace treaty upon Ptolemy. This was due to the growing influence of the power of Rome. Antiochus feared that if he attacked Egypt, Rome might intervene.

**“he will give him a daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but she will not stand *with him*.”** As part of the peace treaty of 197 BC, Antiochus III gave one of his daughters, Cleopatra, to Ptolemy V Epiphanes in marriage. Basically, Antiochus forced his daughter upon the young Ptolemy, who was still under ten years old. Antiochus planned to have Cleopatra undermine Ptolemy V, but instead, she loved her husband and stood with him against her father, even working to make alliances with Rome as a way of protecting the kingdom.

Antiochus’ daughter Cleopatra was the first Cleopatra of Egypt, not the famous Cleopatra of the movies. The famous Cleopatra was Cleopatra VII Philopater (c. 69-30 BC), who lived more than a century after the first Cleopatra. Cleopatra VII was the last queen of Egypt (her son Caesarion reigned as Pharaoh for less than a month after she died), then Rome took control of Egypt.

The phrase, “a daughter of women” is more literally in Hebrew, “a daughter of the women,” which is an interesting and uncommon idiom for “a daughter.”

Dan 11:18

**“turn his face.”** A Hebrew idiom, here meaning “turn his attention.”

**“and will capture many *of them.”*** *After* Antiochus III the Great was not able to move against the Ptolemaic kingdom (which included his daughter, the new queen), he turned his attention to the coastlands and islands around the Mediterranean Sea, especially Greek holdings in Asia Minor but eventually in Greece itself, and had good success.

**“But a commander will put a stop to his insolence.”** The aggression of Antiochus III aroused the ire of Rome, and Rome sent against him an army led by Lucius Cornelius Scipio (he was the brother of Publius Cornelius Scipio, called “Scipio Africanus” whose chariot army was portrayed in the movie “Gladiator,” which lost in the movie but won in real life). After a series of defeats, in 188 BC Antiochus was forced to sign a peace treaty with Rome that included his surrendering territory, troops, hostages (including his son), and paying a heavy tribute to Rome.

Dan 11:19

**“turn his face.”** A Hebrew idiom, here meaning “turn his attention.”

**“toward the fortresses of his own land.”** It is possible that this refers to Antiochus III the Great going back to his homeland for protection, but it could also be a reference to the fact that the money he needed to pay Rome was mostly in fortified cities and temples.

**“and will be found no more.”** After being humiliated by the Romans, and in desperate need of funds, Antiochus went back to his country and in 187 BC tried to pillage the temple of Zeus (Bel) at Elymais, but he was killed by a mob that was apparently trying to defend their god.[[23]](#footnote-32542)

Dan 11:20

**“Then will stand up in his place one who will cause a tax collector to pass through the kingdom.”** After Antiochus III the Great was killed in 187 BC, Seleucus IV Philopater (187-175 BC) took over the Seleucid kingdom. The kingdom was still in desperate need of money to pay the heavy tribute exacted by Rome, so Seleucus IV sent a tax collector, Heliodorus, around the kingdom to get money. This would be of interest to Daniel because Heliodorus got some of the money by passing the oppressive tribute to Rome onto the Jews in the form of oppressive taxes. As Daniel’s prophecy says, Seleucus IV did not die in battle, or by an angry mob like his father died, but instead was poisoned as part of a plot by his tax collector, who was most likely trying to take over the kingdom for himself.[[24]](#footnote-10994)

Dan 11:21

**“a despised person.”** This is Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler. He is described in Daniel 8:9-13, and as a foreshadowing of the Antichrist in a doubly fulfilled prophecy in Daniel 8:23-25.

Dan 11:36

**“The king will do according to his will.”** This verse in Daniel 11:36 is the shift between the historical type of the Antichrist (up to Dan. 11:35), and the Antichrist himself (Dan. 11:36-45). This has been understood by many commentators through the years from Jerome (AD 347-420) to modern conservative commentators.

Dan 11:44

**“devote many to destruction.”** That is, to destroy them totally.

[For more on things “devoted” to Yahweh and devoted to destruction, see commentary on Josh. 6:17.]

**Daniel Chapter 12**

Dan 12:1

**“over your people.”** The Hebrew is literally, “over the children of your people,” but in this context, that idiomatic wording can be confusing.

**“there will be a time of trouble.”** This time of trouble is often called the “Great Tribulation” by Christians because Jesus called it a time of great tribulation: “for at that time there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and it will never ever happen again” (Matt. 24:21). The Great Tribulation will be so terrible for humans that Jesus said, “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive” (Matt. 24:22 NIV; cf. Mark 13:20). Although Jesus described some of the events of the Great Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21), this time of tribulation is most clearly set forth in the book of Revelation, which reveals terrible events associated with seven seals (Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1), seven trumpets (Rev. 8:6-9:21; 10:7), seven thunders (Rev. 10:3-4), and seven bowls of judgment (Rev. 16:1-21). but Jesus was not the first person to speak of the tribulation in the End Times. The time of great trouble had also been foretold by many of the Old Testament prophets centuries before Jesus spoke of them.

The Bible also refers to this time of great tribulation as “the Day of Yahweh” (“the Day of the LORD” in most English versions). But the phrase “Day of Yahweh” can refer to the End Times as a whole or to only part of the End Times; each occurrence must be interpreted in its own context. By far the majority of the times “the Day of the Lord” is used, it is associated with wrath and destruction, and thus refers to the Great Tribulation (cf. Ezek. 30:3, Joel 1:15; 2:1; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:7ff; 1:14ff; Mal. 4:1-5). Also, quite often instead of using the whole phrase, “the Day of Yahweh” or “the Day of Judgment,” the End Times are simply referred to as “the Day,” “that Day,” etc., (cf. Isa. 11:10; Jer. 3:16; 46:10; Amos 8:9; 9:11; Mal. 4:1). The Great Tribulation is also called “the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:2; cf. Isa. 63:4).

According to the prophets, the Day of Yahweh, the Great Tribulation, will be a cruel day, with people becoming as scarce as gold (Isa. 13:9-13). The earth will be laid waste with very few people left (Isa. 24:1-23). The slain will lie like refuse on the ground, and the leaders will not escape (Jer. 25:29-38). It will be “Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), a time of doom for the nations (Ezek. 30:1-19), and a time of distress such as has never been seen before on earth (Dan. 12:1). Believers will have an especially difficult time because the Antichrist will make war against them and prevail against them (Dan. 7:21, 25). The Great Tribulation will be a time of darkness and gloom (Joel 1:15; 2:1-11). Woe to people who think they are righteous and long for the Day of the Lord as if it would vindicate them because it will not (Amos 5:18-20). People’s evil deeds will return on themselves (Obad. 1:15-16). God, in anger and wrath, will take vengeance on the land and on nations, and destroy witchcraft and idols to the end that there will be no more idolatry (Mic. 5:10-15). It will be a day of wrath, distress, and anguish; a day of trouble, ruin, gloom, and darkness. No one’s wealth will be able to deliver them. God will make a terrible end to the people who dwell in the land. God will sweep away humans, animals, fish, and birds—everything—from the face of the earth (Zeph. 1:2-18). God will shake both the heavens and the earth (Hag. 2:6-7), and that Day will burn like a furnace (Mal. 4:1).

The “time of trouble” will be seven years, and will start when the Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel, which he will then break after 3½ years (Dan. 9:27), and it will end with the Battle of Armageddon when Jesus Christ and his armies come down from heaven and conquer the earth and Satan is imprisoned so he cannot be active on earth (Rev. 19:11-20:4). Then Christ will set up his kingdom on earth and reign 1,000 years (Rev. 20:2-8). During that time there will be unprecedented peace, prosperity, and health on the earth. The scriptural evidence points to the fact that the Rapture will be just prior to those seven years of tribulation.

[For more on the Rapture, see commentary on 1 Thess. 4:17. For more on Christ’s wonderful future kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“will be delivered.”** This does not mean that the people who believe will be saved from the persecution and wrath of the Tribulation period. Jesus made it clear that many believers would be killed (Matt. 24:9; Luke 21:16). But the believers who endure to the end of their lives will be saved, delivered from everlasting death, and granted everlasting life (see commentary on Luke 21:18).

**“the book.”** This is a reference to “the Book of Life,” the book that has the names of all those who will be granted everlasting life (cf. Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:28 [some versions have it as 69:29]; Phil 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).

Dan 12:2

**“And many.”** Daniel 12:2 is one of the clear statements in the Old Testament that there is a resurrection from the dead. However, the reference to “many” has been confusing for scholars because there are other verses that seem to indicate that everyone is resurrected and judged by God. There are several ways this verse has been explained.

Some commentators note that there are times when “many” can be a type of tapeinosis (understatement) for “all.” However, that has not generally been an accepted explanation because the following preposition (the Hebrew *min*) is most naturally used in a partitive sense, meaning only some people will awake.

Some commentators see the verse as referring to two groups who awake to different fates. In that case, “many” (the NIV has “multitudes”) people awake from the dead; that is, there are multitudes who have died since Adam and Eve, and some of them have life while others have shame.

Other commentators see the verse as saying that “many” get up from the dead, while other people remain dead. That is a very likely possibility. God is a righteous and just God, and there seems to be little point in raising someone from the dead who never had a chance to believe or be saved. For example, if the Nephilim were who many people believe they were, that is, genetically modified “humans” that were not able to believe, then there would be no point for God to raise them from the dead. They are already dead, so why raise them just so they could die again when they could not have believed and been saved in the first place? They are wicked and not saved, but not due to any free will guilt of their own. In fact, that may be the meaning of Isaiah 26:14 (NIV84), “They are now dead, they live no more; those departed spirits [Hebrew is “*rapha*,” likely a progenitor of the Rephaim, a group of the Nephilim] do not rise. You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them.” Commentators such as E. W. Bullinger say that the statement that they “do not rise” indicates they will not be in the resurrection.

Also, for example, children of unsaved parents who die very young before they can speak or reason could not be righteously judged, so it is possible that they do not get up from the dead. So it seems that when Daniel says “many,” he is being accurate.

**“who sleep in the dust of the earth.”** The people being referred to are not in heaven, they are sleeping in the dust of the earth. They are not alive in heaven awaiting the resurrection of their dead body, they are in the ground “sleeping,” that is, dead. The reference to “dust” is likely a deliberate allusion to Genesis 3:19, where God tells Adam that he is dust and will return to dust.

[For more information on the dead being dead, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

**“will awake.”** The Old Testament has a number of verses about God raising the dead (cf. Deut. 32:39; Job. 19:25-27; Ps. 71:20; Isa. 26:19; 66:14; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2, 13; and Hos. 13:14).

**“some to everlasting life.”** Daniel 12:2 is one of the verses in the Bible that mentions the two future resurrections, the Resurrection of the Righteous and the Resurrection of the Unrighteous, as if they were occurring at the same time. However, we learn from the New Testament, from the book of Revelation, that the two resurrections are separated by 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-6). During the 1,000-year period that separates the two resurrections, Jesus Christ reigns on earth in his Millennial Kingdom. The phrase “everlasting life” in the Hebrew text (or perhaps more accurately “long life,” became “life in the age,” that is, life in the coming age, in the Septuagint, and then that same language was used often in the New Testament.

[For more about Christ’s reign on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the phrase “life in the age *to come,*” see Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

**“shame.”** Most people who are raised in the Resurrection of the Unrighteous, the Second Resurrection, will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and eventually be completely consumed. However, before they die they will experience shame, and there will be “sobbing and gnashing of teeth.”

[For more on the “sobbing and gnashing of teeth, see commentary on Matt. 8:12. For more on the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15. For more about the unsaved being annihilated in the Lake of Fire and not burning forever, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

**“everlasting contempt.”** This phrase does not prove that people burn forever in the Lake of Fire. For one thing, the Hebrew word translated “everlasting” does not have to mean “forever,” but can refer to a long time. However, that is not likely its meaning here because it is contrasted with “everlasting life,” which does go on forever. Although the unsaved do not burn forever, the “contempt” (abhorrence) that God, angels, and the righteous have for them does go on forever. They were wicked when alive, and that memory of wickedness is always associated with them.

Dan 12:3

**“wise will shine.”** Wise people get saved and serve God, and in the future Kingdom of Christ on earth will shine and stand out from those who were barely saved but did not live a wise and obedient life. Part of what it means to be wise is to share the Good News of salvation and obedience with others, and that is highlighted in the second part of Daniel 12:3.

Dan 12:7

**“a time, times, and half *a time*.”** This is 3½ years (see commentary on Dan. 7:25).

Dan 12:10

**“And none of the wicked will understand.”** One of the characteristics of the End Times will be the marked division between the wicked and the wise. Of course, there have always been wicked people on earth. But in the End Times the sheer numbers of the wicked, and their inability to see actual goodness and truth, and instead “call evil good and good evil,” and put “darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isa. 5:20), will make the End Times exceeding difficult for those people who love God (which is an important reason for godly people to fellowship together for mutual support).

Jesus said that “the love of the many will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12), and that will be true. In the End Times, and especially during the Tribulation itself, there will be a coldness and hatefulness on earth like the world has not seen before; but there will also be a deceiving blanket of false love bandied about—an acceptance of those things that God forbids and dislikes—and that will be called “love.” Jesus said the increase in hatefulness would be due to an increase in lawlessness. To be sure, an “increase in lawlessness” means an increase in crime, but more pointedly it refers to people turning away from God’s laws and commands and being “lawless” in His eyes. But since God is love, when a person turns away from God’s commands the only thing there is to turn to is less love; that is, less genuine love.

Dan 12:11

**“1,290 days.”** This is 30 days longer than the 1,260 days that are the last half of the Tribulation. This 30 days is the period of time it will take to prepare the nations for Judgment after the Tribulation and the Battle of Armageddon.

The period of tribulation spoken of in Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21 will be seven years, starting with the covenant made between the Antichrist and Israel, and ending with the Battle of Armageddon, when Jesus defeats the Antichrist (called “the beast” in Rev. 19:19-20). We learn about the seven years from Daniel 9:25-27, which speaks of a “week,” which in that context is a week of years, or seven years.

We also learn the duration of the seven-year time period of the Tribulation from the fact that half of the seven years is 3½ years, a figure that is stated several different ways. The Antichrist, also called the “beast,” and the “little horn,” makes a covenant with Israel for the “week,” (seven years), but in the middle of the seven years he breaks the covenant and comes to power. He is in power for “a time, times, and half a time,” that is, “a year, [two] years, and half a year” (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14). That same time period is also recorded as “42 months” (Rev. 11:2; 13:5) and 1,260 days (Rev. 12:6). All these time periods equal 3½ years.

At the end of the seven-year Tribulation, Jesus Christ fights and wins the Battle of Armageddon and conquers the earth. Then, he sends out his angels all over the earth to gather the survivors of the Tribulation and Armageddon (Matt. 24:30-31; 25:31-32). That would be no small task just by itself, but to complicate matters, at that same time the First Resurrection will occur (Rev. 20:4-6). The First Resurrection is also called the “Resurrection of the Righteous” (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), and the “Resurrection of Life” (John 5:29).

In the First Resurrection, all the righteous dead from Adam to Pentecost come to life. Millions of people will suddenly be raised from the dead (cf. Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2; Hos. 13:14). All these people will need to receive their rewards for their godly works on earth (Matt. 16:27), and they will need to be organized and shown what to do and where to go. Jesus does not do the judging alone, he will have help with the judging and rewarding of all these people. There are spirit being “elders” who have authority to judge who will be helping him, and those elders are associated with the First Resurrection (Rev. 20:4; cf. Rev. 4:4, Dan. 7:10, 26).

We must also keep in mind that every person in the First Resurrection is saved. The unsaved are in the Second Resurrection (Rev. 20:12-15). The First Resurrection is to raise and reward people who are saved. After the judging and rewarding of the people in the First Resurrection, the Israelites will go back to the land of Israel (Ezek. 37:12, 14), while the Gentile nations will be disbursed to places around the earth, likely to where they came from (this explains how it is that during the Millennium, the nations come to Israel to worship).

It is easy to imagine that after the carnage of the Tribulation and Armageddon, and with the added activity of trying to organize, reward, and disperse all the righteous dead who have come to life, it will take 30 days to gather all the Tribulation survivors and prepare the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). The Sheep and Goat Judgment is different from the First Resurrection because it involves both saved people (the “sheep”) and unsaved people (the “goats”). The 1,260 days that are the last half of the Tribulation are extended by 30 days in part to gather all the survivors on earth and get the Sheep and Goat Judgment ready. This all becomes even clearer when we read Daniel 12:12, which says, “Blessed is the one who waits for, and reaches the 1,335 days.” Thus, Daniel 12:12 adds another 45 days to the 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11.

There is little doubt, given the context and scope of Scripture, that the 45 days after the 1,290 days are the 45 days of the Sheep and Goat Judgment of Matthew 25:31-46, and that anyone who was still alive and on earth after the 45 days was “blessed” because he or she was judged to be a “sheep” and allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ, while those who did not make the 1,335 days were judged to be “goats” and were thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Dan 12:13

**“go *your way* until the end.”** The words “your way” are not in the Hebrew but are implied and thus properly supplied. “Go your way until the end” implies that Daniel would not get any more visions. By this time he was a very old man and had accomplished much for Yahweh and stood righteous before Him his whole life. Now he would rest and await the Resurrection of the Righteous, when he would “stand” in his own allotted territory. The Old Testament has a number of verses about God raising the dead (cf. Deut. 32:39; Job. 19:25-27; Ps. 71:20; Isa. 26:19; 66:14; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2, 13; and Hos. 13:14).

[For more on the two resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

**“in your allotted place.”** God had allotted territories for the twelve tribes of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (Ezek. 47:13-48:29). Furthermore, God had said that in the resurrection of the Righteous, the first resurrection, people would come up out of their graves and return to the land of Israel (Ezek. 37:11-14; cf. Isa. 26:19; Hos. 13:14; Dan. 12:2).

We learn from the scope of Scripture that people who have been faithful, like Daniel, will inherit a possession in the Millennial Kingdom, while those who were unfaithful to God but faithful just enough to get saved, will be in the Millennial Kingdom but will not have a land inheritance there but will be workers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15). The importance of knowing about the Millennial Kingdom and rewards in the Kingdom cannot be overstated. The vague teaching that saved people “go to heaven” provides little incentive for people to make difficult choices for Christ. If people knew that they could be saved but do so little for the Lord they would have no land in the Kingdom but would just be workers there, that might motivate them to work harder to be Christlike and follow Christ.

[For more on the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on rewards in the coming Kingdom, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.”]

1. Cf. Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-11301)
2. John Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia. [↑](#footnote-ref-29700)
3. John Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-31009)
4. David Garrison, *A Wind in the House of Islam*, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-14626)
5. Cf. Andrew Steinmann, *Daniel* [ConcC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-19312)
6. Merrill Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-24909)
7. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Holladay, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-27319)
8. John J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia, 307-08. [↑](#footnote-ref-16672)
9. Cf. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix IX, “List of Old Testament Passages Messianically Applied in Ancient Rabbinic Writings.” [↑](#footnote-ref-29353)
10. Stephen Miller, *Daniel* [NAC], 221-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-15812)
11. Cf. Stephen Miller, Daniel [NAC], 225, n. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-30113)
12. Cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel, Daniel*, 350-59; See also Stephen Miller, *Daniel* [NAC], 263-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-19308)
13. Cf. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix IX, “List of Old Testament Passages Messianically Applied in Ancient Rabbinic Writings.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16756)
14. Cf. Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel, Daniel*, 359-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-30416)
15. Harry Bultema, *Commentary on Daniel*, 313. [↑](#footnote-ref-20748)
16. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 468. [↑](#footnote-ref-10650)
17. Stephen Miller, *Daniel* [NAC], 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-16066)
18. Buttrick, *Daniel*, The Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 6, 355. [↑](#footnote-ref-29644)
19. John Walvoord, *Daniel*, 333-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-15983)
20. Stephen Miller, *Daniel* [NAC], 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-19922)
21. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.3.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-16438)
22. Stephen Miller, *Daniel* [NAC], 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-15756)
23. Cf. John Goldingay, *Daniel* [WBC], 535. [↑](#footnote-ref-32542)
24. Stephen Miller, *Daniel* [NAC], 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-10994)