

God is Still on the Throne

Introduction to the Book of Daniel

Text: Daniel 4:17

Introduction:

1. Daniel was likely written around 536 B.C. towards the end of his life
2. Daniel's ministry was in Babylon during the period of the captivity. There are three main periods of the prophets:
 - Pre-Exilic = prior to the captivity (e.g. Isaiah)
 - Exilic = during the captivity (e.g. Ezekiel & Daniel)
 - Post-Exilic = after the captivity
3. The Book of Daniel is one of great significant in the area of Bible prophecy. It also contains much inspiration and encouragement for the believer in the area of practical Christian living as we consider the godly example of Daniel, a man living for God in a difficult place.
4. In this introductory lesson, we will endeavor to acquaint ourselves with the background and theme of the Book under four headings.

I. The Authorship of Daniel

A. The Attack of his Authorship

1. The Book of Daniel has been subjected to vicious and relentless attacks from the liberal critics. Some suggest more so than even the Book of Genesis. They say that Daniel is a fictitious book, written after the events that occurred during the period of the Maccabees. This is because of the startling accuracy of Daniel's prophecies. They assert that it is not possible for the future to be predicted, therefore it must have been written afterwards!
2. "Their attacks can be traced back to a man by the name of Porphyry who was born in A.D. 233 in Tyre, Syria. He wrote fifteen books with the revealing title "Against the Christians." Porphyry became a polytheist, which means he worshipped many gods. One of his favourite targets was Daniel. He did everything he could to prove that this book was written about 165 B.C. and that of all the events which the book of Daniel predicted were written after they had already come to pass. Now all of the modern critics have taken Porphyry's arguments and rehashed them." (Denis Lyle)
3. Sir Robert Anderson, author of the famous work "Messiah the Prince", wrote a book entitled "Daniel in the Critics Den" to defend his authorship.
4. W.A. Criswell said, "There is not a liberal theologian in the world past or present who accepts the authenticity of the Book of Daniel."

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B. The Affirmation of his Authorship

1. Daniel's authenticity is affirmed biblically
 - a. In the Old Testament by Ezekiel
 - i. Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel and obviously held Daniel in high esteem as a man of God, linking his name with two other giants of the faith, Noah and Job.
 - ii. Ezekiel mentions Daniel three times (Ez. 14:14, 20; 28:3)
 - b. In the New Testament by Christ
 - i. In the Olivet discourse, Christ refers to "Daniel the prophet" (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)
 - ii. I'll take Christ's word over the critics any day!
2. Daniels authenticity is affirmed archeologically

Consider some archeological discoveries that disprove the critics:

 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's storing of the temple treasures in the house of his god (1:2): The modernists criticized this saying that this was an unknown custom and couldn't find a reference to it in ancient history. They have now discovered an inscription that proves Nebuchadnezzar always put his choicest spoils into his house of worship. It was one of his peculiar habits. How accurate is the Word of God! (Lyle)
 - b. Ashpenaz, master of the critics: The sceptics asserted he was another fictional character in this fictional book. However, in the last quarter of a century, the name Ashpenaz has been found on the monuments of ancient Babylon which are now in the Berlin Museum. It says, "Ashpenaz, master of eunuchs in the time of Nebuchadnezzar." (Lyle)
 - c. Nebuchadnezzar's "image of gold": Discovered records show that it was Nebuchadnezzar's custom to make public the worshipping of huge images. Excavators at Babylon found this furnace, with an inscription: "This is the place of burning where men who blaspheme the gods of Chaldea die by fire."
 - d. The Dead Sea scrolls contain 8 copies of Daniel, more than any other manuscript.

II. The Attributes of Daniel

A. Consider it Linguistically

1. Daniel is written in both Hebrew and Aramaic.
2. Sections by language:
 - a. 1:1 to 2:3 – Hebrew
 - b. 2:4 to 7:28 – Aramaic (Chaldean)
 - c. 8:1 to 12:13 – Hebrew
3. Aramaic was the Gentile language of commerce and diplomacy over the whole known world at that time. Interestingly, Daniel 2-7 gives the general outline of the whole course of the "times of the Gentiles" whereas the latter visions foretell the future especially in

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relation to the Jewish people. So the section relating particularly to the Gentiles was written in Aramaic and the section relating particularly to the Jews was written in Hebrew.

B. Consider it Divisionally

Daniel has 12 chapters and divides fairly neatly into two sections:

1. The Historical Section (Chapter 1-6) – Daniel interprets others dreams
2. The Prophetical Section (Chapter 7-12) – Daniel receives his own dreams and they are interpreted for him by the angel

C. Consider it Prophetically

1. Daniel is a very important Book for understanding Bible prophecy
2. For example, Daniel's 70-week prophecy in Chapter 9 is foundational to understanding an overview of last things. In fact, it has been called "the backbone of prophecy"
3. It has been said that prophecy is "history written in advance" (See Isaiah 46:9-10)

D. Consider it Practically

1. Daniel's life is a tremendous challenge to us in many areas such as living for God in a hostile world. Daniel is an example of the truth "*them that honour me, I will honour*" (1 Sam. 2:30) Daniel and his friends did not allow their circumstances to dictate their convictions
2. Spurgeon: "The lions would not have enjoyed Daniel if they could have eaten him as he was 50% grit and 50% backbone."

III. The Audience of Daniel

A. The Place – Babylon (How did they get there?)

1. Chapter 1:1-2 details in brief the occasion whereby the people of God arrived in Babylon
2. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem around 605 B.C. after defeating the Egyptian army at Carchemish on the upper Euphrates River. Egypt and Babylon were the two superpowers at this time in history and were competing with each other over control of that part of the world.
3. Nebuchadnezzar received word that his father (Nabopolassar) had died and cut short his campaign in Palestine, taking home with him some of the temple vessels as well as the cream of the Jewish young men. Daniel and his companions were among those captives.
4. There were three Babylonian invasions of the kingdom of Judah
 - a. First invasion – took place around 605 B.C. Daniel and a few other seed royal taken to Babylon with some of the temple vessels
 - b. Second invasion – in 598 B.C. A young priest by the name of Ezekiel carried captive in this group (2 Kings 24:10-17)
 - c. Third invasion – in 587 B.C. where city, temple and nation destroyed (2 Kings 25:1-21)

B. The People – Jews in captivity (Why were they there?)

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1. Because of their insubordination (disobedience)
 - a. Every 7th year the Israelites were to observe the Sabbatical year. That is, they were not to farm the land for that year but allow the land to rest (Lev. 25:1-7). God had warned that if they failed to obey Him, they would be taken into captivity so that the land could “enjoy her sabbaths” (Lev. 26:32-35)
 - b. The Israelites had neglected to observe this command for 490 years. This meant that 70 Sabbatical years were owed the land so God sent them to Babylon for 70 years!
 - c. Challenge: God says what He means, and means what He says! Disobedience to the Lord is a serious matter. You can’t disregard the Word of God without there being consequences.
2. Because of their idolatry
 - a. The people of God had stubbornly persisted in their pursuit of idol worship and its associated, evil practices (creed & practice). The captivity mentioned in 1:2 came in the days of Jehoiakim. Though he was son to godly Josiah, he “*did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.*” (2 Kings 23:37) God had warned his people repeatedly through the ministry of the prophets, giving them an opportunity to repent and avert judgment. See Jeremiah 25:1-14 on the 70-year captivity. God’s patience has its limits!
 - b. Babylon was the centre of idol worship in that day. The people of God wanted idols so eventually God placed them in the capital city of idolatry for 70 years so that they would eventually hate the idols they once loved! Sometimes when we fail to take God at His Word, He eventually gives us what we want and lets us have our gutful of it until we again long for fellowship with Him. “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.” (Psalm 137:1-9)

IV. The Aim of Daniel

Daniel reveals God to us in a special way. The dominant themes are:

A. The Dominion of God (4:17, 25 & 32)

1. This is the key theme in the Book of Daniel. It teaches us the truth of God’s sovereign rulership. God is on the throne! God rules in the affairs of men!
2. Examples
 - a. Jehoiakim (1:2)
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar (2:37; 4:34-35)
 - c. Belshazzar (5:23-28)
3. Psalm 115:3 “*But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*”
4. Psalm 99:1-3 “*The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved. The LORD*

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is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.”

B. The Designation of God

1. The most frequent title of God in the Book is “the most High” occurring 13 times in the Book (e.g. 3:26; 4:2 17, 24, 25, 32, 34; 7:18, 22, 25 & 27).
2. We get a sense for the significance of this Title in Abraham’s words (one of the first uses of this Title of God) to the king of Sodom in Genesis 14:22 *“I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth.”* The universe is the property of our Sovereign, Almighty God and it is His Divine Prerogative to execute His will in that universe.
3. Isaiah 6:1 *“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, **high and lifted up,**”*
4. Isaiah 57:15 *“For thus saith **the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity**, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”*
5. Psalm 86:10 *“For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: **thou art God alone.**”*

Conclusion: Are you pushing past God’s warnings against sin? Are we resting in the sovereignty of God? Will we stand for God when the circumstances are hostile to our Christian faith?

Daniel's Determination against Defilement

Text: Daniel 1:1-8

Introduction:

1. This chapter introduces us to Daniel and his three godly friends. It contains a tremendous challenge concerning living in purity in a wicked and hostile environment. Daniel is a tremendous example of a man who would not compromise on his godly convictions.
2. It often said in the world that "every man has his price." In other words, your price is the point you are willing to sell out. This may be true in the world, but it should not be true of the believer! Daniel is an example of a man who did not have a price tag on his Bible-based convictions.
3. We will study this test of Daniel and his godly resolve under three divisions

I. Daniel's Captivity (Vs. 1-3)

A. The Sovereignty over his Captivity (Vs. 1-2)

1. God 'gave' Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, using him as an instrument of chastisement in the nation. This was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 39:6 and 2 Kings 20:17-18 on account of Hezekiah's compromise. The seed of compromise can yield bitter fruit in later generations even after we have departed this life.
2. God allowed Daniel to be selected for the first wave of captives. God can use difficult and painful circumstances to get us to where He wants us to be so that we might live out his purposes for us. God was going to use Daniel to be a mighty witness before some of the most powerful rulers in the world at that time in history.
3. F.W. Faber – "Ill that God blesses is our good, and un-blest good is ill; And all is right that seems most wrong, If it be His sweet will."

B. The Sorrow of his Captivity (Vs. 3)

1. Imagine the sorrow of Daniel as he witnessed the defeat of his beloved city and likely the death of family and friends in the siege.
2. Imagine the sorrow he must have felt being torn away from his home, family and all that was familiar.

C. The Spirituality before his Captivity

1. Daniel was obviously part of a godly remnant in the midst of a nation that had largely forsaken God at that time.
2. Jerusalem was in a deplorable spiritual condition at that time under the evil influence of wicked Jehoiakim. Each victory in the Christian life prepares us for the greater battles we will face later on (e.g. David fought the lion and bear before Goliath)

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II. Daniel's Circumstances (Vs. 4-7)

Daniel found himself in a challenging and vulnerable position as a young man. He faced:

A. A New Location (Vs. 1-3)

1. What a trial this must have been for Daniel to witness the destruction of his beloved city of Jerusalem and then to be marched off to a strange country as a spoil of war.
2. Like Joseph, Daniel faced the challenge of being in a strange place without the comforts and protection of a godly home.
3. Challenge: It is when we are outside of the protective influence of others that the true caliber of our Christian walk will be manifest.

B. A New Education (Vs. 4)

1. The selection of the students (4a)
 - a. Physical requirements – they were to be handsome
 - b. Intellectual requirements – they were to have wisdom
2. The schooling of the students (4b)
 - a. The Literature of Babylon.
 - i. Babylon famous for its learning at that time in history. The word 'learning' comes from the word 'book'. Archeological discoveries have revealed Babylon's ancient libraries and intellectual genius.
 - ii. "They were famous for their architecture and engineering. This enabled them to construct fantastic things such as their double walls (space enough for two four-horse chariots to pass), the tower of Babel, hanging gardens and irrigation projects." They were masters in mathematics, having developed early forms of calculus and trigonometry. (David Cloud)
 - iii. Some of what they would be taught would be helpful such as Mathematics but their education would also include being steeped in the philosophies and culture of idolatrous Babylon.
 - b. The Language of Babylon

C. A New Temptation (Vs. 5)

1. "king's meat" = this was royal fair. The word 'meat' means delicacies or dainties and these would be the best luxuries in the kingdom. Temptation is hard to resist when it comes from such a source of power and prominence. It is easier to turn down temptation from an unimportant source. Temptation appeals not only to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes but also to the pride of life.
2. "wine" = Babylon famous for its drunken feasts (e.g. Belshazzar in chapter 5)

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3. This temptation would have particular appeal to young men like Daniel who were a long way from home and holiness. Many young people fall into sin when away from godly influences (e.g. university)

D. A New Description (Vs. 6-7)

1. The meaning of their Hebrew names
 - a. Each of the Hebrew names contained part of a Divine title of the God of Israel. “In days of old most names were theophoric, i.e. they had the name of the deity incorporated.” (Leupold)
 - b. Daniel = God is my judge
 - c. Hananiah = mercy of Jehovah
 - d. Mishael = Who is like God?
 - e. Azariah = Jehovah will help
2. The meaning of their Babylonian names
 - a. Belteshazzar = Bel’s prince or treasurer
 - b. Shadrach = command of Aku (moon god)
 - c. Meshach = who is like Aku (moon god)
 - d. Abednego = servant of Nebo
3. The motive behind their name changing
 - a. They wanted to take God out of their lives and out of their thinking.
 - b. It was “to wean them away from their land and religion, and get them to adopt the religion and habits of the heathen nations where their future was to be spent.” (Larkin)
 - c. “They were given Babylonian names to separate them from their Jewish roots and to stamp them with Babylonian character.” (David Cloud)
 - d. The world tries to squeeze us into its mold by forcing its ungodly ideals and philosophies upon us (e.g. political correctness in the workplace). The world speaks much about diversity but in reality, the world is more interested in conformity and uniformity.
 - e. They changed these men’s names but they couldn’t change their hearts! The world may try and pressurize us with its ideals and identity but with God’s strength we can live above it!

III. Daniel’s Convictions (Vs. 8)

Despite the unfavorable and difficult circumstances, Daniel stood for the Lord due to his godly convictions. There are 7 qualities of his godly convictions worth noting:

A. The Significant Timing of His Convictions – ‘but’

1. This is one of the most pivotal words in the entire life of Daniel. If it weren’t for Daniel’s godly decision as a young man, we wouldn’t have the rest of the Book.

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2. It is so important to have godly convictions as a teenager/young adult.
3. Daniel's age: To live into the reign of Cyrus (Dan. 1:21; 10:1) meant Daniel lived about 70 years after he was taken captive. He would have been a young man at the time of his selection. Keil and Delitzsch state that the typical age for this type of selection was between 15-20 years old.
4. W.A Criswell – “Practically every life-coloring decision that we make has been made when we were young...The friends that we choose, the life's companion that we marry, the habits that we acquire, the vocation that we follow, almost all of these decisions are made when we are young. We can read the evening of life in the morning of life.”
5. C.H. Spurgeon – “Very much of our future life will depend upon our earliest days.”

B. The Stoutheartedness of his Convictions – ‘purposed’

1. Daniel showed courage in the face of *consequences*. To defy the king's orders usually meant death. Daniel obviously feared God more than he feared the king of Babylon.
 - a. Illustration: A pastor once said to David Cloud, “You are very brave to preach against so many things.” Bro. Cloud said he could have replied, “You are brave not to!” It simply depends on whom you fear the most, man or God.
 - b. Richard Wurmbrand – “*A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is willing to die for.*”
2. Daniel showed courage in the face of *compromise*. Most of the other Jewish captives chose the easy road of compromise and didn't stand with Daniel and his three friends (Note Vs. 10 “*than the children which are of your sort*”). To stand for God often means standing alone or standing with the minority. There will always be those who will trade their convictions for fleshly lusts, convenience and popularity (e.g. Esau who sold his birthright)

C. The Seat of his Convictions – “in his heart”

1. The heart is the inner most part of a person, the seat of the affections. Daniel's convictions went beyond his head, they were imprinted on his heart.
2. Butler – “Most people have little or no convictions especially in the area of character. They are like a chameleon which changes colors with its environment. They are like a thermometer which tells the temperature, not a thermostat which controls the temperature. They cannot be counted on to be loyal, but will bend which ever direction the wind blows.”
3. Daniel did not fall prey to “situational ethics”. He did not allow his circumstances to dictate his decisions.

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D. The Source of his Convictions – “that he would not defile himself”

1. Daniel’s convictions came from the Word of God. That Daniel was a man well acquainted with the Scriptures is abundantly evident in this Book.
 - a. Certain meats were prohibited the Jews (Lev. 11)
 - b. These meats would also have been dedicated to idols
 - c. Wine and strong drink forbidden by the Word of God
2. Good, godly convictions come to those who saturate themselves in the Scriptures.
 - a. Psalm 119:11 *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, **that I might not sin against thee.**”*
 - b. Psalm 119:104 *“Through thy precepts I get understanding: **therefore I hate every false way.**”*

E. The Sensibleness of his Convictions - “therefore he requested”

1. Daniel was firm and unmovable in his godly convictions but respectful and wise in his dealings with his master. He made a courteous request, not an abrasive demand.
2. We can have convictions without being cranks! Someone has said prudence, politeness and pluck are a great trio. (Denis Lyle)

F. The Steadfastness of his Convictions

1. Daniel persisted despite the opposition he faced to his convictions (Vs. 10-13)
2. Daniel did not take a 2-minute stand and then buckle at the knees. He was resolute and determined.

G. The Sway of his Convictions

1. While most of the other Jewish captives did not follow Daniel’s lead, he was a godly influence on his three friends who were inspired to stand with him. We are all influencing someone.
2. Later on, these same three men would stand alone, seemingly without Daniel’s leadership and support. Taking a stand in the smaller things prepares the way for standing on the bigger things.

Conclusion:

1. How firm are your convictions? Do you have convictions based on the Word of God that you are not prepared to compromise on?
2. What kind of influence are we upon others? Are we willing to stand or do we blend in with the compromises?

Honor God and He will Honor You

Text: Daniel 1:9-21

Introduction:

1. This chapter contains a tremendous challenge concerning living in purity in a wicked and hostile environment. Daniel is a tremendous example of a man who would not compromise on his godly convictions. He did not have a price tag on his Bible-based convictions and would not succumb to “situation ethics”.
2. As an unknown poet put it:

Some ships go east, and some go west,
Before the wind that blows;
It's the set of the sail, and not the gale;
That determines the way it goes.
3. Daniel is an example of the truth of the words of God found in 1 Samuel 2:30 – *“...for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”*
4. In this lesson we will study further details of the stand Daniel took and how he was blessed and rewarded by God for that stand.

I. Daniel's Examination (Vs. 9-14)

Daniel's convictions were put to the test!

A. The Protesting of his convictions (Vs. 9-10)

1. Relationship (9) – the protest from someone with whom Daniel had a good relationship (Vs. 9). It is always harder to stand when it brings you into conflict with someone you are bonded to than someone you don't get along with. Standing for God requires patience and persistence. Many stand for a brief time only to compromise later.
2. Reason (10) – the protest sounded plausible. Living according to the Word of God does not seem reasonable or sensible from the world's perspective.

B. The Proving of his convictions (Vs. 11-14)

1. The proposal (11-13)
 - a. Daniel was not afraid to have his convictions put to the test. This reveals the faith he had in God and His Word. He was not in any doubt as to whether it was best to obey God or not. He had complete confidence that the truth would bear up under scrutiny *“...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4)
 - b. Daniel was enabled of God to take his stand wisely and respectfully. We need God's wisdom and grace when applying

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our convictions in various situations we find ourselves faced with in our lives.

- c. 'pulse' = things sowed; vegetables.
 - d. 'water' = good substitute for wine! "Water never made anyone drunk or debased. Water does not cause crime and ruin homes. But "wine" does all those things." (Butler)
2. The approval (14)
 - a. God's hand was at work in this rulers' heart (Vs. 9) Remember the theme of the Book – God reigns!
 - b. Prov. 21:1 *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."*

II. Daniel's Vindication (Vs. 15-17)

A. Superior in Appearance (Vs. 15-16)

1. The countenances of Daniel and his three friends revealed that godliness pays. The world assumes we will be worse off for obeying God rather than going along with the crowd (Vs. 10) but **time** reveals the truth. Have you ever noticed the difference between a life the devil gets a hold of and a life the Lord gets a hold of? They may look similar to start with and many claims will be made that the ungodly youth will be successful. But follow them on the road of life and look at them both in 10 or 20 years from now.
2. Sin makes its mark on the countenance. Jeremiah 6:15 *"Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, **neither could they blush:**"*

B. Superior in Aptitude (Vs. 17)

1. God was the source of this wisdom (James 1:5).
2. Faithfulness to God's Word imparts much wisdom. David could testify in Psalm 119:100 *"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."* Knowing the One True God opens a whole dimension of wisdom and knowledge unknown and unavailable to the natural man.
3. Illustration: The story is told about some young people who walked into a high school class that was taught by a godless professor. In one of his lectures he said, *" Will all of you who believe the myths of the Bible please stand?"* Several stood. Then he added *"Now this semester I am going to free you from this religious Bible nonsense. I have read the Bible, and it is certainly written by bunch of mixed up men."* One young Daniel spoke up, *" Sir, the Bible is God's letter to Christians, and if you are confused it's because you're reading somebody else's mail."* (Denis Lyle)

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III. Daniel's Promotion (Vs. 18-21)

A. The Reward of Position (Vs. 18-20)

1. Nebuchadnezzar reviews the students after their three years of training. He found them to be better than all the other students (Vs. 18) and all the other wise men in his whole realm (Vs. 20). To what degree were they superior? Tenfold! God rewarded them for each of those ten days of faith and testing by making them ten times better.
2. Psalm 75:6-7 *"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another."*
3. Note: Sometimes it doesn't turn out like it did with Daniel. Sometimes we suffer loss for our stand. Not all are preserved in such circumstances. For example, Jeremiah and Peter were delivered from prison whereas James was killed with the sword. In either case, God is perfect and faithful and our part is to be true to Him, leaving the results in His hands. Either way, whether promoted or persecuted, God will honor those who honor Him (See Heb. 11:32-40. Note the 'others' in this list)

A. The Reward of Continuation (Vs. 21)

1. Daniel outlived rulers and the Babylonian regime. *"...bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days..."* (Psalm 55:23)
2. Daniel lived to witness the fulfillment of Jeremiah's 70-year prophecy being fulfilled with the decree of Cyrus, setting free the people of God to return to the promised land.
3. "He saw the seventy-year captivity begin. He saw it end. We see him standing in the shadows as that small band of pioneers set out for the Promised Land, an old man, his finger pointing to Jeremiah's scroll and his hand raised in thanksgiving and prayer." (Phillips)
4. Those who live for God have the privilege of witnessing the Mighty works of God being performed.

Conclusion:

1. Do you have godly, Bible-based convictions?
2. At what point will you sell out on those convictions? Or will you like Daniel, resolve in your heart, to stand irrespective of the cost?

There is a God in Heaven

Text: Daniel 2:1-23

Introduction:

1. This chapter contains one of the most significant prophecies in the Bible giving an overview of the times of the Gentiles. It describes four great kingdoms that are associated with Israel and dominate it during this time.
2. The circumstances that lead to this dream being revealed and explained are challenging and instructive. We will find Daniel and his three friends suddenly enveloped in a life-threatening trial that was unforeseen and unprovoked. How did they come through it victoriously? The answer: PRAYER!!!
3. This account serves as a powerful reminder that God answers prayer.
4. We will study the text before us under four headings

I. The Peril of the Prophet (Vs. 1-13)

A. The Events that led to his Peril (Vs. 1-11)

1. The king's dream (Vs. 1)
 - a. The timing of his dream – the second year of his reign. There is a supposed contradiction here but it is easily explained when one understands the Babylonian method of reckoning. Denis Lyle explains: "In the Book of Daniel, you do not have Jewish reckoning, you have Babylonian reckoning. And it comes up several times in the Book. The first year of any monarch in the Babylonian system was not considered a part of his reign. It was his year of accession. And when they dated their kings, they dated them from the first full year to the last. So officially even though Nebuchadnezzar had come to the throne, it was called his accession to the throne and they never started counting until the beginning of his first full year."
 - b. The troubling from his dream – he was disturbed in his spirit. This was something that went beyond a superficial nightmare. God was trying to get this king's attention. So troubled was the king that he couldn't sleep.
2. The king's demand (Vs. 2-6)
 - a. The people – the wise men of Babylon. The king summoned the best minds of his day in a worldly sense. These were the elite intellectuals and spiritualists in Babylon. There were the...
 - i. Magicians – those who practiced magic
 - ii. Astrologers – those who studied the stars and made prophecies

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- iii. Sorcerers – the wizards, soothsayers, those who practiced witchcraft and could supposedly communicate with the dead
 - iv. Chaldeans = the philosophers who made the sciences their special study (e.g. astronomy & mathematics). They were the original inhabitants of Southern Mesopotamia. (Cloud). Note Gen. 11:28 “Ur of the Chaldees”
- b. The particulars – they were to both reveal the dream and give the interpretation. The penalty for failing to do so would be severe. You would be cut in pieces and your home would be made a public outhouse!
3. The king’s discernment (Vs. 7-11)
- a. The wise men request that the dream be told them a second time (Vs. 7)
 - b. The king’s response reveals his underlying suspicion and skepticism of the supposed wisdom of these wise men (Vs. 8-9) “These ancient fortunetellers were well adept in the art of drawing out sufficient information to form the basis of some prediction. The framing of their answer was in such an ambiguous manner that it would appear correct whichever way the event would go.” (Butler)
 - c. The wise men admit they cannot fulfill the king’s request. It was impossible for a man to do, it could only be done by God! (Vs. 10-11)
 - d. Note: Intellectuals, spiritualists and practitioners of false religion are powerless to give real answers to the real questions and challenges of life.

B. The Edict that legislated his Peril (Vs. 12-13)

- 1. The prompting of the edict – diabolical rage (Vs. 12) “*He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly...*” (Prov. 14:17)
- 2. The requirement of the edict – death of the wise men (Vs. 13)
- 3. Note: It is of interest that Daniel and his three friends were excluded from the king’s conference. Why this was we do not know. Possibly the jealousy of the other wise men on account of their superior wisdom (1:20). Or perhaps it was due to their ethnicity

II. The Prayers of the Prophet (Vs. 14-19)

A. The Appeal to the Earthly Throne (Vs. 14-16)

- 1. Daniel’s handling of the situation was with wisdom and composure (Vs. 14-15)
- 2. Daniel appeals to the king for time so that he can seek an answer from the Lord (Vs. 16). The king granted Daniel what he had refused the other wise men! There was something authentic about

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Daniel, something real. Here was a man on earth who was in touch with heaven. Behind the human dimension, the unseen hand of God was moving in this whole situation to bring about his purposes and plan.

B. The Appeal to the Heavenly Throne (Vs. 17-19)

There is rich instruction in these verses concerning prayer. Note six characteristics of their praying that brought about a Divine answer:

1. They prayed believingly (Vs. 16)
 - a. Daniel believed God would shew him the dream.
 - b. Prayers that get answered are faith filled prayers.
2. They prayed collectively (Vs. 17)
 - a. Daniel had true friends he could count on in times of crisis. A real friend is someone you can pray with in real life.
 - b. There is power in united prayer.
 - i. Matt. 18:19 *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”*
 - ii. Acts 4:31 *“And when **they had prayed**, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”*
 - c. Challenge: How much do we value the collective prayer meetings of the church? When we come to those meetings, do we pray!?
3. They prayed fervently (Vs. 18a) (James 5:16)
4. They prayed reverently (Vs. 18b)
 - a. “the God of heaven” = God is Omnipresent but His special abode is in heaven. “Our Father which art in heaven”
 - b. We need to remember Who it is we are praying to.
5. They prayed pointedly (Vs. 18c)
 - a. They asked God for specific things expecting specific answers.
 - b. They prayed that God would reveal the dream and spare their lives. Trials can have the effect of sharpening our prayers to what is really needed.
6. They prayed effectively (Vs. 19)

III. The Praise of the Prophet (Vs. 19b-23)

A. The Person of God (Vs. 19-22)

1. His Name (Vs. 20a)
2. His Omniscience (wisdom) and Omnipotence (might) (Vs. 20b)
3. His Sovereignty (Vs. 21a)
 - a. Times & Seasons are in his hands – this includes the physical seasons as well as the movements of men and nations.

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- b. Kings and rulers are in his hands – governments and politics in God’s control
- 4. His Wisdom (Vs. 21a-22)
 - a. He is the source of wisdom
 - i. God is the creator of man’s intellect and is the ultimate source of all His genius. Therefore, God should receive all the glory for all that has been designed and developed by man.
 - ii. Illustration: The famed astronomer Johannes Kepler wisely said, “I was merely thinking God’s thoughts after him. Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to the book of nature, it benefits us to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather, above all else, of the glory of God.” (Cloud)
 - iii. Illustration: Bezaleel and the Tabernacle. Exodus 31:2-5 **“See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: *And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.*”**
 - b. He is the revealer of wisdom – *“The **secret** things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”* (Deut. 29:29). *“The **secret** of the Lord is with them that fear him...”* (Psalm 25:14) Think of the amazing things God has revealed to His people in His Word concerning His character, His workings in the affairs of men and ultimately, His glorious plan of salvation.
 - c. He is the possessor of all wisdom – God knows what is in the darkness. There is nothing hid from His all-seeing eyes! Psalm 139:12 *“Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”*

B. The Personal experience of God (Vs. 23)

1. Note the personal pronouns – ‘I’, ‘me’ & ‘us’. Daniel had personally experienced the supernatural workings of God in his life.
2. “wisdom and might” = Daniel’s prayer of praise commenced with this (Vs. 20). God is the possessor of all wisdom and might and had granted Daniel a supply of it!
3. “made known” = God had revealed His secret to Daniel. This was no ordinary dream. This was one of the most significant prophecies of the entire Bible.

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4. Summary: We praise God for the great truths concerning Himself generally then we praise Him for His Divine workings in our lives specifically.
5. Challenge: Do we stop to thank the Lord when He answers our prayers? How much time do we spend thanking Him for what He has accomplished in our lives? *“Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”* (Psalm 107:8, 15, 21 & 31)

Conclusion:

1. Are you cultivating a life of prayer? Daniel didn't only pray in emergencies. Prayer was the heart beat of his daily life.
2. Is prayer your first or last resort in trials?
3. Do you thank the Lord for answered prayer? Do you glory in His wondrous Person?

The Panorama of Bible Prophecy

Text: Daniel 2:24-49

Introduction:

1. This chapter contains one of the most significant prophecies in the Bible giving an overview of the times of the Gentiles. It describes four great kingdoms that are associated with Israel and dominate it during this time.
2. Someone has said that this is the ABC of prophecy and the book of Revelation is the XYZ of prophecy. But we cannot get to the XYZ of prophecy until we understand the ABC's. (Lyle)
3. Nebuchadnezzar's image gives a panoramic view of what our Lord Jesus Christ described as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). It gives an overview of Gentile world history, particularly as it relates to Israel, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar through to Christ's millennial reign. The "times of the Gentiles" is distinct from the "fulness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 1:25). The "fulness of the Gentiles" has to do with the completion of the church age where Christ is taking out of the world a people for His Name, especially the Gentile peoples.
4. This dream was clearly prophetic. Notice "later days" (Vs. 28); "what shall come to pass" (Vs. 29) "the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter" (Vs. 45)
5. Observe three things about this prophetic dream:

I. The Revelation of the Dream (Vs. 24-35)

A. Daniels Audience with the King (Vs. 24-30)

1. He petitioned Arioch (Vs. 24-25)
 - a. Daniel requests for the lives of the wise men to be spared and for an audience with the king. If it hadn't been for godly Daniel, all these wise men would have perished with their supposed powers. (Vs. 24)
 - b. Arioch appears to try and take some of the credit before the king – "I have found" (Vs. 25)
2. He exalted God (Vs. 26-29)
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's questions presented a tempting opportunity to exalt self. After all, Daniel now was in possession of the Divine Revelation. It would have been easy for Daniel to say, "Yes king, I can do it!" But he didn't.
 - b. Daniel states the fact that the kings request is impossible for any man (Vs. 27). In this statement, he includes himself!
 - c. He then turns Nebuchadnezzar's attention to the One True God who had revealed the dream and the interpretation.
 - d. He makes it clear that the purpose of the dream was so that it might be revealed "what shall come to pass". We now have the

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advantage of looking back on much of this prophecy being already fulfilled but in Daniel's day, most of the prophecy was yet unfulfilled.

3. He humbled self (Vs. 30)

B. Daniel's Articulation of the Dream (Vs. 31-35)

1. The appearance of the image (Vs. 31)

- a. It was huge – 'great' (Vs. 31a)
- b. It was brilliant – "brightness was excellent"
- c. It was frightening – 'terrible'

2. The sections of the image (Vs. 32-33)

- a. The structure of the image was as follows: Head of gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of brass; legs of iron and feet partly iron and partly clay.
- b. Taking a step back and looking at this image, a few noteworthy things can be observed:
 - i. It's impressive appearance and make up reveal that this is the kingdoms of the world viewed from man's viewpoint. In chapter 7, the same world empires are depicted by God as ravening beasts.
 - ii. It is top heavy and weak in its feet, indicating an unsteady and precarious foundation. "Gold has a specific gravity of 19.3, silver of 10.51, brass of 8.5, iron of 7.6 and clay has a specific gravity of 1.9." (Phillips)
 - iii. It represents a gradual deterioration through human history as it progresses from top to bottom (from gold at the head to clay and iron at the feet). This is the inevitable progression of human governments.

3. The destruction of the image (Vs. 34-35)

- a. The image is totally devastated and destroyed by a stone smiting it in the feet.
- b. The statue is so ground to pieces that it becomes like chaff and is carried away by the wind.
- c. This is the ultimate destiny for this world's system!

II. The Interpretation of the Dream (Vs. 36-45)

Vs. 36 clearly marks the transition from Daniel's re-telling of the dream to his interpretation of the dream.

A. Gold: The Babylonian Kingdom (Vs. 37-38) (606BC to 536BC)

1. The source of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom – God (Vs. 37)
2. The scope of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom – world dominion (Vs. 38)
3. The symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom – gold (Vs. 38)
 - a. The Babylonian kingdom was a wealthy and magnificent kingdom.

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- b. “When Herodotus the historian visited Babylon 100 years after Nebuchadnezzar, he wrote that in all of his life he had never seen more gold nor imagined there could be so much.” (Lyle)

B. Silver: The Persian Kingdom (Vs. 39a) (536BC to 333BC)

1. Daniel would witness the transition to this kingdom as recorded in Daniel 5.
2. The two arms appear to represent to two people groups that made up this empire – the Medes and the Persians.
3. This empire was still in power at the close of the Old Testament.

C. Bronze: The Grecian Kingdom (Vs. 39b) (332BC to 63BC)

1. This empire arose in the silent years between the two Testaments. However, the identify of this kingdom is clearly disclosed in Daniel 8:21, “And the rough goat is the king of Grecia and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.”
2. History tells us that the Grecian army used bronze extensively for their armor and weaponry (e.g. shields and swords). Alexander the Great was their leader and has gone down in history as the greatest general of ancient times, conquering the known world of his time. Tradition says he wept that there were no more worlds to conquer. He died in Babylon around 30 years of age.

D. Iron: The Roman Kingdom (Vs. 40-43)

More is said about this fourth kingdom than about any other. Notice the three divisions to this Empire.

1. The legs of iron – the imperial Roman empire (63BC to 476AD). Iron signifies Rome’s power and severity towards those refusing to submit to her. It was a kingdom that “breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things.” (Dan. 2:40). Josephus the Jewish Historian recorded that over 1 million Jews perished in Rome’s siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and 97,000 were taken captive. Ten thousand were burned alive or killed in gladiatorial games to entertain Roman crowds. (Cloud)
2. The feet of iron and clay – weakened form of Roman empire (e.g. the rule of the papacy, European Union) AD 476 to present.
3. The ten toes – revived Roman empire which will be the Antichrist’s kingdom in the tribulation.
 - a. Same kingdom described as ten horns in Daniel 7:7-8.
 - b. Same kingdom described in Revelation 13:1-5 and 17:12-14.
 - c. It appears the European Union is the early development of this kingdom that will eventually become antichrist’s confederacy.
 - d. David Cloud comments:

In 1957, six nations signed the Treaty of Rome, pledging unity (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands). In 1958, the European Economic Community was born, often called the Common Market. In 1979, an election was held for the first European Parliament. In 1993, the European Union was formed. It encompasses 500 million people and in 2014 owned about 24% of the

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world's gross domestic product. In 2002, the Euro was adopted as a common currency. One of the symbols of the European Union is the ancient Tower of Babel. The Tower was featured on the European Union poster in 1992, and the Union's headquarters in Strasbourg, France, is shaped like an unfinished tower. Another symbol of the Union is the ancient goddess Europa riding a bull, which is a woman riding a beast! (Rev. 17:3). Europa is on the Euro coin, and a statue of her resides outside the Union's headquarters in Brussels, Belgium." We don't know if the existing European Union will play any role in the rise of the Antichrist, but we do know that some sort of European Union will.

E. Stone: The Eternal Kingdom (Vs. 44-45)

1. The King of this kingdom – “the stone” This is clearly a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ who is referred to as the stone frequently in Scripture. (Ps 118:22 Lk 20:17 Is 28:16 1 Pet 2:6-7) Note the following outline by Pastor Denis Lyle on Christ the Stone:
 - a. He was the Supernatural stone – “cut out without hands” (Vs. 34)
 - b. He was the Stumbling stone – “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (1 Peter. 2:8)
 - c. He was the Smitten stone - “*Take the rod and smite the rock.*” (Ex. 17:6) Christ is our “*Rock of Ages,*” smitten on Calvary for our sins.
 - d. He is the Salvation stone – “the stone which the builders rejected the same is become the head of the corner” (Psalm 118:22; Matt. 21:42) Salvation is in no other! (Acts 4:12)
 - e. He is the Sovereign stone – “the stone...became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Vs. 35)
2. The timing of this kingdom – “in the days of these kings” (Vs. 44) This is a reference to the 10-kingdom confederacy of antichrist. Christ will smash antichrist's kingdom at the end of the 7-year tribulation period and setup his eternal kingdom.
3. The character of this kingdom – “shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom” (Vs. 44) Question: Were the first four kingdoms literal or spiritual? It is absolutely inconsistent to interpret the first four as literal and this last one as spiritual! Christ will reign on this earth as surely as Nebuchadnezzar sat on the throne of Babylon.
4. The duration of this kingdom – “which shall never be destroyed...it shall stand for ever”
5. The conquest of this kingdom – “the stone...break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold...” (Vs. 45)

III. The Promotion after the Dream (Vs. 46-49)

A. Praise (Vs. 46-47)

1. The praise of Daniel (Vs. 46) – Nebuchadnezzar was pagan king and offered to Daniel the sort of adoration he would offer one of the pagan deities. While Nebuchadnezzar was wrong to do this, it is an amazing gesture considering he was the most powerful ruler on

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earth at that time. Later in chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar will come to know the One true God in sincerity and truth.

2. The praise of Daniel's God (Vs. 47) – the fact the king “answered unto Daniel” is noteworthy. It would appear that Daniel protested this adoration, hence the kings change to a focus upon Daniel's God.

B. Position (Vs. 48-49)

1. The elevation of Daniel (Vs. 48) – Daniel made ruler of Babylon proper which would be the capital city of the empire. This was a high honor indeed! Daniel was given wonderful gifts from the king.
2. The elevation of Daniel's friends (Vs. 49) – at Daniel's request, the king elevates his three special friends to positions of leadership in the realm. Daniel was not selfish with the blessings he received. He knew these dear friends had played an important part in seeking the Lord with him.

Conclusion:

1. Will you be in the kingdom of Christ? The requirement for being a part of the kingdom is to be “born again” (John 3)
2. Are we living for the kingdoms of this world or for the coming kingdom of Christ?
3. Be encouraged! Our God still reigns and His sovereign plan will be accomplished!

Standing When Things Get Heated

Text: Daniel 3:1-18

Introduction:

1. This chapter records the courageous, uncompromising stand of Daniel's three friends. In chapter 1 they supported Daniel in his stand against compromise. Now they must stand for themselves without Daniel's leadership.
2. These men serve as a tremendous example of what it means to stand for God in a world that is hostile to our faith.
3. Richard Wurmbrand – *“A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is willing to die for.”*
4. Observe four lessons about their godly stand:

I. The Catalyst for their Stand (Vs. 1-7)

A. The Construction of the Idol (Vs. 1)

1. The materials – ‘gold’
2. The dimensions – 60x6 cubits (approx... 94x9ft OR 28x2.7mtrs)
This would be around 8 times the height of our church ceiling!
3. The location – plain of Dura. Exact location unknown but somewhere near the city of Babylon (“province of Babylon”). Area selected as it was ideal for both visibility and assembly.
4. The purpose – a two-fold purpose can be discerned
 - a. The exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar – it is likely the idea was based on the Revelation of the previous chapter where Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is depicted as the head of gold. The statue may well have been a sculpture of himself. The deification of man is the natural progression of idolatry (See Rom. 1:23). Recent and present dictators follow the same pattern.
 - b. The unification of world religion – Nebuchadnezzar is a picture of the antichrist who will demand worship in the tribulation period. Despots down through the centuries have sought to control the masses under their rule by taking control of religion (e.g. communism)

B. The Call to the Idol (Vs. 2-3)

1. The subjects of the invitation – the rulers
2. The scope of the invitation – the whole empire. This would involve some organization and effort.

C. The Coercion to the Idol (Vs. 4-6)

1. ‘commanded’ (Vs. 4) = this is compulsory worship; the state seeking to rule the consciences of the people. The edict was clear, “bow or burn” (Strauss)

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2. True religious liberty does not come out of paganism, atheism or even state churches. It comes when the Gospel truths of God's Word deeply permeate a culture and society. The further our nation pursues the religion of atheism, we can expect more and more attempts to dictate what people can believe and even think. Definite attempts are being made to pass legislation today to coerce believers to bow the knee to the idols of perversion and wickedness.
3. "all kinds of music" (Vs. 5) = music used to invoke religious feelings and also signal when to begin worshipping the idol. This would not have been godly music but the type of heathen music often associated with idolatrous worship.
4. "whosoever falleth not down...fiery furnace" (Vs. 6) = the command is reinforced with the threat of a terrifying death if disobeyed.

D. The Compliance to the Idol (Vs. 7)

1. The people, almost without exception, complied with the command and bowed the knee to the idol.
2. It would not be a stretch of the imagination to suggest that there were very likely other Jews (God's people) amongst that great congregation who chose to go along with the crowd rather than face the consequences of standing (remember chapter 1 where most of the Jews chose to defile themselves with the king's meat). It is no different today! Standing against the giant idols of Satan in our day usually means standing alone or with the minority. But better stand alone and have the Lord with you than compromise with the crowd and be without Him!

II. The Criticism of their Stand (Vs. 8-12)

A. Their Approach (Vs. 8-11)

1. The word 'accuse' comes from the Hebrew word "to bite or chew". This was a bitter, malicious attack. Violent opposition can be expected when we stand against idolatry and compromise.
2. These men obviously were watching the Jewish believers. If you are the only three standing out of thousands, you are going to be conspicuous and attract some opposition.
3. "thou, O king, hast made a decree" = there are lots of supporters for laws if the laws condone evil

B. Their Accusation (Vs. 12)

They leveled a triple accusation at the three men.

1. They accused them of disloyalty – "not regarded thee"
 - a. They seek to make their stand a personal attack on the king. In reality, these men were his most loyal and trustworthy subjects! We know from the previous chapter that the king didn't trust his

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own wise men! Daniel and his three friends had proven themselves men of true integrity.

- b. Standing for the Lord will invariably cause offense on a personal level even though in reality you are simply seeking to be true to your conscience before the Lord. It really comes down to a choice as to whom we are more willing to offend; man, or God.
 - c. Christ demands that as His disciples that we be loyal to Him above all else, even if that cuts across the closest and dearest of human ties (Luke 14:26)
2. They accused them of defiance – “they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image”
 - a. This accusation was true! These men would not serve the idols of Babylon or break the first and second commandment. Service and worship are linked!
 - b. They attempt to make it personal again – “which thou hast set up”. They are appealing to the king’s pride.

III. The Confrontation of their Stand (Vs. 13-15)

A. The King’s Offense (Vs. 13-14)

1. “rage and fury” = Nebuchadnezzar was filled with diabolical rage at Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. The world hates it when we refuse to be conformed to its evil ways.
2. “they brought” = appears the accusers were the ones who brought the men to the king
3. This would be an awesome test to their stand to be summoned into the presence of the most powerful monarch on earth in the presence of the most powerful men of the empire (the ruling class).

B. The King’s Offer (Vs. 15)

1. This was probably the greatest test to their convictions. The king offers them the option of compromise. He will give them a second chance to yield to his diabolical decree. The world doesn’t mind extending superficial mercy, so long as you bow the knee of compromise. In fact, the world seems to get a special delight in seeing a godly Christian lower the flag of separation.
2. The promise of personal peace and preservation in exchange for compromising on the truth is a very powerful temptation. Self is ever ready to side step the cross and take the easy road out in such situations.
3. What sort of advice would these men have received from 21st century, rock and roll Christianity? They would probably advise them to just sway with the sackbut and dance to the dulcimer and join in the ecumenical gathering in a spirit of love. Anything but separation!

IV. The Courage of their Stand (Vs. 16-18)

Look at their bold reply!

A. It was Forthright (Vs. 16)

1. “not careful” = there was no hesitation in their reply. While given in a respectful tone, they would not pull any punches on “this matter”. Interestingly, the word ‘careful’ is translated “have need of” in Ezra 6:9. It is almost like they are saying “there’s no need for a discussion on this.”
2. There would be no room for negotiations on their godly convictions. We live in a day where everything has to be “discussed”. If such discussions are for the purpose of negotiating compromise, they should not be entertained! We live in a day where we tend to be so reluctant to express anything in an absolute manner but to be Scriptural, we must. This doesn’t mean being brash or obnoxious. These men didn’t rail on the king. They simply made it clear where they stood.
3. Illustration: Athanasius was one of the early church fathers. We are indebted to him for the purity of the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. He would not relinquish his stand against a popular heresy of the day. Someone came to him and said, “*Athanasius don't you know that the Emperor is against you, the bishops are against you, the church is against you, the whole world is against you.*” Athanasius replied, “*Then Athanasius is against the whole world.*”

B. It was Faith filled (Vs. 17-18a)

The faith of these men was a mature faith that included two elements:

1. They believed in the Ability of God – “our God is able” There was no question in their minds that God had the power to deliver them to the point that there was even assurance that they would be delivered – “and he will deliver us” Even death for a Christian is a form of deliverance!
2. They believed in the Sovereignty of God – “but if not” The ‘if’ has nothing to do with God’s power but rather His will. They were in no doubt that God could deliver them but they didn’t know if he would deliver them. Godly faith involves submission to God’s Sovereign will for our lives whether that has a favorable or seemingly unfavorable outcome in this life on earth. These men didn’t put conditions on their allegiance to their God.

C. It was Fixed (Vs. 18b)

1. These men were unmovable, uncompromising and unequivocal in their reply. Under no circumstances would they bow the knee to Nebuchadnezzar’s pagan idol. Nebuchadnezzar gave them two

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options but for these men there was only one option; honor God and face the fire!

2. Illustration: Not too long ago, a young Korean Christian was taken by the communists. Determining to make him a public example, the soldiers commanded the entire village to appear in the town square. A communist soldier led the young Christian to the centre of the town; put a pistol to his head and shouted, **“Denounce Jesus Christ and embrace Communism, or die.”** The young man looked around at the crowd and then raised his head toward heaven and shouted, *“I believe in Jesus Christ! I believe . . .”* Crack! He was dead.

Conclusion: Will you stand for your Saviour no matter the cost? Will you be loyal to Him even if it means facing persecution, trial and distress?

Facing the Fire

Text: Daniel 3:19-30

Introduction:

1. This chapter again demonstrates the truth which is the central theme of the Book – God reigns! Note Nebuchadnezzar’s reference in Vs. 26 to “*the most high God*”
2. In our last lesson we studied the courageous, uncompromising stand of Daniel’s three friends they took against Nebuchadnezzar’s idolatrous statue. In this lesson we are faced with the consequences of the stand they took and how God miraculously brought them through the fiery furnace. Some wonderful principles to encourage us to endure the fiery trials God allows in our lives as believers (1 Peter 4:12-13)
3. Hugh Latimer was martyred along with Dr Nicholas Ridley in 1555 during the reign of bloody Queen Mary who viciously persecuted the protestant believers. As a lighted fagot was laid at Dr. Ridley’s feet, Hugh Latimer said, “Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England as I trust never shall be put out.” (Foxes Book of Martyrs)
4. Note three principles about the fiery trial these men went through

I. Their Placement in the Fire (Vs. 19-23)

Consider their placement in the fire from...

A. The Earthly Perspective (Vs. 19-23)

1. The King’s Fury (Vs. 19-21)
 - a. The ferocity of his countenance (Vs. 19a)
 - i. ‘visage’ = the face; the countenance or look of a person (Webster). His anger caused his face to be contorted and twisted with rage; his eyes flashed and the color in his cheeks rose.
 - ii. ‘against’ = his murderous intention against these men was etched into his face.
 - iii. Taking a stand against sin and compromise will provoke the fiercest of tempers, not just from the lost world but also from the compromised believer who has allowed the spirit of the world to take hold of his inner life.
 - b. The ferocity of his command (Vs. 19b-20)
 - i. Burning – furnace heated 7 times more than it was normally heated. “This was a furnace for baking bricks...Thousands of Nebuchadnezzar’s building bricks have been unearthed inscribed with his own name and many of them are in museums.” (Cloud) The more

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impossible the situation became, the more the stage was being set for the glory of God.

- ii. Binding – they are bound by Nebuchadnezzar’s elite soldiers to ensure no mistake was made!
2. The King’s Foolishness (Vs. 22-23)
 - a. His command was hasty (Vs. 22a)
 - i. Prov. 14:17 *“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly...”*
 - ii. Prov. 19:2 *“...he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.”*
 - b. His command was costly (Vs. 22b)
 - i. He lost some of his best men to the fire he had intended to slay the three men.
 - ii. Anger always hurts and damages others!

B. The Heavenly Perspective (1 Peter 4:12-16)

1. High above Nebuchadnezzar, the earthly king, God was still on the throne. He Sovereignly allowed these men to go through this fiery trial so that an occasion would be made for His own glory and honor.
2. Job 23:10 *“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”*
3. Illustration: Joseph recognized the sovereignty of God in his trial.
 - i. Gen. 45:5 *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for **God did send me** before you to preserve life.”*
 - ii. Gen. 50:19-20 *“And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but **God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”*

II. Their Preservation in the Fire (Vs. 24-27)

These men experienced...

A. Fellowship in the Fire (Vs. 24-25)

1. “Christ was with these men in the fiery furnace. He doesn’t always deliver His people from trials, but He always accompanies them in trials.” (Cloud)
2. They were unloosed - the only thing the fire consumed was the ropes or chains that had bound them. The Lord is able to direct the fire to deal with those things that bind us and hinder us from being all that we could be for him. Only God can take a fiery trial that would otherwise damage and even destroy the believer and make it work for his good (Rom. 8:28).
3. They were unhurt – the fire had no power over them. They experienced the fulfilment of God’s promise in Isaiah 43:1-2 *“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have*

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*called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: **when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.***” These men “quenched the violence of fire” (Heb. 11:34)

4. Philippians 3:10 *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and **the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;**”*
5. There is a certain depth of fellowship with Christ that can be only experienced in the furnace of affliction.
6. Illustration: Near to the Heart of God (1903) (Hymn)

Cleland B. McAfee was the chaplain and choir director of Park College in Missouri. When communion services came, he would write the words and music of a response which his choir could sing and which would fit into the theme of his sermon. One terrible week, just before a communion Sunday, the two little daughters of his brother Howard and sister in law Lucy died of diphtheria within 24 hours of each other. The college family and town were stricken with grief. Cleland sat long and late thinking of what could be said in word and song on the coming Sunday. He wrote a stirring hymn, the choir learned it at the regular Saturday night rehearsal, and afterward they went to the Howard McAfee’s home and sang it as they stood under the sky outside the darkened, quarantined house;

There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God; A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God. There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God; A place where we our Saviour meet, Near to the heart of God. There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God; A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God. O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God, Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God.

B. Freedom from the Fire (Vs. 26-27)

1. The timing of their deliverance (Vs. 26) Note the word ‘then’. God will only allow us to remain in the fire for as long as is in His perfect will. In His time, He brings us out of it.
2. The testimony of their deliverance (Vs. 27)
 - a. Think of the impact this would have had on that vast audience of the key rulers from all over the empire.
 - b. So complete was God’s Divine protection of them that not one hair on their heads was singed, nor did they even have the smell of smoke upon them.
3. Read Romans 5:1-5 and discern the cycle of Christian growth that takes place in our trials (tribulation – patience – experience – hope)

III. Their Promotion after the Fire (Vs. 28-30)

There was a...

A. New Proclamation (Vs. 28-29)

1. “there is no other God that can deliver after this sort” – what a change in attitude from the words Nebuchadnezzar had uttered only a short time before (See Vs. 15)

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2. Belief in the One True God of Israel is now given protections by the king of Babylon. This would mean that the truth could be freely proclaimed throughout the whole empire. The decree was addressed to “every people, nation and language” and would have been published in the official languages of the empire. Through this situation, God gave light concerning Himself to multitudes of people. Now think how things would have been different if these men had compromised! Truly God’s eyes run to and fro seeking for such men and women through whom He can work mightily (2 Chr. 16:9)

B. A New Position (Vs. 30)

1. These men are a testimony to us again of the truth that when we honor God, He will honor us (1 Sam. 2:30). They were actually in a better position for having gone through the fire than if they had bowed the knee of compromise.
2. For you, God’s promotion of you will be unique, depending on what the nature of your trial is.
3. Note: If things had turned out for the worse on the human level and these men were martyred, God would still be wise and good and their promotion would be into glory. Either way, whether in life or death, the believer is victorious! Remember the ‘others’ mentioned in Hebrew’s Hall of Faith (Heb. 11:32-40)

Conclusion: How are you viewing your trials? Are you trusting and resting in God for His will and purpose to be accomplished? Will you say, “thy way is perfect” (Psalm 18:30 & 32) even if it doesn’t seem so from the human standpoint?

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie

My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply

The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design

Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

The World's Proudest Man Humbled by God

Text: Daniel 4:1-37

Introduction:

1. This chapter is full of the central theme of the Book – God reigns! Note Vs. 3, 17, 25, 26, 32, 34. The phrase *“the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will”* occurs 3 times in this chapter.
2. Nebuchadnezzar had already been given a lot of light from God. God had given him the revelation found in chapter 2. He witnessed God's miraculous preservation of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego against his murderous attempt to destroy their lives. Yet, Nebuchadnezzar was still a pagan, committed in heart and mind to his idols.
3. Now God is going to touch Nebuchadnezzar's life in a very specific and special way to bring him to repentance and faith.
4. Daniel Chapter 4 really contains Nebuchadnezzar's salvation testimony with most of it written in the first person – “I thought it good to shew...” (Vs. 2)
5. The chapter before us divides neatly into five main sections.

Firstly, we have...

I. Proclamation (Vs. 1-3)

A. The king's Audience (Vs. 1)

1. “unto all people, nations and languages” = this message was to have a wide-reaching influence and impact upon the whole empire. It would have been translated into the main languages of the known world.
2. “peace be multiplied unto you” = an amazing salutation considering Nebuchadnezzar's reputation for war and cruelty. It almost reads like one of Paul's salutations from the N.T. Epistles!

B. The king's Aim (Vs. 2-3)

1. God's Goodness (Vs. 2)
 - a. “signs and wonders” = God's miracle working power
 - b. “toward me” = God had personally dealt with Nebuchadnezzar's life
2. God's greatness (Vs. 3)
 - a. “great...mighty” = God is Great, Almighty and All Powerful.
 - b. “everlasting kingdom...from generation to generation” = God is the King Eternal. Nebuchadnezzar came to realize that God transcended the pagan gods of man.

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II. Vision (Vs. 4-18)

A. The Dream Received (Vs. 4-8)

1. His distress (Vs. 4-5)
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar was enjoying a false sense of peace and security. He was the supreme ruler of a vast and powerful empire and could have all that his sinful heart wished (Vs. 4).
 - b. God, in mercy, disrupted his place of false rest with a revelation.
2. His decree (Vs. 6-8)
 - a. The fact he summoned the pagan wise men first reveals that at this point Nebuchadnezzar was still at heart, a committed pagan. All this was in spite of the fact this same group of religious gurus had failed him miserably the last time (Daniel 2)!
 - b. Religion and human philosophy have no real answers for the troubled soul. What is needed is the Word of God delivered through the man of God.
 - c. Daniel is finally summoned. He makes reference to Daniel's Babylonian name which was based on the name of Nebuchadnezzar's deity – "my god". At this point in time, Nebuchadnezzar was still attached to his false god.

B. The Dream Retold (Vs. 9-18)

In the previous dream a great statue was the symbol in the dream. Here is a great tree. Observe...

1. The description of the tree (Vs. 9-12)
 - a. It was a big tree (Vs. 10-11)
 - b. It was a beautiful tree (Vs. 12a)
 - c. It was a bountiful tree (Vs. 12b)
2. The downfall of the tree (Vs. 13-18)
 - a. The proclaimer (Vs. 13)
 - i. "watcher...holy one" = an angelic being
 - ii. "from heaven" = the heavenly origin of this messenger
 - b. The proclamation (Vs. 14-16)
 - i. The tree was to be reduced (Vs. 14)
 - ii. The tree was to be retained (Vs. 15)
 - c. The purpose (Vs. 17)
 - i. "to the intent" = purpose behind the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar revealed.
 - ii. "the living may know" = God is concerned that men know He reigns. God would demonstrate that by dealing with the most powerful man in the world at that time.

III. Interpretation (Vs. 19-27)

A. Daniel's Consternation (Vs. 19)

1. 'astonied' = old English word meaning dazed, bewildered, shocked.

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2. “one hour” = imagine what this must have been like for the king
3. “his thoughts troubled him” = reveals Daniel’s love and compassion for this evil king. Daniel did not delight in proclaiming a message of judgment to this kind though humanly speaking this would have been the natural reaction of a captive in a foreign land.

B. Daniels Comment (Vs. 20-26)

1. The interpretation of the tree (Vs. 20-22) The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom (Vs. 20-22) Note: “It is thou, O king” (Vs. 22)
2. The interpretation of the tree’s devastation (Vs. 23-26). Nebuchadnezzar would be humbled to the level of an animal. He would live like, look like and eat like a beast of the field for 7 years. This reveals just how proud and stubborn this king’s heart was. He would need to be chastised by God for 7 years before he would truly humble himself before Him.

C. Daniels Counsel (Vs. 27)

1. Daniel demonstrates boldness and compassion towards the heathen king. He goes beyond just interpreting the dream to challenging the king concerning his need to turn from his sinful ways.
2. Daniel was clearly burdened for this king’s soul. I wonder how many years Daniel had prayed for his salvation? Are we burdened for the souls of men? Are we prepared to tell them of their sin problem so that they might then run to the Saviour for salvation?
3. Illustration: Caesar Milan challenges young lady concerning salvation

Many years ago, in London there was a large gathering of noted people. Among the invited guests was a famous preacher of his day, his name was Caesar Milan. A young lady played and sang charmingly and everyone was thrilled. After her performance Milan went up to her and graciously but boldly said, *“I thought as I listened to you tonight how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefited if your talents were dedicated to His cause. You know, young lady you are a sinner in the sight of God, but I am glad to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse you from all sin.”* That young lady was so angry with that preacher that she stomped her feet and walked away. As she was leaving, he said, *“I mean no offence. I pray that God’s Spirit will convict you.”*

Do you know what happened? That young lady went home, but she could not sleep. The face of the preacher appeared before her and his words rang through her mind. About two o’clock in the morning she got out of bed, took a pencil and piece of paper, and with tears rolling down her face, Charlotte Elliot wrote these words,

Just as I am without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me

And that Thou bidst me come to Thee

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O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Charlotte Elliot came to Christ, because Caesar Milan had a love and burden for souls.

IV. Narration (Vs. 28-33)

You will note that there is a shift from the first person 'I' to the second person 'he'. On account of his madness, someone else recorded the events that transpired (likely Daniel).

A. Nebuchadnezzar Arrogant (Vs. 28-30)

1. "at the end of twelve months" = God delayed his act of judgment for a whole year! This reveals the amazing longsuffering and patience of God with sinful man! After all Nebuchadnezzar's stubborn refusal to submit to the light he had received; after all his wickedness; God gives him more time to repent; God delays His judgment! Truly God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9) and therefore gives men space to repent (Rev. 2:21).
2. Look at Nebuchadnezzar's pride filled words – "I have built...my power...my majesty" (Vs. 30) It was at this point that the king "crossed that mysterious boundary between God's mercy and His wrath." (Phillips)
3. Description of Babylon's glory by Phillips

The city was built in the form of a square, about fifty-six miles in circumference. The Euphrates, which flowed through the city, provided the city with an abundance of water. It was spanned by a spectacular bridge. On one side of the bridge stood an enormous temple dedicated to Belus and filled with numerous golden idols. On the other side stood Nebuchadnezzar's grand palace. The outside of the walls of the city were 335 feet high and about 87 feet broad. Chariots could race side by side along these massive walls. The walls were matched by a hundred gates of solid brass, twenty-five on each side of the city. A straight road ran from each gate to the opposite gate. These roads intersected each other, dividing the city into 676 squares. In the centre of the city, 150 pillars, each 88 feet high, supported the chapel of Baal. Inside was a colossal golden image of Baal. There was also the spectacular Hanging Gardens, considered to be one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. Successive terraces rose one above another until they reached as high as the walls. They were then filled with soil and planted with every kind of tree and flower.

B. Nebuchadnezzar Abased (Vs. 31-33)

1. Sovereign pronouncement (Vs. 31-32)
 - a. God says what He means and means what He says!
 - b. What God says will surely come to pass.
2. Sovereign fulfilment (Vs. 33)

V. Transformation (Vs. 34-37)

A. A New Praise (Vs. 34-35)

In these words of praise, he speaks of...

1. God's Majesty – "the most High"

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2. God's Eternality – "him that liveth for ever"
3. God's Sovereignty – "whose dominion is an everlasting dominion..."
(Also Vs. 35)

B. A Restored Position (Vs. 36)

1. Restoration of his mind (Vs. 36a)
2. Restoration of his majesty (Vs. 36b)

C. A New Pattern (Vs. 37)

1. 'now' = key word. Every sinner saved by grace has a "then" and a "now". "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see"
2. "praise and extol and honour" = this is clear evidence of a changed life! Nebuchadnezzar now worshipped God as a pattern of his life. Contrast these words of the king with the king's previous words to Daniel (2:47) and Daniel's three friends (3:29). "Do you see those three words in (4:37)? (*praise, extol, honour*) they are active verbs indicating continued action. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar continued praising God long after his restoration, and that would hardly be the action of a pagan." (Denis Lyle)
3. "those that walk in pride he is able to abase" = the heart of Nebuchadnezzar's testimony. Pride was the first sin committed in God's created universe when Lucifer uttered his five "I will" statements (Isaiah 14:13-14) Pride is first on the list of the 6 things the Lord hates (Prov. 6:16-17)

Conclusion:

1. Pride will keep you from salvation. The first step is to humble yourself and admit you are a sinner in need of a Saviour.
2. Pride is a monster which if allowed into the Christian's life will bring breakage and ruin. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6)

Belshazzar's Booze Banquet

Text: Daniel 5:1-4

Introduction:

1. This event occurred in 539 B.C. approx. 23 or 24 years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar.
2. The authenticity of this account has been severely attacked by critics. This was because for a long time no reference could be found in ancient history to a monarch by the name of Belshazzar. History is also clear that Nabonidus was king of the Babylonian Empire at this time.
3. Question: How do we answer this alleged problem?
4. Answer: The Nabonidus Chronicle for 556-539 BC, which was translated in 1882 by T.G. Pinches, states that Nabonidus and Belshazzar shared co-regency. It says that Nabonidus was in the city of Tema (Teiman) in the Arabian Desert for 10 years, while Belshazzar was with the army in Babylon. "He (Nabonidus) entrusted the army (in Babylon) to his oldest son, his first born, the troops in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted kingship to him, and, himself, he started out for along journey." (*Nabonidus Chronicle*, British Museum, Room 55, Case 15, WA 35382) (David Cloud's Commentary)
5. The account of Belshazzar's feast before us serves as a powerful warning to us of the evils of drink and living for sinful pleasure. This will be the focus of our first message from this chapter. Let's study this sinful feast under 3 divisions.

Look firstly at...

I. The Information about the Feast (Vs. 1)

A. The Immensity of the Feast – "a great feast"

1. Feasts like these were often held by pagan kings to flaunt their wealth and prowess.
2. John Phillips describes the scene:

The dining room was enormous, reportedly 1,650 feet wide (502m) and a mile long (1.6km). Some 4,500 pillars in the form of giant elephants were part of the walls. They were carved out of stone and stood twenty feet high (6m). The tables were fashioned in the form of horseshoes. The lords of Babylon and their wives sat down to eat and drink as trained peacocks, arrayed in gold-and-silver-trimmed harness, drew miniature chariots laden with choice wine and all manner of food to the guests. From the adjoining gardens, an enormous choir and orchestra provided food and entertainment.

B. The Invited to the Feast – "a thousand of his lords"

1. This was a large gathering of the political class of Babylon.
2. Note: It is of interest to observe not just who was invited but who wasn't invited! No sign of Daniel at this feast, despite his long

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history of serving the Babylonian court. Whether Daniel was invited or not is unknown but either way, a gathering like this was no place for a man of God. Daniel was likely in his 80s by now but his convictions hadn't changed from when he took a stand as a young man (Daniel 1)

C. The Intent of the Feast

1. Pride - It was about the prideful exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar.
2. Pleasure - It was about giving oneself over to every impulse of fleshly lust and indulgence. The Babylonians worshipped the goddess Ishtar, the goddess of love. The pleasure-driven culture of Babylon was very similar to the one we find in 21st century Australia where people live by the motto, "If it feels good do it!" We live in a pleasure driven, amusement age where people are so high on entertainment it is almost impossible to make them think soberly about eternal realities.
3. Provocation – It was about defying the Medo-Persian army surrounding the city. They were partying in the face of impending judgment!
 - a. They were lulled into a false sense of security on account of their tremendous fortifications and supplies. They felt beyond the reach of judgment or defeat. Their walls were impregnable; huge towers provided strategic vantage points from which to see and attack the enemy. Inside the city there was supplies that would feed the city for many years (some say up to 20!). The river Euphrates ran through the city, providing a permanent source of water and a means to grow crops within the city.
 - b. What a picture of the world that parties and dances as if God's judgment will never come but all the while the sand in the hour glass of God's forbearance and longsuffering is running out.
 - c. "By refusing to think, especially about eternal realities, and by filling our days with entertainment, particularly sin-oriented entertainment, we lose sight of danger and plunge into the abyss." (James Boice)

Look secondly at...

II. The Intoxication at the Feast (Vs. 2)

A. The Emphasis upon the Wine (Vs. 2a)

1. The drinking of wine is mentioned 5 times in Vs. 1-4
 - a. "drank wine" (Vs. 1)
 - b. "tasted the wine" (Vs. 2)
 - c. "might drink" (Vs. 2)
 - d. "drank in them" (Vs. 3)

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- e. “they drank wine” (Vs. 4)
2. Intoxicating substances (i.e. wine and spirits) are central to the world’s parties. “Alcohol has been at the heart of man’s sinful activities since the fall.” (Cloud) This should not be amongst God’s blood-washed people! God help us when Christian weddings today have as much wine flowing at them as a heathen one.
3. The Bible makes plain the Divine perspective on alcoholic wine and strong drink by its plain denunciations of it (e.g. Prov. 23) and by example such as these.

B. The Evil Effects of the Wine (Vs. 2b)

There were two evil effects of the wine we can see in the text:

1. Blasphemy
 - a. The command to bring in the sacred vessels came “whiles he tasted the wine”. Under the influence of the wine, the king gave this wicked command to profane the vessels of the temple of the living God.
 - b. Wine is not just a beverage, it comes with an anti-God, rebellious spirit. Think of the countless curses and blasphemies that are hurled at the Lord of glory while men are under the influence of intoxicating liquor.
 - c. Foolish and wicked decisions are made under the influence of drink. Isaiah, denouncing the sin of his generation said, *“But they also have **erred** through wine, and through strong drink are **out of the way**; the priest and the prophet have **erred** through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are **out of the way** through strong drink; they **err in vision**, they **stumble in judgment**.”* (Isaiah 28:7)
 - d. Strauss on the demon of drink: “The demon of drink has continued to dig at all the foundations of civilization, destroying the moral fiber of nations. People outdo themselves in wickedness when they are overpowered by a pseudo boldness and the absence of restraint produced by the alcohol demon. One of the perils of strong drink is that it too often carries away the drinker to do and say foolish and fatal things, the hidden depths of iniquity being stirred up within him.”
2. Indecency
 - a. The presence of women highlights the immoral activities connected with this feast. In Oriental custom, usually only men were present at such feasts.
 - b. Illustration: King Ahasuerus held a similar feast. Initially the men and women were separate until under the influence of drink, he summoned his wife to be a spectacle for his guests.

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Esther 1:7-12a *“And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should **do according to every man's pleasure**. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus. On the seventh day, **when the heart of the king was merry with wine**, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains.”*

- c. Wine dampens the conscience and releases those who drink it from moral inhibitions. People do things under the influence of drink that they would not normally do!
 - d. Read Prov. 23:29-35. There is a connection between intoxication and indecency and immorality!
 - i. Noah's drunkenness lead to nakedness (Gen. 9:21)
 - ii. Lots' drunkenness lead to incest (Gen. 19:20-38)
3. According to Pastor Denis Lyle alcohol is:
- The main factor in the death of one thousand children each year.
 - The main factor in the death of half of drivers under twenty-five who are killed.
 - Implicated in half of all recorded crimes including half of all murders.
 - Implicated in half of all child abuse cases.
 - Implicated in half of all wife battering.
4. Peter Masters describes alcohol as, “Satan's fermented river of false hopes, false consolation, false happiness, false courage and it is his way of binding millions to the world.”

Look thirdly at...

III. The Impiety of the Feast (Vs. 3-4)

A. The Participants (Vs. 3)

1. “the king”
2. “his princes”
3. “his wives and his concubines”
4. They were unified in their evil defiance of the one true God! There are all too many ready to follow an evil leader.

B. The Profanity (Vs. 4)

1. “they drank wine”
 - a. They used the sacred for the profane.

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- b. Their blasphemous worship of the idols the crowning point of their rebellion but God's displeasure at their sin of drunkenness also clearly revealed.
- c. Clear link again drawn between their drink and their depravity
- 2. "praise the gods"
 - a. Belshazzar's underlying motivation and purpose for using the temple vessels becomes clear. It was an act of willful rebellion and unbelief against the One True God of Israel.
 - b. The primary desire was not to use these vessels so they could feel they were "drinking in style" from vessels that were precious and valuable. It was to despise and degrade the God of Israel and to elevate and honor the pagan deities. He was trying to demonstrate that his pagan gods were superior to Israel's God.
 - c. Vs. 22 makes it clear that Belshazzar was sinning against light that had been given to him by God in the example of Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather.
- 3. Belshazzar crossed the line between God's longsuffering and His judgment. Men often interpret God's patience as weakness but they are gravely mistaken. When God's mercy expires, judgment comes swiftly and severely upon the unrepentant.

Conclusion:

- 1. Challenge: As believers, are our events (e.g. meals and parties) distinct from the world? Are our weddings permeated with the spirit of holiness or the spirit of sensuality?
- 2. Challenge: Do we drink from the devil's cup?
- 3. Challenge: Do we attend ungodly, compromise functions where alcohol is present?

Weighed and Found Wanting

Text: Daniel 5:5-31

Introduction:

1. Daniel chapter 5 is an important fulfillment of prophecy as it marks the transition from the head of gold to the breast and arms of silver as foretold in Dan. 2 (See Vs. 32).
2. The prophecies recorded in Daniel 7 and 8 had already been received by Daniel at this point so Daniel knew of the impending end of the Babylonian Empire at the hands of Persia and even beyond that to the Grecian Empire.
3. Jeremiah 51, written about 70 years prior, describes the fall of Babylon in perfect detail. Daniel was a student of the prophet Jeremiah (See Dan. 9:2) and undoubtedly this aided his interpretation of the handwriting on the wall. Jeremiah 51:11 *“Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up **the spirit of the kings of the Medes:** for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.”*
4. Not only was the fall of Babylon foretold in Scripture but even the name of its chapter, Cyrus, is mentioned in Isaiah 45:1-4, 175 years before the event took place. God’s Word is true!
5. In our last lesson we looked at the ungodly feast of Belshazzar. In this lesson we will study the rest of the chapter as God’s judgment on Belshazzar and Babylon unfolds. It sounds a powerful warning concerning the danger rejecting the light God has given.

I. The Rebellion of Belshazzar (Vs. 1-5)

Note: Refer previous message for more detail on these verses but for the sake of review please observe:

A. The Intoxication of the Feast (Vs. 1-2)

B. The Impiety of the Feast (Vs. 3-4)

C. The Interruption of the Feast (Vs. 5)

1. The timing – “in the same hour”. As they were profaning the sacred vessels by praising their false gods, the fingers appeared. Belshazzar and his guests would know that there was a connection between what they had done and the Divine intervention.
2. The instrument of writing – “fingers of a man’s hand”. This was the hand of God again demonstrating that the most High Rules in the affairs of men.
3. The place of writing – “against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king’s palace”
 - a. This would have been the most visible place. It also took place in a significant place, the king’s throne room in his palace.

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Though Belshazzar was puffed up in pride on account of his high position, God was reminding him of His sovereign power.

- b. The plastered wall of the throne room has been unearthed by archaeologists. A huge chamber 170 x 56 feet (51 x 17 meters) plastered with white gypsum (a common mineral used to make plaster). (Cloud)

II. The Reaction of Belshazzar (Vs. 6-9)

A. Panic (Vs. 6)

Belshazzar's terror affected the king in three ways:

1. His face – “the king's countenance was changed”
2. His mind – “and his thoughts troubled him”
3. His body – “joints of his loins were loosed...his knees smote”

B. Petition (Vs. 7-9)

Belshazzar sought help from his so called “wise men” but once again, the foolishness of the wisdom of this world is manifest.

1. His Petition – he summoned the wise men (Vs. 7a) This is the third time these men have been summoned for help but only a man in touch with heaven could help with truth from heaven.
2. His Promise – he offered a reward (Vs. 7b)
3. His Panic – the wise men failed and he was even more distressed (Vs. 8-9)

III. The Recommendation to Belshazzar (Vs. 10-16)

A. The Recommendation Heard (Vs. 10-12)

1. The queen's identity (Vs. 10)
 - a. This is not Belshazzar's wife but the queen-mother. Likely the wife of Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father, believed by many scholars to be the famous Nitocris.
 - b. Her ability to interrupt the feast and approach the king reveals the high respect afforded her.
2. The queen's testimony (Vs. 11-12)

Her words concerning Daniel are significant and reveal the godly testimony he had in that heathen kingdom.

 - a. Daniel was a man with the Presence of God
 - b. Daniel was a man with the Precepts of God (wisdom)
 - c. Challenge: When the lost are confronted with a crisis, is your testimony such that they will turn to you for help in that time of need? Daniel was such a man.

B. The Recommendation Heeded (Vs. 13-16)

1. The king's introduction to Daniel (Vs. 13-16a)

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- a. Belshazzar’s arrogance and pride can be detected in his words to Daniel – e.g. “of the children of the captivity of Judah”; “out of Jewry”
 - b. Belshazzar acknowledges the failure of the wise men to interpret the writing.
2. The kings offer to Daniel (Vs. 16b)
 - a. Belshazzar offers Daniel fame and fortune if he will interpret the writing.
 - b. Note: The accuracy of the Biblical record is highlighted in his offer to Daniel to be “third ruler in the kingdom”. This was because his father Nabonidus was first, he was second and therefore Daniel would be third.

IV. The Reproof of Belshazzar (Vs. 17-24)

Daniel’s interpretation of the dream is preceded by a strong word of reproof to Belshazzar.

A. Daniel’s Refusal (Vs. 17)

1. Daniel was a man of boldness even though he was speaking to the most powerful man in the kingdom.
2. Daniel was a man motivated by eternal things. He had no interest in the trinkets of the king (promised fame and fortune).

B. Daniel’s Retelling (Vs. 18-21)

1. Daniel recounts what took place in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. He is reminding Belshazzar of these truths he already knew as they will form the basis of the sharp rebuke he is about to give.
2. Daniel reminds him of Nebuchadnezzar’s
 - a. Promotion (Vs. 18-19). His kingdom was given to him by “the most high God”
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation (Vs. 20-21). He was humbled by God when his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride.

C. Daniel’s Rebuke (Vs. 22-23)

1. This is the where Daniel draws the application from the example.
2. Belshazzar had sinned by:
 - a. Not humbling himself despite his knowledge - “though thou knewest all this” Belshazzar had willfully and wickedly sinned against God despite the light he had been exposed to through the example of Nebuchadnezzar his grandfather.
 - b. Lifting himself up against the LORD of heaven
 - c. Profaning the temple vessels with strong drink
 - d. Praising false gods which cannot see, hear or know
 - e. Failing to glorify the one true God - “the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways” Daniel reminded

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Belshazzar that he owes his very breath to Almighty God. Paul said similar words to the pagans on Mars Hill in Acts 17:22-34.

3. Challenge: If God held a heathen king so strongly to account for the light he had, how much more those who in the face of the full light of God's revelation, rebel against Him. (See Matthew 11:20-24)
"The greater the light we walk in the greater the judgment that will come for our sin if we ignore that light." (Butler)

V. The Revelation to Belshazzar (Vs. 25-31)

A. Daniel's Interpretation (Vs. 25-28)

1. MENE = numbered. Word repeated twice for emphasis. This word contains more than the idea of "to count" but "to fix the limit of" (e.g. a man's days are numbered). God determines the rise and fall of nations.
2. TEKEL = Weighed. The king had been weighed against God's standard and found lacking. He was light weight spiritually. These are the scales of God's justice
 - a. This is a picture of every sinner without Christ. We all fall short of God's standard, we are "weighed and found wanting". When our righteousness is weighed against His righteousness the scales will not balance.
 - b. All the righteousness of man put together will never equal the weight of God's righteousness; in fact, they weigh nothing compared to God's righteousness. We must have his righteousness on our side and the only way to have his righteousness is to receive Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Then His righteousness becomes our righteousness before God. (Butler)
3. PERES = divided. The kingdom was rent from Belshazzar and given to the Medes and Persians. God is sovereign over men and nations. God reigns!
4. So, the words were literally "numbered, numbered, weighed, divided"!

B. Belshazzar's Indifference (Vs. 29)

1. His respond shows no sign of repentance. He had hardened his heart against the truth to the point where he was fixed in his unrepentant state. It almost seems that Belshazzar feels that the judgment Daniel has pronounced will be delayed.
2. What a picture of the hardness of man's heart that in the face of such a sobering intervention and revelation of God, can remain unrepentant and unmoved.

C. Belshazzar's Elimination (Vs. 30-31)

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1. God's judgment came swiftly and certainly upon the unrepentant king. You cannot trifle with Almighty God!
2. Powerful Quote by Strauss

There is a last night for every nation and there is a last night for every individual person. Every nation and every man is held accountable to God, and the Almighty holds an indictment against any and all who defy divine light and desecrate holy things. Babylonian pride and confusion are seen on every hand today. There is a handwriting against every man. But our Lord Jesus Christ has made salvation possible for every man. And now all who put their trust in him are saved from the awful night of eternal banishment from the presence of God. But for the proud in heart who refuse to recognize the Most High God, there 'is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.' (Jude 1:13)."

Conclusion: How are you responding to the light God has given you? Are you submitting to the light or rebelling against it? Repent and turn to Christ now before it is too late.

The Prayer Life of Daniel

Text: Daniel 6:1-11

Introduction:

1. Daniel chapter 6 is likely the most famous chapter of the Book as it contains one of the most well-known Bible stories of Daniel and the lion's den.
2. Daniel 6 also introduces the second great world empire – Media-Persia. Remember, the two arms of silver represent the two peoples that made up this empire. Darius was a Median (See Dan. 5:31)
3. Daniel at this stage had been about 68 years in captivity and would therefore be somewhere in his eighties or nineties.
4. Daniel's walk with God will again come under fire in this section but it will merely highlight the depth of his godly character and his unwavering faithfulness to His God. It will provide us a window into the prayer life of this great man of God.
5. It has well been said that no Christian is greater than his prayer life. The real test of our Christian profession is what we are when we are alone with God in our private lives.

Look firstly at...

I. The Promotion of Daniel (Vs. 1-3)

Daniel finds favor in the eyes of this new monarch and is quickly elevated to a place of authority in the kingdom.

A. The Position of Daniel (Vs. 1-2)

1. He was over the princes (Vs. 1)
 - a. Darius was a structured and organized king. The Medo-Persian kings also had less power than the Babylonian kings. They functioned somewhat like a democratic monarchy.
 - b. It is interesting that Book of Esther, which also documents events that took place during the Medo-Persian Empire, mentions 127 provinces. This number differs to the 120 princes mentioned here but the events recorded in Esther came approximately 50 years later than the fall of Babylon so the arrangements would have been adjusted by then.
 - c. These princes were accountable to Daniel and the other two presidents (Vs. 2)
2. He was over the presidents (Vs. 2)
 1. 'first' = indicates his position among the three
 2. "have no damage" = the purpose of the appointments. The word 'damage' means "to suffer loss". This would include things like the king's revenue.

B. The Preferring of Daniel (Vs. 3)

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1. “because an excellent spirit was in him” = the reason why he was preferred.
 - a. Daniel’s performance excelled the others. This was largely due to his spiritual condition. Your spiritual life affects your work life!
 - b. Daniel had the presence of God in his life. He had developed godly character through a close walk with God (i.e. the study of the Scriptures and the work of the Spirit).
 - c. “the king thought to set him over the whole realm” = because of Daniel’s trustworthiness, the king was contemplating making him ruler of the whole realm.

Look secondly at...

II. The Plot Against Daniel (Vs. 4-9)

A. The Stimulation of their Opposition (Vs. 4a)

1. ‘then’ = harks back to the promotion of Daniel in the previous verse and the king’s contemplation of elevating him even further.
2. A spirit of jealousy was the source of their opposition to Daniel. Being upright and godly does not usually put you in favor with many!
3. Jealousy is described in the Bible as being “cruel as the grave” (Song 8:6).
4. Prov. 27:4 says, “*Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but **who is able to stand before envy?***”
5. Jealousy leads people to do the most evil and unjust things. It was the driving force behind the religious leaders of Christ’s day seeking the murder of our Lord (Mark 15:10).

B. The Scrutiny of their Opposition (Vs. 4b-5)

They searched the professional life of Daniel to try and find something they could use against him. The results of their search are worth noting:

1. They found Daniel to be a man of Integrity (Vs. 4b)
 - a. Daniel is described as ‘faithful’. This implies he was trustworthy and dependable.
 - b. They could not find ‘error’ or ‘fault’ against him in his role within the kingdom. He had a clean record.
 - c. The New Testament word that would describe Daniel’s life is the word ‘blameless’. The word ‘blameless’ does not mean faultless but it means to be above reproach, having no just cause for accusation.
 - d. Challenge: This should be the testimony of every one of God’s people. Our walk with God should be such that we those around us have no just cause to bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

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2. They found Daniel to be a man of Intercession (Vs. 5)
 - a. As these wicked men put Daniel's life under the microscope, there was nothing they could find to readily lay hold of as a just and reasonable cause to have him disqualified. However, there was one thing their intense scrutiny showed up – Daniel was a genuine man of God who took his walk with God seriously!
 - b. What a testimony this is of Daniel that these heathen men could discern the genuineness of his walk with God and know that he would not bend the knee of compromise when their planned edict was past. Can you imagine the princes gathering together to share their discoveries from spying on the life of Daniel? What would the spies have to report? He prays and reads his Scriptures and conducts himself in public affairs with dignity and honesty!
 - c. Challenge: We are all being watched by the world in some way. What stands out to them from our lives? Do they see a Christian living a hypocritical life or would they say, this man or lady is the real deal!

C. The Strategy of their Opposition (Vs. 6-8)

1. Deception of the king (Vs. 6-7a)

They employed two tools to deceive the king into signing the new law:

 - a. Flattery – “King Darius, live forever” Flattery is false or insincere praise “bestowed for the purpose of gaining favour and influence, or to accomplish some purpose.” (Webster) They appealed to the king's pride to secure his support for their wicked plan.
 - b. Falsehood – “all the presidents of the kingdom...have consulted” This was a lie! Daniel was not consulted on this piece of legislation yet they falsely made it sound unanimous.
2. Decree from the king (Vs. 7b-9)

Let's look at this piece of proposed legislation!

 1. It was a fixed law – “firm decree” (Vs. 7); “altereth not” (Vs. 8)
 2. It was a religious edict limiting freedom of worship. When a government seeks to legislate in the area of faith and conscience, it has stepped outside its God-ordained bounds!
 3. It was to be enforced with the threat of capital punishment (Vs. 7). Those who disobeyed would face a frightful and gruesome death in the lion's den, the Persians preferred method of execution.
 4. It was signed into law by the king (Vs. 9)

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Look thirdly at...

III. The Praying of Daniel (Vs. 10-11)

These verses give us a window into Daniel's inner spiritual life. We can discern 7 qualities of Daniel's prayer life in these verses.

A. The Persistence of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10a)

1. Daniel is steadfast, faithful and courageous in the face of this threat to his life. When it came to a choice between loyalty to the state or loyalty to God, there was only one option for Daniel – honor God!
2. A godly prayer life that goes beyond the mediocre, will meet with opposition.
3. What would your response be to such a decree? What sort of council would 21st century Christendom give? Many believers go more than 30 days without serious prayer. They would have no problem obeying such a decree and would even coat it with a thin veneer of spirituality.

B. The Place of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10b)

1. 'chamber' = his bedroom in his house
2. Matthew 6:6 mentions the 'closet'. 'closet' = storeroom, innermost secret room
3. It seems Christ often prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39; Luke 22:44)
4. Note: We learn from this that the atmosphere most conducive to prayer is a place that is quiet and secluded.
5. C.H. Spurgeon: "It is well to have, if we can have, a little room, no matter how humble, where we can shut the door, and pray."

C. The Precepts backing his Prayer Life (Vs. 10c)

1. Daniel's practice of praying towards Jerusalem was based on Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple (See 1 Kings 8:46-50 & 9:3). This practice was unique to Israel as a nation but the principle of having a prayer life that is directed by Scripture remains.
2. John 15:7 "*If ye abide in me, and **my words abide in you**, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*"

D. The Posture of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10d)

1. There are a number of postures from prayer in the Scriptures but the key thing to remember is that our posture represents a heart attitude towards God.
2. Kneeling is "most expressive of humility and reverence and submission to God." (Matthew Henry)
3. Psalm 95:6 "*O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.*"
4. There are many examples of God's people kneeling in Scripture. E.g. Christ in the garden (Luke 22:41) and Paul with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:36)

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E. The Plan for his Prayer Life (Vs. 10e)

1. There was a regularity – 3 times a day. Daniel took time to be holy! We need to make time to seek the Lord.
2. There was a consistency – godly habits important. “The finest of God’s servants must maintain regular and fixed prayer habits in order to continue steadfast in devotion to the Lord.” (Lehman Strauss)

F. The Prayers in his Prayer Life (Vs. 10f; 11)

1. Prayer – “and prayed...praying” He actually prayed during his times of prayer!
2. Praise – “and gave thanks before his God” Daniel praised the Lord even during this difficult time. When Daniel was praying, he was “before” God, in His glorious presence.
3. Petition – “and making supplication”

G. The Pattern of his Prayer Life (Vs. 10g)

1. ‘aforetime’ = in time past. Daniel was simply doing what he had been doing now for many years. Daniel’s prayer life as a young man is highlighted in chapter 2 some 62 or more years earlier. Daniels prayer life was clearly something that had remained a priority for him all those long years in captivity.
2. Daniel did not wait for a crisis to begin praying to his God. “His prayer life was a source of spiritual strength to live for God in the midst of a wicked generation.” (Cloud)

Conclusion: How important to you is your walk with God? Are you steadfast in the face of opposition? Do you seek the Lord in the good as well as the bad times?

Daniel in the Den

Text: Daniel 6:11-28

Introduction:

1. Daniel at this stage of his life had been about 68 years in captivity and would therefore be somewhere in his eighties or nineties.
2. Daniel's three friends faced the fiery furnace for refusing to bow to an idol and Daniel would now face the lion's lair for refusing to not bow faithfully in prayer to his God.
3. Daniel is a wonderful example to us of a man of faith – "he believed in his God" (Vs. 23) In this lesson we will consider 3 aspects of Daniel's faith.

Look firstly at...

I. **The Trial of Daniel's Faith (Vs. 11-17)**

A. **The Prosecution of his Faith (Vs. 11-15)**

1. The collection of evidence against Daniel (Vs. 11)
 - a. These men went to search Daniel's life for evidence that he was breaking the decree not to pray to his God. They found plenty of evidence for their case! Daniel had walked with God faithfully for many years and wasn't about to compromise now.
 - b. It is interesting to note that the particular aspect of Daniels walk with God that was under fire was his prayer life. We know from Daniel 10 that the demonic host behind the Persian Empire was taking note of Daniel's prayers.
 - c. Challenge: If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?
2. The presentation of evidence against Daniel (Vs. 12-13)
 - a. They were subtle (Vs. 12)
 - b. They were slanderous (Vs. 13)
3. The reaction to the evidence against Daniel (Vs. 14-15)
 - a. Darius had regret – he allowed himself to be puffed up in pride and thereby fall into the trap set for him by these men. He could see it all now but it was too late!
 - b. Darius tried to reverse the decision but the law could not be altered. He found himself a prisoner to the results of his own foolish pride.
 - c. Prov. 29:23 *"A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."*

B. **The Penalty for his Faith (Vs. 16-17)**

1. He was summoned (Vs. 16)

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- a. The final words of Darius to Daniel before he was thrown to the lions are significant. They reveal the extent to which this pagan king had been impacted by the godly testimony of Daniel.
 - b. “whom thou servest continually” = this was the testimony of Daniel’s life. His walk with God was faithful and consistent. Darius could see something genuine and real in his life. Darius repeats the same words in Vs. 20.
 - c. “he will deliver thee” = Darius had a measure of faith that the One True God of Daniel would come to his aid.
2. He was sentenced (Vs. 17)
 - a. There was a stone (Vs. 17a) There was no way of escape. Daniel was shut in with these ferocious beasts. Daniel’s enemies thought when the stone was rolled over the mouth of the den that it was all over. A stone was also rolled across the entrance to Christ’s tomb. They thought that was the end of this one called Jesus. But the stone was rolled away!
 - b. There were seals (Vs. 17b) These were to ensure they eliminated the possibility of an attempt to rescue Daniel. To tamper with these seals would be a criminal act punishable by death.
 - c. So far as man was concerned, nothing could save Daniel; his destruction was determined – “that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.” God did not intervene or prevent in these events even though He could have. But Daniel’s trial would become an occasion for God’s glory. Are we willing to face the fire or the den if it means our God is exalted and glorified?

II. The Triumph of Daniel’s Faith (Vs. 18-24)

A. The Preservation of Daniel (Vs. 18-23)

1. The fear of Darius (Vs. 18-20) This verse reveals just how much Darius loved Daniel. He was so troubled and distressed that he refused the normal luxuries afforded a king and passed a sleepless night.
2. The faith of Daniel (Vs. 21-23) The calmness and composure of Daniel stands in contrast to the king’s fear. Daniel trusted in the Lord and came through the trial victorious. There are two specific reasons for Daniel’s deliverance highlighted:
 - a. Daniel’s Faithfulness – “forasmuch as before him innocence was found in in me” Daniel was being wrongfully punished for his godly and righteous life. He was a man of integrity.
 - b. Daniel’s Faith – “because he believed in his God”. Like Daniel’s three friends who came out of the fire completely whole and

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unscathed, Daniel came out of the lion's den without a wound or a scratch. God preserved Daniel in this trial and He will preserve you dear saint as you suffer in the center of His will.

- c. God's presence and power was manifest to Daniel in that fearful den of hostility. Trials we go through in the will of God teach us something of the presence of God we couldn't know otherwise if we didn't go through that trial. We would prefer for God to keep us **from** the den but often it is often God's way to preserve us **in** the trial.
- d. Hebrews 13:5-6 *"...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."*

B. The Punishment of Daniel's Enemies (Vs. 24)

1. These evil men reaped the very thing they had intended for Daniel. Their wickedness also brought about the destruction of their wives and children. Sin has far reaching consequences.
2. The Lord was the one who dealt with Daniel's enemies. Daniel didn't vindicate himself or seek revenge.

III. The Testimony of Daniel's Faith (Vs. 25-28)

A. Darius' Proclamation (Vs. 25-27)

1. The requirement of the decree (Vs. 26a). Men were to reverence and respect the God of Daniel.
2. The reasons for the decree (Vs. 26b-27)
 - a. The reality of God – "he is the living God" The pagan gods are dead and lifeless but our God is Real!
 - b. The Immutability of God – "and stedfast forever" God is faithful and unchanging.
 - c. The Sovereignty of God – "and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" God's kingdom is eternal and cannot be destroyed.
 - d. The Activity of God – "he worketh signs and wonders" God intervenes in human affairs.

B. Daniel's Prosperity (Vs. 28)

1. In the reign of Darius. History informs us that Darius didn't live long past this point. Once Darius passed off the scene, Cyrus became the sole monarch of the Medo-Persian Empire.
2. In the reign of Cyrus. We know Daniel lived till at least until the 3rd year of Cyrus' reign (Dan. 10:1). This means Daniel would have had the joy, after all those years, of witnessing the decree Cyrus made in the first year of his reign to allow the Jews to return to the land to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-3)

Conclusion: What price are you willing to pay for your walk with God?

The Times of the Gentiles

Text: Daniel 7:1-14

Introduction:

1. Daniel 7 marks the start of the second major section of the Book – Prophetical. In the first half of Daniel (1-6), Daniel interprets the dreams of others. Now he receives his own visions directly from God.
2. This chapter is a parallel to chapter 2, giving another overview of what Christ referred to as the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) with additional details, particularly in relation to the rise of Antichrist.
3. In Daniel 2 the Gentile kingdoms are seen from man’s point of view – glorious, majestic and powerful. In Daniel 7, these same kingdoms are seen from God’s point of view as vicious, warring beasts that devour one another in order to gain supremacy.
4. We will divide the chapter under 3 headings for our study as follows:
 - The Introduction to the Vision (Vs. 1-3)
 - The Information of the Vision (Vs. 4-14)
 - The Interpretation of the Vision (Vs. 15-28)
 - Note: We will cover the final point in our next lesson.

I. The Introduction to the Vision (Vs. 1-3)

A. The Period (Vs. 1)

1. This vision came to Daniel in “the first year of Belshazzar’s reign”. This was approx. 14 years before Belshazzar was killed by the Medes and Persians (Dan. 5:30-31) and approx. 50 years after the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2.
2. This means chronologically, Daniel 7 comes between Daniel 4 and 5. No wonder Daniel was not interested in Belshazzar’s trinkets. He knew by the Revelation of God’s Word through this vision that the Babylonian kingdom would end and with the rise of the Medo-Persian kingdom.

B. The Place (Vs. 2a)

1. The dream came to Daniel “at night” when he was “upon his bed”
2. Even though it appears that at this time Daniel was no longer a prominent part of the Babylonian court, he was still walking with God and an available channel for God to use to communicate His Word.

C. The Picture (Vs. 2b-3)

1. The Blowing of the Sea (Vs. 2b)
 - a. “the great Sea” = this is the Old Testament name for the Mediterranean Sea (Josh. 1:4). The Mediterranean Sea was an important part of each of these four kingdoms. The sea

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symbolizes the earth (See Vs. 17) and is used elsewhere in Scripture to symbolize the restless mass of humanity (Isaiah 17:12, 13; 57:20; Rev. 13:1; 17:1, 15)

- b. “the four winds” = the four winds stir up the sea and give rise to the four beasts (Vs. 3) The winds probably signify the warring of the nations inspired by the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2)
2. The Beasts from the Sea (Vs. 3)
 - a. The size of the beasts – “four great beasts” These represent powerful kingdoms that ruled the known world at that time.
 - b. The diversity of the beasts – “diverse one from another”

II. The Information of the Vision (Vs. 4-14)

A. The Earthly Kingdoms (Vs. 4-8)

1. The First Beast: Lion with Eagles Wings (Vs. 4) – Babylonian Empire
 - a. The Lion is the king of the beasts and the eagle is the king of the birds. This picture corresponds with the head of gold in Chapter 2.
 - b. The eagle’s wings speak of the speed of the Babylonian conquests.
 - c. Archeologists have discovered numerous “winged lion” sphinxes among the monuments of ancient Babylon (Sargent).
 - d. The “wings plucked” and the giving to it of a “man’s heart” is likely a reference to the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in Daniel 4.
2. The Second Beast: Bear (Vs. 5) – Persian Empire
 - a. The bear is a slower, ponderous beast but has great strength. It is also depicted with 3 ribs in its mouth and is told to “devour much flesh”.
 - b. The Medo-Persian armies were slow moving, but crushed their opposition through weight of numbers. Phillips writes, “When Darius marched through Scythia...he mobilized nearly three-quarters of a million men, not counting his fleet of six hundred ships. When Xerxes marched against Greece, he took two and a half million troops with him; the movement of this mass of men looked more like a migration than an army.”
3. The Third Beast: Leopard with four wings (Vs. 6) – Grecian Empire
 - a. The leopard is one of the swiftest and most agile of wild animals. The conquests of Alexander the Great (332-323 B.C.) are noted for their swiftness. He conquered the known world in 13 years (Sargent). The four wings also speak of speed.

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- b. The “four heads” represent the division of the empire after Alexander’s death. Alexander’s four generals divided the kingdom into Thrace, Macedonia, Syria and Egypt.
- 4. The Fourth Beast: Dreadful, Terrible, Strong & Diverse (Vs. 7-8) – Roman Empire
 - a. Particular attention is given in this chapter to this fourth kingdom. Bible students refer to this as a “non-descript beast”. It is so ferocious and terrible that, unlike the other kingdoms, there are no beasts in the animal kingdom that can adequately illustrate it. There are two stages to this kingdom.
 - b. The **Fulfilled** Stage – ancient Rome (Vs. 7). Described as having “great iron teeth” The iron teeth correspond with the legs of iron in Daniel 2. Iron is stronger than the other metals. Rome was a fierce and brutal kingdom that ruled the world with a rod of iron. Resistance was brutally stamped out. Rome crucified Christ and ten Caesars from Nero to Diocletian persecuted the church ruthlessly (Phillips).
 - c. The **Future** Stage – 10 kingdom confederacy from which antichrist will rise (Vs. 7-8).
 - i. The 10 horns – “and it had ten horns” This corresponds with the 10 toes of the statue in Daniel 2.
 - ii. The little horn – “there came up...another little horn” This little horn rises up out of the 10 horns. It gains power by destroying 3 of the other horns. It is clearly speaking of a man – “in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

B. The Everlasting Kingdom (Vs. 9-14)

- 1. The scene abruptly switches from this little horn boasting great things to the throne room of heaven.
- 2. David Jeremiah says, *“It’s like sitting in a darkened room, watching his vision on a motion picture screen that is split horizontally into two parts. On the lower half of the screen the four beasts are revealed, coming out of the sea of humanity one after another. As we watch with horror and fascination, the fourth beast appears on the screen, devouring and breaking in pieces all of the nations. With the last gasp of the Roman Empire on earth, suddenly the upper level of the screen lights up and we have a glimpse into the throne room of heaven. What an awesome contrast to the turmoil on earth.”*
- 3. Observe the exaltation of the King (Vs. 9-10) Look at what Daniel saw! (adapted from outline by Denis Lyle)
Daniel saw...
 - a. The **Eternality** of God – “the Ancient of days” (Vs. 9a). This depicts God the Father as Christ comes to Him in Vs. 13 to

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receive the kingdom. This is the only place in the Bible where this title of God is used. *“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.”* (Psalm 90:2)

- b. The **Purity** of God – “whose garment was white as snow” (Vs. 9b) What a picture of absolute purity and holiness.
 - c. The **Beauty** of God – “And the hair of His head like the pure wool” (Vs. 9c) Another picture of His purity and also His eternity.
 - d. The **Majesty** of God – “his throne was like the fiery flame...” (Vs. 9d-10a) Look at how closely fire is associated with the Divine Presence of God. “For our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:29)
 - e. The **Company** of God – “thousand thousands ministered unto him” “This is hundreds of millions. Countless elect angels and redeemed men serve God and delight in His ways and in His business.” (Cloud)
 - f. The **Sovereignty** of God – “the judgment was set and the books were opened” The court is in session! Perfect justice will be done based on a perfect record.
4. Observe the destruction of the antichrist (Vs. 11-12)
 - a. In Daniel 2, the destruction of the Empire is detailed in Vs. 44-45 where the stone “cut out of the mountain without hands” pulverises the image, grinding it to powder.
 - b. Here in Daniel 7, the beast is slain and burnt with fire.
 5. Observe the inauguration of the kingdom (Vs. 13-14)
 - a. If all of the first four kingdoms were literal, so will there be a literal kingdom of Christ! It is completely inconsistent to interpret the first four empires in a literal manner and then switch to spiritualize the coming Millennial Kingdom.
 - b. “the Son of man” = one of Christ’s favourite terms for Himself. It appears 85 times in the Gospels.
 - c. Christ claimed this prophecy of Daniel for Himself when he was on trial before the Jewish leaders – Matt. 26:64 *“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”*

III. The Interpretation of the Vision (Vs. 15-28)

This point to be covered in the next lesson in the series.

Conclusion: Are we living for Christ’s return?

The Coming Antichrist

Text: Daniel 7:15-28

Introduction:

1. Daniel 7 marks the start of the second major section of the Book – Prophetical.
2. This chapter is a parallel to chapter 2, giving another overview of what Christ referred to as the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) with additional details, particularly in relation to the rise of Antichrist.
3. Review of outline
 - The Introduction to the Vision (Vs. 1-3)
 - The Information of the Vision (Vs. 4-14)
 - The Interpretation of the Vision (Vs. 15-28)
4. In our last lesson we covered the first two points of our outline. In this lesson we will cover the final point relating to the interpretation of the vision under four sections.

I. The Inquiry for an Interpretation (Vs. 15-18)

A. The Appeal of Daniel (Vs. 15-16)

1. The reason for his appeal (Vs. 15). Daniel’s heart was moved in spirit and troubled mind over the vision and its meaning. Prophetic truth, while fascinating and interesting, should have a sobering affect upon our heart and minds as we contemplate what God is going to do in the future.
2. The request of his appeal (Vs. 16). Daniel asks for help from “one of them that stood by”. This would have been an angelic being.

B. The Answer to Daniel (Vs. 17-18)

1. The explanation of the earthly kingdom (Vs. 17)
2. The explanation of the heavenly kingdom (Vs. 18)

II. The Interest for an Interpretation (Vs. 19-22)

A. Daniel wanted to know more about the Fourth Kingdom (Vs. 19)

1. The description of the beast closely parallels the description in Vs. 7 with an additional detail that it had “nails of brass”
2. A repeated phrase is that this beast was “diverse from all the others” (See Vs. 7, 19 & 23). It stands apart from the other kingdoms as “exceeding dreadful”. This ‘diversity’ could also be on account of the fact it is a conglomerate of the previous empires – See Rev. 13:2. “Rome often incorporated the cultures it conquered into its own.” (Sargent)

B. Daniel wanted to know more about the Final King (Vs. 20-22)

1. The rise of the final king (Vs. 20-21)
2. The fall of the final king (Vs. 22)

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III. The Instruction of the Interpretation (Vs. 23-27)

A. The Explanation of the Fourth Kingdom (Vs. 23-24a)

1. The fulfilled part of this kingdom (Vs. 23)
2. The future part of this kingdom (Vs. 24a)

B. The Explanation of the Final King (Vs. 24b-26)

From Daniel 7 we gain an insightful profile of the coming Antichrist. Note particularly Vs. 8, 20, 24 & 25 and consider 8 particulars about the Antichrist we find in these verses:

1. **Antichrist's Obscurity** – he is described as a “little horn” (Vs. 8)
Perhaps he will be like a Hitler who started out in obscurity but rose to power and prominence quiet rapidly.
2. **Antichrist's Ascendancy** – He arises out of the ten-horn confederacy, the last organized form of the Roman Empire. He will “subdue three kings” in his rise to power revealing that he will come to power through violent means.
3. **Antichrist's Beauty** – “whose look was more stout than his fellows” Webster's dictionary defines ‘stout’ as “strong, lusty”. There will be something striking about him. He will have satanically inspired Charisma, appeal and intelligence (“eyes of a man” Vs. 8). 2 Thessalonians 2:9 says, “*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all **power and signs and lying wonders.***” He will be Satan's “*angel of light*” (2. Cor. 11:14-15) and all the world will wonder after him (Rev. 13:3-4). What a contrast to the true Messiah who had “*no beauty that we should desire him*” (Is. 53:2-3).
4. **Antichrist's Oratory** – “he shall speak great words” (See also Vs. 8 & 20) He will be an eloquent and dynamic speaker. Revelation 13:5 says, “*And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things...*” He will hold his audiences spell bound with promises of peace and prosperity!
5. **Antichrist's Blasphemy** – “he shall speak great words against the most High” Read Revelation 13:1 & 5-6 where Antichrist is pictured as wearing blasphemy upon his very person. What a contrast to our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Messiah, who is pictured in Revelation 19:11-16 with “**KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**” (Vs. 16) written on His vesture and thigh.
6. **Antichrist's Cruelty** – “shall wear out the saints of the most High” Remember, the church age was a mystery concealed from the O.T. prophets (Eph. 3:9-10) so these are Jewish saints and tribulation converts. Antichrist will be anti-Semitic and will viciously persecute the Jewish people (See Rev. 12). Anti-Semitism is inspired by Satan (Rev. 12:4).

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7. **Antichrist's Anarchy** – Antichrist will “think to change times and laws” He will seek to legislate anti-God, unbiblical laws. The stage is being set in our present political environment for such a man!
8. **Antichrist's Expiry** – his kingdom will be short lived (Vs. 25) and will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ (Vs. 26). Antichrist and his kingdom will be dealt a pulverizing blow by the Rock of Ages (Dan. 2:34-35; 44-45) “...whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” (2 Thess. 2:8)

C. The explanation of the Heavenly Kingdom (Vs. 27)

What precious glimpses we get into this coming kingdom of Christ! It will be...

1. A Universal Kingdom – “the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven...all dominions shall serve and obey him”
3. An Eternal Kingdom – “whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom”

IV. The Impact of the Interpretation (Vs. 28)

Daniel is an example to us of how prophetic truth should affect us. This vision affected...

A. His Cogitations (Vs. 28a)

1. ‘cogitation’ refers to “the act of thinking; thought; meditation; contemplation” (Webster’s 1828). It refers to “the action of thinking deeply about something” (Oxford’s Dictionary)
2. Daniel was more than just fascinated and interested in what God was revealing about the future. He was stirred deeply in heart about these sobering truths (See Vs. 15).

B. His Countenance (Vs. 28b)

1. his inward heart burden affected his outward appearance. He was visibly affected by the vision.
2. Can you imagine Daniel at this point with the lines furrowing his forehead, the look of concern in his eyes and the color draining from his cheeks?

C. His Commitment (Vs. 28c)

1. Daniel was receptive and responsive to the truth
2. Everyman’s Bible Commentary: “God’s prophet was not a casual bystander in the special revelation of God to His people. He was deeply and emotionally involved in God’s prophetic program, and so must we be. Instead of merely intellectual academic detachment, he was profoundly affected by the overwhelming Word of God.”

Conclusion: Do the prophecies of God’s Word concerning the future have any effect on our lives? Do they change our priorities and the way we live? Do they affect our perspective of the lost?

Antiochus and the Antichrist

Text: Daniel 8:1-27

Introduction:

1. It is of interest to note that in Daniel 8, the Author reverts back to Hebrew after recording in Aramaic (Chaldean) from 2:4 to 7:28. This is due to the fact that in Dan 2:4-7:28, the Gentiles are the primary focus but the remaining prophecies from chapter 8 have a direct reference to Israel, Jerusalem and the temple.
2. This chapter focuses on the two middle kingdoms of Persia and Greece. In a similar way to chapter 7, this chapter also focuses on a “little horn”. It is important to understand that this is a different “little horn” to the one spoken of in chapter 7 but it serves as a type of the future antichrist who is still to come.
3. The key to correctly understanding this passage of Scripture is the “Law of Double Reference” which states that “the Bible sometimes refers to a near and a far subject in the same passage.” (Sargent) “The vision has a double fulfilment. It describes Antiochus Epiphanes, Grecian king of Syria, but it also looks beyond him to the Antichrist.” (Cloud)
4. We will study this passage under 4 headings.

I. The Introduction to the Vision (Vs. 1-2)

This introductory statement provides us with certain data about the vision:

A. The Period (Vs. 1)

1. “In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar” = The timing of the vision. This means that chronologically Daniel received this vision between the events recorded in Daniel chapter 4 and 5.
2. Remember that now we look back on Daniel 8 from the vantage point of fulfilled history but when Daniel received this vision, it was all yet to be fulfilled. How breathtaking and accurate is the Word of God!
3. “after that which appeared...at the first” = this was a distinct and separate vision to the one recorded in chapter 7

B. The Place (Vs. 2)

1. “Shushan the palace” = this is significant as at the time of the vision, Babylon was the center of world power and Shushan was an insignificant place. But under the coming Persian Empire, Shushan would be the new capital. Shushan was “a city 250 miles east of Babylon, and about 150 miles north of the present head of the Persian Gulf.” (Cloud)
2. Both Esther and Nehemiah would later live here (Esther 1:2; Neh. 1:1)

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II. The Revelation of the Vision (Vs. 3-14)

Several truths are revealed in the vision. There is...

A. A Ram Revealed (Vs. 3-4)

1. The identity of the Ram (Vs. 3)
 - a. The Ram symbolizes the Medo-Persian kingdom (Vs. 20) which is previously revealed as the chest and arms of silver (Daniel 2:32) and the bear (7:5).
 - b. It is significant that the Persian battle standard always carried a Ram. Coins from the Persian Empire have been discovered, bearing a ram's head on one side. There is also a record of "a Persian king riding in front of his army wearing a golden figure of a Ram's Head set with gems instead of a diadem." (Larkin)
 - c. The two horns speak of the two peoples that made up this empire – the Medes and the Persians.
2. The activity of the Ram (Vs. 4).
 - a. It's conquests (4a) The Ram exerts its power in three points of the compass – West, North and South. This corresponds to the 3 ribs in the mouth of the bear in the previous chapter and speaks.
 - b. It's greatness (Vs. 4b) The Persian Empire was one of the greatest in history, spreading from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1) and lasting for approximately 200 years.

B. A Goat Revealed (Vs. 5-8)

1. The description of the goat (Vs. 5)
 - a. Its identity – the goat symbolizes Greece (Vs. 21). The first Greek colony was established by an oracle that sent a goat for a guide to build a city. The goat came to the region of Greece, and in gratitude for the goat's leading them in the right direction, they called the city Agae, meaning the "Goat City." It is of interest that the Sea between Greece and Turkey is still called the "Aegean Sea" meaning "the Goat Sea".
 - b. Its location – "from the west" This would be the first Western Empire. Up until now, world power had been concentrated in the East. For the first time, the center of world dominion shifted from the Orient to the Occident.
 - c. Its speed – "touched not the ground" Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, the Grecian conquests were rapid. They defeated the mighty Persian Empire in a brief 2 and a half years (Cloud) and conquered the world in a mere 12 years (M.A. Butler). John Phillips said, "He (Alexander) led his troops through more than twenty thousand miles of war and bloodshed, leaving behind a long trail of burned and ravaged cities, mountains of dead men, and rivers of tears."

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- d. Its horn – “a notable horn” Symbolizes the first king of Grecia (Vs. 21b) whom we now know from history as Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) who was tutored by the famous Aristotle.
2. The conquest of the goat (Vs. 6-7)
 - a. Its fury (6) – ‘fury’ (Vs. 6); “moved with choler” (Vs. 7) ‘choler’ literally means bile and came to describe vicious anger. Sargent notes that “there was much animosity toward Persian from the Greeks because of earlier attacks upon Greece by the Persians under Xerxes I (480 B.C.).”
 - b. Its victory (7) – the goat slams into the ram with such speed and power that its two horns are broken. The Greeks, despite far superior numbers on the Persian side, defeated the Persians in 3 swift battles between 334B.C. and 331B.C.
3. The division of the goat (Vs. 8)
 - a. The breaking of the great horn (See Vs. 21-22) – Alexander the Great died suddenly at the young age of 33. The cause? Drunkenness. The armies of the world could not defeat this powerful conqueror, but he was defeated at last by the curse of liquor.
 - b. The growing of the four horns – after Alexanders death confusion reigned for a period of about 20 years. This ended with a four-fold division of the Empire by Alexander’s four generals corresponding to the four heads of the winged leopard of Daniel 7 and the four horns mentioned here in Daniel 8. The four-fold division was as follows:
 - i. The **Seleucid Empire** (Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia)
 - ii. The **Ptolemaic Empire** (Egypt, Israel, and part of northeastern Africa)
 - iii. The **Antigonid (Cassander) Empire** (Macedonia and Greece)
 - iv. The **Lysimachus Empire** (Thrace and Asia Minor)

C. A Little Horn Revealed (Vs. 9-14)

1. The origin of the little horn – “out of one of them” This ruler comes out of one of these four kingdoms. Remember! The little horn of chapter 7 arises out of the 10 horns of the Roman Empire which is yet future (7:7-8, 24). The little horn of chapter 8 arises out of the 4 horns of the Geek Empire and is now fulfilled. The little horn of chapter 8 is a type of the future little horn (antichrist). We can identify this little horn from history as Antiochus IV Epiphanes (178-164 BC. He was the eighth ruler of the Seleucid kingdom of the Grecian Empire and came on the scene some 150 years after Alexander’s Empire divided into 4 parts. He gave himself the title ‘Epiphanes’ meaning “glorious one or God manifest.” The events

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described are recorded in the books of the Maccabees and in the histories of Josephus. Antiochus was Syrian and hence from the Seleucid Empire.

2. The focus of the little horn – “the pleasant land” This is a reference to the land of Israel. Antiochus has a Satanic hatred of the Jewish people, as will Antichrist in the future. Notice his attack against three things (Denis Lyle outline):
 - a. He Attacked the Saints (Vs. 10) In the Scriptures the Jews are sometimes symbolized by the stars. Do you recall how God described Abraham’s seed in Genesis 15:5? *“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them and he said unto them. So shall thy seed be.”* (See also Rev 12:1) Some examples:
 - Antiochus tried to conquer the world. After being stopped by the Romans, he turned his fury on Jerusalem, killing some 80,000 Jews and selling another 40,000 into slavery.
 - The Jews were forbidden the practice of circumcision and history records that there were two mothers who because of their deep commitment to their faith, were determined to circumcise their baby boys. When Antiochus heard about it, he took the babies and killed them, hung them about each mother’s neck, and marched the women through the streets of Jerusalem to the highest wall. There the women and their babies were thrown headlong over the precipice. Is it any wonder that the Jews hated this Greek ruler and changed his name to Antiochus Epimanes which means *“Antiochus the Mad-man!”*
 - b. He Attacked the Sanctuary (Vs. 11) He will defy God himself (“the prince of the host”) and sought to force all his subjects to worship the pagan god Zeus. Then on the 16th of December 168 B.C. he sacrificed a pig in the temple, taking its blood and spraying it all over the inside of the temple. The Jews refer to this as “the abomination of desolation” the very phrase our Lord used to describe the activities of the future Antichrist.
 - c. He Attacked the Scriptures (Vs. 12) He “cast down the truth to the ground” Antiochus forbade the reading and teaching of the Scriptures and burnt every copy of the Jewish Scriptures he could find.
3. The duration of the little horn (Vs. 13-14) Daniel overhears two ‘saints’ discussing the time frame of the little horns reign. From the context, these are angelic beings. The answer is given as 2,300 days. Sargent writes, “The 2,300 days is a period of 6 years, 4 months, and 20 days. This corresponds to the historic period of time beginning with the murder of Onias the High Priest in 171 B.C. and ending with the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in 164 B.C.”

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III. The Interpretation of the Vision (Vs. 15-25)

A. The Seeking for an Interpretation (Vs. 15-19)

1. Daniel had a hunger to know and understand more of what God had revealed. That is a good attitude to have!
2. The angel Gabriel was the messenger who would reveal the interpretation to Daniel. Gabriel is one of two angels who are named in Scripture and was the same angel who came to Mary in Nazareth to inform her that she would give birth to Jesus (Lk. 1:26-38).
3. It is here that it becomes clear that the prophecy reaches beyond Antiochus to Antichrist
 - a. “at the time of the end shall be the vision” (Vs. 17)
 - b. “in the last end of the indignation” (Vs. 19) ‘indignation’ refers to judgment
 - c. “for at the time appointed the end shall be” (Vs. 19)

B. The Specifics of the Interpretation (Vs. 20-25)

1. The Ram explained (Vs. 20)
2. The Rough goat explained (Vs. 21)
3. The Ruler explained (Vs. 22-25) There are at least 9 characteristics of this evil ruler outlined in these verses:
 - a. He will be a man of a “fierce countenance” – He will have a hard, frightening yet somewhat awe-inspiring demeanor (Vs. 23a)
 - b. He will be a man with Satanic wisdom – “understanding dark sentences” (Vs. 23b)
 - c. He will be a man of great power – “And his power shall be mighty but not by his own power...” (Vs. 24a)
 - d. He will attack God’s people, the Jews – “and shall destroy the mighty and holy people” (Vs. 24b)
 - e. He will prosper through deceitful policy making – “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand” (Vs. 25a) The word ‘craft’ means “deception, fraud, deceit.” It means “skill employed to effect purposes by deceit.” (Webster)
 - f. He will be full of pride and self-exaltation – “He shall magnify himself in his heart” (Vs. 25b)
 - g. He will disguise his true, malicious intentions with promises of peace – “By peace shall destroy many” (Vs. 25c) Antiochus entered Jerusalem by promises of peace
 - h. He will set himself up against the Messiah – “he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes” (Vs. 25d)
 - i. He will be destroyed by God – “but he shall be broken without hand” (Vs. 25e)

IV. The Conclusion of the Vision (Vs. 26-27)

A. The Integrity of the Vision (Vs. 26)

1. “the vision...is true” = God’s Word is sure and the prophecies of this chapter were fulfilled in Antiochus with razor sharp accuracy. And its forecast of the yet future antichrist will be fulfilled in exact detail also.
2. “shut thou up the vision” = refers more to care than concealment
3. “for it shall be for many days” = it would be many days before it was fulfilled. It would be about 200 years before many of these events were fulfilled.

B. The Impact of the Vision (Vs. 27)

1. Daniel’s heart was powerfully impacted by this vision. Take note of these words – ‘fainted’; “sick certain days”; ‘astonished’
2. When it came to prophetic truths, Daniel was more than just fascinated. He understood that what God was revealing was as good as history and he was sobered and stirred by it. Would to God we would have that response to the truth!

Conclusion:

1. Where will you spend eternity? Are you saved?
2. What is our response to the truths of Bible prophecy? Does it affect the way we live?
3. Are we witnessing to others and giving them the Gospel while there is still time?

Daniel's Prayer of Confession

Text: Daniel 9:1-19

Introduction:

1. Daniel 9 is one of “three great chapter nines” in the Word of God – Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9 & Daniel 9. Each contain a fervent prayer of confession from a man of God on behalf of the people of God.
2. Daniel sets a powerful example for individuals, churches and nations to follow. In the early days of America, pastors and even political leaders prayed prayers similar to this. At least 16 times, the Continental Congress proclaimed days of fasting, repentance, and prayer, “and the entire American community repaired to their various churches on such days.” (Cloud)
3. Humility and confession of sin at the heart of what God requires for us to experience His reviving power (2 Chr. 7:14).
4. We will study this great prayer of Daniel under 6 headings.

I. The Occasion of Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 1)

A. The Season (Vs. 1a)

1. “In the first year of Darius” = the Babylonian Empire, in fulfillment of prophecy, has now passed off the world stage and Medo-Persia has taken its place.
2. This would be around 538 B.C. Daniel was carried away as a young man in 605 B.C. Assuming Daniel was in his late teens, this would mean Daniel was in his early eighties.

B. The Sovereign (Vs. 1b)

1. “Darius the son of Ahasuerus” = the identity of the king given
2. “which was made king” = significant note. Darius had this region delegated to him from Cyrus who was ruling at the same time (Dan. 6:28). We are introduced to this Darius in Daniel 6.

C. The Seer (Vs. 2a)

Think for a moment about the man Daniel at this moment in history.

1. Prayer and the reading and study of God's Word are still the priority for elderly Daniel, even in the sunset years of his life.
2. There is a challenge here for the Senior Saints!

II. The Motivation of Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 2)

What was it that motivated Daniel to pray this way?

A. The Perusal of the Scriptures (Vs. 2a)

1. “I Daniel understood by books” = this is a reference to the O.T. Scriptures. The prophecy of Jeremiah and the law of Moses are mentioned specifically (See Vs. 2 & 11).
2. “Bible reading and prayer stand and fall together.” (Butler)

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3. The order is important. As we read the Word, God speaks to us and then we respond by speaking to Him in prayer. Eugene Patterson, in a book on pastoral ministry, describes prayer this way, *“Prayer is never the first word. It is always the second word. God has the first word. Prayer is answering speech. It is response.”*

B. The Promises of the Scriptures (Vs. 2b)

1. The specifics of the prophecy
 - a. There was a specific prophecy relating to the captivity of the children of Israel in Babylon that particularly captivated Daniel’s attention and drove him to his knees. The prophecies Daniel read were:
 - i. Jeremiah 25:11 *“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years.**”*
 - ii. Jeremiah 29:10-13 *“For thus saith the LORD, That after **seventy years** be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”*
 - b. Daniel approaches this prophecy literally. He expected a literal fulfilment of the plain statements of Scripture. This is the correct approach to Bible prophecy.
2. The stimulation from the prophecy
 - a. Daniel knew that prayer would play an important part in seeing this prophecy fulfilled. “God’s promises are intended, not to supersede, but to excite and encourage, our prayers.” (Henry) Jeremiah’s prophecy, Daniels Prayer and Cyrus’ Proclamation were all a part of God’s plan and purpose (Denis Lyle).
 - b. Daniel knew that repentance from sin would be a necessary qualification to securing God’s blessing (See Vs. 4b). “What the prayer plainly discloses, that Israel’s spiritual unreadiness (because of sin) stands in the way of having the Lord do for His people what He had promised. Israel is still largely impenitent. She may be in distress and deeply humbled by God, but she has not humbled herself under the mighty hand of God. Consequently, her exaltation is being deferred.” (Leupold)

III. The Devotion of Daniel’s Prayer (Vs. 3)

A. The Seriousness of his Praying (Vs. 3a)

1. “I set my face unto the Lord God” = Daniel set his face to seek God’s face. Daniel was earnest about this season of prayer. He was

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purposeful, focused and put aside other things to devote himself to the exercise of prayer.

2. Note: While it is important to maintain a spirit of prayer at all times (1 Thess. 5:17), and to pray the quick “Nehemiah style prayers” on the job (Neh. 2:4), it is also vital that like Daniel, we set aside specific times for extended, earnest prayer.
3. Robert Murray McCheyne, that saintly Scottish Presbyterian minister said this, “What a man is on his knees before God, that he is and no more.”

B. The Humbleness of his Praying (Vs. 3b)

There are three accompaniments to Daniel’s praying that reveal his deep humility before God. He reveals his humility through his...

1. Fasting – purpose of fasting is not to try and force the hand of an unwilling God but rather the deliberate setting aside of bodily appetites for serious prayer to a God who is willing to answer. Fasting is mentioned at least 31 times in Scripture.
2. Clothing – two specifics are mentioned. These were outward displays of an inner heart attitude.
 - a. Sackcloth – a course, rough, dark cloth made of goat’s hair worn to show mourning, repentance and humility. (Cloud) Some examples:
 - i. Hezekiah (2. Kings 19:1) – “...*he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth*”
 - ii. Mordecai (Es. 4:1) – “...*put on sackcloth with ashes...*”
 - iii. King of Nineveh – “...*covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes.*” (Jonah 3:6)
 - b. Ashes – often connected with the wearing of sackcloth and for the same purpose. For example
3. Note: Remember that at this time Daniel held a high position in the government of Babylon under Darius (see chapter 6). He would have had access to the finest food and clothing as Darius’ First Minister, but he lays it all aside and humbles himself before his God. This is even more significant when we consider Daniel’s blameless life. Daniel is probably the most righteous Israelite at this time and yet he humbles himself and confesses his personal sins and the sins of the nation.

IV. The Adoration of Daniel’s Prayer (Vs. 4)

Daniel’s opening words in this prayer are an expression of adoration to his God. He refers to...

A. The Preciousness of God – “the LORD my God” (Vs. 4a)

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1. Daniel could approach God because of his personal relationship with Him. Throughout this prayer Daniel refers to God as “our God” (Vs. 9, 10, 13, 14, 15 & 17) and “my God” (Vs. 4, 18, 19).
2. We approach God based on our relationship to Him as our Heavenly Father.

B. The Greatness of God – “the great and dreadful God” (Vs. 4b)

1. ‘great’ = God is the Almighty, Sovereign Lord. “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” (Psalm 145:3) The word ‘unsearchable’ means “that which cannot be searched or explored; inscrutable; hidden; mysterious.” (Webster)
2. ‘dreadful’ = means “to be feared.” Word is translated ‘reverend’ in Psalm 111:9. God is worth of reverence and godly fear. We often use the word ‘dreadful’ to describe something evil. But God is not dreadful in wickedness but dreadful in holiness!

C. The Faithfulness of God – “keeping the covenant and mercy” (Vs. 4c)

1. God is a covenant keeping God. This gave Daniel confidence to bring the matter of Israel’s restoration to the Lord in prayer.
2. Jeremiah extolled the faithfulness of God in the words, “...*great is thy faithfulness.*” (Lam. 3:23)

V. The Confession of Daniel’s Prayer (Vs. 5-15)

Two dominant themes can be discerned in this confession. Very often they are both contrasted in the one verse – the sinfulness of Israel and the righteousness of God. That is biblical confession in a nutshell! Note 5 things Daniel confessed about Israel:

A. The Depravity of Israel (Vs. 5a)

1. The Admission of their Sin (Vs. 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15)
 - a. Daniel frequently and humbly admits the exceeding sinfulness of Israel in this confession.
 - b. For example: “we have sinned” (Vs. 5); “have committed iniquity” (Vs. 5); “have done wickedly” (Vs. 5); “have rebelled” (Vs. 5); “trespassed against thee” (Vs. 7); “we have sinned against thee” (Vs. 8); “we have rebelled against him” (Vs. 9); “all Israel have transgressed thy law” (Vs. 11); “we have sinned against him” (Vs. 11); “we obeyed not his voice” (Vs. 14); “we have sinned” (Vs. 15); “we have done wickedly” (Vs. 15).
2. The Description of their Sin
Look at the six words Daniel uses to describe their sin:
 - a. Sin = to miss the mark, come short
 - b. Iniquity = to be crooked, perverse. The bent of our sinful nature.
 - c. Wickedness = to be wrong, to violate

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- d. Rebellion = to revolt. Hebrew word always translated 'rebel' or 'rebellion'
- e. Trespass = treachery, unfaithfulness, breach of trust
- f. Transgression = to pass beyond, to cross over. E.g. "trespasses will be prosecuted"

B. The Departure of Israel (Vs. 5b, 11)

- 1. They had departed from the 'precepts', 'judgments' and 'law' of God.
- 2. The word 'apostasy' means "a departure."

C. The Disobedience of Israel (Vs. 6, 10)

- 1. Every class of people included in this sin (Vs. 6) (See also Vs. 8)
- 2. Their stubborn resistance to God's men was ultimately a refusal to hear God's voice.
- 3. Illustration: Paul gave thanks for the attitude of the Thessalonians towards the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)

D. The Dismay of Israel (Vs. 7-9)

- 1. "righteousness belongeth unto thee" = Daniel acknowledges that God is righteous in His judgments. He exalts God and humbles man.
- 2. "unto us confusion of faces" = means shame, disgrace, reproach. It refers to "shame which reflects itself in the countenance, not because of disgraceful circumstances, but in the consciousness of well-deserved suffering." (Keil & Delitzsch) True confession means I acknowledge that I deserve the chastisement I receive from God for my sins.

E. The Discipline of Israel (Vs. 11b-14)

- 1. Daniel acknowledges that they were being chastised for their sins in accordance with the law of God.
- 2. In particular he makes reference to "the oath...of Moses". The word 'oath' means curse and refers to the list of curses from Deut. 28 that God had warned the nation they would experience if they rebelled against God.
- 3. God's judgment had been directed against the people (Vs. 7b) and against Jerusalem (Vs. 12b). Lamentations records the heart-breaking picture of what happened in Jerusalem.
- 4. He acknowledges their lack of repentance (Vs. 13)

VI. The Intercession of Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 16-19)

A. The Focus of his Intercession (Vs. 16-18a)

- 1. That God would turn away his anger from Jerusalem.
- 2. That God would cause His face to shine upon his sanctuary.

B. The Foundation (basis) of his Intercession (Vs. 17b; 18b)

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1. He pleads on the basis of the Lord's glory (Vs. 17b; 19a). Daniel's primary concern is the glory of God.
2. He pleads on the basis of the Lord's mercies (Vs. 18b)
 - a. His mercies are great and numerous in number
 - b. Psalm 86:15 *"But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and **plenteous in mercy and truth.**"*
 - c. Psalm 103:8 *"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and **plenteous in mercy.**"*

C. The Fervency of his Intercession (Vs. 19)

1. "O Lord...O my God" = Daniel uses 'O' repeatedly in this prayer conveying his passion and fervency for the Lord to answer. We have lost the 'O' out of our praying today.
2. Daniel says "O Lord" and "O my God" at least 11 times in this prayer (Vs. 4, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19). This is praying from the heart!

Conclusion:

1. Is prayer and Bible reading a priority in our Christian lives?
2. Does the study of prophetic truth stir us to pray?
3. When was the last time we paused and really humbled ourselves before God over our personal sins, the sins of the nation and the sins of the church.

Daniel's 70 Week Prophecy

Text: Daniel 9:20-27

Introduction:

1. In Daniel 9 we have a prayer (Vs. 1-19) and a prophecy (Vs. 20-27). Daniel receives a speedy answer to his fervent prayer (Vs. 20-23) as Gabriel outlines to Daniel the 70-week prophecy. This prophecy of Daniel 9 is one of the most foundational and important prophecies in the Word of God. Some have referred to it as “the backbone of Bible prophecy”.
2. Daniel 9 powerfully demonstrates the inspiration of Scripture. Denis Lyle notes, “Some scholars consider (Dan 9:20-27) the single greatest defence of the divine inspiration of the Bible, for it precisely states when the Messiah would come to earth. Sir Isaac Newton, who wrote a discourse on the topic, said we could stake the truth of Christianity on that prophecy alone, made five centuries before the Lord Jesus Christ.”
3. David Cloud writes, “The seventy weeks prophecy gives the exact timeline from the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity to Christ’s first coming. And it gives the major events of the seven-year Tribulation that precede Christ’s second coming...In a nutshell, the 70 weeks describes the finishing up of God’s business with Israel: her judgment and restoration.”
4. We will study this great prophecy in 6 parts:

I. The Period of the 70 Weeks (Vs. 24a)

A. The Definition – “seventy weeks”

1. The Hebrew term for ‘week’s means ‘sevens’. It is similar to our term ‘dozen’. It can be used in a variety of contexts. The context of the Bible passage will reveal whether it refers to a week of days or a week of years.
2. Strauss: “A heptad (seven) is used to designate a collection of seven things, just as we would use the word ‘dozen’ to designate a collection of twelve things. However, the word ‘dozen’ does not stand alone. If I enter a food store and ask the clerk for a dozen, he would reply, “a dozen of what?” Do I want a dozen eggs, a dozen doughnuts, or a dozen something else...Here then are seventy sevens, but seventy sevens of what? It is clear in the context that the prophecy is dealing with time. But time is made up of units of varied duration. Are these seventy sevens of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, or years? I am led to the conclusion that the seventy sevens in Daniel 9:24-27 have to do with years.”
3. Illustration: Jacob serves 7 years for Rachel (Gen. 29:14-30) Note particularly Vs. 18, 20, 27, 28 & 30.
4. The context reveals Daniel has years in mind (Vs. 2)

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5. The weeks that have already been fulfilled show plainly that these are weeks of years, not days.
6. So, 70×7 years = 490 years of prophetic history outlining God's Divine program for the people of Israel.

B. The Determination – “are determined”

1. Remember overarching theme of Daniel? God reigns, He is on the throne!
2. These 490 prophetic years will surely come to pass. They are sovereignly determined by the Almighty, Sovereign God.

II. The People of the 70 Weeks (Vs. 24b)

A. Jews – “thy people”

1. To try and include the church into this prophecy results in confusion. God is NOT dealing with the church in this prophecy but the nation of Israel.
2. The Gentiles are not the primary focus either.
3. This provides a strong argument against the pre-wrath, mid-trib or post-trib rapture theories. To inject the church into the 70th week of Daniel is confusion. God is dealing with Israel and the ungodly during this time to bring her to repentance, not the church! (See Rev. 3:10)

B. Jerusalem – “thy holy city”

1. Jerusalem the focal point of this prophecy.
2. Jerusalem is already becoming the focus of world attention which is setting the stage for Antichrist's treaty with Israel.

III. The Purpose of the 70 Weeks (Vs. 24c)

Six purposes of the 70-week prophecy are outlined all introduced by the word 'to'. We could summarize them under 2 headings:

A. The Removal of Sin

1. “to finish the transgression” = refers to the completion of Israel's transgression against God (Cloud).
2. “to make an end of sins” = “Israel's course of apostasy and rebellion will be brought to an end.” (Sargent)
3. “to make reconciliation for iniquity” = the word 'reconciliation' is the Hebrew word for 'atonement'. Provision made at the cross but Israel's national conversion still future (Rom. 11:25).

B. The Restoration of Righteousness

1. “to bring in everlasting righteousness” = the establishment of Christ's eternal, righteous kingdom.
2. “to seal up the vision and prophecy” = all Messianic prophecies will be fulfilled. All vision and prophecy will be fulfilled at the end of this 490 years of prophetic history

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3. “to anoint the most Holy” = reference to the Millennial Temple that will be anointed with Christ’s own presence (Ez. 40-48).

IV. The Past Phase of the 70 Weeks (Vs. 25)

A. The Edict to Commence the 70 Weeks (Vs. 25a)

1. The command to “restore and to build Jerusalem” would be the event that set the prophetic clock ticking until 69 weeks (483 years) were complete.
2. Decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple was in 536 B.C. but wouldn’t qualify since it does not include the rebuilding of the wall and the city.
3. This was the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. and is found in Nehemiah 2:1-8

B. The Eras that Completed 69 Weeks (Vs. 25b)

1. The **7-week** period (49 years) – Jerusalem Rebuilt
 - a. Walls rebuilt under Nehemiah quickly in just 52 days (Neh. 6:15) but city of Jerusalem took a lot longer to rebuild. The times are described as ‘troublous’ (See Neh. 4-6)
 - b. These 49 years (7 weeks) cover the time from the decree in 445 B.C. to the close of Hebrew prophecy and the O.T. canon in Malachi. (Sargent)
2. The **62-week** period (434 years) – Messiah the Prince
 - a. Add to the previous 49 years and you have 483 prophetic years.
 - b. Sir Robert Anderson’s Calculation: Sir Robert Anderson was a lawyer, investigator with Scotland Yard and a serious Bible student. He concluded that the commandment was given March 14, 445 B.C. and Christ entered Jerusalem on the donkey April 6, 32 A.D. He documented this position in his 1895 book *The Coming Prince*.
 - c. John Phillips summarizes this position as follows: “Probably the most convincing attempt to calculate the countdown from the signing of the decree to the death of Christ is that of Sir Robert Anderson. He put the edict for the rebuilding of the city as the first of Nisan, 445 B.C. From that date to Messiah the Prince was to be 69 x 7 of years = 483 years. The Hebrews used a 360-day calendar, so 483 years x 360 days = 173,880 days. Sir Robert’s calculations show that from the tenth of Nisan, 445 B.C., to the end of the 173,880 days brings us to the tenth of Nisan in the eighteenth year of Tiberius, the day when the Lord made His public Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and presented Himself to the nation as “Messiah the Prince.” Sir Robert Anderson contends that this prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled to the very day.”

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- d. Perhaps this is why our Lord made this statement on Palm Sunday: Luke 19:42 Jesus said, “...*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least **in this thy day**, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*” (See also Matt. 21:4-5) That was the most important day for the Jewish people and they missed it!!!
- e. Zechariah 9:9 “*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: **behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.***”

V. The Pause in the 70 Weeks (Vs. 26)

There is a gap/pause in the prophecy with a number of events taking place in between the 69th and 70th week. Sometimes there are gaps in Bible prophecy. Compare Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16-21

A. Messiah is Cut Off (Vs. 26a)

1. “cut off” = speaks of Messiah’s violent death on the cross. He was cut off from man, life and from God the Father. Here we have the cross (Gospel) in the Book of Daniel!
2. “not for himself” = Messiah did not die on account of his own sins. He was sinless and His death was on behalf of others (sinners). “*Christ died **for our sins**...*” (1 Cor. 15:3).
3. Christ was presented as Israel’s Messiah and King but was rejected and crucified. This stopped the prophetic clock as Israel was temporarily set aside.
4. The church age is in this interlude between the 69th and 70th week. Romans 11:25 “*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until** the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*”

B. Jerusalem is Conquered (Vs. 26b)

1. The city and the sanctuary (temple) destroyed. This took place under the Roman general Titus in A.D. 70
2. Note! The future prince is Roman. He is the little horn of the revived Roman Empire described in Daniel 7:7-8.

C. Wars will Continue (Vs. 26c)

1. There are wars and desolations until the end (See Matt. 24:6-14).
2. This is a perfect description of Israel’s history since Christ “cut off”.

VI. The Prospective Phase of the 70 Weeks (Vs. 27)

A. The Agreement with Antichrist (Vs. 27a)

1. “he shall confirm the covenant with many” = a false peace covenant made with Israel at the start of the 70th week by Antichrist

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2. Antichrist is depicted as a man of peace in Revelation 6:2 – *“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”*
3. It is likely that the rebuilding of the temple and peace with the Arab nations will be a feature of this treaty. The 3rd temple is obviously re-built as we have reference to the “sacrifice and oblation”.
4. The Jews believe that whoever builds the temple and brings peace is the Messiah. They are crying out for peace and for the rebuilding of the 3rd temple! The temple will be rebuilt but it won't be Christ's temple, it will be the temple of Antichrist.

B. The Abomination of Antichrist (Vs. 27b)

1. Half way through the 7-year period (3.5 years), Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and desecrates the temple, setting himself up as God.
2. *“When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) ... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”* (Matthew 24:14, 21). Jesus interpreted Daniel's prophecy literally!
3. *“... that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God”* (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Conclusion:

1. The first 69 weeks (483) years of prophecy have been fulfilled exactly as the Word of God predicted. The final 7 years still future, will also be fulfilled in exact detail.
2. The next event on the calendar for the church is the rapture which will take place before this 7-year tribulation period.
3. If Jesus Christ came to snatch away His bride (church) today, would you be caught up or left behind? Where will you spend eternity?

Prayer and the Invisible War

Text: Daniel 10:1-21

Introduction:

1. This is the fourth and final vision Daniel receives from the Lord. It is important to note that chapters 10-12 are one unit and are all a part of this final vision. Note the word 'Also' in 11:1 and the word 'And' in 12:1. In chapter 10 we are introduced to the circumstances of the vision. Chapter 11-12 give the content of the vision.
2. "The visions of Daniel 11 and 12 describe the end of the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, the Antichrist kingdom, the Great Tribulation, and the resurrection and establishment of Christ's kingdom." (David Cloud)
3. This chapter unveils to us details of the unseen spirit world and the battle that rages in the heavenlies as God's people give themselves to fervent prayer. M.A. Butler states, "This chapter goes behind the scene to the spirit world, revealing a picture of the "conflict of the ages" between the plan of God and the opposition of Satan, between good and evil, between angelic and demonic powers and activity." John Phillips says, "This chapter gives us an extraordinary glimpse into the mechanics of prayer and a look at the spiritual forces that take side for and against God's people in the unseen world."
4. In this sermon we will study this chapter under 5 main points.

I. The Introduction to the Vision (Vs. 1)

A. The Period (Vs. 1a & 4a)

1. The monarch (1a) – Cyrus king of Persia
 - a. The third year of his reign.
 - b. Cyrus' proclamation allowing the Jews to return to the land and rebuild their temple given in the first year of his reign (Ezra 1:1-4).
 - c. This means Daniel lived to see the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel.
2. The month (4a) – 24th day of the first month

B. The Prophet (Vs. 1b)

1. The title of the prophet
 - a. Daniel's Babylonian name is mentioned. We can be in no doubt as to the identity of this man Daniel. He is the same man who was carried away to Babylon in his early teens.
 - b. By this time, Daniel would be approx. 90 years old.
2. The thing for the prophet
 - a. The truthfulness of the thing – "the thing was true" God's Word can be trusted!

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- b. The time of the thing – “the time appointed was long” “This means it was not for Daniel’s day. The focus of Dan. 11-12 is of the Greek Empire and the time of the end in the day of the Antichrist.” (Cloud)

II. The Intercession before the Vision (Vs. 2-4)

A. The Fervency of Daniel’s Praying (Vs. 2)

1. The lamentation of it – ‘mourning’
 - a. Who was Daniel praying for? Answer is found in Vs. 12 & 14. Daniel was obviously praying for his ‘people’ (Vs. 14). Daniel was deeply burdened for the people of God, so much so that he ate and drank very little for 3 whole weeks!
 - b. Why was Daniel praying? It is hard to know exactly what prompted this period of intercession but some possibilities are as follows:
 - i. The spiritual condition of Israel. When the opportunity came to return to the land and rebuild the temple approx. 42,360 people returned but the majority stayed in Babylon, choosing the convenient life over the pilgrim life. Perhaps this was the source of Daniel’s heart burden.
 - ii. The spiritual conflicts of Israel. Perhaps word had reached Daniel of the opposition that was facing the builders in Canaan.
 - iii. Whatever the motivation, Daniel had a love and concern for the people of God and prayed earnestly for them.
2. The length of it – “three full weeks” (See also Vs. 3)
 - a. Daniel prayed until the answer came. As the old timers would say, “he prayed the matter through”.
 - b. In a day where we expect everything instantly, we need to be reminded to be ‘instant’ in prayer. Christians today aren’t interested in praying for 3 hours, let alone 3 weeks!
 - c. Challenge: How much do we involve ourselves in this ministry of intercession for others? Are our hearts ever moved even slightly for the needs of others? Have we ever experienced a burden that comes even close to that of Daniel’s?
 - d. Illustration: Andrew Bonar’s prayer life

Andrew Bonar was one of the great preachers and writers of the 19th century. His daughter was taking a Welsh evangelist through the church that her father pastored. She said, “*When I was a little girl, my Daddy used to bring me here and tell me to sit in a pew in the back.*” He would say, “*I’ll be back in a little while. You stay here.*” “*He’d leave me, and I wouldn’t see him for a while. One day I decided to find out what he was doing, so I crawled out of the pew and walked up the aisle until I finally found him. I saw the strangest thing. My Dad would be seated in a pew bent forward, as if to read the name on the plaque. He would read the name and then bow his head and pray. Then he would scoot over and read the name on the next pew and pray again. My father would spend an entire evening in the*

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place where the people of God came to worship, and one by one, pray for every worshipper in the church fellowship. He had an overwhelming burden for his people.”

B. The Fasting of Daniel’s Praying (Vs. 3-4)

1. The particulars of his fasting (Vs. 3)
 - a. “no pleasant bread...neither flesh” = pleasant means ‘delightful’. Appears Daniel did not refrain from food entirely but from certain kinds of foods such as meat.
 - b. “nor wine” = implies he only drank water
 - c. No anointing = a form of ancient toiletry
 - d. “Daniel lived in the top tier of one of the wealthiest and most sensual kingdoms that has ever existed, but his passion was for God and the things of God.” (Cloud)
 - e. Note: The particular way in which you approach a fast is between you and the Lord.
2. The place of his fasting (Vs. 4)
 - a. Daniel was by the river ‘Hiddekel’ which is the Tigris river.
 - b. Note: To fast, pray and seek the Lord, it is wise to set aside a specific time and place to do it.

III. The Revelation in the Vision (Vs. 5-9)

A. The Heavenly Man’s Description (Vs. 5-6)

1. Similar to John’s vision of the glorified Christ in Revelation 1:10-17.
2. Very possible this was a vision of the Christophany, the pre-incarnate Christ (See Dan. 3:25) but it is difficult to say with complete certainty. Concerning the identity of this “certain man”, noted Bible teacher Lehman Strauss said, “In 1948 I was very sure; in 1958 I had reversed my former conclusion; now in 1968 I am not certain that I know just who this certain man is.”
3. I would strongly contend it is a vision of the preincarnate Christ for the following reasons:
 - a. The language so closely resembles John’s description in Revelation 1 it seems the most logical conclusion.
 - b. There appears to be at least one other heavenly personage to the ‘man’ of Vs. 5-6 (See Vs. 10, 16 & 18). In fact, Dan. 12:5 (also a part of this same vision) indicates there were several supernatural beings present during this vision. This explains why the angelic being could be hindered in his progress by evil spirits (Vs. 12-13)
4. Consider the specific details of the description. Note the word’s ‘like’ and ‘as’ in Vs. 6.
 - a. His clothing – linen and a golden girdle
 - b. His body – as beryl. Beryl is “a yellowish-green gemstone” (Barnes)

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- c. His face – as the appearance of lightning
- d. His eyes – as lamps of fire
- e. His arms and feet – like polished brass
- f. His voice – like the voice of a multitude

B. The Earthly Man’s Reaction (Vs. 7-9)

1. The reaction of Daniel’s associates (Vs. 7). Twice Daniel mentions that he saw this vision alone (Vs. 7 & 8). God clearly intended that only Daniel receive this vision.
2. The reaction of Daniel (Vs. 8-9)
 - a. Daniel had a sense of his own weakness – twice he mentions that he had “no strength” (Vs. 8)
 - b. Daniel had a sense of his own wickedness – “my comeliness was turned in me into corruption”. Even though Daniel had walked closely with God all his life and was possibly the godliest man in the world at that time, he was totally undone in the pure presence of God. Isaiah had a similar experience (Isaiah 6)
 - c. Challenge: Do we ever pause to contemplate who we are serving? Do we have a high view of our Lord Jesus?

IV. The Consolation in the Vision (Vs. 10-11; 15-19)

The heavenly messenger tenderly comforts Daniel. Daniel was...

A. Strengthened by a Touch (Vs. 10a, 16a & 18)

Three times Daniel is touched in this passage. He was touched...

1. To Stand (Vs. 10-11)
2. To Speak (Vs. 16)
3. To be Strong (Vs. 18)
4. Note: Remember that Christ is closer to you dear Christian than the breath you breathe. He dwells in you and can strengthen you.

B. Strengthened by the Truth (Vs. 11 & 19)

1. Daniel is reminded that he is “a man greatly beloved” (Vs. 11a & 19a) As God’s children we are the special objects of His affection.
2. Daniel is given God’s peace – “peace be unto thee”
3. Daniel is exhorted to “fear not” and to “be strong” (Vs. 12a, 19)

V. The Explanation in the Vision (Vs. 12-14; 20-21)

A. The Reception of Daniel’s Prayer (Vs. 12)

1. There was NO delay in the prayer getting to the throne room of heaven. Satan CANNOT delay our prayers getting to God. It is impossible for him to do so as we are seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).
2. “from the first day...thy words were heard” = the prayer was heard immediately and a prompt answer was dispatched with the sending of an angel.

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B. The Resistance to Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 13, 20)

There are two princes spoken of here. There is a...

1. An evil prince – “the prince of the kingdom of Persia”
 - a. A high ranking, powerful demonic spirit was behind the Persian Empire. The demonic host is a well-organized army with a united objective to oppose the will of God. This evil spirit came to withstand the angel sent with the message for Daniel. This was the reason for the 3-week delay in the answer to Daniel's prayer.
 - b. Satan is called “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2) Ephesians 6:12 says, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers of the darkness of this world**, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”*
 - c. Satan was interested in the subject of Daniels praying on account of his hatred of the Jewish people. They were God's chose people and from Israel would come the promised Messiah. Intercessory prayer takes us into direct conflict with the enemy.
 - d. Challenge: Does your prayer life attract Satan's attention? Are you known in hell? Satan knew who Daniel was. Satan knew who Paul was (Acts 19:15). For most of us, our prayers are so weak that they hardly ever come up on the devil's radar. Many believers live their lives with little to no sense of the battle that often rages in the heavenly places.
2. A godly prince – “Michael, one of the chief princes”
 - a. A powerful, high ranking angel in heaven – ‘chief’
 - b. The only angel in Scripture referred to as an ‘archangel’ (Jude 1:9)
 - c. Has a special relationship to Israel as a nation (Dan. 10:21, 12:1; Rev. 12:7-9)

C. The Revealing because of Daniel's Prayer (Vs. 14, 21)

1. Prophetic truth (Vs. 14) Note the phrase “latter days”
2. Predetermined truth (Vs. 21) The Scripture that was to be revealed was already in existence in heaven. It existed before it was delivered to holy men by God's Spirit (See Psalm 119:89)

Conclusion: Are you involved in intercessory prayer for others? Are you involved in the spiritual warfare that is raging in the heavenly places? Prayer is our most potent weapon against the enemy.

Prophecy is Pre-written History

Text: Daniel 11:1-20

Introduction:

1. Daniel 10-12 are one unit and detail the fourth and final vision Daniel received. In this chapter we get into the main prophetic detail of the vision.
2. Daniel 11 is a powerful testament to the inspiration of Scripture. It is packed full of prophecies that we can now see fulfilled in history. According to M.A. Butler, over 130 specific prophecies from Vs. 1-35 have been accurately fulfilled. Dr. Charles Feinberg states: "It is truly a manual of divine inspiration. The events prophesied in this chapter are traced as accurately as one would have expected from a history of those times written AFTER the fact."
3. In fact, "this prophecy is so precise that critics are sure that it was written after Daniel's lifetime after the fulfillment of the events." (Cloud) Robert Sargent writes, "No other chapter in the Word of God has stirred up the wicked hearts of so-called Higher Critics more than Daniel 11. This is because it contains a detailed and accurate account of Jewish and Gentile history primarily covering the "Four Hundred Silent Years" between Malachi and Matthew. To the unbelieving mind, this chapter had to have been written after the fact."
4. Illustration: A Professor at a liberal theological seminary was teaching from the book of Daniel. His class consisted of young men and women. At the beginning of his lecture he said, "*Now I want you to understand that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period in the second century BC, not by the historic Daniel who lived in the sixth century BC. The facts were written as all history is, after the events took place.*" One young man raised his hand and asked, "*How can that be, sir, when Christ said in (Matt 24:16) that it was written by Daniel?*" The professor paused for a moment, looked at the student in the eyes and said, "*Young man I know more about the book of Daniel than Jesus did.*" This is just one example of many that could be given of the sort of blind and evil unbelief that exists towards this prophetic chapter.
5. The chapter divides into two main sections:
 - **Vs. 1-35** pertain to the Greek kingdoms of Egypt (Ptolemy) and Syria (Seleucid) and particularly to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. These events occurred exactly as written between 301 and 168 B.C. The history is found in Josephus and the book of the Maccabees.
 - **Vs. 36-45** pertain to the Antichrist. The words "time of the end" point beyond Antiochus, beyond the church age, to the last days.
6. In this sermon we will study the first 20 verses which take us from the reign of Ahasuerus the Persian to Antiochus Epiphanes. We will divide the text into three sections under the names of the three prominent kings covered in these verses.

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I. Ahasuerus the Persian (Vs. 1-2)

A. His Predecessors (Vs. 1-2a)

The three kings the followed Darius the Mede were:

1. Cambyses (Xerxes or Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6)
2. Pseudo-Smerdis (the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4:7-23)
3. Darius Hystaspes (Darius I, the Darius of Ezra 4:24)

B. His Power (Vs. 2b)

1. The fourth king is Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther
2. Read Esther 1:1-9 (particularly Vs. 4) for a description of the sort of pomp and riches that characterized his reign, just as the Word of God predicted.

C. His Provocation (Vs. 2c)

1. Ahasuerus (Xerxes) attacked the Grecians with a great army, stirring up others to join the fight as the Word of God predicted.
2. Ironside: “He stirred up Asia against the realm of Grecia and with an immense army of over two million and a half (if we can trust the computation of the historians those days), crossed the Hellespont and invaded Greece...the Grecians never forgave this insult to their race and nursed the desire for vengeance until the days of Alexander the Great.”

II. Alexander the Great (Vs. 3-9)

A. The Success of Alexander (Vs. 3)

1. “great dominion” = Alexander conquered the known world in 12 short years. His military career was one unbroken chain of victories.
2. “do according to his will” = he was undefeatable. Alexander is the notable horn on the goat in Daniel 8

B. The Successors of Alexander (Vs. 4)

1. “his kingdom shall be broken” = Alexander the Great died at the height of his power (“when he shall stand up”) at the age of 33.
2. “his kingdom...shall be divided” = prediction of the four-fold division of the Greek empire.
3. “not to his posterity” = the kingdom would not be inherited by any one in Alexander’s family.
 - a. John Phillips explains:

“None of his posterity received any lasting inheritance. His half-brother, Philip Aridaeus, succeeded him, but after six years he was murdered, along with his wife Euridice, at the instigation of Alexander’s mother, Olympias. The generals did not recognize his illegitimate son, Hercules, and whom Polysperchon murdered along with his mother, Barsine, Alexander’s former mistress. His wife Statira, daughter of the ill-fated Darius, was murdered by Roxane, another of Alexander’s wives. His posthumous son Alexander Aegus, born to Roxane, was put under a guardian and then murdered by the order of Olympias through the treachery of the general Cassander. Alexander’s mother, Olympias, was murdered. His

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sister, Cleopatra, queen of Epirus, was murdered. **Within fifteen years of his own death, none of his family remained alive. Thus, exactly was the Word of God fulfilled.”**

- b. The kingdom was subsequently divided between Alexander's four generals.

C. The Subsequent kings after Alexander (Vs. 5-9)

Note: Vs. 5-20 of this chapter gives the history of battles between the southern kingdom (Ptolemy in Egypt) and the northern kingdom (Seleucid in Syria) - “king of the south...king of the north”

Geographically, Israel stood between these two kingdoms and became the meat in the sandwich between their struggles. This is why the prophecy focuses on these two parts of the divided Greek Empire. Scofield described Palestine as lying “between the anvil and the hammer.” Israel is described 3 times in this chapter as “the glorious land” (Vs. 16, 41 & 45). Let's look at a number of kings that came before Antiochus the Great. Note: Much of the below information is drawn from David Cloud's commentary on Daniel.

1. Ptolemy Lagus (South) and Seleucus Nicator (North) (Vs. 5)

- a. The strong king of the south was Ptolemy Lagus, one of Alexander's generals. “He reigned over Egypt, Lybia, Cyrene, Ethiopia, Arabia, Phoenicia, Coelesyria, Cyprus, and several istles in the Aegean Sea, and many cities in Greece.” (John Gill)
- b. The stronger prince of the north was Seleucus Nicator. “Seleucas was stronger than Ptolemy and had a greater dominion. His empire included Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor.” (Cloud)

2. Ptolemy Philadelphus and Antiochus Theos (Vs. 6)

- a. These kings were successors of Ptolemy and Seleucus
- b. “in the end of years” = they made an alliance after many years of warfare
- c. “the king's daughter of the south” = this was a lady by the name of Bernice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus who was given in marriage to the king of the north (Antiochus Theos) to “make an agreement” (alliance) between the two kingdoms
- d. “but she shall not retain the power of the arm...” (6b) = here's what happened. When Bernice's father died, Antiochus divorced her and took Laodice, his former wife, again. She, likely embittered on account of the divorce, killed him and her son Seleucus Callinicus was placed on the throne.

3. Ptolemy Euergetes (Bernice's brother) and Seleucus Callinicus (Vs. 7-9)

- a. “branch of her roots” (Vs. 7) = Ptolemy Euergetes (Bernice's brother) took the throne of the Southern kingdom

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- b. “shall come with an army” (Vs. 7) = He raised an army against Seleucus Callinicus of the north and was victorious.
- c. Ironside writes: “Ptolemy Euergetes forced his way across the land of Palestine, spreading desolation everywhere, actuated by the desire to avenge the murder of his sister and to wipe out the dishonor inflicted on Egypt. He was everywhere successful, utterly defeating Callinicus and reaping an immense spoil.”
- d. Vs. 8-9 document his return to Egypt with the spoils of war. “Ptolemy carried away captives, 2,500 idols that had previously been carried away from Egypt by Cambyses, plus 40,000 talents of silver and many vessels of gold and silver.” (Cloud)
- e. “he shall continue more years than the king of the north” = he outlived Seleucus by four years.

III. Antiochus the Great (Vs. 10-20)

A. His Battles with the Southern Kingdom (Vs. 10-16)

- 1. Battle # 1 (Vs.10) – Antiochus the Great attacks Ptolemy of the south and prevails
 - a. “but his sons” = the sons of Seleucus, Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great. They assembled a large army to attack the southern kingdom.
 - b. Ceraunus, Antiochus’ brother dies before the conquest so Antiochus leads the army to victory.
- 2. Battle # 2 (Vs. 11-12) – Ptolemy Philopater of the south attacks Antiochus of the north and prevails
 - a. “Ptolemy had 70,000 soldiers, 5,000 cavalry, and 73 elephants, whereas Antiochus had 72,000 soldiers, 6,000 cavalry, and 102 elephants. Ptolemy defeated Antiochus and killed thousands of his soldiers.” (Cloud)
 - c. “he shall not be strengthened by it” = after this victory, Ptolemy was lifted up in pride and gave himself to sensual pleasures. “He might have spoiled Antiochus of his kingdom; but, content with the recovery of the cities he lost, made peace and greedily took advantage of ease, and rolled himself in luxury, uncleanness and intemperance.” (Gill)
- 3. Battle # 3 (Vs. 13-16) – Antiochus the Great attacks Ptolemy Epiphanes (Ptolemy Philopater’s son) of the South
 - a. This was 13 or 14 years after the last battle where Antiochus lost to Ptolemy Philopater.
 - b. “a great army” = Some say it consisted of 300,000 footmen, besides horsemen and elephants.
 - c. “much riches” = Antiochus brought abundant provisions and money to pay his soldiers

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- d. “cast up a mount” = refers to besieging the city with battering rams and other war engines
- e. “the glorious land” = a reference to the land of Israel
- f. “shall be consumed” = Israel wasn’t consumed at that time but it would be later

B. His Attempted Alliance with the Southern Kingdom (Vs. 17)

1. Antiochus was minded to launch a further attack on Egypt but decided to make a marriage alliance with Egypt by giving his daughter Cleopatra in marriage to young Ptolemy Epiphanes (Ptolemy V).
2. “daughter of women” = a reference to her renowned beauty
3. “but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him” = his plan backfired! Instead of the daughter supporting daddy, she fell in love with hubby!!!

C. His Assault on the Greek Isles and Territories and defeat by the Romans (Vs. 18-19)

1. John Gill writes, “Disappointed in his design on the kingdom of Egypt, he turned his face, and steered his course another way, and with a large fleet sailed into the Aegean sea; and, as Jerome relates, took Rhodes, Samos, Colophon, and Phoea, and many other islands; and also several cities of Greece and Asia, which lay on the sea coasts.”
2. “but a prince...shall cause the reproach to cease” = the Romans defeated Antiochus. “...the reproach which Antiochus cast upon the Roman nation was turned upon his own head...” (Gill)
3. “he shall turn his face toward...his own land” = Antiochus the Great returned to his own country. He died at the age of 52 when he tried to attack and rob a temple of Jupiter in Elam and was killed by the people.

D. His son’s brief reign and death (Vs. 20)

1. The Romans demanded a 12,000-talent tribute. Antiochus’ son, Seleucus Philopater levied great taxes in order to pay the dept.
2. His reign was brief as he was murdered by his treasurer Heliodorus.

Conclusion:

1. In our next lesson we will look at Antiochus Epiphanes who is a type of the antichrist and then on to the antichrist himself.
2. We will likely not remember all the names of the kings involved but we should come away with a great sense of wonder in the inspiration of Scripture. When God predicts the future, it is as good as history. It will happen! You can trust your Bible!
3. This chapter also reminds us of the truth of the sovereignty of God. He is on the throne and history is “His story!”

From Antiochus to the Antichrist

Text: Daniel 11:21-45

Introduction:

1. The chapter divides into two main sections:
 - **Vs. 1-35** pertain to the Greek kingdoms of Egypt (Ptolemy) and Syria (Seleucid) and particularly to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. These events occurred exactly as written between 301 and 168 B.C. The history is found in Josephus and the book of the Maccabees.
 - **Vs. 36-45** pertain to the Antichrist. The words “time of the end” point beyond Antiochus, beyond the church age, to the last days.
2. Review of previous sermon (Vs. 1-20)
3. In this sermon we will study Vs. 21-45 which take us from the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, a prototype of the Antichrist, to the Antichrist of the end times (Vs. 36-45). We will divide the text under two headings:
 - The Antichrist Pre-figured (Vs. 21-35)
 - The Antichrist Predicted (Vs. 36-45)

I. The Antichrist Prefigured (Vs. 21-35)

A. His Description (Vs. 21a)

1. “a vile person” = the word ‘vile’ means morally debased, depraved
2. John Phillips: “Various ancient historians agree that young Antiochus was indeed “vile” or “contemptible,” as the text declares. Often, his behavior was eccentric, if not actually mad. He was given to the most degraded and unnatural vices. He was unscrupulous, cruel, of a savage temper, and fond of the company of the lowest of men. He was erratic and cunning but not devoid of courage.”
3. John Gill: “He is called ‘vile,’ being a very immoral man, given to drunkenness, lasciviousness, uncleanness, and unnatural lusts, and a violent persecutor... The word signifies ‘despicable.’” Gill goes on to state that he lived a lascivious and foolish lifestyle “drinking with strangers, and people of low life; reveling at merry bouts with young people; putting on strange habits; throwing away his money among the rabble.”

B. His Deceptions (Vs. 21b-24)

1. Deceitful in his ascension to the throne (Vs. 21b)
 - a. “obtain the kingdom by flatteries” = the nobles and people did not want to give Antiochus the kingdom, preferring Demetrius, son of Seleucus, who was being held hostage in Rome.
 - b. “To gain the throne, he made flattering speeches to the nobles, made false promises and gave gifts to the citizens.” (Cloud)

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- c. Note: When someone flatters you, they have a hidden agenda, an ulterior motive (Prov. 29:5). See also Prov. 2:16, 7:5 and 20:19
 - d. Note: Deception is the devil's trademark, the key weapon he uses to his advantage. Therefore, it is no surprise that the coming Antichrist will be a master deceiver.
- 2. Deceitful in his agreements (Vs. 22-24)
 - a. Harry Ironside: "At the beginning, he made a league both with the Jews and with Ptolemy Philometer but proved false to each, as God had declared he would."
 - b. "he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches" = he distributed the spoils of Egypt to his soldiers and followers

C. His Destructions (Vs. 25-26)

- 1. Antiochus attacks the Southern kingdom of Egypt (Ptolemy Philometer) and prevails.
- 2. "for they shall forecast devices against him" = one of the main reasons for Antiochus' victory against the king of the South was his clever espionage behind the scenes where he seduced key men within Philometer's inner circle (e.g. military commanders) to work for him. These men are referred to as "they that feed of the portion of his meat"
- 3. Josephus said that Antiochus "circumvented Ptolemy Philometer by fraud."

D. His Desecrations (Vs. 27-32a)

These verses document two attacks of Antiochus against Judea. They both followed failed attempts to gain power over the Southern kingdom.

1. A Failed Covenant – Israel attacked (Vs. 27-28)

- a. Antiochus and Ptolemy met ("at one table") and pretended to be friendly to one another but in reality, they both had their own secret agenda and planned on deceiving the other. "Though they seemed to carry it very friendly to one another, yet at the same time they were contriving in their minds to do as much mischief to each other as they could." (Gill)
- b. On his return to Syria, he attacked Israel. Historians say this was on account of rumors the Jews had revolted against him but the Word of God highlights the true heart motive – his heart was "against the holy covenant".
- c. 2 Maccabees 5:11-14 – "When these happenings were reported to the king, he thought that Judea was in revolt. Raging like a wild animal, he set out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of three

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days, eighty thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery.”

2. A Failed Conquest – Israel attacked (Vs. 29-32a)

- a. Antiochus attacked Egypt again but was unsuccessful. The Southern kingdom had formed a new alliance with the Roman Empire and when Antiochus arrived, the “ships of Chittim” (Roman navy and representatives) were waiting for him.
- b. The Romans demanded that Antioch depart from Egypt at once. Antiochus had no choice but to leave.
- c. Antiochus left Egypt in a diabolical rage and on his way home, unleashed his revenge against Israel – “therefore he shall be grieved, and return and have indignation against the holy covenant...” (Vs. 30-31)
- d. In 168 B.C. Antiochus caused the daily temple sacrifices to cease and polluted the sanctuary with sacrifices of pigs. He set up an idolatrous image (idol) of Jupiter in the temple (2 Maccabees 6:2). This is what is referred to as “the abomination that maketh desolate” (See Dan. 9:27; 11:31 & 12:11)
- e. The same year Antiochus struck a coin with his image on one side and a depiction of himself seated as Jupiter on the other. The inscription read, “Antiochus, image of God, bearer of victory.”
- f. Note: Antichrist will also force the world to worship the idolatrous image of himself (Rev. 13:14-18). He will have total power both religiously and economically.

E. His Devastation (Vs. 32b-35)

Antiochus’ rampage against the Jews evoked an uprising that would see his grip of power on the holy land broken. It is known in history as the Maccabean revolt. The resistance took two important forms:

1. Education – “shall instruct many” (Vs. 33)
 - a. “they that understand...shall instruct many” = A new class emerged called the Maschilim (“the wise”), men who knew the Word of God and who struggled to keep the true faith alive in the midst of persecution.
 - b. “yet they shall fall by the sword...” = many perished by fire and sword or were enslaved (‘captivity’). Possibly the persecutions listed in Hebrews 11:35-37 are drawn from this dark period of history.
2. Contention – “shall be strong, and do exploits” (Vs. 32)
 - a. The Maccabees War against Antiochus and the Greek Seleucid Empire lasted from 167 to 160 B.C. Judah and his forces were called ‘Maccabees’ which is the Hebrew word for hammer (makkebbeth), because of their unexpected, hammer-like

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attacks on the Greeks. (Cloud) (Refer slide for further detail).

The temple was recaptured, cleansed and repaired in 164 B.C.

- b. CHALLENGE: In these dark times, like the godly remnant during the dark reign of Antiochus, we need to keep faith alive by diligent education in the truth and by a spiritual contending for the doctrines we hold dear (Jude 1:3). *“We further covenant to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children...”*

II. Antichrist Predicted (Vs. 36-45)

The prophecy now fast forwards to the end times and the future Antichrist. These gaps are not an unusual feature in Bible prophecy as previously demonstrated (e.g. gap between 69th and 70th week of 70-week prophecy). We can break what has been revealed about Antichrist in these verses into two divisions:

A. Antichrist’s Worship (Vs. 36-39)

1. His Prideful Deification (Vs. 36-37)
 - a. He will set himself up as god (Vs. 36a & 37b) He bears the mark of his father the devil (Isaiah 14:13)
 - b. He will set himself up against God (Vs. 36b-37a)
 - i. “he shall speak marvellous things against God” = describes his blasphemies against God
 - ii. Revelation 13:5-6 *“And there was given unto him a **mouth speaking great things and blasphemies**; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in **blasphemy** against God, to **blaspheme** his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”*
 - c. Illustration: The anti-God atmosphere of today (Jeremy Rifkin)
2. His Personal Deity (Vs. 38-39)
 - a. “the God of forces” = a reference to Satan. “The word ‘God’ is capitalized, indicating that it refers to Satan himself.”
 - b. John Phillips: “This king will not be simply an initiate into occult powers; he will be indwelt by Satan himself. As the god of forces, Satan is the instigator of war. Antichrist will rise to power over the world in the wake of war. He will glorify war. And when he arrives at the apex of his power, he will acknowledge his debt to his sinister master by establishing Satan worship as the world’s new religion.”

B. Antichrist’s Wars (Vs. 40-45)

1. The First Battle Described (Vs. 40-43)
 - a. Antichrist will be attacked from the north and the south. The South is present day Egypt and Northern Africa and the north is present day Syria and Iraq. Both areas are now Muslim.

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- b. Antichrist will be victorious in his counterattacks. He will overthrow “many countries” but not Edom, Moab and Ammon which is territory of modern Jordan. He will take control of Egypt and her treasures and the Libyans and Ethiopians will also submit to him.
2. The Final Battle Described (Vs. 44-45)
 1. Antichrist is attacked from the north and the east. The kings of the Far East take advantage of his local troubles in the Middle East and march against him.
 2. It appears that this sets the stage for the battle of Armageddon.
 3. John Phillips:

“With what armies he can gather from the West, he will prepare for the final confrontation with the East. But his time has run out. The divine clock of seven years, which began its countdown with the signing of his treaty with Israel, has been ticking away relentlessly. Now it chimes the final hour. At that moment, the heavens will open. The Lord Jesus will come, backed by the armies of heaven and accompanied by his blood-bought bride. Invincible and omnipotent, sweeping all before Him, He will descend. The sword will flash forth, and the Battle of Armageddon will be over in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. “None shall help him” is Daniel’s final word on the fate of the Antichrist. No one could help him. The Apocalypse adds the final details. The Antichrist and his soul twin, the False Prophet, will be hurled living into the lake of fire. Satan will be incarcerated in the Abyss. And Jesus will take to Himself His mighty power – and reign!”

Conclusion: There are at least four concluding challenges we can take home from the study of this passage

1. The Accuracy of Scripture – There are at least 130 fulfilled prophecies in Vs. 1-35! Isaiah 46:9-10 *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:**”*
2. The Certainty of Prophecy – M.A. Butler “If the first 35 verses have been fulfilled in every minute detail, the remainder of this prophecy, too, will one day be history.” There will be a rapture, there will be an antichrist, there will be a return of Christ to earth, there will be a 1,000-year reign!
3. The Sovereignty of God – See Vs. 27, 29, 35 & 36. God’s position as ruler and sovereign again magnified through this passage. History is really “His story”! Man proposes but God disposes. Psalm 115:3 *“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”*
4. The Brevity of Life – this passage reminds us that kings and kingdoms come and go. It reminds us that the affairs of this life are temporary and fleeting. Life is a vapour (James 4:14) and men are like the grass of the field. 1 Peter 1:24-25 *“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”*

The Tribulation & Beyond

Text: Daniel 12:1-13

Introduction:

1. Remember: Daniel 10-12 form one unit and are the fourth and final vision Daniel receives from the Lord. Note the word 'Also' in 11:1 and the word 'And' in 12:1.
2. Daniel 12 brings the vision to a conclusion. Its primary emphasis is on the coming Great Tribulation, the final 3 ½ years of Daniels 70th week (7-year period). The first 3 ½ years are the birth pangs ("beginning of sorrows" Matt. 24:8) and the final 3 ½ years are the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21). Like a woman in child birth, the final 7-year period grows in intensity and severity as it progresses.
3. We will study these end time events under four divisions

I. The Tribulation of the End Times (Vs. 1)

A. The Angel in the Tribulation (Vs. 1a)

1. Michael is a special angel in Scripture, the only one given the title archangel (Jude 1:9). He has a special relationship to the nation of Israel.
2. In the tribulation period, Michael will play a role in protecting the Jewish remnant (See Rev. 12:7-17)

B. The Adversity of the Tribulation (Vs. 1b)

1. It is described as "a time of trouble" that will be unparalleled in history. Pick the worst atrocity or disaster you can think of, the Great Tribulation will be much worse.
2. Jeremiah 30:7 describes it as "the time of Jacob's trouble". Christ described it as the "great tribulation" in Matt. 24:21.

C. The Aim of the Tribulation (Vs. 1c)

1. God's dealing with the nation of Israel is the primary focus during the tribulation. It is described as the "time of **Jacob's** trouble" (Jer. 30:7) Remember, the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 are "determined upon **thy people** and upon **thy holy city**"
2. Revelation 3:10 also reveals that the tribulation period is to "try them that dwell upon the earth."
3. This verse predicts a saved Jewish remnant that will be 'delivered' out of this terrible time.

II. The Resurrection of the End Times (Vs. 2-3)

A. The Resurrection to Everlasting Life (Vs. 2a, 3)

1. 'sleep' = reference to physical death and speaks of the body, not the soul

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2. There are two resurrections in this verse. They are described by our Lord Jesus in John 5:29 as “the resurrection of life” and the “resurrection of damnation”.
3. Revelation 20:4-5 describes the resurrection of life as “the first resurrection.” The second resurrection is described in Rev. 20:11-15.
4. The first resurrection is in two main stages
 - a. The resurrection of Church-age saints at the Rapture (1. Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16-18)
 - b. The resurrection of Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints at Christ’s return (second coming) (Rev. 20:4-5)
5. The glory of the resurrected saints is described (Vs. 3)
 - a. The saints are described as ‘wise’. The wisest thing a person can do is heed the message of salvation as found in God’s Word. The most foolish thing a person can do is reject God’s offer of salvation.
 - b. The saint’s in their glorified state are described as the shining of the firmament and the stars.
 - c. In particular, those “that turn many to righteousness” are mentioned. In the tribulation period this would include the 144,000 faithful, Jewish witnesses who win many souls to Christ. What a challenge for us in the area of soul-winning. How bright will you shine in that day? Will you receive the soul-winners crown? Those who shine brightly for the Gospel in this life will shine brightly with heavenly light in the next (See Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15). There is no greater privilege on earth than helping a lost sinner find the Saviour.

B. The Resurrection to Shame and Everlasting Contempt (Vs. 2b)

1. This is the resurrection of unbelievers described in Rev. 20:11-15 where they are judged at the great white throne judgment
2. The unsaved will experience great ‘shame’ at the judgment. Shame for their sins and shame for their having rejected the offer of salvation.
3. The unsaved will be cast into everlasting torments described here as “everlasting contempt”. Webster (1828) defines contempt in this context as, “The state of being despised; whence in a Scriptural sense, shame, disgrace.”
4. Challenge: Which resurrection will you be a part of?

III. The Prediction about the End Times (Vs. 4)

A. The Seal upon the Book till the End (Vs. 4a)

1. Daniel is commanded to “shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end”. This verse along with Vs. 9 indicated

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that the prophetic message of Daniel would largely remain a mystery until the time of the end.

2. David Cloud writes, “In the 19th century, there was a great movement of literal interpretation of prophecy that spread widely among Brethren, Baptists, fundamentalist and evangelicals. It was promoted by the Scofield Bible, the Bible School movement, large prophecy conferences, and great numbers of books and magazines.”
3. The nearer we get to the end times, the clearer the prophecies of the end time become to us.

B. The Signs of the End (Vs. 4b)

1. Many shall run to and fro – transportation did not change much during the first 6,000 years of man’s history on earth. Men walked, rode beasts or traveled on sailing ships. But since the 19th century there has been an explosion of transportation technology that has allowed man to have the ability to “run to and fro” (Cloud).
2. Knowledge shall be increased
 - a. “Up until the 1900s it was said that the accumulation of knowledge doubled every century. At the end of World War 2 every 25 years. Now information is doubling every 11 hours” (“Knowledge Doubling Curve and You,” MartinGover.com, Oct. 6, 2009)
 - b. David Cloud writes,

Those who were born near the turn of the 20th century, such as my parents, witnessed an explosion of knowledge such as the world has never seen. In one lifetime the world moved from the horse and buggy age to the space age. When my mom was born in rural central Florida, they had no electricity or indoor plumbing. The airplane had only recently been invented and even telephone was still relatively new. Those who had telephones were on “party lines” and could hear other people’s conversations, but in her lifetime, the ultra-modern Kennedy Space Center was built not far from where she was born as a prominent symbol of the rocket age. The increase of knowledge has brought us into the computer age. The first general purpose computer, UNIVAC, was built in 1951. It weighed 29,000 pounds, took up 350 feet of floor space and stood 8.5 feet high. In the 1960s the integrated circuit was invented, and today’s tiny laptops are millions of times more powerful than the UNIVAC. The increase of knowledge has allowed man to walk on the moon and to send robot craft on the 154-million-mile journey to explore the surface of Mars. The increase of knowledge has allowed scientists to discover the fundamental elements of the universe and map the DNA of the living cell. The increase of knowledge has brought us into the global communications age, with its satellites, Internet and smart phones. In 2012, there were nearly six billion connected mobile devices and two billion people on the internet (“No Borders Mean Flatter World,” BBC News, June 29, 2012).

- c. A report by a US market research company suggests that there are now more **mobile devices** on the planet than people - 8.6 billion **devices** vs. 7.3 billion people (<https://www.connected-uk.com/more-mobile-devices-in-the-world-than-people-how-many-do-you-have/>)

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IV. The Duration of the End Times (Vs. 5-13)

A. The Angel's Question concerning the timing (Vs. 5-7)

1. The place described (Vs. 5)
 - a. Two angelic beings stand on either side of the river (Tigris)
 - b. A Heavenly Messenger stands upon the river
2. The Person asked (Vs. 6)
 - a. Described as "the man clothed in linen" (Vs. 6 & 7)
 - b. This identifies the Messenger as the One described in Daniel 10:4-6. This is clearly the preincarnate Christ (the Christophany). Daniel uses the title 'Lord' to address Him in Vs. 8.
 - c. Note: These verses reveal that angels have an interest in God's prophetic program (See 1. Peter 1:12). It also reveals that though angels are glorious and intelligent beings, their knowledge is still limited. They are not Omniscient and still need to learn from their Creator, God Almighty.
3. The point explained (Vs. 7a)
 - a. Both hands are raised by the shining one (Jesus) as the solemn oath is given concerning when would be "the end of these wonders" (Vs. 6). "The hands raised is a double swearing as to the certainty of these prophecies." (Sargent)
 - b. The time frame would be "a time, times, and a half". We know this is 3 ½ years (Refer Dan. 4:25), or 1260 days (Rev. 12:6, 13:5-7). This is based on a 30-day lunar month (42 months x 30 days = 1260 days).
4. The purpose identified (Vs. 7b)
 - a. "to scatter the power of the holy people" = God's chastisement of Israel during this time again highlighted
 - b. This terrible time will be 'finished' once God's purposes have been completed for the Jewish nation.

B. Daniel's Question concerning the timing (Vs. 8-13)

The Lord's answer to Daniel involved:

1. An instruction (Vs. 9) Daniel is reminded that the meaning of words would remain a mystery to him.
2. An explanation (Vs. 10-12)
 - a. The righteous and wicked of the tribulation are described (Vs. 10)
 - b. The time frame reiterated and enlarged upon (Vs. 11-12) The Lord specifies the time frame from the abomination of desolation to the end of the second half of the tribulation.
 - i. The 1,290 days (Vs. 11)
 - ii. The 1,335 days (Vs. 12)

God Reigns – Daniel Series

- iii. M.A. Butler: “The 75 days after Christ returns provides time for the judgment of the living nations (sheep and goats – Matt. 25:32), the resurrection of Tribulation martyrs to everlasting life (Rev. 20:4), and the banishment of Antichrist and his followers “to shame and everlasting contempt” (Rev. 19:20-21)
3. A conclusion (Vs. 13) The Book of Daniel ends here but the story of Daniel isn’t finished yet! He will be standing in his lot (portion, inheritance) at the end of days.

Conclusion: In summary, there are some challenges we can take to heart from our series in the Book of Daniel

1. Be challenged by Daniel’s godly life. Like Daniel we need to have...
 - a. Courage to stand for truth and right
 - b. Commitment to prayer irrespective of the cost
 - c. Consistency in godly living. We first meet Daniel as a young man in chapter 1, purposing in his heart not to be defiled. Now as an old man, he hasn’t changed his convictions. He stands unwavering for the Lord.
2. Be encouraged in Daniel’s God
 - a. God is on the throne in relation to your life. Daniel’s life a testimony of this truth.
 - b. God is on the throne in relation to the course of this age and beyond. The future is in His hands.
 - c. Dan. 4:17 *“This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: **to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.**”*