

The Prophets, Book 5

Daniel

The book of Daniel is the last book of the Major Prophets; this book, Ezekiel, and Revelation, constitute the "trinity" of the most important books in the study of end-time prophecy (eschatology). No serious, in-depth, study of any one of these books should be undertaken without reference to the other two.

Daniel the Man. In the third year of the reign of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Daniel was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, in the first group of captives deported from Judah; at the time, he was a boy or a very young man. He was of the royal family, and with him were three young friends and relatives, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, also of the royal family¹. The boys were all trained for service in the king's court, and Daniel lived in Babylon through the entire captivity period. When the rest of the Israelites returned to the Promised Land, Daniel was kept in Babylon, probably because of his advanced age, and his value as an advisor to the Persian kings². He saw the Babylonians replaced by the Persians as the dominant world power, remained to serve the first Persian Kings, Darius and Cyrus, and apparently died there. The nature of his death and the place of his burial are unknown.

Daniel and Ezekiel. Ezekiel arrived in Babylon 9 years after Daniel, who had by that time become prominent and powerful in Nebuchadnezzar's court. They ministered in Babylon as the two great prophets of the exile, with Ezekiel ministering in the countryside, and Daniel ministering in the palace. Ezekiel made mention of Daniel in his prophecies as an exemplar of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14, 20) and of wisdom (Ezekiel 28:3).

Daniel and Pythagoras. The great Greek mathematician, Pythagoras, left his home on the island of Samos in the Aegean Sea about 535 BC and traveled to Egypt to study there. Ten years later, when the Persians invaded Egypt, Pythagoras was taken as a captive to Babylon, undoubtedly because of his reputation as a mathematician and philosopher. He shared about five years of the Babylonian captivity with the Jewish people, during the time that Zerubbabel was building the Second Temple. He stayed in Babylon until 520 BC, when he was liberated and returned to Samos. Pythagoras was intensely interested in religions (he even founded one of his own). And, because of the prominence of both Daniel

¹ According to Josephus, these four young men were related to Zedekiah, who would be the last King of Judah (Antiquities 10.10.1).

² There is no mention of Daniel in the events at the time of the return from captivity; he may already have died.

and Pythagoras in Babylon, it would be reasonable to think that they became acquainted during those five years. And, if they did, Daniel would certainly have shared with Pythagoras the truth concerning the Hebrew's God. Nothing is known of this, but it is an interesting possibility.

Unusual Expressions of Time. Daniel uses "time" to mean "year." In combination, "time" and "times" mean "one year" and "two years," respectively; and "half-time" (or "dividing of time") means 6 months. Thus, "time, times and half-time" means 3 1/2 years (see 4:25; 7:25; and 12:7). This unusual manner of expressing time was also used by the apostle, John, in the Book of Revelation (see Rev 12:14); here is another link between the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Daniel's Book. Considering the book's importance, it is comparatively short (12 chapters, compared with Ezekiel's 48). Daniel's book, like Ezekiel's, is divided into two parts: the first six chapters tell of Daniel's experiences in Babylon and the power of God to make a mockery of the pagan gods and their priests; and the last six chapters describe Daniel's four great visions. The first six chapters are written in the *third person*, and the last six chapters are written in the *first person*, and we may wonder why. In the first six chapters, Daniel is objectively recording history, as a proper historian should; thus, the third person is to be used. And, in the last six chapters, he is describing prophetic visions that he experienced, and from which he and his experiences cannot be separated in fully describing them; thus the first person is the correct choice.

A. Author. The human author was undoubtedly Daniel himself. Critical scholars assert that the book was written by an unknown imposter, during the period of the Maccabees, at the time of the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes (about 160 BC)³. But why would they say such a thing? If you ask them they will point you to volumes of their arguments, based upon the theory of someone calling himself Porphyry, an **infidel** of the 3rd Century AD⁴. Their motivation, however, seems to be their own intellectual, humanistic pride, which cannot accept the obvious miracles and supernatural prophecies recorded in this book, especially the miraculous survival of Daniel in the lions' den, and that of his three friends in the fiery furnace. Professing to be wise, they become fools, blinded by their foundational premise that there is no supernatural God who performs miracles and involves Himself in the affairs of men.

Evidence for Daniel's authorship includes the following:

³ For a refresher concerning the persecution under the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes, see "The Silent Years" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).

⁴ This obscure man and his theory were discredited and forgotten, both by Jewish and Christian scholars, for 1,500 years, until the rise of modernist, critical scholarship in the 18th and 19th Centuries. When it was rediscovered, they pounced on it as unquestionable "truth" because it fits their preconceived assumptions.

1. Internal Evidence. The book itself says that it was written by Daniel; Chapters 7-12 are written in the first person. See, especially, 7:28; 8:2; 9:2; 10:1-2; and 12:4-5.

2. The Testimony of Jesus. Jesus quoted from the book and attributed it to Daniel himself (see Matt 24:15).

3. Unbroken Tradition. The early Christian and Jewish writers, and all subsequent ones, accepted Daniel as the author, from the time of writing, about 550 BC, until the rise of modern critical scholarship. Daniel's authorship was never questioned until the 18th and 19th Centuries, when such skepticism became fashionable.

4. The Languages. The languages add fascinating evidence. From 2:4 to 7:28, the book was written in Aramaic, the language spoken by the Chaldeans (Babylonians) of Daniel's time; and the rest was written in Hebrew (see the wording in 2:4). This is what would be expected of a document written for Jews living in Babylon, with passages containing copies of official Babylonian documents in their original language (Aramaic)⁵.

5. The Dead Sea Scrolls. Critical scholars have rejected the canonicity (validity in terms of being valid for inclusion in the canon of the Bible) of the Book of Daniel in the Masoretic Hebrew text, the basis for the Hebrew Bible and our Old Testament. However, in cave 4 at Qumran there were found fragments of the book of Daniel which have been dated no later than the 2nd Century BC. They are in almost perfect agreement with the Masoretic Text, which dates from about 900 AD. This means that Daniel was written earlier than the critical scholars contend, and that Jewish scholars had carefully preserved the text of Daniel's book for at least 1,000 years⁶! Once more, archeology confirms the Bible record.

B. Place and Date. The book was written in Babylon, where Daniel, except for his early years, lived all of his life; the time of writing was approximately 550 BC.

C. Theme. The theme of Daniel is the absolute supremacy of God, manifested in His limitless power to protect His faithful servants, and in His limitless knowledge of what we mortals call the future.

D. Highlights. Although the book of Daniel is relatively short, it is extremely rich, both in intense narrative, and in symbolic, prophetic significance. Highlights include the following:

⁵ The actual Babylonian records that have been discovered by archeologists are in remarkable agreement with Daniel's references to those documents.

⁶ There is much more in the Daniel fragments found in Cave 4 to support the early dating and validity of Daniel's book, but it is technical and too expansive for our purposes here. For more on this subject consult the Biblical Archeology Review concerning the Daniel fragments in Cave 4.

1. Daniel and Others Are Taken to Babylon. Jehoiakim was placed on the throne of Judah by Pharaoh Necho as a puppet king. By the third year of Jehoiakim's wicked reign, however, the balance of power was shifting, and Nebuchadnezzar was driving the Egyptians out of the area, back toward the Nile. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, and Jehoiakim surrendered without a fight.

Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiakim his puppet king, took some of the sacred vessels from the Temple, and left Jehoiakim on the throne⁷. He also ordered that certain boys and young men of the royal family, the most promising ones, be taken to Babylon and trained for service in the palace. Such promising male captives were routinely castrated, and in this case it is virtually certain that they were, for they were placed in the care of "Ashpenaz, master of the king's eunuchs." Thus the prophecy of Isaiah to King Hezekiah, about 90 years earlier, was perfectly fulfilled⁸. Thus, also, was the beginning of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the Babylonian captivity⁹. The four boys were given Babylonian names: Daniel became Belteshazzar, and the other three became Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo. (1:1-7)

2. The Daniel Fast. As was the case with Joseph in Egypt, cream again rises to the top. Daniel, as the leader of the four young Israelites, decides against eating the king's food and drinking his wine. Instead, he asks that they be given only pulse and water; but the prince of the eunuchs fears that they will then not prosper, and he will be blamed. Daniel asks for a 10-day trial and, at the end of 10 days, they look better than the other captive youths; so the diet of pulse and water continues for the three-year period of their preparation (v 5)¹⁰. God blesses the four young men, gives them knowledge, skill and wisdom, and at the end of three years of study and preparation, when they appear before Nebuchadnezzar, they are 10-times better than all the magicians and astrologers in the kingdom. It appears that, after the three-year period of preparation, Daniel returned to normal food, except when fasting (10:3). (1:8-21)

NOTES:

a. Daniel's reasoning for his objection to the king's food and wine is not made clear; but it seems that, since he would not "defile" himself with what came from the king's table, it either included unclean things according to the law, or food that had been offered to idols. Such a diet can be healthy for a limited time; but for

⁷ It appears from the wording of II Chron 36:6 ("Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, and bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon." [emphasis mine]), that Nebuchadnezzar at first intended to take Jehoiakim to Babylon as a prisoner but, for an unknown reason, changed his mind and left him on the throne as a puppet ruler.

⁸ Isaiah 39:5-7; Josephus, Antiquities, 10.10.1.

⁹ Jeremiah 25:8-11.

¹⁰ Today when some people fast they restrict themselves to lentils and water, and call it a "Daniel fast."

Daniel and his friends to have lived only on vegetable stew and water for three years, and to have grown normally while remaining in perfect health, was probably miraculous. In the natural such a diet, lacking essential amino acids, and continued for three years, would be extremely unhealthy, and could be fatal; because all plant proteins are deficient in certain essential amino acids, and vegetables alone lack essential vitamins.

b. In Daniel 1:12 and 16 the Hebrew word rendered "pulse," literally means that which is sown [in quantity]; thus it can mean any vegetable or plant in which, to grow it, the seed is sown. Its common usage, however, is much more restricted. To quote Merrill Unger, pulse "is a word of far more restricted meaning than the Hebrew 'zeroa' or 'zeraon,' something sown, which signifies primarily vegetables in general." In modern English it means any of a number of beans, lentils, peas, etc, cooked in water as a stew. The word first appeared in the 13th Century as the Middle English word, "puls"; beyond that its etymology is a matter of contention. It can mean any of a variety of seeds cooked as food, such as lentils, beans, peas, etc. and can mean a cooked mixture of such seeds. Daniel's "pulse" could have been lentils, chosen for their food value; it could also have been any of the other edible beans and peas; or it could have been a mixture of them. Today the belief that Daniel's pulse was lentil stew is common; but its origin is unknown to me.

3. Nebuchadnezzar Forgets His Dream. In the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he had a troubling dream¹¹. He was really upset, couldn't go back to sleep, and called for his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and other practitioners of dark arts, and demanded to know the meaning of the dream; but there was a serious problem: he couldn't remember what he had dreamed. The assembled experts, quite reasonably, said that if he would tell them of the dream, they would interpret; but Nebuchadnezzar, also quite reasonably, replies that if they knew the dream, they could make up any interpretation. If they don't tell him of the dream, **and** its interpretation, all such advisors shall all be horribly put to death, and this will include Daniel and his three friends. Daniel learns of this from the captain of the king's guard, who is to conduct the killing; he goes before the king, promises that if he is given some time he will tell of the dream, **and** give its interpretation¹². Then he rushes back to his three friends and they all begin to seek the Lord¹³. The Lord

¹¹ This dating presents a problem, for the preparation of Daniel and his three friends to appear before the king lasted three years. Various explanations have been given in attempting to reconcile this apparent contradiction, but none clearly resolves the problem. The most likely explanation is that Daniel was so exceptional that he was consulted, even though he was only 1/3 of the way through his formal preparation.

¹² Here is an interesting thing: Daniel could have been executed on the spot for just appearing before the king without being summoned. Perhaps the captain of the guard took Daniel before the king, although this is not stated in the text. If not, either Daniel already had very special favor with Nebuchadnezzar, or he was supernaturally protected--probably the latter.

¹³ The text does not say how much time Daniel was given by the king; Josephus records that he asked for, and was given, one night (Antiquities 10.10.3).

gives the knowledge to Daniel in a night vision, Daniel takes some time out to praise the Lord, and has the captain of the guard take him, in haste, before the king. Daniel points out the obvious: that the God of Heaven can do what all the sorcerers and magicians cannot do, and Daniel, his friends, and all the occult advisors, are saved from execution. (2:1-28)

4. Nebuchadnezzar's Prophetic Dream. Being very careful to give God the glory, Daniel begins by telling Nebuchadnezzar what he had been thinking before he had gone to sleep: that he had been wondering what the future held for him and his empire. This was a bonus--the king had not even asked for that--and it was apparently what had brought on the dream¹⁴. In the dream the king had seen a great image, with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and the feet a mixture of iron and clay. Then a stone, cut without hands, smote the feet and smashed them, and then smashed the rest of the image. The shattered pieces became like chaff, which was blown away by the wind and could be found no more. Then the stone that had smashed the image became a great mountain that "filled the whole Earth." (2:29-35)

5. The Interpretation of the dream. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he and his three friends (note "we" in v 36) will give him the interpretation of the dream¹⁵. Beginning with a declaration that it is "the God of Heaven" who has made Nebuchadnezzar the most powerful king in the world, Daniel explains that the image represents four kingdoms that will rule the known world, in succession. The head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom; the breast and arms of silver represent a second kingdom, inferior to Babylon; the belly and thighs of brass represent a third kingdom; and the legs of iron with feet partly of iron and partly of clay, represent a fourth kingdom which shall be divided and weakened, but it will still be strong. This fourth kingdom will have kings, represented by the toes, who will not unite, will mingle with other nations, and the kingdom will be divided. Then the God of Heaven will establish a kingdom, one which will exceed all the four preceding kingdoms, will fill the whole World, and shall never be destroyed. This kingdom, represented by the great stone cut without hands, will overcome and outlast all other kingdoms on Earth.

Nebuchadnezzar is overcome, and falls down before Daniel, declaring that Daniel's God is "a God of gods and a Lord of kings," gives him riches, and makes

¹⁴ God is generous, and will often give to us exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask or think. Corrie Ten Boom, when speaking of having asked the Lord to fill her with the Holy Spirit, said, "I asked for a cup full and received the whole ocean."

¹⁵ Although Daniel was the one who usually dealt with Nebuchadnezzar and his subordinate rulers, he and his three friends were a team; and, when Daniel was singled out for honor by Nebuchadnezzar, he always graciously included the other three in his successes.

him second-in-command over Babylon and chief of all the wise men. Daniel, again taking care of his three friends, asks that they be regional governors under his authority, and he is established in the king's court. (2:36-49)

NOTE: It is generally agreed (and pretty obvious) that the four kingdoms in the vision represent Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Rome, in its latter days, was divided into Eastern and Western Empires; and, in its time of dominance, the Kingdom of God, which will eventually fill and rule the entire World until the end of the age, was established in the first advent of Christ and the birth of the Church. Jesus appears to have referred to vv 34-35 and 44-45 as applying to Himself, in Matt 21:42-44.

6. Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image. Nebuchadnezzar, for reasons unknown, has a giant statue erected in the plain of Dura¹⁶. It is almost certainly a statue of a man, perhaps of Nebuchadnezzar himself, for his pride will soon condemn him to seven years of madness; this colossus is 90 feet high, 15 times the size of a man, and covered with gold. Subordinate rulers and officials from all parts of the kingdom are summoned to Babylon for the dedication of the statue; and all are commanded to fall down and worship the image whenever a mighty signal is given in the form of music. The penalty for not bowing and worshipping the golden idol will be to be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. The signal is given, and the assembled multitude falls down and worships the image; all, that is, but three men who disobey. (3:1-7)

7. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Refuse to Bow. Some of the gathered officials, no doubt jealous and resentful of the honors given to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, inform Nebuchadnezzar that the three Israelites had not bowed down and worshipped his idol¹⁷. He commands that they be brought before him; and, undoubtedly because he is fond of them, gives them another chance to comply and avoid the horrible penalty for refusing to bow. Giving glory to the God of Israel, they reply that their God is able to protect them in the fire; but, they say, even if He chooses not to deliver them from the fire, still they will not worship the idol. (3:8-18)

8. A Fourth Man in the Fire. Nebuchadnezzar is furious! He commands that the fire be made seven times hotter than it already is, and that his mightiest soldiers bind the three offenders and throw them into the furnace. The fire is now so hot that the soldiers who approach the furnace and throw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it, are themselves killed by the heat. In the natural, the three young

¹⁶ The exact location is unknown; there were several places with this name in ancient Babylon, plus a river with that name.

¹⁷ Where Daniel was at this time is not stated. Perhaps his duties had taken him somewhere else at the time of the dedication.

men should have been not only killed, but cremated; but a miracle is taking place, and the king is in for the shock of his life. As he looks into the flames he expects to see bound, burning corpses; instead he sees the three young men of God alive, no longer tied up, and walking about in the inferno. And, even more astonishing, he sees a fourth man in the fire, walking about with the other three, as if they were strolling on a cool Autumn evening, discussing a pleasant topic. Nebuchadnezzar can't believe his eyes, and asks his counselors for confirmation, saying that the fourth man "is like the Son of God." Calling them "ye servants of the most high God," Nebuchadnezzar calls for the young men to come out of the furnace, and they emerge; although the fire has consumed the cords that had bound them, they are completely unharmed, and not even the smell of smoke has adhered to their garments. Nebuchadnezzar, thoroughly chastened, praises God, promotes Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to even higher positions than they held before, and decrees that anyone who speaks ill of their God shall be cut in pieces and his home made a dunghill¹⁸. (3:19-30)

NOTE: In v 25 of the KJV, the fourth man in the fire appears "like the Son of God." In the Hebrew text there is no definite article, so that the phrase can validly be rendered, "like a son of God," a phrase sometimes used to mean an angel, or other Heavenly being. Because of the context, however, and to give God the glory wherever there is room for doubt, the KJV translators chose "the Son of God." Jerome, in his Latin Vulgate (4th Century AD), the first complete Christian Bible, and the first Old Testament translated from the Hebrew text (rather than from the Greek Septuagint), was likewise not confused. He rendered the phrase, "similis filio Dei," i.e., "like [the or a] son of God."

The NIV and other modern versions, however, pervert this phrase to "like a son of the gods," denying the God of Israel and the Christ this mighty miracle, and ascribing His great miracle to a pagan god! Even the NKJV has this blasphemous perversion in a footnote, giving it credibility as an alternate rendering; but Nebuchadnezzar wasn't confused, as the modern translators are, about which God was involved in this great miracle (see vv 26, 28-29).

9. Nebuchadnezzar's Testimony. Chapter 4 is a testimony, declared by Nebuchadnezzar, publicly giving glory to the God of Israel ("the high God"). At the beginning he is burdened with a heavy load of sinful pride. He is also still theologically confused: he declares to (literally) the entire known World the power and supremacy of Daniel's God, yet he still speaks of Daniel as being one "in

¹⁸ This form of punishment was not uncommon in the ancient world, and its meaning was literal. The offender was literally chopped into pieces and denied a burial, his possessions were seized, and his house was made a place for dumping the community's sewage. Typically, his entire family was also put to death.

whom is the spirit of the holy gods," and refers to Daniel's Chaldean name as being derived from "my god" (Bel-Merodach). Here, again, he has a troubling dream. Here, again, his pagan astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers cannot interpret it. And, here again, Daniel correctly interprets the dream, giving God the glory. By the end of the chapter, which covers a period of eight years, Nebuchadnezzar's eyes are completely opened and he is no longer confused. He is apparently also liberated from his sinful pride, and declares God's power and willingness to chasten us in order to set us free.

a. The Dream. The king dreamed of a great and flourishing tree which reached unto heaven; in it the birds dwelt, and under it the wild animals found shelter. Its leaves were fair, and its fruit provided food for all. Then, in the dream, "a watcher and an holy one" came down from heaven and ordered the tree to be cut down, but not killed. The stump is to be left intact, with its roots in the ground, and a band of iron and brass around it. It is to be in the tender grass, and wet with dew. Its heart is to be changed from a man's heart to that of a beast. Seven "times" are to pass over it, and the purpose of all this is that men may know that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." (4:1-17)

NOTE: The band around the top of the stump is to protect it from splitting--to keep it intact--until time for it to sprout again. The fact that it is made of both iron and brass is significant. Iron represents strength and power, the supreme power of God over the affairs of men--even kings, to bring down and to exalt. Ordinarily, if a king becomes insane, his enemies would dispose of him (permanently) and seize his power. The preservation of the stump means that after Nebuchadnezzar has learned his lesson and forsaken his pride, he will return to his position as king, having lost nothing, except for his pride. The brass in the band represents judgment, which must take place, for God is just, although His justice is tempered with mercy.

b. The Interpretation of the Dream. Daniel is summoned, Nebuchadnezzar describes the dream to him, and commands that it be interpreted. For an hour Daniel seeks the Lord, and is given the interpretation; but he is "astonied"--shocked and troubled--for the dream is bad news for the king. Realizing that Daniel is deeply troubled, Nebuchadnezzar reassures him, and encourages him to speak the truth; and Daniel tells him that the dream is a revelation from God, and the news is bad. The king is the tree, and what will follow is decreed by the Most High God. Nebuchadnezzar's problem is his pride. In order to teach the king that the God of Heaven is supreme, and that it is He that has made Nebuchadnezzar what he is, he will live outdoors like an animal, eating grass like an ox, until "seven times" (seven years) have passed. Daniel ends his explanation with a plea

that the king forsake his pride, and show mercy to the poor, in order to avoid this punishment. (4:18-27)

c. Seven Years of Madness. A year passes, and Nebuchadnezzar has still not gotten the message. As he strolls about the beautiful palace, taking pleasure in looking at all that he has built, giving himself the glory for all that he has accomplished, a voice from Heaven speaks to him, saying that the dream will now be fulfilled. For seven years he lives like a farm animal, out of his mind, staying outdoors and eating grass. His hair and beard grow long and tangled, and his finger and toe nails become elongated claws. Some commentators believe that he became hairy all over, like a shaggy bear, but the passage doesn't say that. Nevertheless, he must have been a fearsome sight; and, being completely mad, probably made animal noises rather than speaking normally. At the end of seven years, as if waking from a bad dream, his reason returns. He is restored to his former grandeur, and now he has no theological confusion. He praises the one true God, and declares that God knows how to deal with those who are proud. (4:28-37)

***NOTE:** One thing about this episode that is clearly supernatural, and which seems to be overlooked by commentators, is that for seven years, while he crawled around on all fours, eating grass, grunting and roaring like a beast of the field, no one usurped his throne. In the natural, after a few days of such behavior, someone else would have imprisoned or killed him (almost certainly the latter), and seized his power. But here, after seven years of non-functional insanity, he was healed, and simply resumed his position as absolute ruler. It seems that God had a special purpose and plan for this pagan king. I won't be surprised to find him in Heaven when we arrive there.*

10. The Handwriting on the Wall.

a. God Gets the King's Attention. Daniel is now about 75 years old and near the end of his life. About 20 years have passed since the death of Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar, his grandson, is king. He will be the last King of Babylon, for this is the night that Babylon will fall, and Belshazzar will die. Darius the Mede is besieging the city, and is outside the wall. Belshazzar is presiding over a banquet, and he and his guests are drinking from the sacred vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the Temple in Jerusalem; they all are drunk¹⁹. Blaspheming the God of Israel, they are praising the pagan gods when a most amazing thing occurs: part of a hand appears, and begins to write on the wall, words that no one understands, as the king watches. The king is so frightened that he trembles ("...his knees smote one against another."), and he cries

¹⁹ Their drunkenness at the time of the city's fall was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 51:57).

out to summon the astrologers and soothsayers²⁰. He promises that whoever can read the words will have a robe of scarlet, a gold chain, and will be "third ruler in the kingdom." As usual, the astrologers, soothsayers and magicians are stumped; but the queen, who has apparently not been at the party, enters and wisely advises the king to call for Daniel, who has apparently been demoted since Nebuchadnezzar's death. (5:1-16)

b. Daniel Educates the King. Daniel is summoned, the king repeats for him the reward to be given if he can interpret the message, and Daniel tells him that he will do it, but that he doesn't want the reward. Daniel then sketches the history of Babylon since Nebuchadnezzar, and summarizes the chastening and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar. He then rebukes the king for rejecting the true God and worshipping the pagan gods, and tells him that his pride and paganism are the reason that the message on his wall has been sent. (5:17-24)

c. The End of the Babylonian Empire. The message, "Mene Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," means "God hath numbered the kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and the Persians." The last act of Belshazzar, only hours before his death, is an amazingly honorable one: he keeps his promise to Daniel, even though Daniel has just prophesied his doom. He orders that Daniel be clothed in scarlet, a gold chain of office put around his neck, and proclaims him "third ruler" of Babylon²¹. In that night Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede break into the city by diverting the channel of the Euphrates, which runs through the city, drying up the river bed and walking into the city by passing under the iron water gates²². They kill Belshazzar, and the Medo-Persian Empire becomes the World's superpower. In about two years, Cyrus will assume control from his co-regent, Darius, and issue his famous decree, freeing the Israelites. (5:25-31)

NOTES:

a. Actually, Belshazzar was co-Regent with his father, Nabonidas, the last King of Babylon, who was away on an extended military campaign. This explains the position of "third ruler" in the kingdom (vv 7,16,29).

b. Until 1853, there was no mention of Belshazzar found in Babylonian records; Nabonidas was known to have been the last king of Babylon, and critics cited this

²⁰ The king's fearful reaction was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 50:43).

²¹ Of course, that was like being promoted to "third ruler" of the Reich by Hitler in the bunker, or Third Officer of the Titanic, as she was sinking. Nevertheless, we must admire Belshazzar, in the most difficult hour of his life, for keeping his promise to Daniel; and Daniel, apparently preserved by God, survived the slaughter of the King's court to become a key advisor to the Persian kings..

²² This means of penetrating the otherwise impenetrable walls of Babylon is recorded by the Greek historian, Herodotus, and seems to have been prophesied by Isaiah (Is 44:27) and Jeremiah (Jer 50:38; 51:36-37).

to "prove" that the Book of Daniel is not historical. In 1853 an inscription was found in a cornerstone reading, "May I, Nabonidas, King of Babylon, not sin against thee. And may reverence for thee dwell in the heart of Belshazzar, my firstborn, favorite son." Other Babylonian records, now called "The Nabonaid Chronicle," explicitly state that Nabonidas "entrusted a campaign to his eldest, firstborn son... He freed his hand, he entrusted the kingship to him. Then he himself undertook a distant campaign." Once again, the Bible wins, and the liberal critics eat crow.

b. There is more significant revelation in the last two verses of Chapt 5 than in any other such brief passage in the Bible, with the exception of Genesis 1:1! In 25 lean words, an enormous turning point in human history is recorded-- almost dismissed as a passing thought. Here, God seems to be saying to us, "Oh, yes-- and, incidentally, that night the Medo-Persians finally broke into the impregnable fortress of Babylon, King Belshazzar was slain, the Babylonian Empire came to an end, the Medo-Persian Empire ascended to World dominance, and the stage was set for the end of the Babylonian captivity and the return of the Israelites, to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple."

11. Daniel in the Lions' Den. The Medo-Persians have taken over Babylon, Belshazzar has been executed, and Darius has organized the new regime. Once more, cream rises to the top and Daniel is chief of the princes of the realm, the Prime Minister--Darius's number one guy. Darius is wise enough to see in Daniel the virtue and brilliance that Nebuchadnezzar saw. Things are going smoothly, but all the sub-rulers under Daniel are jealous of his position. They want badly to accuse him to the king, but even his enemies, plotting against him, can find no fault²³. Realizing that Daniel's only vulnerability is his absolute faithfulness to his God, they conspire to have enacted a law, which imposes the death penalty for anyone who prays or makes a request of anyone else but Darius. The law is to be in effect for 30 days. Daniel, as they knew he would, continues to pray openly, facing Jerusalem, three times daily; delighted, the plotters make a point of observing this and report it to the king. Darius immediately sees the picture, and is greatly upset with himself for allowing this to happen. He tries all day to find a way to save Daniel, but can't. Then his pushy princes have the audacity to remind him of what must be done to Daniel (if they had a chance before, to survive this episode, they have blown it now). Very reluctantly, Darius has Daniel put in the lions' den, but first assures him that his God will protect him. It was difficult for Darius to believe his own comforting words, for by this time Daniel is perhaps 90. The king fasts and stays up all night worrying, and rushes to the lions' den at first

²³ When your enemies can't find anything to criticize, you are squared away!

light. Finding Daniel unharmed, he has him lifted out, and has the accusing princes thrown in, with their families²⁴. The king then glorifies God, decrees that He be honored throughout the realm, and prophesies that God's Kingdom will endure forever! (Chapt 6)

NOTE: The second half of the Book of Daniel (Chapters 7-12) consists of his dreams and visions. They are not chronological. Chapters 7 and 8 take place while Belshazzar is king, Chapt 9 takes place in the reign of Darius, Chapt 10 takes place in the reign of Cyrus, and 11 and 12 take place back in the reign of Darius. The significance of this discontinuity seems to be the importance of the visions: their value lies in the extremely important revelation they contain, not in the chronological recording of history.

12. The Vision of the Four Beasts. This appears to be a continuation of the prophecy concerning Nebuchadnezzar's dream, about 60 years earlier (Chapt 2). The 4 Beasts are generally thought to be the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, or the periods in history during which each was the World's super power (from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, to the time of Jesus and the establishment of His everlasting Kingdom). Like the Book of Revelation, the vision further speaks of the final secular, World kingdom (the antichrist Beast Kingdom,? The New World Order?) which is yet to be established, prior to the return of Christ. The parallels of this chapter and Revelation 13 seem obvious, although interpretations differ. The fourth beast here in verse 7 is suggestive of the Beast of Revelation 13-19. (7:1-8)

13. The Ancient of Days. This title is fascinating, and **it appears only three times in the Bible, all three here in Daniel 7** (vv 9,13,22). This seems to refer to God the Father, since the Son of Man (a title that Jesus will repeatedly apply to Himself) also appears in the passage, and in v 13 the Son of Man comes "to" the Ancient of Days, and is given everlasting dominion "by" Him²⁵. The description of this awesome Person is reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision of the wheels (Ezek 1), and of John's vision of the Almighty, the Alpha and Omega (Rev 1). Here is a fascinating glimpse into the mystery of the Trinity. This Ancient of Days gives to the Son of Man an everlasting Kingdom, and the description of this Kingdom of God is almost identical to the descriptions by Nebuchadnezzar (4:34) and Darius (6:26).

The vision is of four beasts, succeeding World powers. Out of the fourth beast (apparently Rome) grow 10 horns representing kings. Then an 11th horn arises

²⁴ This execution of the princes' families seems horrible to us today, but it was a universal practice in ancient times. The principle seems to have been that dead family members can't plot to get revenge. In places with despotic rulers, it still is done.

²⁵ This aspect of the mystery of the Trinity may be seen in John's Gospel (5:17-30, 6:65 and 8:26-29).

and speaks great blasphemies against the Most High, and persecutes the saints "until a time and times and the dividing of time [for 3 1/2 years]." Then this evil kingdom will be destroyed and dominion forever will be given to the saints of the Most High. (7:9-28)

14. A Vision of Successive Conquerors. Chapter 8 seems to be a continuation of Daniel's vision of the four-part, giant, image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chapter 2. This vision occurs in the palace at Shushan (Susa), in the 3rd year of Belshazzar's reign over Babylon. In the vision, he sees a ram with two horns, one of which is greater than the other. This seems to represent the Medo-Persian Empire, in which the Persians (Cyrus the Great) will be dominant over the Medes (Darius), and it will become the Persian Empire, conquering all the nations around it. Then there appears a "he goat," with one great horn between its eyes, coming from the west and conquering all before it. This he goat conquers the ram, and replaces it; then the great horn is broken and replaced by four smaller horns. This he goat seems to represent Greece, and its one great horn Alexander the Great, who will eventually conquer the Persians and became the dominant World power²⁶. The four lesser horns that replace the one large horn seem to represent the four Greek sub-kingdoms into which Alexander's kingdom will be divided after his death (Greece Proper, Syria, Turkey and Egypt).

Then, out of the four lesser horns, comes a little horn which becomes very large, and this one is difficult to interpret. It becomes so powerful as to battle the hosts of Heaven and cast some of them down to the Earth and trample them. Suddenly the vision becomes cosmic in its scope. This wicked person magnifies himself, even against "the prince of the host" (Michael the archangel? Christ?), ends the daily sacrifice (apparently, in the Temple, which will have been restored), tramples on truth (the Scriptures?) and prospers in his wicked despotism. This little horn which arises from the four kingdoms of Greece sounds like the evil Antiochus Epiphanes, ruler of the Syrian sub-Kingdom of the Greek Empire, who will profane and terribly desecrate the restored Temple during the time of the Maccabees. Yet, the part about battling the "host of Heaven" sounds like the battle between Michael and Satan in Revelation 13. Perhaps it is applicable to both, for Antiochus did his very best to stamp out the Jewish religion, and was a dark type, or symbol, of the antichrist leader who will arise in the end times. The period of 2,300 days in v 14 is difficult to interpret, and opinions as to its meaning differ with no single interpretation seeming to be the valid one. (8:1-14)

²⁶ The symbol of Alexander's empire was the goat (Greek, "aigos"); from this was derived the name of the region and of the adjacent Mediterranean, the Aegean Sea.

15. Gabriel Explains the Vision. Daniel seeks to understand the vision, and the angel Gabriel is sent to explain it²⁷. Daniel is overwhelmed by the visit ("in a deep sleep on my face"), and Gabriel helps him to get to his feet. He then explains that the ram with two horns is Media-Persia, that the rough he-goat is Greece, and its single horn is Alexander ("the first king"). The four small horns are the later kings of the four regions of the Greek empire, with none so great as Alexander. However, toward the end of Greek dominance, one of them, fierce and cruel, shall arise to destroy "the mighty and holy people." This seems to be a perfect description of Antiochus Epiphanes, the great persecutor of God's people during the "silent years" between Malachi and Jesus²⁸. And yet, at this point the description becomes cosmic and undoubtedly refers to the antichrist leader of Rev 13 who, operating with another's evil power, will enter into conflict with Christ ("the Prince of princes"); it also sounds like the "war in Heaven" of Rev 12. At this point Daniel has had all he can handle; he is again overwhelmed, again goes down, and is incapacitated for some time ("certain days"). He is astonished, and no one understands it all (including Daniel). (8:15-27)

16. Daniel Studies Jeremiah's Prophecies. In the first year following the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians, Daniel studies the prophecies of Jeremiah, and discovers that the Israelites will be captives, and Jerusalem will be in ruins, for a total of 70 years. This seems to us to be very obvious, for it was stated plainly in a letter that Jeremiah had sent to the captives about 50 years earlier (Jer 29:10), and at that time Daniel was a young man in the service of Nebuchadnezzar. At any rate, by this time Jeremiah's prophecies are combined in a scroll, in some sort of Israelite library with other scripture portions ("books"), and Daniel is studying them. In studying the prophecies of Jeremiah, he sees clearly that the entire length of captivity in Babylon, and the corresponding desolation of Jerusalem, is to be 70 years. The starting point of the 70-year period is well known to Daniel, for he was part of it: he was in the first group of captives carried from Jerusalem. As he sees this, he realizes that it is time for the captivity to end, and he enters into a prolonged period of fasting and prayer, in sack cloth (rough cloth, like burlap) and ashes, asking forgiveness for himself, for the people, and for Jerusalem. By this time he is about 85 years old. (9:1-19)

17. Another Visit from Gabriel. During Daniel's prolonged period of fasting and prayer, Gabriel is again sent to him. Gabriel "touches him" and announces that he has been sent in response to Daniel's prayers, and because Daniel is "greatly

²⁷ This is the same angel Gabriel who will announce the coming of John the Baptist to his father, Zachariah, and the coming of the Messiah to his virgin mother, Mary.

²⁸ See "The Silent Years" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).

beloved." He tells Daniel that "seventy weeks" will be the period of time to pass "...to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...and to anoint the Most Holy." Here a "week" may be interpreted to mean seven years, for the Hebrew is literally "seventy sevens." Seventy years have been required in order to chasten the people of God, and to give the Promised Land the Sabbath rest that the Israelites had failed to give it. Compared with this righting of wrongs and restoration of righteousness, the period that will be required to prepare the World for the coming of the Messiah ("the Most Holy") will be seven times that long, or seventy times seven (490) years²⁹.

At this point Gabriel gives Daniel some unsolicited information, which becomes one of the most amazing pieces of supernatural revelation in the Bible. He tells Daniel that "seven weeks, and three score and two weeks" will pass, from the decree to return the Jews to Jerusalem, until the coming of "the Messiah, the Prince"³⁰. This means that from the Decree of Cyrus it would be 69 "weeks," or 483 years, until Jesus begins His earthly ministry as Messiah. The Decree was made in 457 BC; and Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15) in 26 AD³¹. It was on this occasion that He was anointed by the Holy Spirit and began His ministry as Messiah. Thus, exactly 483 years passed between the Decree of Cyrus and the coming of "the Messiah, the Prince." There is controversy among scholars as to how to interpret these periods of time (see "**NOTE: a.**" below), including the matter of whether the Jewish calendar, the Chaldean calendar, or our Gregorian calendar is to be used in calculating this. All evidence, however, combining Scripture, Persian records, and Roman records, indicates that this amazing prophecy was **precisely fulfilled.** (9:20-25)

NOTES:

a. In addition to the differences of opinion concerning which calendar to follow in calculating these "weeks" of years, scholars also differ as to which decree is to be used as the beginning point, for the passage says only "the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." After the Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1), there were two more decrees that might be considered the starting point: the decree of Darius to resume the work after conspirators had forced the ceasing of the work on the

²⁹ This is reminiscent of the reply of Jesus, trying to make a teaching point with Peter about the requirement to forgive. When Peter asked (probably feeling a bit righteous) if we should then forgive another's offenses seven times, Jesus replied that he must forgive "seventy time seven" (Matt 18:22).

³⁰ As we have seen, there are in the Old Testament a great many prophecies about the Messiah to come; here, however, is the only one in which the word "Messiah" is used.

³¹ All evidence now indicates that an error was made in calculating the year of Jesus' birth when the Gregorian calendar was established, and that Jesus was probably born in 4 BC, not in 1 AD.

Temple (Ezra 6:1f); and the decree of Artaxerxes that sent Ezra to Jerusalem with gold and silver implements for the Temple, plus a royal commission and finances to finish the work in Jerusalem. The most likely starting point, and the one generally accepted by conservative scholars, is the first one: the Decree of Cyrus. Note that Gabriel said, "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem"; he did not say, "to resume the restoration (as in the decree of Darius), nor did he say, "to take gold and silver implements for the Temple and provide money to finish the work" (as in the decree of Artaxerxes). No, he said "to restore and to build Jerusalem."

This simple approach to the question as to which decree should be utilized, as our starting point in calculating the times, seems valid to me; yet scholars have been dissecting the matter for at least 300 years. The great commentator, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), who could think in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, looked upon the swirling controversy and observed that their intellectual nit-picking was futile: "The learned Mr. Poole, in his Latin Synopsis, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said, pro and con, concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may amuse themselves."

b. Jesus did not begin His earthly ministry as Messiah when He was born in late September of 4 BC; nor did he become Messiah at age 12 when He discussed the Scriptures with the scholars in the Temple. He became Messiah, and began His ministry, at age 30 when He was baptized in water by John, and anointed by the Holy Spirit Who descended and remained ("abode") upon Him. There is no record that Jesus ever performed a single miracle prior to this pivotal day. This momentous, pivotal event in human history is recorded fully in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 3 and appears in all three of the other gospels.

c. The latter part of v 25 seems to refer to the fact that the Israelites who would return to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple will succeed, but that the work will be done with difficulty and opposition ("in troublous times"). The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell us that this is exactly what happened there.

18. "Messiah Shall Be Cut Off, but Not for Himself." In one extremely long sentence, Gabriel continues by saying that after 62 weeks "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." Just before this, Gabriel is speaking of 69 weeks, and now he is speaking of a time "after 62 weeks"; what do we make of the missing seven "weeks," or 49 years? These 49 years are apparently the time required for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, so that 62 "weeks" (434 years) after the restoration is finished, Messiah will be "cut off, but not for himself." This calculation brings us to 26 AD. This is the year that we estimate for the beginning of Messiah's ministry; and His ministry lasted for three years, ending in 29 AD

when He was "cut off." Does this variation of three years mean that the prophecy was in error? Of course not! Given that we must **estimate** years of beginning and ending, and that we are dealing with half a millennium of time, no matter how we begin and end the times of this prophecy, it is astonishingly accurate! Some time around 26-29 AD, Jesus was indeed "cut off"--sacrificed--and not for Himself, but to pay the sin debt for all mankind.

The latter half of the verse speaks of the people of a prince who is yet to come, one who will destroy the city and the Temple, that the end shall be with a flood, and states that "unto the end of the war desolations are determined." Opinions differ as to the meaning of this, depending on the identity of "the prince that shall come"; but it seems to refer to Titus and his Romans, who conquered Jerusalem in 71 AD after a prolonged siege, completely destroyed the Temple, removed its stones, leaving (as Jesus prophesied) "not one stone upon another." They even plowed the site, leaving no trace of the once-magnificent building. The Romans then enacted a law forbidding Jews from entering Jerusalem "forever." In v 26 the interesting phrase, "with a flood" probably refers to the vast numbers of the Roman army, which finally overran the city; there is no record of any flood of water that covered Jerusalem since the time of Noah--not ever. (9:26)

***NOTE:** The modern versions of the Bible (except for the NKJV) replace "but not for Himself" with "and shall have nothing." This undercuts and weakens the foundational doctrine of the substitutionary atonement: the fact that Jesus, the sinless "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world" was scourged and crucified, not for His own transgressions, but to pay the sin debt for sinful mankind. I cannot see this as anything but arrogant blasphemy, and yet it is fashionable; and the modern versions so mutilate this verse--even the Amplified Bible--which is, in my opinion, the very best of a bad lot.*

19. But What About the 70th "Week"? But Gabriel mentioned 70 "weeks," and we have accounted for only 69 of them. What do we make of the 70th "week" of seven years? This final period of seven years is often referred to as "Daniel's seventieth week." The key to understanding this final verse in Chapter 9 is the identity of "he," the second word in the verse. Some believe "he" to be Jesus, and that He brought an end to the sacrificial system by being "cut off" in the middle of the week (after 3 1/2 years of public ministry); but if this is true, what do we make of the last 3 1/2 years? Jesus referred to this prophecy, and expanded upon it, in speaking clearly of end-time events, saying that after this causing of "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" there would follow "great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the World...nor ever shall be."

Some believe "he" in the first sentence to be Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian despot who ruled the Syrian portion of the Greek Empire for 11 horrible years, who brutalized the Jewish people, and attempted to force all Israel to embrace Greek paganism. These outrages triggered the revolt of the Maccabees, which ultimately gained the Israelites their independence. This horrible man certainly fits the one described by Jesus as "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, [which will] stand in the holy place..." (actually, both he and his statue of Jupiter) in Matt 24:15. However, Antiochus had nothing to do with confirming "a covenant for one week"; he was a wrathful, despotic enemy of the Jews and their religion. He is definitely a type, or symbol, of the antichrist leader of Revelation--but only a type, and not the real thing (see Highlight 25).

All things considered, it seems to me that Daniel's 70th week has not yet occurred, and that this prophecy refers to the seven-year period of the Great Tribulation of Revelation 13, and that "he" of the first sentence in v 27 is the antichrist leader of the end times, or last days. In Revelation he is called "the Beast" (capitalization mine). (9:27)

NOTES:

a. No such tribulation as that prophesied by Jesus occurred in the 3 1/2 years following the crucifixion; in fact, those years were years of explosive growth of the Church. During this time the only persecution of believers was by the Jewish zealots, such as the Pharisees. And, although some, beginning with Stephen, were arrested and put to death, these martyrdoms were temporary tragedies, rather than real, brutal, widespread, persecution, such as that which would begin under Nero in 64 AD, and which has continued to occur, periodically, until now.

b. The "princes," spoken of by the angelic being that we are about to see in Chapt 10, are not earthly princes or kings. Here we are given a glimpse into the heavenly realm, where Satan's kingdom still opposes the plan and purposes of God. It seems clear that Satan has such a kingdom, and that it is organized, with ruling (evil) spirits responsible for the various parts of the Earth (see "sons of men" in Job 1:6). Here it seems that the evil spirit who rules over the works of darkness in the Kingdom of Persia will be defeated and will be replaced by the evil prince of Greece. The Greek Empire under Alexander the Great will defeat and replace Persia as the World's super power. Here the Bible partially reveals this unseen conflict in the heavenly realm (see also Rev 12:7-9); additionally, Jesus revealed that Satan has a spiritual kingdom, and that it is organized, i.e. "not divided" (see Lk 11:14-20).

20. A Bewildering Glimpse into the Spirit World. About two years after Zerubbabel has led most of the Israelites back to Jerusalem, Daniel is on the river

bank with a group of men. He has been fasting and praying for three weeks. Suddenly he sees, in the Heavenly realm above him, a mighty Heavenly Being³². Only Daniel sees the Visitor, but those with him are so frightened by what they feel (and, perhaps, what they hear) that they flee for their lives. Daniel, left alone with the Visitor, is again "slain in the Spirit"; like Ezekiel on the River Chebar, he falls on his face on the ground, unable to stand. "A hand" touches him, and he is able to get up on his hands and knees, but no farther. The Visitor, who does not identify himself, tells him to "stand upright" and old Daniel gets to his feet, trembling. Telling Daniel that he is greatly beloved, the Visitor says that his prayers have been heard since the first day, but that he (the Visitor) was delayed in coming for three weeks, fighting with "the prince of the kingdom of Persia." In order to overcome the prince of Persia and come to Daniel, he had to have help from Michael, the archangel. He tells Daniel that the message he is bringing to him is about something that will take place "in the latter days." Overwhelmed, Daniel goes down again.

Then there comes an angel ("like the similitude of the sons of men") who touches Daniel's lips; now he can speak, but he is still without strength. Then another angel ("like the appearance of a man") touches Daniel a second time and imparts strength to him. He also says that Daniel is greatly loved in Heaven, and that he (the angel) must return to the battle with the prince of Persia. He says that after the prince of Persia is defeated, the prince of Grecia will come, and that he has only Michael to help him in the fight. (Chapt 10)

Introducing Daniel 11

Chapter 11 is a difficult chapter. The first 35 verses speak of what will take place as the Persian dynasty is replaced by the Greek dynasty of Alexander the Great, and the power struggles between Syria and Egypt that follow after Alexander's death, until Rome rises to become the World's new super power. The prophecies come fast, and the chapter is filled with them; in order to understand them, it is necessary to outline the secular history of the 400-year period between the close of the Old Testament and the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. The history of this 400-year power struggle is indeed "a tangled web," and difficult to follow. To help us to keep it straight, the prophetic verses will be shown in parentheses along with the events in history that were their fulfillment.

History, Written in Advance. Chapter 11 is history, written in advance. Most of it has to do with the 400-year period after the restoration of the Israelites to the

³² This awesome angelic being may have been Gabriel; it is more likely, however, that it was the pre-incarnate Christ (note the description in vv 5 and 6, and compare it with that in Rev 1:13-16). Opinions differ.

Promised Land by Persia and the rebuilding of Jerusalem--prophecies already fulfilled. The last 10 verses are prophecies of the antichrist person of the end times, and are yet to be fulfilled. Secular ancient history confirms the prophecies of the first 35 verses, and in mind-staggering detail³³. In interpreting these prophecies, we have the advantage of knowing what actually took place in World history during that time; in spite of this, however, much of this chapter is difficult to understand, for there was a complex succession of offensives and counter-offensives, the rising of new kings and their falling, betrayals and the murders of princes, kings and queens. As we can well understand, Daniel was completely bewildered by them, but he faithfully recorded what he was told.

NOTE: The identity of "I" in 11:1 is uncertain. Some believe him to be the pre-incarnate Christ because of the description of "a certain man clothed in linen" in 10:5-6; others believe that he is Gabriel. It is difficult to know with certainty. Whatever the identity of this Heavenly Being, he is speaking prophetic truth in amazing detail.

21. The Rise of a World Super Power. The message is that there will be three more kings in Persia, and the last (Darius III) will be the most powerful (even more powerful than Cyrus the Great) (vv 1-2); he, however, will be defeated by a foreign king--one who is still greater (v 3). This still-greater king, the one who will conquer Persia and end the era of Persian dominance, is apparently Alexander the Great, who will conquer the known World, bringing in the era of Greek power and influence that we know as the Hellenistic period of World history. (11:1-3)

*NOTE: Keep in mind the fact that all these princes, kings and queens in the following power struggles were **Greek** (Macedonian), whether of Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, or Persia. They spoke Greek and documents were written in Greek. All the Pharaohs of Egypt after the conquests of Alexander were Greek; and the language of Alexandria, the most important city in Egypt, was Greek. Cleopatra, the remarkable last Pharaoh, was unique because she was the first (and last) of the Greek Pharaohs who bothered to learn the language of the Egyptians, the people she ruled.*

22. Struggles for Power: Kings of the North versus Kings of the South. When Alexander dies, his kingdom will not pass to his descendants, but will be divided into four sub-kingdoms (Egypt, Persia, Asia Minor, and Greece), each ruled by one of his generals (v 4). In the power struggles that followed Alexander's death, the "king of the south" (Egypt), Ptolemy I, and the "king of the north" (Syria), Seleucus I, emerge as the founders of two dynasties. Ptolemy I and Seleucus I

³³ The more thorough one's knowledge of ancient history is, the more is revealed the amazing accuracy of the prophecies of Daniel 11.

cooperate, but Ptolemy I dies after a long life and is succeeded by his son, Ptolemy II. Seleucus I is murdered, and his son, Antiochus I replaces him (v 5).

In an attempt at unification, the king of the south, Ptolemy II, gives his daughter, Berenice, to Antiochus II, the king of the north, as a wife. It doesn't work, however, for the king's first wife murders Berenice, along with her son and the king himself (Antiochus II). This is the beginning of a long period of conflict between the two dynasties. Berenice's father (Ptolemy II) hasn't the strength to avenge her death; but her brother ("a branch of her roots"), who becomes King of Egypt as Ptolemy III, invades and defeats Syria, ruled by Seleucus II (Seleucus Callinicus) (vv 6-9). Seleucus II falls from a horse and dies at age 40. (11:4-9)

23. Continuing Conflict Between Egypt and Syria. The two sons of Seleucus II, Seleucus III and Antiochus III, rebuild the Syrian army; but Seleucus III is poisoned by his generals. Upon the death of Seleucus III his brother, Antiochus III, becomes the sole King of Syria and is known as "Antiochus the Great." This Antiochus the Great attacks the Egyptians and regains control of Syria. He then attempts to regain control of the Promised Land, but is defeated by the Egyptians near Gaza, at the former Syrian fortress, Raphia ("even unto his fortress") (v 10). The Egyptians win the final battle at Gaza, but at great cost in casualties, and return to Egypt (vv 11-12). Fourteen years later, with his army much stronger, Antiochus attacks Egypt again, is victorious, and carries great riches from Egypt back to Syria (vv 13-15). Subsequently, the Egyptians re-invade the Holy Land and ravage it, while Antiochus is engaged elsewhere. Antiochus returns and re-establishes the Israelites; but the land is greatly impoverished by the continuing wars fought in the land (v 16). Antiochus gives his daughter, Cleopatra, to Pharaoh (Ptolemy V), in a plot to regain control of Egypt; but his plan fails when Cleopatra supports her Egyptian husband (v 17). (11:10-17)

NOTE: Cleopatra will soon take her place on the throne of Egypt as the last Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt, playing a brilliant role on the stage of World history. She will resist mighty Rome by reducing, in succession, Rome's mightiest generals, Julius Caesar and Marc Antony, as lovers. She will have one child by Caesar, and three by Antony. Her son by Caesar, Caesarian, will briefly succeed her as king after her famous death by suicide, but will be Pharaoh in name only, before being executed by order of Augustus Caesar.

24. Antiochus the Great versus Greece and Rome. Antiochus III ("the Great") then builds a great fleet of ships and invades Asia Minor and Greece, capturing many important islands; but he is defeated by the Roman army at Magnesia (190 BC). Thus, the "reproach" he intended for the Romans was turned instead upon him (v 18). He then returns to Syria, where he is forced to raise a great deal of

money to pay reparations to Rome. In order to raise this money he moves into the eastern region of his kingdom to tax the people, and is killed there in 187 BC (v 19). His sordid death supposedly occurs when he was killed by hostile tribesmen while robbing their temple of its treasures. He is succeeded by his son, Seleucus IV ("a raiser of taxes"), who reigns for 11 years. He must continue to raise money from the people to pay the Romans. To do this he eventually attempts to plunder the Temple at Jerusalem ("the glory of the kingdom"), but "within few days" he is murdered in a plot by the chief tax collector to take the throne³⁴. Thus he is killed, "neither in anger nor in battle" (v 20). (11:18-20)

25. The Rise of the "Vile Person," Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus, the king who follows Seleucus, is not the rightful heir; he is a usurper. By treachery he gains the throne, which rightly is his nephew's. He names himself "Epiphanes" ("the illustrious"), but this surname is the opposite of his true character; he is cruel, deceitful, base, whimsical, and probably mad (behind his back he was called "Epimanes" [the insane]). He schemes to have his nephew (the rightful heir to the throne) taken as a hostage to Rome, and promises that he will rule only temporarily, as regent for his infant nephew, second in line for the throne. But he intends no such thing; he murders the infant, and seizes the throne. At first he has few followers, but he goes into the provinces and scatters money and spoils of war among the common people, gaining their support ("...obtain[ing] the kingdom by flatteries") (v 21). His goal is to retain the throne, which he does for 12 terrible years, and to conquer Egypt, which he never quite accomplishes, because the Romans also have designs on Egypt. He overruns the Promised Land, and displaces "the prince of the covenant (v 22)³⁵." (11:21-22)

26. A Failure in Egypt and "A Line in the Sand." Antiochus Epiphanes (whom we shall call "Epiphanes") prepares a great army and moves south against Egypt. Ptolemy VI (also called Philometor, i.e. "mother lover") also prepares a great army to defend Egypt³⁶. Ptolemy VI is defeated, because Epiphanes has bribed key men among Ptolemy's advisors, those trusted counselors who have eaten at Ptolemy's table. These men betray him and make possible the Syrian victory (vv 23-26). A peace treaty is made by Epiphanes and Ptolemy VI, but neither is sincere (v 27). Epiphanes returns to Syria with great riches plundered from the Egyptians (v 28)

³⁴ Seleucus IV was king for 11 years. The meaning of "within [a] few days" is unclear; but it probably means that he was killed very soon after attempting to rob the Temple at Jerusalem.

³⁵ This "prince of the covenant" may represent the nephew of Antiochus Epiphanes, the rightful heir to his father's throne; or, it may refer to the high priest in Jerusalem, whom Antiochus removed from his position and replaced him with one who bought the position by bribery.

³⁶ Ptolemy VI was the son of Cleopatra I, not to be confused with Cleopatra VII, lover of Julius Caesar and, later, Marc Antony. This most famous Cleopatra was the last ruling Pharaoh of Egypt (her son, Caesarion, was proclaimed Pharaoh upon her death, but he was soon murdered by order of Octavian (Augustus Caesar)).

and prepares for another war with Egypt. When he again moves against Egypt he lays siege to Alexandria, but the Roman navy arrives, carrying a Roman army, and Epiphanes is stopped. The Roman commander draws a circle in the sand around Epiphanes and tells him that before Epiphanes steps out of the circle he must commit to leaving Egypt, "or else"³⁷. Epiphanes, fearing war with Rome, agrees; the two shake hands, Epiphanes steps across the "line in the sand" and withdraws into the Promised Land (vv 29-30a). (11:25-30a)

27. Vented Rage in Jerusalem. As Epiphanes withdraws through the Promised Land, he vents his frustration and fury on the Israelites. He confers with the apostate Jews who join him in his paganism (v 30b). He slaughters tens of thousands of the faithful Jews, and sells tens of thousands more into slavery. He declares the Jewish religion illegal, decreeing death to all who would embrace it in any way, and orders the burning of all copies of the Scriptures. He sends soldiers to defile the Temple by entering the Holy of Holies and sacrificing a pig on the altar of burnt offering. They horribly torture and execute seven priests, and their mother, who would not eat the flesh of the pig. He dedicates the Temple to Jupiter, and erects a statue of Jupiter in the Holy Place (see Highlight 19) (vv 31-32a)³⁸. These outrages trigger the revolution of the Maccabees, in which the Jews are victorious over Epiphanes, and the Temple is cleansed, about 160 BC (vv 32b-34)³⁹. After ruling cruelly and wickedly for 11 years, Antiochus Epiphanes dies suddenly while waging further war. (11:30b-35)

ANTIOCH EPIPHANESE, OR THE ANTICHRIST LEADER OF REVELATION?

*The remainder of Chapt 11, and all of Chapt 12, seem to speak of the rise of the antichrist leader during the end times, as described in the Book of Revelation. In 11:36-45, the evil king of the north, an **apostate Jew** (v 37), seems to be the antichrist leader who will rule during the great end-times tribulation ("Daniel's 70th week")⁴⁰. At any rate, it is certain that Antiochus Epiphanes was **not** a Jew--apostate or otherwise; he was a Syrian pagan, a lover of Greek paganism. The "king of the south" (Egypt) will oppose him, but the "king of the north" (the*

³⁷ This is generally accepted to be the origin of our expression, "draw a line in the sand," meaning to establish a limit which, if crossed, will lead to war.

³⁸ This horrible persecution, torture and mutilation of the faithful, and the desecration of the Temple, are recorded in the Books of I and II Maccabees, especially II Maccabees, Chapter 7.

³⁹ The Jewish Feast of Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees, and the subsequent cleansing of the Temple and re-dedication of the altar of burnt offering.

⁴⁰ This evil person, never given a name or title in the Bible, seems to be the one whom Paul calls "that man of sin" and "son of perdition," in II Thes 3, and who is called "the beast" in Revelation 13-17, 19-20.

antichrist leader?) shall conquer the Promised Land and Egypt, plus Ethiopia and Libya, leaving only Moab, Ammon and Edom as allies (vv 40-45).

Matthew Henry, the great commentator (1662-1714), attributed these last 10 verses of Chapt 11 to a continuation of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and opined that all of Chapter 12 could apply, either to Epiphanes, or to the antichrist leader and the time of the end, as described in Revelation. I have the highest regard for the opinions of Matthew Henry; but 11:36-45 seem to me to speak of the antichrist leader of Revelation, and it seems very clear that Chapt 12 speaks of the end times and the antichrist person, in a time yet to come--not of Antiochus Epiphanes, in the 2nd Century BC.

28. Prophecy of the End Times. The Heavenly Being continues to speak to Daniel of things to come. He speaks of the great tribulation ("a time of trouble such as never was"), of the Lamb's Book of Life and the second resurrection (12:1-3)⁴¹. Then there follow specific prophecies about the end times:

a. Of Travel and Learning. In the end times, travel and the accumulation of knowledge will vastly increase. This is, of course, quite apparent today. One need only think of rapid advances in medicine, nuclear physics, astrophysics and space travel, genetics, metallurgy and computer science. And, whereas our fathers and grandfathers in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries typically lived and died without leaving the counties of their birth, people of very ordinary means today travel all over the World (to say nothing of space travel). (12:4)

b. The Scattering of the Power of the Holy People. Two additional men appear, standing on either side of the river, and ask the one clothed in white linen, who stands upon the water, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The one standing upon the water replies that he swears "by him that liveth for ever" that it shall be 3 1/2 years ("time, times and an half") until the power of the holy people shall be scattered, and "all these things shall be finished." This seems to speak of the mid-point of the great tribulation, when the antichrist leader will declare himself to be God and the worst part of the tribulation will begin. (12:5-7)

c. The Wicked Shall do Wickedly. Daniel asks for an explanation, but is told to seal up the book of prophecy, for many shall be purified (by the tribulation trials), but the wicked shall not understand, and shall still do wickedly⁴². (Compare II Tim 3:1-13). (12:8-10)

d. An End Point to Tribulation. The last thing the Heavenly Being tells Daniel is apparently one that will be a beacon of hope for the tribulation saints who shall

⁴¹ Matthew 24:3-51; Rev 20:12-14.

⁴² Revelation 22:10.

be trying to be faithful in that time of terrible, unprecedented, final, persecution. He says that from the time that the antichrist leader enters the Temple, takes away the daily sacrifice, and declares himself to be God--the event which will mark the beginning of the most terrible part of the Great Tribulation--it will be 1,290 days until the end of the Tribulation, and 1,335 days until the end of all things. Thus, those believers who will be alive during this terrible period of unprecedented persecution of the faithful, will have an end point of suffering. They can mark their calendars and, literally, mark off the passing days. This will give them a goal--a hope to cling to when all otherwise seems hopeless. This will help them to "hold fast the profession of our faith, for He is faithful who promised"⁴³. (12:11-13)

NOTE: The second half, and most terrible part, of the seven-year tribulation period is to last 3 ½ years (42 months, or 1,260 days. The extra 30 days in v 11, and the extra 75 days in v 12, are not explained.

A FINAL NOTE: The last 10 verses of Chapt 11, and all 13 verses of Chapt 12, i.e. the final 23 verses of the book of Daniel (remember that the Bible had no chapter divisions until about 1200 AD), seem to speak of the events of Revelation, and should be compared when studying Revelation. There are also earlier passages in Daniel that seem to relate to Revelation. For a guide to this see **Epilogue** at the end of the study guide to Revelation.

⁴³ Hebrews 10:23.