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Dear precious and faithful friends,

God specializes in broken hearts and contrite spirits (Psalm 34:18 and Isaiah 61:1). And anyone old enough to be reading these words knows that at times life is hard and punctuated with heartbreak. And we quickly learn that broken hearts are much more painful than broken legs.

But God specializes in crushed spirits and broken hearts, and if, in such hard times, we cry out to Him He is there. And if we make Him a part of every moment, every tear, in difficult times and things that break our hearts, he is there, loving us and binding us up.

What a blessing to belong to such a loving, healing Master!

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### **Peter's Home Has Been Discovered**

Capernaum was the center of Jesus' Galilean ministry--the vast majority of his earthly ministry. The headquarters there for him and his closest friends, identified in the gospels only as a "house," was almost certainly Peter's spacious home (Peter's family owned and operated a prosperous fishing business, with a number of boats and servants).

The foundations of Peter's house at Capernaum have been uncovered. It was very large, with several roofed buildings around three courtyards, about 84 square yards altogether. Etched into the plastered walls are "Jesus," "Lord," "Christ," and "Peter."

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### **Paul's Physical Description**

Most of us have a mental picture of the apostle Paul. His enemies are said to have called him a cock sparrow. To use a phrase common in the South when I was growing up, I would have thought of him as "small, but wound up tight."

The Bible gives us a hint in that his Hebrew birth name was Saul ("prayed for"); but Jesus renamed him Paul (a Latin name meaning "small").

A late 1<sup>st</sup>/early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century document, *Acta Pauli* ["The Acts of Paul and Thecla"], tells us of a man named Onesiphorus who heard that Paul was coming to Iconium, and he wanted to see him. He did not know Paul, but Titus had described him for Onesiphorus so that he would recognize him (isn't it delightful that such little gems can be found today in ancient documents?).

Paul arrived, Onesiphorus spotted him, and he described what he saw as, "a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked [bowed] legs, in a good state of body [good physical condition], with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat crooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now [then] he had the face of an angel."



After much discussion with my artist friend Joe McCormick of Pinson, TN, Joe created this wonderful image.

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**Excerpt from the Study Guide:  
Introduction to the Book of Daniel  
(The Prophets Book 5)**



Photo by [Corbin Mathias](#) on [Unsplash](#)  
Detail of the Ishtar Gate of Babylon

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 family. 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 kings. 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 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 Hebrews' 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). 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 AD. 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:

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. **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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 years! 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.

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## Food for Thought:

### The Atonement and the Resurrection Accomplish More Than What We Could Ask or Think



Photo by Anuja Mary  
ilj on Unsplash

Those of you on the email list received this article (a similar version anyhow) as a monthly Food for Thought email. But those of you on the postal mailing list have not seen this one. So I thought I would include

it here, with Resurrection Sunday still on my mind and with spring and new life still going on around us.

When I was growing up, my parents held a sunrise service on our farm each Easter. It was beautiful and meant a great deal to everyone present (not least to me).

Many years later, however, I sometimes had a vague feeling that was difficult to articulate, a feeling that I was failing to see something. I knew that Jesus's death on the cross paid for my sins, but I think on some level a portion of my brain wondered why God didn't just forgive us (if He was inclined to forgive) without Jesus having to do that. And the resurrection...well, it was proof that Jesus was God and not just a normal man, and it gave us a glimpse of our own coming eternal life. But I still felt I was missing something important about it—probably several important things.

One day I determined to think carefully about the cross and the resurrection. And I asked myself, "What would it be like if Jesus had not died on the cross? What if there had been no atonement? What would things be like?" I would pay the price for my sins myself, I thought. Then what? What would my punishment accomplish? Would it fix things? My punishment might be fair and just, but would it change anything? Could it make things right? Would it clean up the ugliness or damage brought about by my sin? Every sin of mine distorts me and usually damages others too. I finally came to see--once I thought about what sin actually does--that sin had to be atoned for, not because God randomly wanted it that way or because a formula

had to be followed, but because sin changes things for the worse and it does so in a way which only God could undo.

When I consider how much one sin on the part of Adam and Eve changed our world, it gives me pause. Sin transformed our world from one of perfection and beauty to one where death and destruction abound—because sin changes things. In ways large or small, sin always brings about some sort of distortion, destruction, or theft. It cannot be otherwise. Eden was ruined, and earth became a place where tigers rip apart lambs, a place where some animals eat their own young, a place where people make car bombs and rape children. This transformation is what sin does. It is the way sin changes things. I realized that if God punished me for my sins, my punishment would be deserved and would be just. But my punishment could not accomplish anything beyond that. My punishment could never fix what my sins have marred. It could not undo the work of sin. It would take something on a cosmic level to do that. Only Jesus's atonement could do that.

Not only is the guilt of our sins washed away by Jesus in a way which our own punishment could never accomplish, but because *He* is the one who paid for our sins, one day we will also see the injury sin has caused become erased, undone, reversed, healed. It is because of His sacrifice that one day our world will be cleaned up and recreated as a new earth, one in which there is no more disease or death, an earth where lambs and wolves will sleep together, where sorrow and sighing will have fled away, and where we will sing new songs. It is because of what Jesus accomplished on a cosmic level that Jesus will be able to fulfill His promise to wipe away every tear. Our death, our eternal punishment, could never have accomplished this. His was the only punishment that could accomplish it all. And He did it. He chose to.

And when we remember that, in his death, he was both the sacrifice and the priest, his resurrection takes on new meaning as well. If, in the Mosaic sacrificial system, the priest made the yearly sacrifice of atonement for Israel and then came out of the Holy of Holies alive, then it meant his sacrifice had been accepted, and their sin was covered for that year. If something went wrong with the sacrifice, then the priest would die, and his body would have to be pulled out by a cord tied to his leg (nobody could safely go into the Holy of Holies to fetch him). The crowd outside would anxiously wait to see whether the priest came out alive and would breathe a sigh of relief if he did.

Jesus, our priest, offered Himself and then three days later came out of the tomb alive as the Priest emerges from the Holy of Holies and whose sacrifice had been accepted! So when we celebrate and remember the resurrection, we can celebrate that not only is the resurrection a reminder that Jesus is divine and not only

a reminder that there is life after death, but that it is also proof to us that His sacrifice *worked*. It did not merely fulfill the requirements of some dry, abstract formula. It was effectual in reality! It worked! The priest came out alive!

--Sally (McKenney) Mahoney  
with thanks to C.S. Lewis and Michael Card

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This is a reminder that our current email address is [wordsforliving7@gmail.com](mailto:wordsforliving7@gmail.com) (the letterhead still has the old email address in it). If anyone would like to be on our email list and receive the newsletter by email (as well as Food for Thought on the months when a newsletter isn't going out), contact us at [wordsforliving7@gmail.com](mailto:wordsforliving7@gmail.com). You can also email Sally, at [sumacsally@gmail.com](mailto:sumacsally@gmail.com) (which I check more often).

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#### Milestones:

In this newsletter we note the passing of several very dear saints.

**Rice Sutherland** 31 December 2022

**Anna Hovater** 6 January 2023

**Ed Clement** 2 February 2023

**J.T. Parish** 24 February 2023

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#### A FINAL WORD

Treasure and use each day as if it were your last, and never give up hope: God has a limitless supply of new beginnings, and He makes beautiful things out of broken pieces.



Photo by [Mr. Great Heart](#) on [Unsplash](#)