

- The book of Daniel is the foremost book of prophecy in the Old Testament
 - What the book of Revelation is to the New Testament canon, the book of Daniel is to the Old Testament canon
 - The prophecies of Daniel reveal more future events, in exceptional detail and in greater concentration, than any other book of the Bible
 - Daniel explains how God's plan for Israel, God's plan for the Gentile nations and God's plan for His coming Kingdom unite in history
 - In fact, without the book of Daniel, it would be literally impossible to understand the rest of biblical prophecy, much less God's program for history
 - Therefore, a proper understanding of all prophecy hinges on obtaining a proper understanding of the book of Daniel
 - Daniel is particularly important for its comprehensive unveiling of the political future of the major powers on the earth
 - The book accurately predicts the rise and fall of world empires spanning thousands of years of human history
 - Its predictions about coming world empires were so accurate that biblical critics in the 18th century concluded the book must be a forgery
 - These men (who denied the existence of prophecy in the Bible) proposed that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period, years after the events in the book had already come to pass
 - But the book's undeniable historical accuracy is *not* the result of a human hoax
 - It's the power and wisdom of God revealed through a prophet
 - Because when your source happens to be the Author of human history, perfect accuracy is to be expected
 - The Lord wanted Daniel to relay his perfect insight to us, so we might understand God's purposes in appointing the rise and fall of nations
 - The book is like a roadmap, explaining historical signposts and intersections of peoples
 - Daniel is also our "decoder ring" for interpreting Revelation, as these are the only two apocalyptic books in the Bible
 - Daniel explains many critical events of the end times not addressed by any other book of the Bible
 - Which explains why Daniel is the most-quoted OT book of prophecy by the NT authors
 - Finally, Daniel contains more fulfilled prophecies than any other book of the Bible
- Daniel can also be classified into "twos", divided in several ways
 - First, the book is divided by two languages
 - Chapters 2-7 were written originally in Aramaic, the common language of the Near East and the Babylonian empire

- Chapters 1, and 8-12 were written in Hebrew, the language spoken only by the Jewish people
- Daniel's choice to use different languages also tells us that the book was written to two audiences
 - At the time of Daniel's writing, Judah was living in captivity in Babylon, so the Jewish people learned both languages
 - But the Babylonians could only understand their native Aramaic
 - Furthermore, Daniel was the only Jewish prophet who delivered his prophecies to a Gentile employer, rather than directly to the Jewish people
 - Therefore, we conclude that the chapters written in Aramaic were intended by Daniel to be understood by both Jews and Babylonians
 - While the Hebrew chapters were directed to the Jews alone
- Thirdly, the book has two messages
 - First, Daniel explains God's future plan for Israel in delivering the promised Kingdom, but only after a period of judgment
 - Secondly, Daniel demonstrated how God's people are to live in faith even now while they await the Kingdom
- Finally, the book has two themes:
 - The first theme is the sovereignty of God, as evidenced by His control over the rise and fall of earthly powers according to His timetable
 - God will ultimately triumph over evil, even if for a time, it appears that evil has the upper hand
 - The second theme is God's grace for His people, as evidenced by His response to their prayers and His faithfulness to His promises
 - At various points in the book, God responds to prayer, reminding us that even as God is writing history, He gives attention to our place within it
- Normally, we would spend some time introducing our study with more background on the author and his circumstances
 - But fortunately, the opening chapter of Daniel is an introduction of its own, so we begin there

Dan. 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah,

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Dan. 1:2 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

Dan. 1:3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,

Dan. 1:4 youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and

discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

Dan. 1:5 The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

Dan. 1:6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Dan. 1:7 Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

- Daniel dates his writing in a precise manner
 - Daniel is a book of prophecy that anticipates important events in history
 - Prophets earn their credibility based on the accuracy of their predictions
 - Daniel's predictions were so specific, it's critically important for Daniel that we understand he wrote before the events came to pass
 - He also wants us to know how he came to possess his ability to foresee history so clearly
 - So he establishes up front that he wrote these things before they came to pass, which means the knowledge came from God
 - Jewish prophets dated their writings by the reign of Jewish kings
 - And Daniel dates his story to the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah
 - The third year of Jehoiakim's reign corresponds to 605 BC
- In that year, a Babylonian prince named Nebuchadnezzar led the army of his father, Nabopolassar, against two enemies: Assyria and Egypt
 - Assyria had been the dominant world power in the Near East for centuries
 - The Assyrian kingdom stretched from Mesopotamia to the Arabian desert
 - Assyria had conquered the great power of Egypt, making the Pharaoh and his people Assyria's vassal
 - Assyria had also conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as God appointed scattering those ten tribes
 - But now, Babylon was gaining power and challenging Assyria for world supremacy
 - Five years earlier, in 609 BC, Assyria and Egypt fought together to retake the Assyrian capital of Harran from Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army who had seized it
 - As the Egyptian army traveled north up the Via Maris (the way by the sea) through Judah to meet up with the Assyrians at Haran, they suddenly found their path blocked by the Judean army

- King Josiah had massed his forces at Megiddo in the Jezreel valley, seeking to destroy the Egyptian army before it reached Haran
- Since Assyria was in decline, and Egypt was weakened from years of Assyrian domination, Josiah thought he saw his chance to free Judah from Egyptian oppression
- As the Egyptians and Judeans confronted one another in the valley, the Pharaoh Neco, who was leading his army, issued a warning to Josiah not to interfere
 - That moment is captured in 2 Chronicles 35

2 Chr. 35:20 After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him.

2 Chr. 35:21 But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, “What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, so that He will not destroy you.”

2 Chr. 35:22 However, Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to make war with him; nor did he listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to make war on the plain of Megiddo.

2 Chr. 35:23 The archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, “Take me away, for I am badly wounded.”

2 Chr. 35:24 So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem where he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

- As 2 Chronicles explains, the Egyptian Pharaoh, Neco, warned Josiah to go home and not interfere
 - Interestingly, Neco tells Josiah that the Lord Himself was directing Neco’s steps into battle
 - Furthermore, Neco says that God Himself will destroy Josiah if he gets in the way
 - Here’s a Jewish king receiving a word from Israel’s God from the mouth of a Gentile enemy
 - God was at work bringing nations against one another for His own purposes in the world
 - And He graciously allowed Josiah the opportunity to step back from acting outside God’s will
 - Regrettably, Josiah would not listen to the “mouth of God” referring to the words spoken by Neco

- So Josiah decides to attack anyway, contrary to God's wishes
- As a result, God lets Josiah die in the battle
- And then the Egyptians proceeded north into the battle against the Babylonians
- The Assyrians and Neco failed to recapture Haran in 609 BC, so the Egyptians returned to Egypt, passing through Judah once more
 - During the three months Neco was battling at Haran, the people of Israel had appointed Josiah's son, Joahaz, as king
 - Three months later, Neco returned to Judah and deposed Joahaz
 - Neco placed his brother, Jehoiakim, on the throne, since he was willing to submit to Egyptian authority
 - Jehoiakim, became king in 608 BC
 - He ruled three years under Egyptian authority, until 605 BC
 - In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar arrived at Jerusalem, having conquered Assyria at Carchemish
 - When Nebuchadnezzar arrived, he took control of Judea
 - He robbed the temple of some of its artifacts
 - And he took captive some Jewish nobles and royalty
 - Nebuchadnezzar's policy was to bring the best of whatever kingdom he conquered to the capital, to strengthen his court
 - In this case, removing the nobles helped ensure the loyalty of King Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar left in power to rule under Babylonian authority
- One of the nobles taken at that time was a young boy named Daniel
 - Notice how Daniel describes these nobles
 - In v.4, Daniel uses the word "youths"
 - The word in Hebrew describes a young boy, maybe barely a teenager
 - In v.5, Daniel says he was to be trained for three years before entering the king's service
 - Plato reports that education of Persian court servants began at about age 14 and continued until 17, when they would assume a role in the court
 - So it seems that Daniel was probably age 14 when taken to Babylon
 - These young men were the best and brightest of Israel, which is why Nebuchadnezzar wanted them in his court
 - They were physically strong, intelligent, discerning, and therefore appropriate for royal service
 - Wonder if Daniel included these details merely to compliment himself?
 - No, Daniel was explaining his opportunity to accomplish amazing things on behalf of the Lord in Babylon
 - It's one of the great ironies of the book that Daniel was virtually unknown when he

- lived in Israel, yet he becomes one of the greatest men for Israel's enemy, Babylon
- His rise to prominence was the result of God elevating him, of course
 - But, his personal traits were also essential in his story
 - Daniel was a man of character, intelligence and discernment
 - These traits become tools in God's hand to accomplish great things for His glory
- Now we often remember 1 Corinthians 1, where Paul says the Lord uses the weak things of the world so that He might be seen to be strong
 - But let's not misunderstand Paul's teaching
 - God does choose to work through the weak and inconspicuous, but He elevates men and women of strong character
 - He accomplishes the impossible with the least
 - Yet He favors those who are faithful, devoted and spiritually mature
 - So don't confuse God's preference for humility or obscurity as indifference to our spiritual strength
 - Daniel may have been but a child, but he was a spiritual giant among men
 - And if we have a desire to be useful to God, we can't ignore the importance of being ready for any opportunity
 - To be prepared in our character, knowledge of Scripture and spiritual maturity
 - Finally, notice how Daniel's position in the court of Israel's enemy, Babylon, parallels the experiences of Joseph and Moses
 - Like Daniel, those men became instruments in God's hand to rescue God's people
 - And they were useful in that way, precisely because God caused them to rise to prominence in the court of a foreign king
 - And even before that moment, they each spent time learning the culture and politics of the foreign realm
 - It reminds us that God has placed each of us in a certain place and culture for a reason, so that we might understand it and work within it
 - And by that work, we might minister to the people of God for the glory of God
 - At the end of v.4, Daniel says the king wanted these boys trained in the literature and language of the Chaldeans
 - The word "Chaldean" can refer either to the Babylonian culture, or it can refer specifically to the profession of astrologers and magicians
 - The magicians of Babylon were the keepers of all science and ancient knowledge
 - These "Chaldeans" were society's experts in natural science, mathematics, medicine, history, and astrology
 - In v.4, Daniel is using the word "Chaldean" to refer both to the culture of the Babylonians and to the profession of magician

- Daniel was going to become an expert in all these things
- Leading him to eventually rise to become the leader of the magi in Babylon
- Among those taken in his group were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah
 - Josephus reported that Daniel and these three boys were all relatives in the family of Zedekiah, the final king of Judah
 - As was customary, these boys were assigned new, Aramaic names
 - New names were especially necessary in the case of these four, since all four of their Hebrew names incorporated a reference to Israel's God
 - "El" means "God" and "iah" is short for "Yahweh"
 - Daniel is renamed Belteshazzar, which may refer to the wife of the chief Babylonian god, Marduk
 - "Shadrach" may mean "I Am of Little Account"
 - And "Abednego" may mean "Servant of Nebo" (a god of Babylon)
 - Changing a person's name signified they were now part of a new people, a new culture, and it served to cut ties with their past
 - The king wanted these young men to see themselves as part of Babylonian society
 - But the Jewish people have never been completely assimilated into Gentile culture, because the Lord is preserving His people
 - So changing names wasn't going to change Daniel and his friends
- Finally, notice in v.5, that the king wanted to ensure these men had access to the best in the land to strengthen them for studies and service
 - So Nebuchadnezzar commanded the boys be fed from the king's table, which meant first-class dining
 - That sounds great to us, of course
 - It seems the Lord is blessing Daniel already, allowing him to receive this choice menu, even as he lives in captivity
 - But this is not a good situation for a faithful Jew living under the Law
 - Daniel and his friends are obligated by the Old Covenant to observe certain dietary restrictions, especially regarding the preparation and type of meat and drink served
 - It's highly likely the meat the king served was not kosher
 - And it was likely sacrificed to Babylonian idols
 - Daniel and his friends may have been required to pour out a cup of wine as an offering to a false god at the table before drinking
 - So if Daniel and his friends partake of the king's table, they must violate the Law's requirements and pay homage to foreign gods
- This sets up the first conflict between Daniel's convictions in service to God and the king's authority

Dan. 1:8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

Dan. 1:9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

Dan. 1:10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

Dan. 1:11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah,

Dan. 1:12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.

Dan. 1:13 "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

Dan. 1:14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

- This confrontation begins as all such conflicts begin
 - In the heart of the believer
 - Daniel knew what was coming, and he understood his choices and the likely consequences of his choices
 - So he had a private decision to make, even before his situation was made known to anyone else
 - Daniel had to resolve to do the right thing
 - So Daniel considered all the possibilities, of what would happen if he ate and what would likely happen if he didn't
 - He knew eating would mean disobeying God and inviting God's displeasure
 - On the other hand, Daniel knew that refusing to eat meant crossing the most powerful man on earth and risking his life
 - With those two options on the table, the choice was obvious: Daniel chose to side with God, rather than the king
 - Daniel made up his mind to not defile himself, it says in v.8
 - The Hebrew word for "made up" or "set" means to fix or determine something and to hold to it surely
 - Daniel is determined to remain ceremonially obedient, no matter what comes
 - But that doesn't mean he isn't interested in trying to avoid the earthly consequences
 - He doesn't want to become a martyr, if he can avoid it
- So Daniel seeks permission of the commander of the officials to forgo eating the meat

provided by the king

- Isn't this remarkable? How many of us, when we imagine ourselves in such a situation, would consider the option Daniel selected here?
 - Wouldn't we just assume that by our defiance we must steel ourselves for inevitable punishment?
 - Do you ever stop to consider asking permission before making a protest?
 - The Word of God commands us to give preference to God's commands over the precepts of men
 - But the Word doesn't mandate we walk into persecution, unless it's unavoidable
- Daniel's discernment protected him, so that even as he resolved to defy the king's order, he was still searching for a way to please the king
 - This is the essence of Paul's command in Romans

Rom. 12:17 ...Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

Rom. 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

- Daniel is searching for a way to obey God, while still respecting the king's authority
- And he thinks he has a way to do that, by approaching the commander of the court, the steward appointed to watch over them
- Daniel asks the commander if he and his friends might avoid defiling themselves with the king's food by eating only vegetables
 - Vegetables were generally safe for a Jew to eat and were not routinely sacrificed to idols
 - We might assume that a steward working for a pagan king would reject such a request out of hand
 - Why tolerate the demands of prisoners?
 - But notice in v.9, the Lord was already working behind the scenes to support Daniel in his obedience
 - The Lord granted Daniel compassion in the "sight" of the commander
 - In other words, God softened the heart of the commander so he would see the situation from Daniel's perspective
 - Already, we see the Lord at work through the agency of earthly authority to ensure that Daniel's stand for righteousness would succeed
 - This will be a recurring theme in Daniel's book
 - And while we can't say for sure what the Lord will do in every situation, we can take comfort seeing what the Lord did for Daniel
 - This example reinforces our earlier observation: that when we take a stand for God's Word, we shouldn't assume persecution will always result

- Persecution will come sometimes, certainly, and it does for Daniel eventually
- But other times the Lord, by His grace, may choose to step in to keep us safe from the world's hatred and persecution
- We simply do the right thing, trusting in Him for whatever the outcome
- The commander, moved by God to consider this request with sympathy, then wonders what will happen when the king sees the boys' declining health
 - Normally, a vegetarian diet must be carefully planned to ensure proper nutrition
 - This would have been true, especially in that day, when people depended on meat to bolster the diet and ensure strength
 - So the commander imagines the worse...that after a month or two of vegetables only, Daniel and his friends will appear gaunt and weak
 - His concerns are reasonable and probably accurate
 - A month or two of vegetables probably would weaken Daniel and his friends noticeably
 - Then, the king would turn to the commander and blame him for neglecting his duty to care for these young men
 - Truth be told, the king probably didn't care what Daniel ate
 - Nebuchadnezzar's only concern would have been that the commander take good care of these young men in his charge
 - So commander's dilemma is in how to keep the king happy, while satisfying Daniel's request
 - Daniel suggests a test to reassure the commander
 - In v.10, Daniel tells the commander to let them eat vegetables and drink water for ten days, and then examine their appearance
 - Ten days is short enough time that the king would be unlikely to notice any differences in their appearance
 - But the commander could inspect their appearance closely, to know if they were being negatively affected
 - If after ten days the boys appeared healthy, then the commander could be confident the king wouldn't notice either
 - The choice of ten days is meaningful, since ten represents testimony in Scripture
 - The Lord inspired Daniel's choice of ten as a testimony of the Lord's intervention to sustain these boys
 - It suggests that the Lord planned to ensure their health, regardless of their diet
 - Daniel must have had an expectation that the Lord was prepared to sustain them, which is why he proposed the test
 - His faith was such that he had confidence in the Lord to perform this miracle in response to their obedience
- And what was the result?

Dan. 1:15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

Dan. 1:16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

Dan. 1:17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

- Miraculously, these boys weren't simply holding their own, they were actually *better* looking than their peers who continued to eat a regular diet
 - His peers were other youths in captivity, probably including some from Judah, yet they didn't share Daniel's convictions
 - This reminds us that even as Daniel obeyed and followed the Lord, he represented a minority
 - The people of God are not uniformly obedient
 - And based on the history of Scripture, it's safe to assume that a minority will seek to serve Him in faithfulness and without compromise
 - It's that group we are all called to emulate
 - As a result of this outcome, the commander saw no reason to suspend his support for Daniel
 - So the commander continued to give them vegetables only
 - The Hebrew word for "vegetables" in v.16 appears only here in the Bible
 - It literally means "seed grown", as from the ground
 - Daniel ate only of the ground
 - Daniel goes on to say, in v.17, that the Lord's grace toward Daniel's physical strength was matched by the Lord's grace for his spiritual strength
 - Daniel also grew in his knowledge and intelligence while in training by God's grace
 - God was preparing this young man for great things, and it all began with Daniel taking a step of obedience in the face of opposition
 - While Daniel's training program may have originated in the mind of a pagan idol worshipper
 - Its true origin was in God's economy to school Daniel in ways suited to God's purpose for ministry in Babylon
 - Daniel's situation parallels Paul and Moses, again
 - Paul was prepared in the great rabbinical traditions of Israel
 - Yet he lacked a heart to know God truly until God chose to harness Paul's intellect and training for the sake of the Gospel
 - Moses was trained in the courts of the Pharaoh, which prepared him to lead a

people against the most powerful nation on earth

- And now, Daniel is being prepared to serve the Living God, but that training came at the hands of a pagan court
- How is the Lord preparing you to serve Him through the everyday influences of a fallen, lost world so you may fulfill your mission for Christ?

Dan. 1:18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

Dan. 1:19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.

Dan. 1:20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.

Dan. 1:21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

- Finally, Daniel's introduction comes to an end, as Daniel graduates this Babylonian academy
 - He is presented before the king, and of all those who had been trained in this process, none was his equal
 - Once again, you can see that though God uses weak things, He is not beyond making weak things mighty when it suits His purpose
 - Daniel has become mighty: mighty in knowledge, mighty in discernment and wisdom, yet mighty in humility and obedience as well
 - These are not contrary qualities
 - In fact, they are essential compliments for anyone who desires to serve the Lord to the fullest of his or her capacity
 - Daniel's companions are also judged superior, perhaps as a result of their close companionship with Daniel, and as a group, they enter the king's service
 - As the king consults these young men for counsel, he finds them ten times better than any other Chaldean in his service
 - It seems unlikely that the king could quantify the superiority of Daniel's service so precisely, so we must conclude that the number ten is yet another reference to testimony
 - Daniel's excellence in service to this pagan king becomes a part of his testimony
 - Just as Paul reminds us to do all we do in excellence, as for the Lord
 - If we must be poor at something in life, let us be poor at sinning and nothing else
- Daniel is an example of what can come of our obedience to the Lord's Word, even in the face of persecution

- Daniel's knowledge and wisdom were a testimony to how the Lord helps us rise to meet difficult challenges when we make excellence in His name our goal
 - Daniel's strength and fortitude remind us that faith lived-out calls for courage
 - And courage is the result of trusting in God's greater power over the power of our enemies
 - As Paul says in Romans 8, if God is for us, who can be against us?
- At the same time, Daniel sits in captivity, taken from his home and forced into serving a foreign king
 - Which reminds us that God's choice may be for us to serve Him in difficult situations
 - Daniel didn't assume that because he was in Babylon that the God of Israel was no longer on the throne
 - He lived with a trust in God's power, even as he came to accept that the Lord's will was for Daniel and his friends to be in slavery
- Remember that as you confront difficult circumstances in life
 - The fact they exist doesn't mean God isn't God
 - The test is whether we will still serve God in every situation, trusting He has good purposes for placing us where we are
- Consider how the chapter ends...looking to the end of Daniel's life and career in Babylon
 - Daniel served the king of Babylon until Babylon was conquered by Cyrus of Persia in 538 BC
 - His work as a minister in the court of the king lasted 65 years, making Daniel nearly 90 years old at the end of that time
 - We have no record that Daniel ever returned to Judah with the exiles
 - So despite Daniel's faithfulness and strong character, it was God's choice to leave Daniel in exile his whole life
 - This is the important footnote to Chapter 1
 - Daniel was a man who received the favor of God his whole life
 - Yet God kept Daniel subject to a foreign authority his whole life
 - The lesson is that we can't measure God's faithfulness by our circumstances
 - God often places us in difficult circumstances, expressly so we can see His faithfulness at work
 - And He may leave us there for a time so we can demonstrate our faithfulness to Him in turn

Daniel 2

- After our introduction last week, today we're ready to dive into the prophecies of the Book of Daniel
 - The next section of the book is written in Aramaic, which indicates that the context was intended for both the Jew and the Gentile
 - This section runs for the next six chapters
 - And it contains one of the most impressive prophetic revelations anywhere in Scripture
 - The section is organized as a chiasm, which helps us understand the overall meaning of the section
 - A chiasm is a structured way of organizing a writing to emphasize the main point – similar to the way we use outlines
 - The chiasm of Chapters 2-7 can be charted this way:

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world
B - God delivers Daniel's friends from Gentile persecution
C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty
C' - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty
B' - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution
A' - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- The chiasm helps explain the seemingly contradictory plan for Israel under Gentile domination and persecution
 - While at the same time God protects and preserves the Jewish people until a time of rescue
 - Israel will be on the losing side of a struggle against the Gentile world
 - But it's God Who put Israel there and it's God Who will ultimately rescue Israel
- Tonight, we study the first part of this chiasm
 - In Chapter 2, Daniel will interpret a dream for the king of Babylon

- In this dream, the Lord reveals His plan to bring a succession of Gentile kingdoms to rule the earth
- During this time, Israel will be under the authority of Gentile powers
- But at the end of this long period of history, the Lord will restore Israel as the chief nation on the earth
- And thus will the Messiah usher in the long-awaited Kingdom promised to Israel

[Dan. 2:1](#) Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

[Dan. 2:2](#) Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

[Dan. 2:3](#) The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

[Dan. 2:4](#) Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

[Dan. 2:5](#) The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap.

[Dan. 2:6](#) "But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."

[Dan. 2:7](#) They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

[Dan. 2:8](#) The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm,

[Dan. 2:9](#) that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."

[Dan. 2:10](#) The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean.

[Dan. 2:11](#) "Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."

- In v.1, we hear that in Nebuchadnezzar's second full year as king, he had dreams

- As we'll soon see in the chapter, the dreams were not the result of too much pizza the night before
 - God has given these visions to the king intentionally
 - The Hebrew indicates that the king had multiple dreams
 - There is some Hebrew in this chapter – the Aramaic doesn't begin until v.4
 - So either this dream repeated itself, or the king received the dream in pieces
 - Either way, God made the visions so dramatic, so troubling, so provocative that the king didn't forget them and couldn't ignore them
- Yet God has also done something else interesting
 - He made sure that the king couldn't understand the dreams
 - Not all our dreams have significance, much less prophetic meaning sent from God
 - Mine rarely even make sense
 - But occasionally, the Lord may use dreams to communicate to someone from behind the scenes, even today
- In this case, the Lord withheld the meaning from the king to ensure the king would reach out for explanation
 - And reach out he did
 - Nebuchadnezzar calls in all his counselors in Babylon seeking their advice
 - These men consisted of four groups: magicians, conjurers, sorcerers, and astrologers
 - A magician was one who attempted to divine the future
 - A conjurer attempted to communicate with the dead
 - A sorcerer cast spells or called upon demons for power
 - Finally, the astrologer studied the heavens to determine the future

- As we see in the text, these men were called to give an interpretation, but the king wanted to be sure they were telling the truth
 - So Nebuchadnezzar wisely required that the men tell him both the dream and the interpretation
 - Normally, these men expected their leader to describe the dream first
 - Then, they would each appeal to their respective demonic power to arrive at an answer
- Probably if their sources failed to answer, the men might simply propose their own answer to satisfy the king's curiosity
 - It seems the king suspected they might do this
 - Which is why he threw them this curveball
- Predictably, the counselors object to the new rules, since it makes their job much harder and will expose any fraud
 - Starting with their first protest in the second half of v.4, Daniel switches to writing in Aramaic
 - The first three verses were still in Hebrew
 - But now from v.4 until 7:28, the original text remains in Aramaic
 - This indicates that the subject of Daniel's writing is to be known by the Gentiles and Jews
 - When these men protest, the king sees right through their scheme
 - In v.5, he declares that he will tear them limb from limb and destroy their families' homes if they won't do as he instructs
 - He's calling their bluff
 - If they can't tell him something he already knows (i.e., the content of the dream)
 - Then by what power could he expect them to tell him things he doesn't know?
 - And that's the only reason they are employed
 - This back and forth of the king's demand and the counselors' protests serve to set up the next part of the story

- Notice how they end their final protest against the king's methods
- They insinuate that Nebuchadnezzar isn't a great king, since no great king would ask such a thing
- And they claim that only gods could reveal the things that the king seeks to know
- And that is precisely the conclusion the Lord wants Nebuchadnezzar to reach, as well
- This is a dream that only the Lord will reveal, though contrary to their claims, He will reveal it through flesh (Daniel)
- This sets up the entrance of our hero
 - The king received these dreams in his second year
 - The ancient Babylonians counted a monarch's first year of reign as starting on the first calendar year after he took the throne
 - Ancient records show that Nebuchadnezzar became king at the halfway point in the year of 605 BC
 - So the king's first full year didn't start until he had already been ruling for six months
 - So his second full year started in 603 BC and ended in 602 BC
 - Therefore, Daniel was either just ending his three-year training, or very near the end, when these dreams came to the king
 - In either case, Daniel was the least qualified among all the king's men
 - Which made him the perfect candidate to be elevated into God's service
 - For when Daniel is able to interpret the dream, God will be glorified, not Daniel

Dan. 2:12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Dan. 2:13 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

Dan. 2:14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;

[Dan. 2:15](#) he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.

[Dan. 2:16](#) So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

[Dan. 2:17](#) Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter,

[Dan. 2:18](#) so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

- Predictably, Nebuchadnezzar declares that all wise men be destroyed
 - Since Daniel had just entered service in this capacity, he and his friends suddenly find themselves caught up in this melee
 - In fact, they know nothing of what brought about this sudden decree
 - So Daniel shows great discretion, but with discernment
 - In other words, Daniel doesn't panic, he doesn't beg or argue
 - He remains rational and thoughtful, though aware of the seriousness of this situation
 - Simply put, Daniel doesn't operate in fear
 - Fear is a sinful response to the circumstances of life, reflecting a failure to trust the Lord
 - And it's often born out a longing to preserve this life at the expense of the next
 - Jesus was speaking about this dilemma when He said:

[John 12:25](#) "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

- Daniel didn't want to die if God would spare him
 - But he knew that his ability to understand and operate in God's will in the midst of these challenging circumstances depended on keeping his wits about him
 - Daniel's example continues to be eminently practical

- Be smart, be creative, be adaptable, be calm, be thoughtful and be unyielding in your character and godliness
- Trusting God for whatever comes next
- Daniel's next step is to buy some time
 - He needs time to appeal to the Lord for an answer, for he knows that only the Lord can grant him the insight to save his life
 - To get the time he needs, Daniel goes to the king and asks for the time
 - And the reason he gives is so that he can interpret the dream
 - He's already assuring the king that he can give the interpretation, which suggests that Daniel had a sense of his calling and gifting already
 - He wasn't presuming God's will, except to assume that God wouldn't have placed him here except to serve this purpose
 - It's a fine line, admittedly, but I think we can operate in a similar confidence when we know the calling on our life
 - Evangelists who are confident in their gifting and mission will step forward to present the Gospel when others hesitate
 - Teachers who know they are called and gifted with insight will tackle a study of Scripture that others struggle to understand
 - The same can be said of those who have calling and gifting to pray, heal, plant a church or make a large financial gift
 - If you're operating in God's calling and gifting, then you don't need to hesitate or apologize for confidence
- Daniel declared that he was ready to serve the king, but then he stepped back long enough to seek the Lord's blessing
 - Presumably, if the Lord had not granted approval, Daniel would have retreated from serving and gone to his death
 - But that would have been God's will
 - Of course, that wasn't God's will in this case

[Dan. 2:19](#) Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

[Dan. 2:20](#) Daniel said,

“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.

[Dan. 2:21](#) “It is He who changes the times and the epochs;
He removes kings and establishes kings;
He gives wisdom to wise men
And knowledge to men of understanding.

[Dan. 2:22](#) “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And the light dwells with Him.

[Dan. 2:23](#) “To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,
For You have given me wisdom and power;
Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,
For You have made known to us the king’s matter.”

- In Daniel’s narrative, he jumps immediately to receiving an answer from God
 - We don’t know how long he prayed to the Lord, since his prayer isn’t captured in the text
 - But it appears that he prayed that night and received an answer in the same night
 - It’s hard to believe the king allowed Daniel much more time
 - That night, the Lord gives Daniel his answer through a night vision
 - A night vision in this case could be a euphemism for a dream, or it can mean a conscious revelation that occurred in the evening
 - The point is that Daniel received the answer to the dream directly from the Lord
 - So the Lord delivered the coded message to the king
 - And He delivered the decoded interpretation to Daniel
 - We might ask why didn’t the Lord just give the king the decoded message in the first place?
 - Two reasons: since Abraham, God has always revealed himself through the Jewish people

- He may use Gentiles like Nebuchadnezzar as well, but even then, the Lord requires that a Jew be involved to explain God's purpose
- Secondly, the Lord is speaking to a Gentile leader about the rise and fall of Gentile kingdoms
- But the ultimate subject of the vision is Israel's future, so the Lord uses a prophet to reveal this truth to Israel
- Daniel then responds in a praise of God for His revelation
 - Daniel's words indicate he not only understood the vision, but its significance
 - First, he credits God's wisdom and power for the plan that was revealed
 - He isn't merely talking about God's ability to reveal these mysteries
 - Daniel is talking about the subject matter of the revelation itself
 - God's wisdom and power is evident in the plan that the dream reveals
 - In v.21, Daniel extolls the works of God as revealed in the dream's interpretation
 - God changes times and epochs
 - And He establishes and removes leaders of nations
- As Daniel speaks of times and epochs, he's referring to something very specific, the very topic of the dream
 - The word "times" refers to the course of history, and the word "epoch" refers to specific periods of time
 - So history can be called "times"
 - And therefore epochs are the sectioning or dividing of history into periods
 - God is both the author of history (times) and the One Who divides time into its periods (epochs)
 - God does these things with purpose, according to a master plan

- These concepts are also taught in the New Testament, though with slightly different terms
 - In the NT, the term for epochs is “ages”
 - The history of Creation is divided into ages, which the Lord controls, as Daniel says
 - Ages are long, but finite, periods in God’s program for history
- For example

[Mark 10:29](#) Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, [Mark 10:30](#) but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

- Jesus speaks about a “present age” and an “age to come”
 - It’s clear that we exist in one age (or epoch) today, yet God has another period of history, another age, planned after this one
 - This pattern of one age leading to another age is the way God has always worked in history
- Furthermore, the Lord generally gives notice when these changes in ages happen, just as He is giving notice through this dream
 - In the NT, the transition from one age to another is characterized as “last days”
 - The last days are the final period of one age that ushers in the next age

[2 Tim. 3:1](#) But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

[2 Pet. 3:3](#) Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,

- Daniel is praising the Lord for His sovereignty in these transitions
 - God authors the events of history
 - But more than that, He has set these events into ages so as to accomplish a greater purpose

- As Daniel proclaims in v.20, God is the One Who *changes* these periods of history
- He is in control of them, leading the world to a certain purpose
- As we'll see, this dream is an elaborate description of one such age, of how it begins and how it ends
- Furthermore, the Lord decides who He permits to see these things and understand them
 - Daniel acknowledges in v.21 that many people live and die without ever understanding what God is doing around them
 - Of course, we can only see a few decades of history, which naturally limits our ability to understand the larger scale of God's plan for time
 - Only if He reveals it to us by His Word can we understand the big picture
 - Daniel praises the Lord for choosing to grant him that revelation
- Finally in v.22, Daniel praises the Lord for His purposes in these matters
 - God is working to bring light into darkness
 - The light of His truth into a world darkened by the lies of the enemy
 - Ultimately, He is working through ages of history to bring evil and darkness to an end
 - God will triumph over evil, but He chooses to do it on His own timetable
 - Daniel has received a remarkable insight into both
- So in v.23 Daniel ends in thanks for the revelation, knowing it has saved his life and the life of his friends

Dan. 2:24 Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king."

[Dan. 2:25](#) Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"

[Dan. 2:26](#) The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"

[Dan. 2:27](#) Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

[Dan. 2:28](#) "However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.

[Dan. 2:29](#) "As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

[Dan. 2:30](#) "But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

- That next morning, Daniel hurriedly reaches the king's representative to stop the executions of the wise men
 - When Arioch hears Daniel's story, the guard goes to the king, claiming to have found the man to interpret the dream
 - We see the guard seeking a little credit for himself
 - Meanwhile, Daniel consistently redirects credit away from himself and toward the Lord
 - When the king asks Daniel if he can reveal both the dream and the interpretation, Daniel says, in effect, "no"
 - Daniel can't do such things, but the One true God can
 - Daniel specifically locates his God as the One in Heaven
 - As opposed to the false gods of Babylon that occupied earthly temples
 - And of course, Daniel's accurate revelation is his proof that the God of Israel is true
- As Daniel prepares to give the king his answer, he introduces his answer by describing it as a prophecy concerning "latter days"

- The term “latter days” simply means future days of the end, but that just begs the question, “the end of what?”
 - As you probably guessed, latter days refers to the last days of an age
 - And in fact, this dream is a description of an entire age, from beginning to end, not just of the last days
- Daniel says this is a prophecy about the future, but he refers to the latter days because that is the main point of the dream
 - It’s a description of a period of history, an age, but the meaningful part of the vision is in how the age ends
 - Just as in a story about an important football game, the most important part of the story is how the games ends
 - Similarly, in this prophecy, the most important part is how the age ends
- Even more important, knowing the age and how it ends explains God’s purpose in this age
 - The events that make up history are not random...
 - They are part of a plan God is working to bring an age to conclusion and lead us to the next age
 - All ages work together to bring God glory and accomplish all that He has promised to His people
 - Through this dream, the Lord is communicating what happens in this age of history and why it is happening
- So then, Daniel begins to explain to the king what none of the other men could do: he describes the king’s dream

Dan. 2:31 “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.

Dan. 2:32 “The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

Dan. 2:33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

Dan. 2:34 “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

[Dan. 2:35](#) “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

- The king’s dream is one of the most intriguing visions in the Bible
 - The dream was of a strange and majestic statue
 - The materials of the statue vary from head to toe
 - They progress from greater value to lessor value
 - And from softer to more brittle
 - Daniel describes the divisions of the statue from head to toe, and then he describes what came next
 - A stone, uncut by human hands, descended from above, like an asteroid, and struck the statue at the feet
 - Though it struck at the feet, nevertheless, the statue was completely destroyed and obliterated
 - Leaving nothing of the statue
 - The stone remained, however, and it grew to a giant mountain that filled the entire earth
 - This is the dream, and obviously, despite its simplicity, no one could imagine its meaning simply by hearing the description
 - It could meaning almost anything
 - But it has a specific, assigned meaning given by God
 - So unless we know and accept the Lord’s own interpretation, we will not have the correct understanding
 - That’s why it required that God provide the decoder ring to the dream
 - It forced Nebuchadnezzar to seek for Daniel, whom God empowered to answer the king’s inquiry
 - Ultimately, it results in Daniel being elevated as God intended
- Now we turn to Daniel’s interpretation

[Dan. 2:36](#) “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.

[Dan. 2:37](#) “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory;

[Dan. 2:38](#) and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

- Daniel says the head of gold at the top of the statue represented Nebuchadnezzar as ruler of Babylon
 - Daniel tells the king that his power to conquer the nations of the world was a direct result of Israel’s God giving them into his hand
 - And the Lord’s decree was even more comprehensive than the king may have imagined
 - By God’s decree, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over every inch of the physical earth
- Now, we know Nebuchadnezzar didn’t travel to every inch of the globe during his time as king, so how can Daniel say he ruled the entire earth?
 - He’s describing the authority God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, regardless of the degree to which Nebuchadnezzar actually assumed that authority
 - Jeremiah confirms Daniel’s words

[Jer. 27:5](#) “I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight.

[Jer. 27:6](#) “Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him.

[Jer. 27:7](#) “All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.

- Jeremiah confirms that for a time, God appointed Nebuchadnezzar king of the world
- The choice of gold for Babylon represents the style of government in that kingdom
 - In Babylonian society, the king was all-powerful
 - No one could challenge his rule or edict

- There was no senate or prime minister
- Gold represents the absolute authority of Nebuchadnezzar
- But notice also in Jer. 27:7 that his rule is temporary
 - In fact, Nebuchadnezzar would lose his authority while he was still alive
- The next part of the statue confirms this conclusion

Dan. 2:39 “After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

- Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar something comes after him
 - In fact, another kingdom will arise to replace his kingdom
 - Though Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon falls to another kingdom, nevertheless, this new world power is somewhat less powerful
- Before we look at the second and third kingdoms, let’s understand what our statue represents
 - We see the head of gold is Babylon, and that the silver and bronze represent subsequent kingdoms in the statue
 - Therefore, the statue represents a timeline of history
 - Each part of the statue replaces the prior part, indicating time progressing from the head of the statue to the feet
- So the statue represents an epoch, or an age, of time in history
 - We know when it began, since it starts with Nebuchadnezzar
 - And when we get to the end of the dream, we will know how it ends as well
 - So what does the Bible call this age?
- Jesus names this age and defines its purpose in Luke 21

Luke 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- In Chapter 21, Jesus is in the midst of explaining how Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans
 - As He's explaining the coming fall of the city in AD 70, Jesus says these events are part of a larger plan of God
 - Specifically, the people of Israel are to be scattered outside their land
 - And the city of Jerusalem is to remain under control by Gentile oppressors
 - Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled
- The Greek word translates as "times" in my Bible is the Greek word *kairos*
 - That word can also be translated "season" or "age"
 - In other words, Jesus said there is an age called the Age of the Gentiles
 - It is defined as a period of Jewish exile
 - And of the city of Jerusalem under Gentile domination
 - It's called the Age of the Gentiles because it will be a period of history when Gentile nations rule over Israel
- So the events of AD 70 were merely a continuation of the age, which is why Jesus said these things will happen until the age is fulfilled
 - The Greek word for "fulfilled" is *pleroo*, which can also be translated "completed"
 - So the Roman sacking of Jerusalem was just another moment in a timeline of Gentile domination of Israel
 - And this domination will continue until it reaches its appointed end
- And from the statue in Daniel 2, we now see where this age began
 - The head of gold, which is Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, was the first time in history that a Gentile authority scattered the Jews of Jerusalem and captured the city
 - That's why Nebuchadnezzar represents the start of the statue and the timeline

- He is the beginning of the Age of the Gentiles
- So the statue represents a timeline for the Age of the Gentiles
 - We know the age began in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Judah and Jerusalem
 - We know the age was still ongoing in Jesus' day
 - And we know its purpose is to subject Israel to Gentile domination until the age is completed
- Like all ages, this age has a beginning and an end, so one day, Gentiles will no longer dominate Israel once this age is over
 - From studying the rest of the dream, we will come to understand how the Age of the Gentile progresses and how it ends
 - Moving to the second and third kingdoms
- Daniel says the silver (the second kingdom) will be inferior to Babylon
 - The inferiority of the second kingdom is represented by the lesser value of silver, compared to gold
 - How will the next kingdom be less than Babylon?
 - To understand this question, we must determine which kingdom replaced Babylon in history, since Daniel doesn't name it
 - So we must determine the criteria for defining each kingdom
 - The criteria to be one of the kingdoms in the statue derive from the definition of the age itself
 - Each kingdom must be a Gentile kingdom
 - Each kingdom must be the most powerful kingdom on earth, having replaced the prior kingdom in that position
 - Therefore, each kingdom must possess Babylon and Jerusalem
 - Because Babylon possessed each of these cities originally
- Looking at history, only three kingdoms meet these criteria
 - First, the kingdom of the Medo-Persians replaced the kingdom of Babylon in 550 BC

- We read of this transition later in the book of Daniel, because it happened in Daniel's lifetime
- This kingdom was formed by the alliance of the Medes and Persia, represented by the two arms of the statue
- It grew in power until it challenged and defeated Babylon under Cyrus the Great
- The kingdom was less majestic than Babylon because the king Medo-Persian empire was not all powerful
- He had checks on his own authority
- In particular, the Medo-Persian laws stipulated that a king could not reverse the decisions of prior kings
 - We will see this rule at work later in the book of Daniel
 - So the rule of a Medo-Persian monarch was like silver, compared to Babylon's gold, because it wasn't as absolute
 - Nevertheless, the Medo-Persians will defeat the Babylonians at a point in the age and assume their position of authority
 - Meanwhile, the Age of the Gentiles presses onward
- In v.39, Daniel adds that a third kingdom is also slated to assume power over the world
 - That kingdom will replace the second, and will likewise exhibit lesser majesty in its rule
 - Based on our criteria above, the next kingdom to qualify for the statue was the Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great
 - Alexander extended the Greek empire out of central Europe and into the East
 - He defeated the Persians in 330 BC
 - He is represented by bronze because the leader of the Greek empire was far less powerful than those of either the Medes or Babylonians
 - He competed with the leaders of city-states within the empire and with land aristocracy

- Ultimately, the sovereign enforced his control through a powerful military that could impose his will
- Also, the statue divides during this period, represented by the division of the legs
 - This division reflects the way the Hellenistic Empire evolved
 - Alexander the Great died barely four years into his reign
 - At that point, he had no heirs, so his kingdom was divided into four parts assigned to four generals to rule
 - The two generals in the West allied together and the other two generals in the East were allied
- This East-West political divide has never changed
 - Even today, we still speak of the East and West, politically
 - The division that began under Alexander the Great remains throughout the rest of the age
 - Just as the legs in the statue remain forever separated
- Daniel's interpretation sped past the second and third empires because they were not important features in this timeline
 - They must be covered, of course, but only because they lie along a path leading us to the final kingdom
 - As we said in the beginning, the part of the timeline that is most important is how it ends
 - And therefore, this fourth kingdom gets the most treatment in the interpretation

Dan. 2:40 "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

Dan. 2:41 "In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

Dan. 2:42 "As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.

Dan. 2:43 “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

- The final kingdom moves to the least valuable, but more brittle materials: iron and clay
 - This kingdom replaces the prior kingdom by breaking it down and crushing it into pieces
 - The fourth kingdom follows a very different pattern, compared to the first three
 - Rather than consolidating power into a single entity, the fourth kingdom will assimilate existing powers, yet leave them as pieces
 - Some of these pieces will be stronger than others, resulting in an empire that is unbalanced in power
 - Just as clay and iron do not stick together well, this kingdom will find its various pieces combining for a period of time and then breaking apart again
 - Nevertheless, this combining and separating pattern will not mean the end of the kingdom overall
 - Together, the pieces continue to act together to perpetuate the Age of the Gentiles
 - Together, they function to dispossess the people of Israel from their land
 - And they take turns trampling the city of Jerusalem
 - Finally, as the kingdom comes to its end, a division of ten emerges, represented by the ten toes of the statue
 - Daniel doesn't explain what the ten toes represent, at least not in this chapter
 - But we will get our explanation in Daniel 7
 - For now, we simply understand that the kingdom ends in a division of ten
- What kind of earthly Kingdom fits this unique set of details? We know from history that the next Gentile power to follow Greece was the Roman Empire

- The Roman Republic defeated the Hellenistic Empire in 168 BC
 - Rome eventually defeated Judea in 63 BC and took control of Jerusalem and Babylon
 - And Rome continued to expand even after for the next several centuries
- As Rome conquered, it transitioned from a republic to a monarchy ruled by Caesars
 - Yet it added territory by assimilating cultures and lands without changing the culture of these lands
 - As a results, the Roman Empire could very well be described as iron held together by clay
 - The Romans conquered like iron, crushing those who opposed them and cutting up land into new divisions
 - But because these lands retained their cultures, they continued to see themselves as independent of Rome
- At this point, we ask the natural question, “What came after the end of the Roman Empire?”
 - Well, in a word...nothing
 - The Roman Empire has never completely disappeared, at least not in the sense intended by the statue
 - Remember, this fourth kingdom is made up from “pieces” not a single entity
 - These pieces combine for periods of time, but like iron and clay, they don’t adhere, so they eventually break apart
 - This pattern has never ended
 - It defined the period of Roman rule
 - But it’s only increased in the centuries since the Roman Empire disappeared
 - Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and even North Africa and Western Asia have all experienced this pattern
 - New alliances are created and then later dissolve

- So given this unique pattern, as reflected in the statue, we can't call this fourth kingdom the Roman Empire
 - Certainly, the Roman Empire began this fourth period, but the period extends beyond the Roman Empire itself
 - In later centuries, the kingdom was still operating, but different pieces and different unions were at work
- So we must see this fourth kingdom in the way the statue represents...“pieces” combining and breaking apart over history
 - Instead of calling them “Rome”, we might call this kingdom the Imperialistic-Democratic Alliances
 - This name better reflects the changing nature and identity of the actors that combine to make up this kingdom
 - Collectively, these parts serve to dispossess Israel and keep Jerusalem under Gentile authority
- Daniel then writes of an interesting end, about a stone that came down

Dan. 2:44 “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

Dan. 2:45 “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

- Finally, the last piece of the puzzle, the stone falling from the sky
 - Daniel says the stone that fell and crushed the statue is itself a new kingdom
 - The kingdom represented by the stone is not connected to the prior Gentile kingdoms
 - We see this because the arrival of the stone coincides with the destruction of the statue
 - The statue represents an age of time, the Age of the Gentiles
 - When this new Kingdom comes, it puts an end to the Age of Gentiles

- Therefore, this new Kingdom is something entirely different from what came before it
- We can understand what this new kingdom is by first remembering that the Age of Gentiles is defined as a period of history when Israel is scattered and the city is ruled by Gentiles
 - So, by definition, if this age comes to an end, then the scattering of the Jewish nation must have come to an end
 - All Jews must be returned to their land
 - Likewise, if the Age of Gentiles has ended, then the trampling of Jerusalem by Gentile nations has ended as well
 - So Israel must have regained complete control of their beloved capital city
- So we know that this coming Kingdom represented by the stone cannot be another Gentile Kingdom
 - It must be a Jewish Kingdom, for what is not Gentile is Jewish (again, by definition)
 - And this Jewish Kingdom must be the most powerful nation on earth
 - Just as in the statue, whatever replaces the prior dominant power must itself become the dominant power
 - Daniel confirms this assumption for us in v.44 when he says this new Kingdom will end all other kingdoms on earth
 - Furthermore, this new Kingdom will endure forever...no more transitions, hence the end of the statue
 - Next, notice that this Kingdom is set up by God Himself
 - This is an odd detail, since Daniel already told us that the Lord is always the One removing and establishing kings (v.21)
 - But this time, Daniel means that God doesn't just place another man as king of the world
 - This time, God Himself is the King on Earth and He personally sets up the Jewish Kingdom that replaces the Gentile powers

- Furthermore, the symbol of a stone uncut by human hands confirms that this Kingdom comes as a result of God's arrival on earth
 - The term "uncut stone" finds its source in the Law, where the Lord declares:

Deut. 27:6 "You shall build the altar of the Lord your God of **uncut** stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the Lord your God;

- The Lord commanded that Israel only use uncut stones for His altar
- The use of natural, unworked stones signified that our atonement could not be earned through our own works
- The altar of sacrifice would be a place where only God's work (*i.e.*, the Creator of the stones) was applied
- Likewise, the uncut falling stone represents the work of God, and since it falls on the statue, we conclude that it comes from the sky (*i.e.*, Heaven)
 - It grows into a mountain that fills the earth
 - Mountains, when used symbolically in Scripture, represent kingdoms
 - And here, we see that pattern continuing, since we're told the mountain represents a Kingdom filling the earth after the statue is gone
 - Notice also, the stone fell "on the feet" of the statue, indicating that the coming of Christ happens at the end of this age
- Therefore, the falling uncut stone pictures the coming of Christ to set up His literal Kingdom on earth
 - It will be a Jewish Kingdom, in that Jesus is Jewish
 - It will replace all other ruling authorities on Earth
 - It brings an end of the Age of the Gentiles and ushers in a new age on Earth
 - And it will result in the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel to grant them an eternal Kingdom in their land

- Daniel's interpretation reveals a long history of world empires that bridge history from Judah's first dispersion until their final regathering under Christ
 - Obviously, we've already seen three of these four kingdoms rise and fall
 - And we're currently somewhere in the midst of the fourth kingdom
 - How close are we to the end?
 - We will get a better sense of that question when we get to Chapters 7 and 11
 - But consider that Daniel gave us this progression of kingdoms before any of these transitions took place
 - Given his accuracy today, we can trust him for the rest of the prophecy
 - Which means we're still waiting for the stone, the coming of Christ
 - But He will come, and He will set up a Kingdom
- Obviously, Daniel's interpretation more than satisfies the king

Dan. 2:46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense.

Dan. 2:47 The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."

Dan. 2:48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Dan. 2:49 And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.

- The king's response is understandably appreciative
 - He sees in Daniel a power of gods and pays Daniel homage as a result
 - Of course, it didn't hurt that the king liked what Daniel said
 - At least he liked the idea of being the chief power on earth

- Consider for a moment that the most powerful man on earth has bowed to the least in his service
 - On what basis would such a thing happen? Only because of the revealed Word of God
 - God's Word is more powerful than kings, even those who God Himself has placed in power
- Despite his homage to Daniel, it's also clear that Nebuchadnezzar is not a man ready to bow down to Daniel's God
 - He calls the Lord "Daniel's God", though he does recognize that this God is above other gods
 - He's just a step short of recognizing that the Lord is the only God
- The king appoints Daniel over all other wise men and gives him gifts, probably great wealth
 - Daniel is still a teenager, barely out of basic training
 - And suddenly, he rules over all the wise men of Babylon
 - Do you suppose that Daniel has just made some powerful enemies within the Babylonian government?
 - Never mind that Daniel saved their collective lives
 - Daniel's intellect and wisdom and savvy come to his aid again at this point
 - And with the king of the world paying homage to you, what should you do next? You make requests of the king
 - So Daniel asked for positions of power for his friends, as well
 - This isn't simply cronyism
 - Daniel wants friends in his new role, especially since he knows everyone else will be against him
 - So his friends join him in administering the province of Babylon

- Daniel's third chapter moves us forward one step in the chiasm I described last week
 - The chiasm of Chapters 2-7 can be charted this way:

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

B - God delivers Daniel's friends from Gentile persecution

C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

C' - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

B' - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution

A' - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- As I said last week, Daniel's opening chapters are organized in this way to help us make sense of God's (seemingly) contradictory plan for Israel
 - In some chapters, God is revealing His plan for a millennia-long Gentile domination of Israel
 - In other chapters, God reassures the Jewish people that these rulers remain under God's sovereign control
 - Despite the overwhelming might of these nations, God remains at the helm, steering the rudder of history
- Furthermore, the Lord is still protecting the faithful within Israel
 - The remnant, believing Israel, will be caught up in the scattering and captivity
 - But nevertheless, the Lord is still with them
 - The nation will not be extinguished during the Age of the Gentiles
 - And furthermore, God will show Himself strong in defense of the remnant
- Chapter 3 of Daniel corresponds to Point B in the chiasm, which is the Lord moving to defend the faithful remnant among the exiles in Babylon
 - In particular, Daniel's three friends will be caught up in a political trap set by the king's other counselors
 - Let's move into Chapter 3 with King Nebuchadnezzar again

Dan. 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Dan. 3:2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Dan. 3:3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Dan. 3:4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: “To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language,

Dan. 3:5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

Dan. 3:6 “But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.”

Dan. 3:7 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

- Nebuchadnezzar sets about creating his own massive statue
 - It’s logical to assume there is a connection between the statue in the dream of Chapter 2 and Nebuchadnezzar’s statue
 - Daniel has organized his book so that these two events are described back-to-back
 - So that detail alone would lead us to draw a connection
 - And we know this chapter follows the events of Chapter 2, because Daniel’s friends are in their roles as administrators over Babylon
 - But how close in time are the events of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3?
 - The timing of this chapter’s events is a matter of some guesswork
 - Several possibilities for when Nebuchadnezzar built this statue exist, but I think the most likely answer is about 585 BC
 - In that year, Nebuchadnezzar reached his limit of patience with the Jewish people
 - It’s been 20 years since he first conquered the city and took Daniel captive
 - And in those two decades, he was forced to contend with one insurrection after another in Judea
 - He had been forced to return to the city once already to replace a rebellious king and reassert his authority
 - And then in 585 BC, after another rebellion, he returned a third and final time to lay waste to what remained of the city and temple
 - He destroyed the walls, rendering the city indefensible
 - He razed the temple to its foundation
 - And he carried off the rest of the Jews into slavery

- Leaving behind a city in ruin
- That final victory over Israel may be the occasion that prompted Nebuchadnezzar to build his statue
 - He had received Daniel's interpretation of the dream, so he knew he had been granted power by Daniel's God to rule the earth
 - But now, he had successfully defeated the very nation this God claimed for Himself
 - Moreover, the king has completely obliterated Yahweh's personal temple on earth
 - Under those circumstances, we have to wonder if Nebuchadnezzar had begun to think he defeated God
 - As if the king had succeeded in rewriting the history represented by the timeline of the statue
 - If so, he might have presumed there would no longer be a second kingdom
 - Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar would rule without end
 - After all, if Nebuchadnezzar was capable of crushing the temple of the God who gave him his power, then who could challenge him?
 - For that matter, does Israel's God even exist any longer?
 - So I presume Nebuchadnezzar orders the construction of this statue to commemorate his defeat of Israel and Yahweh
- The description of the statue would seem to support this conclusion
 - First, it's an image made entirely of gold
 - We remember, of course, that the statue in the dream began with gold, but it progressed into other metals
 - Each metal represented a new empire, and each new empire came to power by defeating the prior Gentile kingdom
 - Nebuchadnezzar understood that the Lord intended to replace Babylon at some point, and we can be sure he didn't like it
 - So by making his statue out of only gold, Nebuchadnezzar's message is clear
 - He now believes his rule will never end
 - Gold (that is Babylon) will reign forever
- As the final group of Jewish exiles were marched into Babylon following Nebuchadnezzar's attack, they would have joined their countrymen in captivity
 - They would have brought with them accounts of Jerusalem's destruction
 - They would have told of the falling walls
 - Of the city's destruction
 - And they would have reported that the temple was gone
 - Can you imagine how the Jews in captivity would have taken the news?

- Perhaps they were starting to doubt the promises of their God
- Many of the exiles must have questioned whether Israel was destined to disappear altogether
- And certainly, many Jews decided to leave their nation and the Lord behind
- Other Jews remained true to Yahweh and to His Covenant
 - At this time in history, the Jewish people began the practice of meeting in synagogues
 - They had little choice, since they were living in exile and lacked a temple
 - They also formed many of the religious traditions that persist today
 - In fact, you could say that modern Judaism began during the exile
- Nevertheless, the destruction of the city and the temple must have tested the faith of every believer in exile
 - Now we see why God delivered Daniel's interpretation of the dream so early in their period of captivity
 - Daniel revealed the meaning of the statue in barely the third year of Israel's captivity
 - He was preparing the remnant in Israel to understand coming events, so as to encourage them
 - Seventeen years later, when the city walls fell for the last time, the remnant could see those circumstances with a view to God's sovereign purpose
 - They remained strong in faith, knowing the Lord foretold it
 - But understanding God's plan is one thing...living in the light of that revelation is quite another
 - The real test for the remnant comes when Nebuchadnezzar demands that all people worship his statue
- We don't know what the statue looked like, but it probably wasn't a copy of the statue in the dream
 - For one thing, the dimensions are very unlike normal human proportions
 - It was tall, slender and made of solid gold
 - It was ten times taller than it was wide
 - It was 90 feet high, equal to an eight-story building, and it was about 9 feet wide
 - If this image was of a man, then it would have resembled a 6-foot man with a 7-inch chest
 - Therefore, we must conclude this object was shaped more like an obelisk, similar to those set up in Egypt
 - The image was set up on the plain of Dura, which is a word that means an area enclosed or walled
 - It was somewhere near the capital city

- But it was set on a plain, far from other structures, so that it might stand out
- Something like the Washington Monument standing in Death Valley, surrounded in the distance by mountains
- In v.5, the king assembled his government to carry out his orders
 - The various agents represent Nebuchadnezzar's military, judicial, economic, and governmental leaders from all levels of the nation
 - He informs them that from this point forward, the image will be the center of worship for everyone in the nation
 - Specifically, they were to bow whenever music is played
 - The king is referring specifically to a worship moment which always involved musical instruments
 - The list of instruments includes both traditional Babylonian instruments and Persian and Greek instruments
 - So he's demanding that people, no matter their culture or allegiance, fall in line with this new single object of worship
 - Notice, as Daniel adds in v.7, that people of "all languages" were required to obey this command
 - From these details, we come to understand that Nebuchadnezzar was less interested in establishing a new religious practice
 - He's working to ensure political loyalty and submission to his absolute authority
 - Remember, we're still relatively early in the history of the Babylonian empire, following its defeat of Assyria
 - So Nebuchadnezzar is working to consolidate power and expose disloyalty in his government
 - And of course, the whole affair is also an exercise in pride and hubris
 - Assuming the image was square, an object of this size would have required about 4,400 tons of gold
 - And 4,400 tons of 24k gold would be worth \$204 trillion today, or roughly equal to the number of cat videos on the Internet
 - This was Nebuchadnezzar's absurd testimony (*i.e.*, 10:1 ratio) of his superiority over any other god, including the God of Israel
- As a means of exposing disloyalty, his tactic probably wasn't very effective in the polytheistic cultures of Babylon and Persia
 - These were people comfortable with worshipping images and many different gods
 - It probably wasn't a huge sacrifice to switch from their traditional images to this new one
 - So I doubt Nebuchadnezzar's display of grandeur exposed much opposition within his government
 - On the other hand, this kind of test is tailor-made for exposing dissent among the Jews, whose Law specifically prohibited worship of graven images

- Now we see the Lord's hand at work behind the scenes
- He brought Nebuchadnezzar to this moment specifically to test the hearts of His people, Israel
- In the case of Daniel's friends, the test becomes especially severe
- In v.6, Nebuchadnezzar declares, quite dramatically, that anyone who failed to abide by his command would be thrown into a furnace fire
 - Excavations in the area of Babylon have uncovered massive ovens
 - Babylon's furnaces were used to bake the bricks for the nation's buildings and walls
 - If you've seen pictures of the ruins of Babylon in Iraq, then you've seen the product of those ovens
 - These are the very same ovens that held Daniel's friends
 - Ancient documents from the time describe disobedient slaves being thrown into these ovens, so the king's idea wasn't novel

Dan. 3:8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

Dan. 3:9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!

Dan. 3:10 "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.

Dan. 3:11 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.

Dan. 3:12 "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

- Daniel reports that the king's edict gave opportunity for certain Chaldeans to bring charges against the Jews serving in the king's court
 - Remember, we said at the end of last week's teaching that Daniel's sudden success at a very young age would have created enemies
 - The king's other counselors would have been intensely jealous of Daniel's instant promotion over them
 - And they would probably have feared that someone with Daniel's insight might expose them as frauds or incompetent
 - And that dislike also transferred to Daniel's three friends, who had been promoted alongside him
 - Normally, these counselors would have waited and watched until their adversary

slipped up, doing something to incriminate themselves or give rise to an accusation

- But in this case, Daniel and his friends were righteous in their behavior and incorruptible in their character
- So these men needed a break
- And Daniel says, “for this reason” they have their opportunity
- In other words, God gave Daniel’s enemies the break they were waiting for, in the form of this edict
- The king’s edict exposed the Jews’ commitment to show allegiance to Yahweh over the king
 - This is always the expectation for God’s people
 - Our allegiance to God is never second place to anything in this world
 - For the Jewish people, the Law demanded that they have no gods before the Lord
 - Not only would they not worship false images, but they would not put the commands of men above the precepts of God
 - The New Testament believer is under similar expectations, as Jesus said

Mark 12:17 And Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were amazed at Him.

- The government deserves our honor and obedience, as Jesus says give what is required to the Roman ruler, Caesar
- But then He adds that we must likewise render to God what God has reserved for Himself
- And the Lord has reserved for Himself our worship and our obedience, even above our allegiance to the government
- As Paul teaches

Rom. 13:7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

- Paul says we give to all what is due
 - Certain things are due to the government, which the Lord has appointed over us for our good
 - Similarly, we should render honor to the society in which we live by observing customs as expected
 - But we also render fear to God, and our fear of God must trump our fear of men
- In other words, when our obedience to God comes into conflict with our obedience to human rulers, we will face a fearful choice

- One way or the other, we are going to make someone upset, which will cause us to fear for the consequences
 - Either we will choose to obey the Lord and disobey the government
 - In which case, we will have reason to fear the government's response to our disobedience
 - Or we will choose to obey the government and disobey the Lord
 - In which case, we will have good reason to fear what the Lord may do in response to our disobedience
- Paul says when we face that choice, we should render fear to whom deserves our fear...and Who deserves our fear?

Luke 12:4 “I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

Luke 12:5 “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

- According to Jesus, the One Who deserves your fear is God
 - The earthly ruler you upset can only take revenge so far
 - But the Lord can take revenge much farther, so fear Him more
 - If you make your priority preserving your earthly peace, then you risk your eternal reward, as Jesus said

Matt. 10:37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Matt. 10:38 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Matt. 10:39 “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

- That's the dilemma faced by Daniel's friends
- The Chaldeans notice that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego have declined to bow and worship the image as required
 - These three men apparently didn't attempt to hide their disobedience
 - For example, we might imagine them bowing on cue, but in their hearts, praying to Yahweh instead of the statue
 - They would not have been worshipping the obelisk, though they may have appeared to be in compliance
 - I've heard stories of missionaries praying to Jesus when the local mosque calls for Muslims to pray

- They bow and pray, but they pray in their heart to Jesus
- The actions of Daniel's friends strongly suggest that there is something wrong with any compromise that conceals our true worship so as to avoid drawing attention to our disobedience
 - The circumstances of Daniel 3 suggest strongly that God expects our public worship behavior to comport with our private understanding of Him
 - When the world demands we bow to a false god, we do not have license to comply outwardly, while secretly disagreeing in our hearts
 - Our behavior IS our testimony, so to behave in any way contrary to our beliefs is sin
- Furthermore, this violates the spirit of the 2nd commandment, which forbids graven images
 - A graven image isn't just a false god
 - A graven image also refers to images that stand for the true God
 - So we cannot bow to any image in worship, even if we tell ourselves we are secretly worshipping the true God
 - We are violating God's commandment, and consequently, such worship will not be accepted by God
- Instead, we must be prepared to accept the consequences of disobeying men so that we might please the Lord
 - That is what Daniel's friends did, and as a result, their enemies used their faithfulness to God as cause to cast accusations against them
 - In v.12, they tell the king these three were not willing to comply with the king's orders
 - In v.11, they conveniently reminded the king that he ordered those who will not comply be thrown into the fire
 - These conspirators seem to have found the perfect solution to their problem
 - But it's one God Himself has constructed for a greater purpose
 - We might wonder at this point why Daniel wasn't caught up in the accusations?
 - No one knows for sure
 - Perhaps these conspirators were too afraid of Daniel's power to accuse him
 - Or perhaps Daniel was somewhere else and couldn't be observed
 - For this reason, perhaps Daniel receives his own moment of testing later in the book
- Finally, there is an interesting picture emerging in the story of Nebuchadnezzar
 - We know from Chapter 2, that Nebuchadnezzar is the first ruler in the Age of the Gentiles
 - He was the head of gold
 - He is the single most powerful man on earth in his day

- All nations and peoples and even the animals have been given over to his authority
- At the opposite end of the statue, we learned that the age will end when Jesus Christ returns to set up His eternal Kingdom
 - His return comes at the point of the “ten toes” on the statue, which we have yet to see explained in the Book of Daniel
 - Later, in Chapter 7, we learn about these “toes”
 - Also later, we learn that as the Age of the Gentiles comes to its end, one man will have gained all power over all people and nations in that day
- Therefore, the Age of the Gentiles will come to an end under circumstances very similar to the way it begins
 - It starts with one Gentile man ruling the entire world
 - And it will end with one Gentile man ruling the whole world
 - It starts with a king requiring all his subjects to worship an image he erects in his own honor
 - And it will end with a king requiring the whole world to worship an image he erects in his own honor
 - We’ll learn more about this connection when we reach Chapter 7
- When the king learns of the boys’ rebellion, he becomes enraged and reacts in a predictable way

Dan. 3:13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.

Dan. 3:14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?”

Dan. 3:15 “Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”

Dan. 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.

Dan. 3:17 “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

Dan. 3:18 “But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

- The king is angered and demands the three appear before him
 - I’m sure they were ushered in unceremoniously, and probably roughly

- The king asks them whether what he has heard is true
- But it's clear this was a rhetorical question, since we don't see him waiting for an answer
- He decides there's no reason to entertain a discussion, since it's easy enough to settle the matter one way or the other
- He simply puts the demand to them once again
 - Will they bow down to the image?
 - And if they will not, he repeats the threat to put them in fire
 - Imagine the fear you would feel in this moment
- Stories like this tend to lose their impact for experienced Bible students, because we know how the story ends
 - Knowing there will be a miraculous outcome robs the scene of some of its drama
 - We see the men's courage as logical, given what God is prepared to do
 - But these men didn't know the end of the story
- So try to put yourself back in the moment with these men
 - They were hustled into this moment without warning, without a chance to prepare their hearts, without time to pray
 - They find themselves standing before the most powerful man in the world, who is visibly upset with them
 - He's probably shouting as he declares they are moments away from a painful death
- Understanding the situation they faced makes their response all the more admirable
 - First, they say they don't need to answer the king
 - They mean he already knows what they are going to say
 - Just as the king's question was rhetorical, their answer is obvious
 - They are Jews; they will not worship an image
 - Furthermore, they declare their God is more powerful than Nebuchadnezzar, and He can deliver them from the furnace if He chooses
 - Then they add that even if the Lord should choose not to deliver them under these circumstances, it matters not
 - Not even death is reason to turn their backs on God's Word
 - Many a Bible commentator has remarked on the noble response of these men
 - They have taken the command of Scripture to love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your strength
 - And they have made obedience their aim in life
 - God's glory before the nations was more important to them than their own security, and even their very lives

- Perhaps more amazing, is their unwavering trust in God's sovereignty
 - It's one thing to stand firm against the king by saying, "God will save me"
 - But it's another thing altogether to stand firm, knowing God may decide not to save you
 - Too often, we conflate God's *potential* to act with God's *willingness* to act
 - God is capable of all things, yes, but self-evidently He only does certain things
 - Therefore, our resolve to remain obedient in times of testing cannot be based on an expectation that God is obligated to respond to our faithfulness according to our desires
 - That's a quid pro quo, and it's superficial obedience at best
 - It's equivalent to a child who does his chores merely to receive his allowance
 - That's not obedience...that's employment
 - The true test of whether our hearts are obedient is whether we will serve the Lord, even if His will is to see us suffer for that obedience
 - Remember, God's own Son was not spared from suffering, despite living a life of perfect obedience to the Father
 - And no slave is above his Master
 - Therefore, we must leave room for the same possibility
 - When we live this way, we please the Lord
 - We won't be disappointed or discouraged when our obedience isn't met with prosperity, happiness and easy living
 - God can do all things, but He only does what is good, right and best
- In the case of these men, the right thing was to allow the king to carry through on his threats, and then to manifest Himself in the result

Dan. 3:19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

Dan. 3:20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire.

Dan. 3:21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

Dan. 3:22 For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Dan. 3:23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

- The king's rage transfers to the temperature of the fire
 - He orders that the furnace be turned up 7 times hotter
 - The number 7 represents completion
 - So Daniel isn't saying the furnace was necessarily exactly 700% hotter
 - He's saying the king ordered the furnace to its maximum temperature (*i.e.*, turning it up to "11")
 - The furnace itself was probably an adobe structure, several stories tall and lined with natural stones that could withstand the heat
 - The top of the structure was open to exhaust the fumes
 - Moving down the structure, you would find various openings into which the clay bricks were inserted to cure in the furnace
 - At the bottom, were openings for shoveling in the wood and removing ash
 - The three men are probably led to one of the openings toward the top of the oven
 - They would have ascended the structure on a series of ramps or stairs
 - We can imagine the three Jewish men in the front of the procession
 - The guards follow them, forcing them to climb ever higher on the structure
 - Finally, the guards then push the three Jewish men into the furnace through one of the openings in the side of the furnace
 - Notice that these men fell into the furnace fully clothed and tied up
 - These details become more important in the next passage of the chapter
- After depositing Daniel's friends in the furnace, these guards would have then climbed back down
 - And on their way down, fire from inside the oven suddenly belches outward through one of the lower openings
 - And the guards are consumed
 - Ironically, Nebuchadnezzar's rage blinded the king into doing something foolish
 - If he truly wanted to inflict maximum punishment upon these three men, he would have ordered the oven turned lower, not higher
 - Setting the oven to a low temperature would have prolonged their agony
 - But by increasing the temperature, he ensured a quick and relatively painless death
 - His hasty decision also resulted in some of his own men dying
 - That outcome is a signature move by God
 - It revealed God at work to fulfill His promises to Abraham
 - That is, those who curse Israel will receive the very curses themselves
 - For the Jew, this detail was important
 - It signified that even when an all-powerful world ruler has taken Israel captive

and destroyed the temple, God is still on His throne keeping His covenants

- This is the central message of the chapter
- The lives of these three men are finding their purpose in this testimony
- In a sense, we can say that the Lord has placed these men in this situation so that by their testimony they can give meaning to Israel's defeat
- And they can give encouragement to God's people

Dan. 3:24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king."

Dan. 3:25 He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

Dan. 3:26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

Dan. 3:27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

- The lower most level of these furnaces featured large openings, tall enough to walk through
 - These openings allowed men to refuel and stoke the fires
 - Through these openings, someone outside the furnace could watch the fire burning inside
 - So apparently, the king has stationed himself at this point so he can peer into the fire of the furnace from a safe distance
 - Naturally, he expects to see three bodies fall from above and instantly burst into flame under the intense heat
 - Instead, he stands up in astonishment as he witnesses men standing and moving around in the furnace fire, seemingly unharmed
 - And not three men only, but a fourth man as well
 - The king also sees the men are loosed (unbound)
 - Their ropes have been taken away, perhaps burned away
 - Now they are free
 - Finally, the king remarks that the appearance of the fourth man is different
 - He describes him as a son of gods

- His words mean a human who appeared to have divine power
- Remember, he worshipped pagan gods often portrayed in the likeness of men or animals
- We know that Nebuchadnezzar's words were more correct than he could have known, coming about 600 years early
 - This fourth person was the Angel of the Lord
 - The Angel of the Lord is always the Person of Christ, prior to His incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth
 - Even before He took on flesh, the Lord Jesus was still at work in His Creation
 - And in fact, Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1 both teach that all visible manifestations of God are always the work of the Second Person of the Godhead
 - The Father and the Holy Spirit are all spirit and invisible
 - So when Christ makes an appearance in the Old Testament, He's called the Angel of the Lord
 - Though that name is not given here specifically, we know by the miraculous nature of the moment and the king's comment, that this is Christ
 - He appears in the fire to save these men
 - They are saved from heat, toxic fumes, and lack of oxygen
 - They were even saved from the fall from a great height
 - When the Lord saves us, He truly saves
 - They remain in the fire until the king calls them out
 - Presumably, they could have run out immediately, but they remain in the furnace
 - It seems the Lord wanted to make a point to the king more than simply saving the men
 - He wants the king to be convinced
- And of course it worked, for the king called them out and they emerged, stunning everyone watching
 - Quite a crowd had assembled to see this moment
 - The king probably required their presence
 - He wanted to show his power against those who would challenge him
 - As the three walk out unharmed, even their clothes are untouched
 - There is not even an odor from the furnace in their clothes
 - Here's where the clothing becomes an important element in the story
 - Normally, we might expect condemned men to lose their clothing prior to their execution
 - This was certainly the usual practice

- We still find it practiced in Jesus' day, as He was stripped of his clothing at the cross
- But these men were allowed to keep their clothing, presumably because the king's anger propelled the soldiers to act with extreme haste
- God even preserved it from the flame
- God ensured these men would emerge from the furnace with both their lives and their dignity intact
 - The king had attempted to kill them and to do so in a way that made an examples out of them
 - But in the process, God has set the example
 - He has consumed His adversaries, vindicated His faithful, restoring their dignity while vacating the king's orders
 - The king shows he received the lesson, declaring these three are servants of the Most High God, a declaration he repeats seven times
- To the Jew in captivity, this account would have been a source of real encouragement
 - The dream in Chapter 2 foretold that Israel would suffer under Gentile kings
 - But the events of Chapter 3 remind God's people that these kings still remain under God's sovereign control
 - Israel cannot defeat these Gentiles powers, since the Lord has appointed them to rule over Israel for a time
 - But neither can these Gentiles defeat God's faithful, for the Lord continues to honor His Word and His covenants to them
 - In fact, their judgment during the Age of the Gentiles is itself a result of God's promises to Israel in His Covenant
 - But this scene is also a source of encouragement to every man or woman who follows Christ in faith
 - The three men walking up the stairs to their death can be said to represent all believers
 - We carry our burdens of sin with us, all that we possess
 - We are bound by that sin, declared guilty and sentenced to death in the eternal fire that never dies
 - But as we fall, our faith in Jesus saves us from destruction
 - Jesus Himself enters the furnace so as to save us from the judgment
 - Jesus cuts our bonds and frees us unharmed
- After the men emerge, the king recognizes – to a degree – the lesson the Lord was teaching

Dan. 3:28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants

who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

Dan. 3:29 “Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”

Dan. 3:30 Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

- The king begins to put the pieces together
 - He declares these men are blessed
 - He acknowledges they placed their trust in the right place, in their God
 - And yet, he acknowledges they defied his orders in the process
 - Interestingly, the king doesn't try to gloss over the fact that these men disobeyed his orders
 - Their survival has made such an impression on the king that he drops any pretense of saving face or honor in the face of their triumph
 - He acknowledges this outcome as God-ordained and he yields to it
 - And he declares these men deserve praise for standing up for what they believed
 - Then, he reverses his prior edict to have these men punished for their defiance
 - As the unchallenged sovereign in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar had the authority to reverse earlier decisions with impunity
 - This will not be the case for the Persian rulers later in this book
- His new decree is that no one may speak a word against the God of Israel
 - He removes any threat against them arising out of their worship of Yahweh
 - Furthermore, he sets the stage for future generations of Jews to exist alongside Babylon, and later the Medo-Persians, without fear
 - They will remain in captivity for some time longer
 - But they will no longer see their worship of the true God inhibited
 - Here again, is a strong encouragement for the Jew in exile
 - The Lord may have placed them in difficult circumstances
 - But He expects them to continue in their faithful obedience to His commands, even in the exile
 - And now, He has made sure they may do so without an impediment
- The ending of this story serves as another picture of how the end of the Age of the Gentiles will proceed
 - In a future day, Israel will find itself subjected to a fiery trial from a single world ruler

- In that trial, the nation will seem to be at its end
- And the temptation to repudiate the Lord (taking the mark) will be great, for it will seem like the only way to survive
- But in the last moment, the Lord will appear to save Israel from their trial and preserve them against their enemy
 - And the result will be Israel left unharmed
 - And their enemies will acknowledge the Lord's superiority
 - As Paul says, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess
 - We will continue to look into these parallels with increasing detail as move further into the chapters of Daniel

- Tonight, we take the next step down the chiastic structure of Chapters 2-7 in the Book of Daniel
 - In the chiasm, we've studied steps A and B so far:

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

B - God delivers Daniel's friends from Gentile persecution

C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

C' - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

B' - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution

A' - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- Step A was Chapter 2, where Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream
- The main point of that chapter was to explain God's plan to place Israel under four successive Gentile authorities
- It gave Israel the context to understand their fate in captivity
- In Step B, we studied last time in Chapter 3, as Daniel's friends were spared supernaturally from persecution
 - That chapter reminded Israel that though they were under Gentile oppression, the Lord has not abandoned His people
 - Particularly, the remnant within Israel was assured of the Lord's continuing favor, even in the midst of this time of judgment
- Furthermore, it illustrated that even though God has written a coming history of empires and kings, nevertheless, He continues to exert His supernatural influence
 - Daniel 3 stands as refutation against those who believe God has created the world and stepped back to let it rule itself
 - Like a top set spinning on a table
 - Instead, the Lord is active and engaged in steering the world, even as He reveals His larger plans
- Now today, we reach the deepest part of the chiasm, Step C
 - Step C and its corresponding alternate point, Step C', provide the "point" of the chiasm
 - In today's chapter, the Lord humbles the king of Babylon
 - He's the very man God placed in authority over Israel, and indeed all the world, yet he will be brought low
 - Ultimately, he will be restored
 - The point in these circumstances will become evident as we study through the

chapter

- But perhaps the most interesting part of the chapter, is it's author
 - The chapter is written from the first person perspective of Nebuchadnezzar himself
 - It was penned by Daniel, but it's likely Daniel simply recorded the testimony of the king, who dictated it to Daniel for posterity
 - So we could say this is the only chapter of Scripture written by a Gentile, and perhaps the only one written by a pagan
- As we begin the chapter, let's take note that the chapter itself is structured as a mini-chiasm in an ABB'A' form
 - It begins with the king praising the Lord of Heaven for His mighty works
 - It moves into an account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream
 - Followed by Daniel's interpretation and its fulfillment
 - And it ends with the king praising the Lord once more
 - Let's begin with the first of those four parts

Dan. 4:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!

Dan. 4:2 "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

**Dan. 4:3 "How great are His signs
And how mighty are His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom
And His dominion is from generation to generation.**

- In v.1, Nebuchadnezzar opens his account by addressing everyone on the earth
 - It may seem a bit grandiose to think that his words would be sent to the entire world
 - Like assuming everyone else is as interested as you are in the poodle pictures you posted on Facebook
 - Because let's be honest...no one wants to see a poodle picture
 - In this case, the king's assumption makes sense, given what the Lord told him in Chapter 2
 - The Lord declared he was king of all the earth, according to the interpretation of the dream
 - So Nebuchadnezzar is merely acting on that premise in addressing the entire world as his subjects
 - Furthermore, the Lord made his words part of Scripture, which will endure forever
 - So both in the king's day, and in our day, these words go to the entire earth

- His testimony is a testimony for all people for all time
- In v.2, Nebuchadnezzar says it seems good to him to declare the good things the Lord has done
 - He's referring to the story that is about to unfold
 - Looking back on what happened, he remembers the entire experience as something mighty, something great
 - As you read through his account, however, you may struggle to understand why he thinks this is so great
 - In fact, his story will read like a mini-version of the story of Job
 - Secondly, the effect of this experience for Nebuchadnezzar was to declare that the Lord's Kingdom was everlasting
 - Specifically, it is from generation to generation
 - This is an important summary of the purpose of Chapter 4
 - Earlier, we learned that the powers that rule the world would transition
 - One kingdom would give way to another
 - A few generations would have power for a time, but then in a future generation, power would be lost to another kingdom
 - But the Lord is truly the One ruling the earth and His Kingdom is everlasting from generation to generation
 - Who better to declare this truth than the man who begins the statue as the head of gold
 - Even the man who received power to rule has come to recognize that his own ruling was subjected to the authority of God
 - Remember, this king is a Gentile and a pagan who took God's people captive, killing many of them in the process
 - Yet, this man declares that God Himself is greater and that His Kingdom is always in control
 - Remember this next time someone suggests that Hitler's reign of terror over the Jewish people proves God wasn't in control
- Now the king starts to tell the story of his dream

Dan. 4:4 "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.

Dan. 4:5 "I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

Dan. 4:6 "So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

Dan. 4:7 "Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its

interpretation known to me.

Dan. 4:8 “But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying,

Dan. 4:9 ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

- Once again, we find the king receiving a dream from the Lord
 - Also, the dream makes an impact such that the king can't stop thinking about it
 - Unlike the dream in Chapter 2, this time, the king is willing to tell them the dream up front
 - And then, he asked for an interpretation
 - Why do we suppose the king is willing to do this now, when he didn't before?
 - The answer is that this method is the normal procedure
 - The king would call his staff of advisors and he would tell them the dream
 - And then, they would explain what they thought it meant
 - Back in Chapter 2, the king departed from the normal pattern in demanding they reveal the content of the dream first
 - We don't know what reason the king had for changing the pattern in Chapter 2
 - But we know the Lord planted that desire in the king's heart to ensure the other men would be frustrated
 - Which ensured the king would meet Daniel
- By that same token, we wonder why the king even bothered asking the other guys for help this time?
 - Once you've discovered a man with the talent Daniel possessed, why waste time with lesser counselors?
 - A couple of reasons come to mind
 - Perhaps Daniel was busy elsewhere
 - Remember, he was made a man of power and responsibility in the province of Babylon
 - So it's unlikely he just hung around the palace
 - But it's also possible that the king had a sense of what the dream was revealing, and he was afraid to hear Daniel's interpretation
 - Therefore, he may have been shopping for a better answer
 - Furthermore, when the king turns to his regular counselors, still they couldn't offer any explanation, even knowing the dream
 - Is this just a group of quacks?

- Their silence is especially surprising, since this dream is relatively easy to interpret, even without supernatural assistance
- In fact, the dream practically interprets itself at one point
- So why didn't these guys offer any answer to the king?
 - The logical conclusion is that they understand the dream very well, but were afraid to give the answer
 - Because, as you will see, it's not good news
- Finally, notice in v.8 how the king describes Daniel
 - He repeats that Daniel is Belteshazzar, which he says is a name after Nebuchadnezzar's god
 - He then acknowledges that Daniel is a special man
 - Daniel has the spirit of "holy gods"
 - These statements are important because they confirm for us that at the outset of this story, the king is a pagan worshipper
 - He identifies with a pagan god, from whom he got Daniel's name
 - And he sees Daniel's powers as coming from other "gods"
 - He respects the power Daniel demonstrates
 - But that demonstration hasn't been enough by itself to lead the king to rethink his allegiance to his god and to seek after Daniel's God
- He then proceeds to reveal the dream to Daniel

Dan. 4:10 'Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.

Dan. 4:11 'The tree grew large and became strong
And its height reached to the sky,
And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

Dan. 4:12 'Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it was food for all.

The beasts of the field found shade under it,
And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,
And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

Dan. 4:13 'I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

Dan. 4:14 'He shouted out and spoke as follows:

"Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,
Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;
Let the beasts flee from under it
And the birds from its branches.

Dan. 4:15 "Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,

**But with a band of iron and bronze around it
In the new grass of the field;
And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,
And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.**

Dan. 4:16 “Let his mind be changed from that of a man

**And let a beast’s mind be given to him,
And let seven periods of time pass over him.**

Dan. 4:17 “This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers

**And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,
And bestows it on whom He wishes
And sets over it the lowliest of men.”**

Dan. 4:18 ‘This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’

- The dream centers on a single great tree that dominates the earth
 - It reaches to the sky, such that the entire earth can see it
 - Interestingly, on a round earth, this is literally impossible
 - So we must assume that the king was dreaming of a flat earth
 - Since we know the earth is round, we wonder why the Lord doesn’t give the king a dream consistent with Creation?
 - The answer is simple...the king would have assumed the earth to be flat, as that was the common understanding in his day
 - Therefore, the Lord gave the king a version of the world in his dream that fit his expectations
 - He did this not to confirm the king’s viewpoint, but simply not to distract him from the main point of the dream
 - Imagine if the Lord had shown the king a round earth, that detail might have overshadowed the other, more important details
- So on a flat world, one tree reaches to the sky and can be seen from everywhere
 - This tree was like Eden itself, feeding the world and protecting its inhabitants
 - The fruit was abundant
 - The branches were home to every bird
 - The shade accommodated every beast
 - But then, an angel from Heaven appeared to remove the tree
 - He did violence to every part of the tree

- Only the roots of the tree and its stump were allowed to remain
- The stump was shackled with bronze and iron
- Then, the stump is allowed to simply sit in the field of grass
- But then, at this point in the dream, the pronoun changes to “he”
 - It becomes clear at this point that the tree stands for a man
 - And that’s why I said it practically interprets itself
 - This man is to live in the wild like an animal
 - And he receives the mind of a beast, acting like an animal
 - And this strange period in the man’s life will continue for a period of seven
 - The reference to seven is not defined, but as we will see in the interpretation, it refers to seven years
- Then the angel declares in the dream that this has come to pass as the result of the decision of “the holy ones”
 - The use of a plural here is curious
 - At first, it suggests that the angels themselves made the decision to humble this man in this way
 - But that conclusion doesn’t make a lot of sense, given that angels are messengers and not decision-makers
 - The more reasonable conclusion is that “the holy ones” refers to the Godhead itself
 - In other words, God (plural) decided this fate for this man
 - This would be another OT reference to the Trinity
 - Finally, the reason given for this man’s strange downfall is to ensure that he understood that the power to rule came from above
 - This power is given out as the Lord desires
 - We could say, “easy come, easy go”
 - He even gives it to the lowest of men
- Rather than give commentary on the dream itself, I’ll wait for the interpretation to weigh into the significance of these things

Dan. 4:19 “Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!’

Dan. 4:20 ‘The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth

Dan. 4:21 and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose

branches the birds of the sky lodged —

Dan. 4:22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.

Dan. 4:23 ‘In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,”

Dan. 4:24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

Dan. 4:25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

Dan. 4:26 ‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

Dan. 4:27 ‘Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’

- As Daniel hears the dream, he too is frightened
 - The king doesn’t appear to be surprised by Daniel’s reaction either
 - We’re getting the sense that everyone connected to this dream knows it’s bad
 - Daniel is truly grieving over what he has to reveal
 - And this was a consistent feature of every prophet God sent to Israel
 - They usually had bad news for the people, and they often wept over what they had to reveal
 - The king reassured Daniel that it’s ok to reveal the bad news to him
 - With that reassurance, Daniel then has the courage to move ahead and reveal it
 - But not before he commiserates with the king over what he’s about to reveal
 - Daniel then tells the king what he, and probably everyone, knew: the tree was a representation of him in his rule over all the earth
 - Like the head of gold in the statue, this tree emphasizes the complete and total rule Nebuchadnezzar exercised over the earth
 - And each detail in the dream reinforced that picture
 - The birds nesting in the branches is a classic picture of Gentile populations

- The beasts feeding represents the provision the king's empire makes to all its subjects
 - And the shade represents the power of the kingdom to protect and defend its citizens by enforcing a time of peace
- So the tree pictures the king, as the king himself represents the entire kingdom of Babylon
 - Then, Daniel says the angelic woodcutter means that the Lord will drive Nebuchadnezzar away from his kingdom for a time
 - Notice the tree was cut down, but the root was not removed
 - It was left in the ground, which means it has the potential to sprout growth again
 - Notice in v.26, Daniel tells the king that the fact that the root remains is proof that this calamity does not spell the end of the king's time as ruler
 - If the Lord intended to end Nebuchadnezzar's rule forever, the stump would not have remained
 - It would have been pulled out by the roots
 - So leaving the stump or roots of a tree means hope for a future restoration
 - This is a powerful symbol in Scripture that the Lord uses repeatedly in a similar fashion for other people
 - In particular, the Lord uses this symbol to represent the Nation of Israel hardened and set aside for a time, but later restored
 - Paul says in Romans, speaking of how Israel was cut off for a time to give opportunity for the Gentiles

Rom. 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,

Rom. 11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

- The root is Paul's picture of what remains of an Israel cut off for their unbelief
- The fact that a root remains, however, means that the nation has not met its end
- In fact, Israel will one day rise again, as Paul goes on to say

Rom. 11:23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Rom. 11:24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so

that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- So just as a tree root here is used to picture the return of Nebuchadnezzar on a future day, so it will be for Israel too
- Curiously, the tree stump in the dream is bound by a band of brass and iron
 - The symbol of a band suggests captivity or subjugation
 - And the metals of brass and iron suggest judgment
 - The Lord's judgment is always pictured by brass in a furnace
 - And iron is a picture of ruling in power (e.g., "a rod of iron")
 - So the meaning is clear: the king will be taken out of power as a judgment from God
 - Yet he is not being deposed, nor is he forgotten
 - He is only set out of power for a period of time
 - But during this time, he will endure a particularly humiliating set of circumstances
 - In v.25, we get the details of what God has planned for this king
 - First, the king will be driven away from mankind
 - He will trade the comfort and civility of the palace for life among the beasts of the field
 - Notice he will not make this change of his own desire, but he will be driven in this way
- What drives the king to do such a thing?
 - Back in v.16, we're told that the king's mind of a man was changed into the mind of a beast
 - Simply put, Nebuchadnezzar would start thinking (and therefore behaving) like an animal, rather than a human being
 - We don't know to what extent his behaviors looked like an animal
 - But the description indicates he lived like a wild man in the fields, without shelter
 - Perhaps attacking and eating prey, much like a lion, refraining to communicate with words
 - Today, we would describe this behavior as insanity, and certainly it must have appeared to be that way in his day as well
 - Perhaps the Lord accomplished this change by permitting a demon to possess Nebuchadnezzar
 - Certainly, demon possession produces these kinds of bizarre behaviors, as we see with the man living in the tombs in Luke 8

Luke 8:27 And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.

Luke 8:28 Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.”

Luke 8:29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

- So perhaps the Lord brought a demon to bear on Nebuchadnezzar
- Or perhaps the Lord did literally as He describes
 - Supernaturally, the Lord changed the king’s mind from that of a human to something less
 - We can’t imagine how that works, but we can’t say it isn’t within God’s power to do so
- In either case, we need to give a moment’s thought to what it means that God can do this to a person
 - Insanity is simply the name we give to unexplained, bizarre behaviors
 - The secular world gives no allowance to the possibility that bizarre behavior is the result of a supernatural cause
 - Clinically, the condition Nebuchadnezzar experienced is called “zoanthropy” today, which tells us that other people have done the same
- But here, we clearly see that this malady is the result of the Lord producing insanity in the king’s life for a good purpose
 - While we can’t draw broad conclusions from one example, we should be more thoughtful about where abnormal or pathological behavior originates
 - Is the cause natural? Environmental? Genetic? Or is it the decision of God to bring a trial, a test or to make a point?
- Nebuchadnezzar's strange behavior resulted in the king abdicating his throne for a time, specifically for a period of “seven”
 - It could mean seven hours, seven days, seven weeks, *etc.*
 - The text doesn’t say and Daniel doesn’t specify either
 - Later, we learn that the “seven” refers to years
 - Knowing the Lord has declared this is coming, Daniel exhorts the king to do what he can to stop it
 - Specifically, Daniel says forgo sinning, repent and do works of mercy for the poor
 - It would seem this king had not been particularly concerned with the plight of

the poor

- And in general, Daniel doesn't seem to think the king is particularly upright
- So can we assume that Daniel's offer for mercy was inspired by the Spirit, or was it merely Daniel's own point of view?
 - In this case, we might assume that Nebuchadnezzar's plight was inevitable, since it fits into the Lord's larger plan to demonstrate His sovereignty
 - If so, then it's hard to imagine that the king could have done anything to stop this prophecy
 - But we shouldn't assume that no opportunity existed for the king to avoid this fate
 - It's a fundamental truth of Scripture that repentance can forestall God's judgment
 - The Lord gave that opportunity to Cain in Genesis 4
 - Jonah declared it to Nineveh
 - The prophets declared it to Israel

Ezek. 18:29 "But the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right?

Ezek. 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord God. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you.

Ezek. 18:31 "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?

Ezek. 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live."

- But the principle of repentance has a corollary
 - As repentance delays, judgment advances
 - So that at some point, the judgment is assured and the time of repentance has come and gone
- In the psalms we find a good example of this truth
 - The psalmist writes that God is a righteous judge, ready to strike against those who fail to heed warnings
 - And in that sense, the one who falls to judgment has dug their own grave

Psa. 7:11 God is a righteous judge,
And a God who has indignation every day.

Psa. 7:12 If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.

Psa. 7:13 He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.

Psa. 7:14 Behold, he travails with wickedness,
And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood.

Psa. 7:15 He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,
And has fallen into the hole which he made.

Psa. 7:16 His mischief will return upon his own head,

And his violence will descend upon his own pate.

- The psalmist says the unrepentant sinner falls into the hole he made for himself
- His decisions return upon his head
- These truths don't deny God's mercy, nor do they contradict the grace God extends to every believer so that our sins aren't counted against us in eternity
- We're simply learning that whatever mercy God may be prepared to extend to us, His mercy depends on timely repentance
- So perhaps Daniel's declaration to Nebuchadnezzar was an offer of mercy from the Lord, which gave Nebuchadnezzar opportunity for a time
 - But if so, the king didn't make use of the opportunity

Dan. 4:28 "All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

Dan. 4:29 "Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

Dan. 4:30 "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'

Dan. 4:31 "While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,

Dan. 4:32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'

Dan. 4:33 "Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

- In v.28, we get the bottom line: it all happened
 - Remember, this narrative was written by the king himself
 - So in a sense, he's confessing to having ignored Daniel's advice

- And he ignored it for some time
- The events of the dream didn't come to pass until twelve months later
- This delay would seem to confirm the psalmist's observation
 - The king was busy digging his hole for a year
 - And that year of waiting was clearly grace from the Lord
 - But in the end, the king fell in
- The king's downfall is clearly pride in his position over the kingdom and the world
 - Daniel intimated the king's pride problem in his advice to Nebuchadnezzar
 - And now, we see the king himself confessing to this problem
- In v.30, the king relates how he was reflecting (probably to himself) on how great Babylon had become
 - Ancient records recovered from Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon document the king boasting of the splendor of his kingdom
 - Josephus quoted another historian of antiquity, Berossus, who said Nebuchadnezzar had much to boast about
 - His impressive building exploits were some of the most ambitious in all ancient history
 - Babylon's capital city was walled to a circumference of about 17 miles
 - The king's palace sat inside the city, behind a second wall running about 5 miles in circumference
 - The river Euphrates ran through the palace
 - The hanging gardens of Babylon inside the palace were one of the lost seven wonders of the world, fed by an elaborate water supply
 - Statues of bulls and dragons lined a huge processional avenue leading to a huge ziggurat temple to Marduk,
 - But the key comment in Nebuchadnezzar's boasting is in found in v.30, where he says he himself made the nation great by means of his own might and for his own glory
 - He couldn't have been more wrong on every count
 - He didn't make Babylon great, the Lord did
 - He didn't accomplish anything in his own might; it was the Lord's power that created Babylon
 - And Babylon wasn't elevated to bring Nebuchadnezzar great glory; it was for glory to God
- The king's pride blinded him to the work of God going on through him, despite God having already revealed the details in the earlier dream
 - God told him he had been elevated to the position of king of the world
 - And the Lord said he was placed there for a purpose not his own

- And the dream even told Nebuchadnezzar that he wouldn't hold the position forever
- Nevertheless, the king has let the whole affair go to his head and now he thinks it's all a result of his power, wisdom and good looks
 - He's forgotten God, and this is always the way pride works
 - Pride is like spiritual amnesia
 - It causes us to forget God in every sense, and our ego is only too happy to step into the vacuum we created
- Pride was the first sin in God's creation, and since that beginning, pride has been at work in the hearts of humanity to cause us to forget God

Rom. 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Rom. 1:21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

- Nebuchadnezzar knew God, at least in the sense that he knew that Israel's God existed and had power over him
- And he knew the Lord's words, as revealed through Daniel
- He even had a second dream warning of a coming judgment
- And yet here, he is telling himself that he's big man in the universe
- When time runs out for repentance, God's judgment arrives swiftly and without additional warning
 - In v. 31, Nebuchadnezzar reports that even as he was uttering his prideful boasts, he heard a voice from Heaven proclaiming his sentence
 - God's pronouncement includes a dose of sarcasm
 - Before the final boast exited Nebuchadnezzar's mouth, the Lord had already nullified his boast
 - The king's declaration was overridden by the Lord's declaration
 - Nebuchadnezzar said, "I'm the king of the hill!"
 - And the Lord's response was, "Not anymore."
 - The Lord declared sovereignty has been removed from him
 - At that very second, a switch was thrown in Nebuchadnezzar's brain
 - Immediately, his mind became like an animal and his behavior followed suit
 - If you find yourself wondering if God is treating him fairly, remember how we got to this point

- The king should have known the Lord was over all and assigning authority as He desires
- He had two dreams to explain it and he had the experience of Daniel's friends to demonstrate it
- Yet it still required this dramatic experience to get the point through to him
- Ironically, God made Nebuchadnezzar to look insane
- But the real insanity was the king acting as if the God Who had revealed Himself so clearly didn't actually exist
- The Lord explains how Nebuchadnezzar's life will go for the next seven periods
 - First, he will go away from mankind
 - Nebuchadnezzar had just been marveling at the magnificence of his palace, and now he will be denied the comforts of it
 - Instead, he will literally live outdoors in the fields where wild beasts live
 - No doubt, he will be the talk of Babylon, as the people marvel over how far he has fallen
 - In keeping with his new animal nature, he will eat only grass, which probably means he will eat various green plants, but nothing particularly normal for a human diet
 - He had been enjoying the luxuries afforded a king who demanded only the best
 - All the while denying mercy and provision to the poor in his kingdom
 - Now, the Lord visits those sins back upon the king by denying him even the most basic human food
- Yet even in these harsh conditions, we can still see God's grace
 - Normally, a man living out in the fields for a long time would not survive very long
 - For example, wild predators would have been a real threat, especially lions
 - Secondly, desert days are brutally hot under the sun, and the nights can be quite cold, especially in the winter
 - So if the animals didn't get him, exposure would have
 - And then there is his diet of grass
 - He ate food that normally wouldn't sustain a person for long, and may have even been harmful
 - Under those circumstances, it's hard to believe the king could have survived outdoors that long without God's grace and supernatural protection
 - He survived because he was the stump, cut down, chained in judgment, but not dead, not destroyed
 - He was to remain this way for a period of "seven"
 - And that period must have been a period of seven years for several reasons
 - First, the description in v.33 of his appearance implies a very long time
 - Specifically, his hair grows to the point of looking like eagles' feathers

- That description suggests long, unkempt matted hair, long enough to resemble an eagle's wing, which is about 22 inches (56 cm) long
 - And his nails are as long as an eagle's talons, which are 2 inches long
 - Men's hair and nails don't grow that long in just seven weeks or even seven months
 - It would require seven years
- I imagine the people of Babylon would have taken great fascination in the plight of their king
 - As long as he was alive, he was still the king, though I suspect others were handling the business of the kingdom in his absence
 - In fact, it seems likely that Daniel played a significant – if not the prominent – role in governing the nation in his absence
 - We might also suppose that Daniel righted Nebuchadnezzar's wrongs regarding the poor or otherwise
 - And finally, we know Daniel understood the king would return to power one day, so he probably advised the staff to prepare for that day
 - It would not go well for anyone who tried to undermine the king in his absence when the king returned to discover their disloyalty
 - So the Lord achieved a fair judgment against the king, while also correcting his errors in rule and elevating Daniel once again
 - We suppose that Daniel also found ways to show kindness to the rest of Israel in slavery
 - It would have been a tremendous encouragement to the people of God to see their adversary humiliated while Daniel took charge
 - That's the point of this chapter, again
 - The power of God resulted in God's people under Gentile rule
 - But God continues to protect the remnant
 - And the Gentile authorities God installs still owe their position to the Lord and therefore, they rule only by His grace
- Eventually, even Nebuchadnezzar got the point

Dan. 4:34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;
 For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

Dan. 4:35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
 But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
 And among the inhabitants of earth;
 And no one can ward off His hand

Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

Dan. 4:36 “At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

Dan. 4:37 “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

- Just as God controlled the timing of Nebuchadnezzar’s descent into madness, so does the Lord dictate the moment of his recovery
 - The king testifies now in the first person again, that after the 7 years were complete, he then regained his senses
 - And as if released from a prison of the mind, the king immediately does what he should have done in the beginning
 - He raises his eyes toward Heaven and makes a declaration that matches the one that opened the chapter
 - He praises God and he declares that God deserves honor, the One Who lives forever and ever
 - The fundamental difference between man and animals is that God made man in His Own image so we could relate to Him
 - The Westminster Confession declares that the chief and highest end of man is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever
 - It requires the mind of a man to know and glorify God for all that He is
 - And an animal mind can’t do that
 - Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t using his mind to fulfill his purpose, so the Lord took his mind for a time
 - Now that his mind has returned, he immediately begins to use it for its consummate purpose
 - In the second half of v.34, the king emphasizes the never-ending dominion of the Lord, which was the point he needed to understand
 - God’s rule is eternal and always in effect
 - Men come and go as God appoints, but God is the true sovereign
 - And He remains sovereign, regardless of whether men on earth acknowledge Him as such or not
 - He doesn’t grant everyone the chance to learn this truth this side of eternity
 - But sooner or later, every knee bows and every tongue confesses
- Furthermore, the king acknowledges the absolute sovereignty of God
 - Perhaps this was the more personal lesson for the king

- In v.35, he says all the inhabitants of earth are accounted as nothing
- He doesn't mean that God cares nothing for the people of His Creation
- He means that in any conversation about power and world outcomes, the only actor that truly matters is God
- God is the absolute author of History
 - Some imagine the Lord reacts to circumstances so as to direct them in a certain direction
 - Like someone guiding the steps of a toddler running down the sidewalk
 - Others go a step further and imagine God is only an observer of His Creation, intervening periodically in response to prayer or exceptional circumstances
- Neither of these views could be farther from the truth, and Nebuchadnezzar testifies from firsthand experience that the answer is very different
 - God is in control of all things
 - Imagine the worst thing from human history that you can remember, and the Lord caused it to happen
 - Imagine the best that's ever happened, and the Lord made that happen too, as He says in His Own Word

Is. 45:5 "I am the Lord, and there is no other;

Besides Me there is no God.

I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

Is. 45:6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun

That there is no one besides Me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other,

Is. 45:7 The One forming light and creating darkness,

Causing well-being and creating calamity;

I am the Lord who does all these.

- Nebuchadnezzar saw the Lord give him great power and then take it away
 - He went from the best of times to the worst of times
 - And now, he finds himself back in a position of power once again
 - How can this be explained in any other way?
 - The Lord Himself revealed the plan to Nebuchadnezzar in advance and set the time at seven years to be sure everyone knew He commanded it
 - Furthermore, the king adds in v.35 that no one is in a position to second-guess God in what He does
 - No one can stop Him
 - No one can challenge Him
 - This is what it means to be God

- The king's account ends with two verses that show the degree to which the Lord's work changed his heart
 - First, the king was fully restored to power
 - His counselors returned to seeking his leadership
 - Probably Daniel was at the forefront, bringing it about
 - This was true grace for a man who was thought to be insane for seven years
 - The king also recognizes that his own pride was the cause of his downfall
 - He acknowledges that the Lord worked to humble him and he seems genuinely pleased to have been brought to this point
 - Nebuchadnezzar is an example to prove that humility is a preferable way to go through life than to live in pride
 - When we seek to be prideful, we imagine it gains us an advantage in life
 - But experience teaches us that pride diminishes us in the eyes of others and gives cause for the Lord to bring us low
- Finally, look at how the king addresses the Lord in the final verse
 - He gives Him praise and honor as the King of Heaven
 - These terms would seem to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar is rejecting the prospect of other gods in favor of the one true God
 - Perhaps he has become a follower of the one true God
 - If so, then we would say that he was saved
 - When we contrast his words to those in the beginning of his account, it would seem his heart had changed
 - But it could still be possible that his respect for God simply means he placed God above all other gods
 - Only God knows for sure what happened in Nebuchadnezzar's heart
 - In the end, the lesson is clear: the Lord controls those who control Israel
 - Remember, even after Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses and praised the God of Israel, he didn't free Israel
 - The people of God may have assumed that Nebuchadnezzar's (possible) conversion would have resulted in their freedom
 - But it didn't, because God was in control of that too
 - And the people of God were in captivity because God brought them there
 - Chapter 4 of Daniel reminds both Jew and Gentile that God is in control. Period.

- After our break for the 2016 conference, we return to Daniel tonight, moving one step farther down our chiasm
 - Last time, we studied Chapter 4, the story of Nebuchadnezzar
 - That chapter, and the one we study tonight, form the nadir (low point) of our chiasm
 - Chapters 4-5 gives us the “point” of a story embedded within the structure of Chapters 2-7
 - Both chapters focus on the same general idea
 - But each looks at that idea from an opposite perspective
 - In the chiasm, we’ve studied steps A and B so far:

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

B - God delivers Daniel’s friends from Gentile persecution

C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

C’ - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

B’ - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution

A’ - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- Last chapter centered on King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon
 - He was the appointed ruler of the world
 - And he was the conqueror of God’s people
 - The destroyer of the temple and wall of Jerusalem
- Nevertheless, he was also a man subjected to the authority of God, like every other man
 - He was ruling only because the Lord placed him in that position
 - The Lord had revealed this to the king, yet the king allowed his pride to get the better of him
- The Lord gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream to explain how God would humble the king
 - And sure enough, one day, the king began boasting that his power and wisdom were responsible for his success
 - So the Lord stripped the king of his power, comfort, dignity and humanity for a total of seven years
 - Leading to the king’s repentance and, some would argue, his salvation
- The message of that chapter was directed at both the Jew and the Gentile
 - Simply put, God is large and in charge

- He gives and takes away
- And He does all He does for His glory
- For Israel, the message was respect and submit to the Lord's decision to place them in captivity in Babylon
- For the Gentiles appointed over Israel, the message was they rule God's people only for a time and only to serve God's purposes
- Chapter 4's storyline finds its compliment in Chapter 5
 - A king with great power, humbled by the Lord
 - But the antagonist changes from Nebuchadnezzar to another Babylonian king, Belshazzar
 - From the first Babylonian king in the Age of the Gentiles to the final Babylonian king
 - And the story changes from one of repentance leading to redemption to one of judgment leading to destruction
- Therefore, the central idea for this step in our chiasm is flipped on its head
 - Where Chapter 4 supported the kingdom of Babylon over Israel
 - Now, Chapter 5 reduces that great kingdom to rubble
 - In both cases, the Lord demonstrates His sovereign choice and power
 - And as with Chapters 2 & 4, a king receives a cryptic message from God, which the prophet Daniel alone can interpret

Dan. 5:1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

Dan. 5:2 When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

Dan. 5:3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

Dan. 5:4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

- Belshazzar is not Nebuchadnezzar's successor
 - In fact, he's not even a king at all, though the text uses that title to reflect he was in charge at this time
 - Belshazzar is the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar
 - Nebuchadnezzar had a son, named Evil-Merodach
 - Coincidentally, that is also the name of our new poodle

- His son ruled for barely 2 years
- Following his death, Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law Neriglissar reigned for another 4 years before he died
 - Finally, a second son-in-law, Nabonidus, reigned until the end of the Babylonian empire
 - Nabonidus had a habit of staying away from the capital city of Babylon for prolonged periods
 - In fact, during the final ten years of the kingdom, Nabonidus never set foot in the city
- In his absence, he appointed his son, Belshazzar, as regent or ruler of Babylon
 - Technically, Belshazzar was second in command
 - But in the king's absence (since there were no radios, phones *etc.*), the nation needed a man in the capital who could make decisions
 - So though he was not the king, he acted as king
- Glance down to v.29, and you'll notice that as Belshazzar moved to reward Daniel for his interpretation, he offers Daniel the position of third ruler
 - That title indicates that Belshazzar was not the king, but rather the second in power
 - So the best he could do is grant Daniel third ruler
- The backdrop for Chapter 5 is the end of the Babylonian kingdom
 - The year is 539 BC
 - It's been about 67 years since Daniel entered Babylon in captivity
 - That means he is probably about 80 years old at this point
 - He's served Nebuchadnezzar until his death
 - Then he served Evil, Neriglissar, Nabonidus and now, Belshazzar
 - All the while, the people of Israel remain in captivity
 - By 539 BC, the Medes and Persians had united against their common enemy, Babylon
 - The two nations had been winning victories against the Babylonians and were descending upon the capital city
 - But even with the city under attack, the population of the city, including the king, had virtually no care whatsoever
 - The city of Babylon hadn't been captured in over 1,000 years
 - The city of Babylon was a fortress unlike anything that has ever existed in the ancient world, before or since
 - The Greek historian, Herodotus, described the city and its walls
 - He reported the city covered about 14 sq. miles
 - And surrounding the city was a wall so massive, it's hard to even imagine

- The wall was 87 feet thick, wide enough for four chariots to drive side-by-side on top of the wall
 - And even more amazing, the wall was 350 feet high
 - That is half the height of the Tower of Americas in downtown San Antonio!
 - In the wall were 100 gates and hundreds of watchtowers that rose another 100 feet above the walls
- And the provisions within the wall were equally impressive
 - The city was said to have stored up twenty years' worth of food and wine to survive an extended siege
 - Furthermore, the city straddled the Euphrates river, so it had a continuous source of fresh water
 - Where the walls of the city reached the Euphrates, they turned and paralleled the banks of the river on each side
 - The walls along the riverbanks had gates that opened, allowing residents to gain access to the water and to move between the two halves of the city
 - In a time of attack, these gates could be closed and the walls defended
 - The river was deep, so armies attacking by water stood no chance against the impossibly high walls topped by soldiers sending down barrages of arrows
 - Babylon's impenetrability gave its residents a false sense of security
 - So even as the powerful Medes and Persians converged on the city in 539 BC, Belshazzar was oblivious to the dangers
 - In v.1, we're told he is presiding over a great feast
 - It says he is entertaining a thousand nobles from the kingdom
 - The reported size of his dinner party may sound like an exaggeration, but there are good reasons to believe the number is accurate
 - Ancient kings in Persia, by comparison, reportedly dined with as many as 15,000 guests daily (who had to do those dishes?)
 - Secondly, the many nobles in attendance had sought refuge in Babylon to escape the advancing Medes and Persians
 - Babylon has become a sanctuary
- Rather than war-planning or devising an escape, however, these leaders of the kingdom are gathered, eating and drinking and being merry
 - The king's willingness to disregard the war outside the walls tells us how sure he was of Babylon's strength
 - He assumed the walls couldn't be breached
 - He trusted in his power and the historical strength of the city to withstand any attack
 - And his behavior is a reflection of his cavalier attitude
 - His self-assurance reminds us of the story of Nebuchadnezzar in the previous

chapter

- Nebuchadnezzar foolishly assumed he had gained his power by means of his own might
- And now, his grandson was assuming he could never lose that power
- Yet both men knew that it was the God of Israel Who had given this power to Babylon, and then, only for a time
- At a point in the night's celebration, the king (probably under the influence of the wine) makes a foolish decision by calling for the golden vessels from the Jewish temple
 - These gold and silver vessels were the basins, cups and the like prescribed in the Law to be used for temple service
 - The Lord permitted Nebuchadnezzar to capture these items when he looted the temple and the city
 - Notice in v.2, Nebuchadnezzar is called Belshazzar's "father", though he was his grandfather
 - The Chaldean language has no word for "grandfather" (and remember, this chapter was written in Aramaic)
 - So they merely referred to all male ancestors as "fathers"
 - Belshazzar's brilliant idea was to use these precious implements of Jewish worship to serve his court women
 - He directs that his wives and concubines will drink from these vessels
 - It appears these vessels were held as trophies of war until this point
 - We might imagine them sitting in a display case in the palace somewhere
 - But on this occasion, as a great enemy bears down on the city, Belshazzar decides he should remind his entourage of great victories past
 - He is encouraging optimism on the occasion of a great enemy bearing down on the city
 - In effect, the king is telling his nobles, "Remember we've defeated great gods and great people in the past"
 - And we'll do it again now
- As they drink from vessels intended to honor the God of Israel, they dedicate their drinks to the praise of false gods made of human hands
 - This is blasphemy and idolatry of the highest order, and it tested the Lord's patience
 - So the Lord stepped in on this evening to make clear His displeasure with the king
 - And in typical form, the Lord speaks in a way that necessitated Daniel's involvement
 - Before we look at the *way* God communicated to Belshazzar, we need to recognize the importance God places on speaking through the Jewish people
 - God brings His Word to the world through Israel

- In fact, everything we have from God came through the Jewish people
- The Covenants, the Word, the Messiah
- Though the Lord may speak to Gentiles from time to time, even then, He does so in the context of working with Israel
- In this case, Daniel is God's prophet, so the Lord constructed His message to Belshazzar so that it requires a Jew to explain it
 - And in this case, the Lord used a particularly unique way of speaking to the king
 - Rather than a dream, the Lord presented the king with a vision unlike anything else in Scripture

Dan. 5:5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.

Dan. 5:6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.

Dan. 5:7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom."

Dan. 5:8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

Dan. 5:9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.

- So the Lord gets the king's attention in a dramatic way
 - It's entertaining to imagine what a floating hand with fingers looked like
 - Was the hand cut off?
 - Did it look bloody or did it just fade out at the wrist?
 - Whatever its appearance, it's attention-grabbing and frightening
 - God writes with the finger on a plaster wall
 - Since no writing instrument is mentioned, we assume the fingers carved the message directly into the plaster
 - It reminds us of God's finger writing the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets
 - This would seem to connect the king's sin to the Law
 - The Law specified the holy purpose of those vessels, and now, the king is engaged in idolatry
 - In archeological digs of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, a large throne room was

discovered

- It was shaped as a rectangle and was large enough to accommodate hundreds of people
 - At the midpoint of one of the longer walls, was an alcove setback for the king's throne
 - And the wall behind the throne was covered in white plaster
- Daniel says the hand wrote opposite the lampstand, which probably stood on one side of the throne chair
 - The writing then, was on the opposite side of the throne chair from the lampstand
 - No one but the king noticed the writing...the writing hand floated immediately behind and to the side of the king's throne
- In v.6, we see the effect of the vision on the king
 - He's scared out of his wits and certainly, we understand that reaction
 - It's one thing to see something like this as a special effect on a TV show or at the movies
 - But imagine how fearful you would be to see it happening before you in reality
 - His sudden fear contrasts with his merriment a moment earlier
 - His contentment in the face of the Medes and Persians was a result of a false faith in himself and a forgetting of God
 - Like Nebuchadnezzar, his pride produced spiritual amnesia
 - In that way, Belshazzar represents all unsaved mankind upon whom God's wrath will ultimately fall
 - The world is always a heartbeat away from a great and terrible judgment, but they don't acknowledge it
 - They live Solomon's advice to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die, yet without a thought for what comes next
 - They think things are fine...until they discover quite suddenly things are not as they hoped
- The writing on the wall was in Aramaic, yet no one knew what it meant
 - Still, the mysterious and dramatic way it appeared compelled the king to discover its meaning
 - So like his grandfather before him, Belshazzar called for all the magicians to interpret the message
 - He offers them great riches if they provide an interpretation
 - Notice also, he offers the winner a position of third in the kingdom, as we discussed earlier
 - And for the third time, the Babylonian magicians strike out
 - Though the writing was in Aramaic, no one gave an interpretation

- It seems the Lord is intent on humiliating Babylon's wise men
- The message is clear: the Lord speaks through His people and reveals mysteries to whom He chooses
- As the king begins to realize he has no one to explain the mystery, he gets even more worried
 - But he doesn't think to call upon Daniel
 - Apparently, this king has lost touch with his grandfather's experiences with Daniel
 - Given his age, Daniel may have been "retired", in the sense that he no longer held a position of authority in the kingdom
 - But Belshazzar's ignorance of the Lord's prophet is further evidence of Babylon's leaders giving no regard for God's past revelations
 - So like his grandfather before him, it requires that someone else, someone acquainted with Daniel, make the introduction
 - In this case, it's a woman who brings the king's attention to Daniel's unique gift

Dan. 5:10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.

Dan. 5:11 "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners.

Dan. 5:12 "This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

- Just as Belshazzar is not the real king, this woman is unlikely to be the true queen, for a couple of reasons
 - First, the wife of a king would be unlikely to speak up in this manner in the court, and especially during a tense situation like this
 - Women did not play a role in court matters
 - And the king had many wives, so it would have been out of order for one to interject in this way
 - Secondly, this woman has a keen awareness of Daniel's abilities, which would have been unlikely if the king himself didn't know Daniel
 - Therefore, it's more likely this woman is Belshazzar's mother, Nebuchadnezzar's daughter

- Growing up in the court, she would have heard the stories of Daniel's exploits from her father's servants
- And as the king's mother, she would have had much greater license to speak up and to advise the king
- The queen mother is made aware of the commotion in the banquet hall and arrives to see her son vexed over the situation
 - She tells the king not to be afraid because there is one who can solve this problem
 - She must have recognized the similarities between this situation and the stories of her father's encounters with Yahweh
 - And since her father's experience had always turned out well in the end, she tells Belshazzar not to worry either
 - Then, she introduces the king to Daniel
 - Notice, she describes Daniel in ways similar to her father's words
 - He has the spirit of the holy gods
 - And in the days of his father, Nebuchadnezzar, he demonstrated insight, wisdom and illumination
 - And finally, she explains that Nebuchadnezzar once appointed him the chief magician
 - He could solve any puzzle, she says, because of that spirit in him
 - While her description is glowing and largely accurate, we can also see that she has no regard for the God of Israel
 - She speaks of nameless gods and spirits in Daniel, terms that reflect a pagan's view
 - So, despite her memory of her father's experiences, she has not known the true God
 - So even if we assume her father came to true faith and turned from pagan idolatry, his faith wasn't shared with his family
 - Perhaps this is the best argument someone could make in casting doubt on Nebuchadnezzar's "conversion"
- And now briefly, the king meets Daniel

Dan. 5:13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"

Dan. 5:14 "Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you.

Dan. 5:15 "Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message.

Dan. 5:16 "But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give

interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.”

- The king meets Daniel and repeats what Belshazzar’s mother reported
 - The king knows Daniel as an exile from Judah and someone with great spiritual power
 - And the king acknowledges his dependence on Daniel’s abilities
 - Since the king’s counselors couldn’t produce the reading, Daniel is now the king’s only hope
 - And so the king makes an appeal to this exile
 - When you stop to consider the situation, it’s really extraordinary
 - The most powerful position on earth is at the mercy of a slave
 - Only the Lord could produce such an upside down situation
 - Even more remarkable is his offer to elevate this slave to #3 in the kingdom, should he give the interpretation
 - The king could have threatened Daniel with death for not complying
 - Instead, he chooses to bargain with the slave
 - Finally, Daniel’s response is even more remarkable

Dan. 5:17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.

- It’s apparent that Daniel is in a completely different place now, at this point in his life, as compared to when he made his appearance before Nebuchadnezzar
 - In his earlier encounter, Daniel was barely 17 years old and had been in captivity only a few years
 - He may have understood the Lord had ordained Israel’s captivity, but still, he had no idea how long it would last
 - He was in awe of the king’s power, yet hopeful that he might please the king and win favor for his people
 - And he was gaining power and status in the nation, which gave him great freedom and comfort
 - But after living most of his life in Babylon as an exile and watching generations of Jews die in captivity, I wonder if Daniel’s attitude has changed
 - He sounds more cynical, maybe even a little discouraged
 - He’s no longer a man of responsibility and has been largely forgotten within the

nation

- He knows the Lord is in control of these things, so I assume his cynicism is directed toward the Lord
- So now that he is finally brought before the king, late in his life and perhaps with hope for release fading, he speaks with a noticeably different tone
 - Compare his words here to his actions in Chapter 2
 - In Chapter 2, he first spoke boldly and with discretion to the king's captain, seeking an explanation for the king's concern
 - He then prayed with his three friends
 - When he answered the king, he credited the Lord in Heaven for having answers to give the king
 - And he made requests of the king as a consequence of having pleased him
 - Now in this encounter, you can imagine an old, gray-bearded, stooped man shuffling into the king's presence, perhaps without much enthusiasm
 - He hears the story and the king's offers, but gives them no regard
 - He refuses the king's offers of riches in a manner bordering on insolent
 - And he makes no attempt to negotiate a reward
 - He just gets down to business
 - Daniel knows this message has come from God and that he's still serving the Lord in this matter
 - But he seems a little less enthusiastic over the opportunity
 - It's understandable, and it will come to explain Daniel's thinking in Chapter 9
 - Finally, we can't forget that as Daniel entered the dining hall, he must have noticed the sacred temple implements being used as serving dishes
 - This alone must have enraged and discouraged Daniel
 - Despite the Lord's work through Daniel, the circumstances for Israel seem to have gone from bad to worse
- Let's look at Daniel's interpretation, including a description of the words written on the wall

Dan. 5:18 "O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father.

Dan. 5:19 "Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled.

Dan. 5:20 "But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

Dan. 5:21 “He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.

Dan. 5:22 “Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,

Dan. 5:23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.

Dan. 5:24 “Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

Dan. 5:25 “Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.’

Dan. 5:26 “This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’ — God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

Dan. 5:27 “‘TEKEL’ — you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

Dan. 5:28 “‘PERES’ — your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

- In vs.18-21, Daniel gives Belshazzar a little family history lesson, one he should have known already
 - Daniel explains that his grandfather was also a powerful king, made so by the God of Israel
 - Yet once, Nebuchadnezzar acted arrogantly toward the Lord, just as Belshazzar was acting now
 - So the Lord acted in a way to bring Nebuchadnezzar through a sad, humbling experience
 - Of course, this was the experience we studied in the previous chapter
 - God ordained the king’s experience living like an animal for seven years to humble him and make a point about where real power lies
 - Belshazzar’s grandfather thought he was inherently powerful
 - But the truth was, he was nothing apart from God’s choice to use him
 - And as easily as that power came to Nebuchadnezzar, the Lord could withdraw it just as easily
- There are two important words in this passage
 - The first of these words appears in the middle of v.21...the word “until”
 - Daniel says the Lord subjected Nebuchadnezzar to living as an animal until he

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- He is mocking the God Who allows the king to keep breathing
 - Spiritual amnesia
- Notice to this point, Daniel has yet to address the handwriting interpretation at all
 - He's just giving background for *why* the Lord brought the revelation
 - This would suggest that Daniel has recognized the meaning of the message immediately
 - Or perhaps the Lord had given Daniel this insight at an earlier point
 - Or perhaps Daniel has been waiting for an opportunity to say these things to the king for some time
 - In any case, he's delivered the background for the occasion of the revelation, and now he's ready to reveal the meaning of the writing
 - First, Daniel reads the king the inscription
 - The words were "*mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*"
 - These words appear to be Aramaic words, though there is some mystery involved here
 - First, the Aramaic meaning of the words are various weights or measures of value
 - *Mene* means the same as *mina* in Hebrew
 - *Tekel* comes from the same root word as the Hebrew *shekel*
 - And *upharsin* means "half a shekel"
 - A mina was worth 50 shekels
 - So the phrase was similar to us saying "Dollar, dollar, nickel, penny"
 - You can see why the magicians wouldn't even know where to begin in offering an interpretation
- But for that same reason, it's hard to see how Daniel came to understand the writing
 - Daniel says that *mene* (or *mina*) means God has numbered Belshazzar's kingdom and brought it to an end
 - Neither ancient Hebrew nor Aramaic has written vowels
 - So it seems Daniel took the word *mena*, but used different vowels to turn the word into *menah*, which is Aramaic for numbered
 - We don't know what led him to do this, but we take his interpretation at face value
 - Likewise, he changed *tekel* to *tekal* and *uparsin* into *peras*
 - *Tekal* means "weighed"
 - And *peras* means "divided"
 - Putting all three words together, the phrase changes from "mina, mina, shekel, half-shekel" to "numbered, numbered, weighed, divided"
- Daniel explains that this message is one of judgment for both the king and the nation of

Babylon

- Daniel says the nation's days were numbered, that is, it would rule only for a time
 - Furthermore, the nation and its leader have been found deficient in God's sight
 - So the kingdom was going to be given to the Medes and Persians instead
 - Belshazzar has offended the God of Israel in the worst possible way, and he and his nation will pay the price
- Daniel interprets the repetition of the first word to mean that Babylon's end is coming immediately
 - God uses repetition to mean emphasis or certainty or swiftness
 - In this case, it means the nation's end was coming that very night, even as the king and the people felt secure
- We remember that the Lord promised in Nebuchadnezzar's dream that the nation of Babylon would only rule for a time
 - And then another nation would rise to displace Babylon
 - The time for that displacement has come, and the Lord has just cause for the changing of the guard
 - Belshazzar's arrogance has given God just cause to destroy the nation He placed in authority over the world
- This is an interesting example of the intersection of God's will and man's responsibility for his actions
 - God's words to the king indicate his behavior was responsible for the timing of the nation's fall
 - And yet, we know the Medes and Persians were destined to defeat the Babylonians
 - In attempting to reconcile these two contradictory ideas, the best we can say is God preordained the end
 - But Belshazzar's sin was the tool the Lord used to bring about that end
 - The Lord found the nation of Babylon deficient because of Belshazzar, but it was deficient in another, larger sense as well
 - This nation could never serve God's purpose in ruling the earth in righteousness
 - Therefore, it was deficient in comparison to the coming Kingdom
 - Though Babylon had authority over the whole earth, it's merely a precursor to the Kingdom of God that comes in the future
 - The Lord gave a powerful Gentile nation the opportunity to rule the entire earth, simply to demonstrate that only God can rule the world in righteousness
- We might think that this interpretation would bother the king, or at least distract him a little, but he seems to go on with little regard for Daniel's words
 - He proceeds to reward Daniel as promised, even though Daniel refused it

Dan. 5:29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.

Dan. 5:30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

- Daniel received the honor and gifts the king promised, even though Daniel had tried to refused them
 - If the king insists, it's an offer you can't refuse
 - Daniel is now third ruler in the kingdom
 - And he will hold this distinction for a few hours
 - Why was the king so insistent on granting these honors to Daniel, especially in light of his interpretation?
 - Either he's oblivious, drunk, an idiot or all three
 - Or he's a calculating politician
 - Perhaps the king thought Daniel possessed the power to change the future outcome of his prophecy
 - If so, then the king was binding Daniel's future to the future of the kingdom
 - Because before the night was over, the Persians had entered the city and conquered the nation, killing the king
 - When a conquering nation arrives, it's a bad thing to be part of the old government
 - By elevating Daniel to third in charge, the king might have thought that Daniel would have been motivated by self-preservation to ensure the ongoing protection of the nation
 - Of course, you can't out maneuver God,
 - So the Lord protected Daniel and the Jewish people, even as He allowed the Medes and Persians to conquer the Babylonians that night
- The story of how the Medes and Persians worked together to conquer the unconquerable city that night is worthy of Homer's Iliad
 - Multiple ancient historians including Herodotus, Xenophon, Berossus, and the Babylonian Chronicles all describe the incredible events of that evening
 - On the night of October 12, 539 B.C., the Persian army completed work north of Babylon on a dam across the Euphrates river
 - They diverted the flow of the river to a nearby lake, greatly reducing the amount of water flowing toward the city of Babylon
 - Within a few hours, the river level was barely thigh-high, low enough for Persian soldiers to wade up the riverbed running through the city
 - The watchmen on the wall towers above the city would have been scanning the horizon for large troop ships coming up the Euphrates or ground forces marching to the walls

- They never noticed columns of men quietly wading through the drying riverbed below under the cover of darkness
- Therefore, sensing no threat from the water, the Babylonians left the city walls and gates facing the river undefended
- The Persian troops simply scaled the walls from the riverbanks, opened the gates to the city and entered the city without a fight
- Herodotus says that the city was so vast, that even after the outer parts of the city had been taken by the Persians, the residents in the center of the city still had no idea the city had fallen
- He says the Babylonians in the center of the city were engaged in a festival, dancing and reveling until the invaders overtook them
 - We might imagine that the king's palace was located in the center of the city
 - And therefore, as he celebrated that night, the troops were already inside the walls
 - And as Daniel pronounced the king's downfall, the troops were probably at the doors of the palace
- As this king was executed and this nation fell swiftly, a new king took power, a man named Darius, the Mede

- Let's start working our way out of Daniel's chiasm
 - We've reached Point B' in the chiasm of Chapters 2-7
 - The message of this chapter parallels the story in Chapter 3
 - Chapter 3 saw Daniel's friends suffering persecution at the hands of the king of Babylon because of their faithfulness
 - Now that we're on the flip side of the chiasm, we find a similar story of persecution and rescue

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

B - God delivers Daniel's friends from Gentile persecution

C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

C' - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

B' - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution

A' - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- The message in both chapters is largely the same
 - Those in Israel who remain faithful to the Lord will continue to receive His protection, even in captivity
 - The God of Israel was still at work preserving a remnant among the exiles
- In Chapter 6, however, the antagonists and the protagonist change
 - Instead of the king of Babylon, we have the king of the Medes, now that the Medes and Persians have supplanted Babylon
 - And instead of Daniel's friends, it's Daniel himself who suffers
- But, the outcome will be the same
 - Israel was in captivity by God's decree, but the nation was not forgotten or forsaken
 - He continues to protect them against the very enemies He's permitted to conquer His people
- We pick up tonight at the very end of Chapter 5, where we learn that there is a new sheriff in town

Dan. 5:31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

- The final verse of Chapter 5 bridges us into Chapter 6, and in fact, this verse is the first verse of Chapter 6 in the Hebrew Bible
 - Darius the Mede is now ruling all that Babylon previous owned

- This reminds us of the statue prophecy in Daniel 2
- The Lord told Nebuchadnezzar that his nation's time ruling was appointed by God to last only a time
- Then a second kingdom, the breast and arms of silver, would take over for Babylon
- Now just 66 years later, we've moved into the second stage of the statue timeline
 - Babylon is no more, Belshazzar is dead and Darius is ruling
 - And the new ruler inherits the service of Babylon's previous court, including Daniel
- The exact identity of Darius the Mede has long been a source of controversy in Daniel's book
 - History records that the first ruler of the new Medo-Persian Empire was not a Mede, but a Persian
 - Specifically, Cyrus the Persian was the king that defeated the Babylonians
- Even Scripture confirms that Cyrus was ruling at the time
 - Isaiah says, hundreds of years before it even happened, that Cyrus would come conquering to release Israel from captivity
 - Ezra and 2 Chronicles confirms Cyrus as king of Persia
 - In roughly a year's time, Cyrus will issue an order that the Jewish people be released to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem
 - And even Daniel confirms he served Cyrus in the final verse of Chapter 6
- On the other hand, Daniel says he served BOTH King Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian
 - This comment at the end of the chapter tells us that Darius and Cyrus were different men
 - Yet Darius must have ruled in about the same time as Cyrus
 - Daniel was in his 80's when Babylon fell and he served both kings, he says
 - So they couldn't have ruled very far apart
 - In other books of Scripture, we hear of other kings of the Medo-Persian empire named Darius I and Darius II
 - These men ruled long after Cyrus
 - So they can't be the same Darius as mentioned here in Daniel 6
 - Therefore, some propose that Darius the Mede may have been a co-regent ruling with Cyrus the Persian
 - Perhaps they divided up the kingdom, with Darius ruling Babylon and Cyrus ruling in Persia
 - Then when Darius died, Cyrus took over the entire kingdom
 - Or perhaps Darius was the title of a lesser ruler over Babylon appointed by

Cyrus, much as Belshazzar ruled under Nebonidus

- Whatever the answer, Daniel's book is the only historical record we have of Darius' ruling
- And it's under the rule of Darius in Babylon that Daniel gains attention

Dan. 6:1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom,

Dan. 6:2 and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.

Dan. 6:3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

Dan. 6:4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

Dan. 6:5 Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

- This chapter chronicles how the new king is manipulated into persecuting Daniel, and yet, Daniel is protected and his enemies vanquished by the Lord
 - The chapter is another chiasm in itself
 - It begins with Daniel's success in serving the king
 - It will end the same way
 - In the middle, we'll find Daniel's enemies conspiring and later dying
 - And at the point of the chiasm, we find Darius hoping for Daniel's deliverance, and then witnessing that deliverance
 - The story opens with Daniel's new appointment as the commissioner of a third of the kingdom
 - Whatever role Daniel played in the years of Babylon's decline, he's back on top now
 - Darius divides his kingdom into 120 lesser provinces to administer the kingdom's business
 - Their role is probably focused on tax collection more than anything else
 - But the king has limited trust in these 120, so he then divides the 120 into three groups of 40
 - And over each of the 40, he appoints a commissioner to ensure he does not suffer loss
 - That would tell us that the king has great trust in the integrity of these three

men

- And Daniel is one of the three commissioners
- Soon enough, Daniel begins again to distinguish himself before the king
 - The details of his good work are not provided, but we can imagine them on our own
 - Daniel is probably scrupulous in rooting out fraud and corruption
 - He is probably wise in his judgments and incorruptible in his rule
 - Where others might take bribes to look the other way, Daniel serves the king faithfully
 - And when we hear that he has distinguished himself among the other commissioners, we know there is a comparison taking place
 - The king is looking at Daniel's behavior in comparison to the other commissioners
 - And the result is the king finds Daniel to be exceptional
 - But by the same token, it means his peers are diminished in the eyes of the king
 - Like the straight-A student who blows the curve on the test for the rest of the class
 - So in jealousy over Daniel's success, and in anger over being convicted by comparison to Daniel, his peers begin to conspire against him
 - Both the commissioners and the satraps began searching for an accusation against Daniel
 - Presumably, they asked his associates or others in the court for anything they could charge against Daniel
- But much like the Pharisees seeking to discredit Jesus, they could find no accusation that would stick
 - Daniel was blameless
 - He couldn't be charged with corruption, because he was faithful
 - This finding must have amazed Daniel's enemies
 - Taking bribes was the norm in that line of work
 - Daniel's integrity must have been a complete shock
 - Furthermore, Daniel was never negligent in his duties
 - Here again, this is unprecedented
 - Men of great power are often found to take advantage of their position
 - Showing up late, going home early, taking long vacations, *etc.*
 - Daniel never did these things...he was diligent in his duties
- Daniel's extraordinary testimony was the result of the extraordinary Spirit within him, as the king found in v.3
 - That Spirit, that is, the Spirit of the Lord working in Daniel, sanctified him, leading

him into righteousness

- That's the power of God working in the life of a faithful servant
- We don't just possess a testimony in our words
- We possess a testimony in our actions
- And the testimony of our obedience and faithfulness is far more powerful than anything we might say
- And when we conduct ourselves in a blameless fashion, we are making a public statement about the Lord
 - We are testifying that His love and approval of us matters more to us than gaining the approval of men
 - That His laws written on our hearts are more important than the ways of men
 - That testimony of faithfulness is more valuable than silver and gold
- As Peter reminds us

1 Pet. 2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

1 Pet. 2:14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

1 Pet. 2:15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

- It's God's will that we would silence ignorant, foolish men by serving Him faithfully in submission to human authority
- Just as Daniel silenced his critics because they could find nothing wrong in his service to the king
- But Scripture doesn't teach that our faithfulness will necessarily yield converts among those foolish men, nor even prevent them persecuting us
 - On the contrary, our faithfulness may very well provoke persecution
 - Those who witness our faithfulness to Christ may choose to attack us for that very reason
 - Like the commissioners and satraps, our enemies may grow angry at us because of their conviction in witnessing our blameless ways
 - Christ knew that persecution, so we may as well
 - Nevertheless, we persevere in our obedience, integrity and diligence because we know the Lord may reward us one day
 - As Paul says

Col. 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

Col. 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

- So because these men couldn't find something against Daniel, they turn to the only solution left to them
 - In v.5, they say they must find a way to turn the Law of Daniel's God against him
 - These men are using the oldest trick in the book, literally
 - They are looking for a way to manipulate the Word of God against Daniel
 - Understand, they aren't depending on finding Daniel violating God's Law
 - On the contrary, they are depending on Daniel's obedience
 - They are looking to turn his obedience to the Law against him in the eyes of the king
 - I call this the oldest trick in the book, because in a sense, this was Satan's trick against Woman in the Garden
 - He knew she was inclined to obey the Word of God, so he manipulated God's Word to deceive her
 - Woman was innocent and without the support of her husband in the face of a superior adversary
 - So the enemy used the Word of God against her in that sense
- So these men devise a plan to bring Daniel's obedience to the Word of God into conflict with the expectations of a pagan king

Dan. 6:6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever!

Dan. 6:7 "All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den.

Dan. 6:8 "Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

Dan. 6:9 Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

- The advisors come to the king with an appeal to his pride
 - Specifically, they know the king will react predictably to any suggestion that there are those in his government who do not toe the line
 - They suggest a test to ensure that everyone is loyal to him
 - Everyone must worship only the king and should one disobey this law, they will

be cast into a den of lions

- The test will last for 30 days, long enough to ensure time to catch someone who is disobedient to the king
- Obviously, the test is specially-designed to target Daniel's piety toward Yahweh
 - These men knew of Daniel's religious practice, of course
 - They are confident Daniel will be obedient, they are depending upon it
- In proposing this rule to the king, they add that everyone in his government has agreed it should be done
 - There is no evidence that this was, in fact, the case
 - For one thing, Daniel himself is in the government and he didn't propose this, of course
 - They are lying to manipulate the king
- The game they are playing is obvious
 - They have the king issue this edict, knowing that Daniel will not cease worshipping his God
 - Then they lay in wait to catch Daniel and expose him to the king
 - Essentially, they are making a law tailored to arrive at Daniel's disobedience
 - This is an example of the kind of law that a godly man or woman must disobey
 - While we endeavor to obey rulers, there are limits to our obedience

Rom. 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

- When the law of man compels us to disobey the Law of God, we refuse men and live to serve God
- The commissioners knew Daniel's heart would act in this way, so they intended to take advantage of it
- As we consider the impact of their actions on Daniel, don't forget this law would have impacted all the Jews in captivity
 - While we don't hear what they did, we can imagine that many chose apostasy during these 30 days
 - In fact, we don't hear of anyone else entering the lions' den beyond Daniel
 - These men may have only sought to prosecute Daniel, while ignoring anyone else's violation of the law
 - If this is so, then it would mean that any other Jew who chose to remain faithful to God was spared in the end
 - They didn't go to the lions' den because they were never the true target
 - And even if some were caught and killed, their faithfulness was a testimony to the rest of Israel

- This is how the Lord uses trial to purify the true heart and expose the false
 - And as the story will reveal, the Lord continues to bless those who are faithful in Israel
 - This is the fundamental lesson of the chapter...that faithfulness, even in times of trial, has its own rewards
- The commissioners tell the king to sign the law so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians
 - They are referring to a unique aspect of Medo-Persian law
 - In their law, the king was all powerful in the kingdom
 - There was no senate or parliament to counter his judgments
 - In that sense, their kingdom was equal to the Babylonians
 - But there was one key difference
 - The Medes and Persians required sitting kings to honor all previous royal edicts, even their own
 - So once a law was passed by a king, it couldn't be changed or ignored, even by future kings
 - This was a constraint on the king's power, since it gave a king reason to give careful thought before making edicts
 - This one difference between the Medo-Persian empire and the Babylonians accounts for the difference in the metals in the statue
 - Remember, we noted that the gold of Babylon gave way to the silver of the Medes and Persians
 - Silver is of lower value than gold, which suggested a less glorious or majestic kingdom
 - The lower value of the metal is symbolic of this limit on the king's power in the Medo-Persian empire
 - Babylonian kings had no such restriction, and therefore, they were more majestic in power
- The commissioners' trick worked and the king signed the document, sealing Daniel's fate
 - We can't tell if the king expected to entrap Daniel with his order
 - He may have given his law little forethought, which is ironic, given the Medo-Persian rule
 - He took the bad counsel and acted too quickly
 - As a result, he needlessly endangers the life of his most trusted advisor

Dan. 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving

thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

Dan. 6:11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

Dan. 6:12 Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

Dan. 6:13 Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

Dan. 6:14 Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.

Dan. 6:15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

- First, we hear that Daniel has learned of the decree
 - He must have suspected why it has been issued and that it was directed against him
 - He has suffered attacks and jealousies in his role ever since he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream
 - So this is nothing new
 - On the other hand, this threat represents real jeopardy for Daniel
 - The king has issued an injunction Daniel can't obey
 - And he has specified a penalty he can't survive, or so one would assume
 - So we might think Daniel would step carefully at this point
 - Nevertheless, in v.10, we're told Daniel keeps to his normal routine
 - Three times a day, Daniel goes to a room on the roof, where it was cooler and semi-private, and he prays and gives thanks to the Lord, facing Jerusalem
 - His posture of facing the city was a practice Solomon taught the people of Israel as a way of looking expectantly for the Messiah
 - Obviously, Daniel's routine was already somewhat private
 - But because Daniel has followed this routine for so long, it was also probably well known
 - For that reason, we would expect Daniel to change his practice, now that it could get him killed
 - Daniel could go about his worship and prayer, but do it at other times, or in other places or less frequently

- But Daniel shows great confidence in his convictions by sticking to his normal pattern
- Even as we consider his courage, are you not simply impressed by his routine?
 - He prays and praises the Lord every day, three times a day, without fail
 - It's one thing for Daniel to hold the line in the face of persecution
 - That's admirable, of course, and some of us would struggle to follow his example
 - We might see persecution as good reason to shrink back and save ourselves by becoming more secretive in our practices
 - On the other hand, following this practice routinely is a challenge all itself
 - Many people gain greater resolve in the face of trials
 - It's not uncommon for people to grow stronger when under threat
 - Like a mother putting herself in harm's way to save her children
 - Or a husband protecting his wife from an intruder, *etc.*
 - We grow braver and show more resolve when someone threatens us
- For this reason, I'm even more impressed that Daniel followed his three-times-a-day routine before God, even when he wasn't being persecuted
 - I think the hardest test of faithfulness to pass is keeping to our disciplines of the faith when times are easy and nothing forces our hand
 - It's easy to find time to pray when you're desperate for rescue
 - But it's hard to pray when we don't feel you have much need for God's grace
 - It's easy to give thanks in times of ease
 - But it's hard to rise three times a day to thank the Lord when doing so puts you at risk of dying for proclaiming it
 - Daniel prayed three times a day in times of ease
 - And he gave thanks to the Lord three times a day in times of great trial and testing
 - He's a great example of a mature, faithful follower of God
 - He didn't let his relationship with the Lord turn on his life circumstances
 - And he didn't let life's circumstances dictate his pattern of prayer and praise
 - How closely do we live this pattern in our lives?
 - It's been said that those who have no regular habit of prayer or study or praise rarely do much praying, studying or praising
 - In other words, these practices develop out of habit
 - And the formation of habits must be by intent, by choice
 - They will not form of their own
 - And if you do not make them habit in times of ease, then you will not turn to

them with much conviction in times of distress

- Then in v.11, we see the conspiracy come to conclusion
 - His adversaries came “by agreement” to Daniel’s house at one of his appointed prayer times
 - “By agreement” means in a conspiracy, because they want multiple witnesses to make their accusations stick
 - They planned the time of their visit to coincide with Daniel’s usual time of prayer
 - And they knew what they would find
 - After they observe Daniel in violation of the order, they quickly return to the king and make their accusations
 - First, they remind the king of his edict
 - And they remind him that an order by the king is binding, even upon the king himself
 - To which the king agrees again
 - Then, they lower the boom and reveal what Daniel has been witnessed doing
 - Obviously, these men realize that Darius has a sweet spot in his heart for Daniel
 - And in fact, notice in v.14, that the king is distressed over Daniel’s situation
 - And then he begins to look for some way to rescue Daniel
- This is different than the corresponding story in our chiasm in Chapter 3
 - In that chapter, Nebuchadnezzar had become enraged at Daniel’s friends
 - So he quickly ordered that they would be placed in a super hot furnace
 - His anger burned against them, being driven by his pride
 - But now, we see the Gentile king working hard to save Daniel
 - But having been trapped by his own edict and his kingdom’s own rules, the king can do nothing to help Daniel
 - Not even the king of the most powerful kingdom on earth can save Daniel now
 - The point in this difference is to emphasize that God doesn’t just rescue the remnant of Israel from kings He sets against them
 - God remains Israel’s deliverer, even when kings are favorable to Israel
 - The Lord has constructed this situation so that Daniel’s rescue must depend on the Lord, and the Lord alone
 - Darius may be king, but even he can’t solve this problem
- So all that remained was for the sentence to be carried out

Dan. 6:16 Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions’ den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Your God whom you constantly

serve will Himself deliver you.”

Dan. 6:17 A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

Dan. 6:18 Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

Dan. 6:19 Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions’ den.

Dan. 6:20 When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

Dan. 6:21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever!

Dan. 6:22 “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.”

Dan. 6:23 Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

- Now we have the infamous moment which has inspired countless young coloring book artists
 - As Daniel is pushed into the den, the king pronounces a prophetic blessing
 - He says the Lord Daniel served continuously will deliver him
 - In other words, the king is saying you served me well, Daniel, but I couldn’t save you
 - So the God you serve without fail will have to save you instead
 - And as I said, that’s exactly what the Lord wanted
 - He is Israel’s Deliverer
 - Even though Gentile nations rule over Israel, those nations do not hold the secret to Israel’s safety and security
 - The Lord alone is Israel’s strength
 - The king’s words sound a lot like the way many Christians think under trying circumstances
 - We pray, “God, I couldn’t solve this problem myself.”
 - “And my family and friends couldn’t solve it.”
 - “My lawyer, banker or doctor couldn’t solve it...”
 - “So I guess you are going to have to solve it.”
 - Why do we try everything else before seeking the Lord?
 - In Daniel’s case, the Lord *wanted* everyone else out of the way so He could show

Himself to Daniel

- But Daniel was already praying three times a day
- And I suspect he prayed for deliverance even before he was taken before the king
- But if we're not in the habit of praying and praising regularly, perhaps the Lord will use trial to teach us the importance of depending upon Him
- Nevertheless, there is no guarantee the Lord is going to rescue us every time we come to Him for relief
 - He may solve our problem, or He may let it overcome us
 - Regardless of how it turns out in the end, the question is: did we respond in faith and obedience?
 - Because the spiritual benefits of depending on the Lord are far greater than the physical toll taken by our trials
- At that moment, the king puts Daniel in the den, which was a large pit or cistern used to hold the king's lions
 - A cistern was a large underground cavern used to store rain water
 - Larger cisterns or pits can be the size of a large hall or theater, so this pit may have been a very large cave
 - As Daniel is dropped into the pit, the entrance is covered over with a stone
 - So no one is going in and no one is going out
 - That sealing reminds us of Jesus' tomb
 - In fact, Daniel can serve as a picture of Christ here
 - Like Daniel, Jesus was given over to death for obedience to the Word of God
 - Jesus was subjected to the penalty by a ruler, Pilate, who was sympathetic, but felt he had no choice
 - Only Jesus' God could rescue Him
 - And after a time in the ground, He was vindicated by His God and Father
 - Certainly, no one expected to see anything of Daniel again
 - No one being left overnight in such a place would be expected to survive
 - In fact, there would be no trace of the person come morning
 - Every bit of the person would be consumed
- During that night, the king is fasting and wants no entertainment before him, because he's obviously not in the mood for merriment
 - The king is troubled by what has happened and he can't sleep at all
 - It's interesting to wonder about what the king is doing
 - He is obviously worried for Daniel and yet, he seems to hold out some kind of hope

- His fasting would seem to suggest a petition before a god or gods
- But it may just be nerves
- When morning comes, he goes to the den with some anticipation
 - He seems to believe that Daniel's God has the potential to do something miraculous for Daniel
 - Such a thought would be expected for a pagan, since they looked to many gods for many things
 - But perhaps Daniel's history and the history of Yahweh in Babylon are also giving the king some reason for hope
- The next morning, the king rushes to see if Daniel survived
 - The sentence of death in the lions' den must not have had a specific length of time, since the king is already ready to release Daniel
 - Again, the king's return to open the pit at dawn foreshadows the women running to Jesus' tomb on the first day of the week
 - And like Jesus' tomb, the king finds only the living in the pit
 - He calls out to Daniel through the mouth of the opening
 - His question is specific:
 - Has your God delivered you?
 - The king is already prepared to credit Israel's God, should Daniel have survived
 - Again, this is the message of the chapter
 - And the Lord is reminding the reader of the point each time the king makes this pronouncement
 - Daniel is in God's hands
 - And even lions submit to God's will
- Daniel responds to the king with a greeting of honor and respect
 - Remember, Daniel is in his 80's by this time, probably a bit feeble and obviously no match for a lion
 - And so as he emerges unscathed, it's clearly a miracle
 - Daniel says the Lord sent His Angel to guard the lions' mouths
 - The mention of God's Angel suggests the Angel of the Lord appeared to save Daniel
 - Remember, the Angel of the Lord saved Daniel's friends in Chapter 3
 - So it seems sensible to conclude this is the same Person, that is Jesus Christ, pre-incarnate
 - Daniel says the Lord shut the mouths of the lions
 - His words make clear that the lions were still inclined to eat Daniel
 - This wasn't a case of lazy or disinterested lions

- They were supernaturally held back from pursuing their natural course
- When Jesus went to the grave, it was the enemy himself who pursued Jesus, but the enemy wasn't able to defeat Jesus in the end
 - The Bible calls the enemy a prowling lion looking to devour
 - And the Lord shut the enemy's mouth in His day, just as He did in Daniel's day
- Daniel adds that his vindication was proof from God that Daniel was innocent in the matter
 - Daniel is speaking about the larger claims the king's advisors made against him
 - Daniel certainly violated the king's law
 - He prayed to a God other than the king
 - But the advisors sold the king on passing this law on the basis that it would expose those who were disloyal to the king
 - And in that, Daniel was innocent
 - He was not disloyal to the king
 - In fact, he was the king's most loyal subject
 - The king's edict was poorly conceived and executed rashly, leading to Daniel's entrapment
 - So the Lord vindicated Daniel by saving him in the den
 - Interestingly, the edict said that this law remained in effect for 30 days
 - Yet, we must assume that Daniel went back to praying three times a day without further incident
 - We know the law could not be changed
 - So how did Daniel avoid another round of persecution under that law?
- The answer is, his enemies were no longer around to accuse him
 - Because ironically, the king's edict did, in fact, expose those who were disloyal to him

Dan. 6:24 The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

- Those who had conspired against Daniel were now judged guilty of the very crime they accused Daniel of
 - They weren't guilty of praying to another god
 - But they were guilty of disloyalty by conspiring against one of the king's loyal advisors
- Therefore, the king cast all of them and their families into the den

- And this time, the lions' mouths were allowed to remain open
- In fact, we might wonder if the lions were all the more hungry, having just stared at Daniel all night without being able to pounce
- While we might question the decision to destroy whole families, this was common practice in these days
 - The errors of the leader of a home brought consequences to everyone in the home
 - This is still somewhat true today, though not in the same way, obviously
 - If a father is poor with money, the family suffers
 - If a wife has an affair, the family suffers
 - If children rebel, the family suffers
 - These aren't necessarily judgments from God, so much as the natural consequences of sin
- The chapter finishes with another decree, one that sounds much like the one issued in Chapter 4 by Nebuchadnezzar, following his humiliation

Dan. 6:25 Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound!

Dan. 6:26 "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel;
For He is the living God and enduring forever,
And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed,
And His dominion will be forever.

Dan. 6:27 "He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

Dan. 6:28 So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- Darius wrote an edict for all people of earth to hear, which again made sense, given he was (co)ruler of the most powerful nation on earth
 - As we read his recounting of the story and his praise for Daniel's God, we see two things reinforced
 - First, the key lesson of the chapter emerges again
 - God will rule over the Gentile nations that rule over Israel
 - So that as Israel exists under Gentile authority during the Age of Gentiles, this is according to God's purposes and plans
 - Secondly, Gentile kingdoms will rise and fall as God appoints, but His dominion goes on forever
 - He is still on the throne, and Israel's plight is not cause to doubt God's power and authority

- Here, we see another chapter where God uses Gentile kings to remind Israel of that truth
- Finally, Darius' praise for Yahweh leads us to ask the same question we asked about Nebuchadnezzar: did he become a convert? Was he saved by faith in the Lord?
 - He uses striking language
 - He calls Yahweh the Living God and the God that endures forever
 - But he also calls Him the God of Daniel
 - Once again, the answer is, we don't know for sure
 - It makes more sense to conclude that the Lord doesn't persuade the king to faith
 - It would remind Israel that God can use even their enemies to save them
- The chapter ends, reminding us that Daniel forevermore enjoyed success under these kings in Persia
 - The events of Daniel 7 and 8 occur prior to these events in Chapter 6
 - But the events of Chapter 9 happen in the same year as the lions' den experience
 - And then Daniel's final revelations are given in Chapters 10-12
 - Those revelations come in the third year of Cyrus' reign, just a couple of years after this
 - Daniel died soon thereafter, while still in Babylon
 - He never returned to Jerusalem
 - He was faithful during his time in exile

- We've finally reached the conclusion of the chiastic structure
 - The final step is literally back to the future
 - We return to the prophecy about the Age of the Gentiles
 - The Age of the Gentiles is a period of history that God has planned for Israel and the world
 - The age is marked by three things, according to what we learned back in Chapter 2
 - First, it is a time for Israel to be scattered outside their land
 - Secondly, their city, Jerusalem, will be under Gentile domination
 - Thirdly, this age must continue until the Messiah's Second Coming
 - At Christ's return, the Jewish nation will be returned to her place as the supreme nation on earth
 - If this background is unfamiliar to you, then I encourage you to revisit our teaching from Chapter 2 of this study
 - That review will be helpful for you, since Daniel 7 takes the teaching of Chapter 2 and expands it greatly
 - But by that token, understanding Chapter 7 depends on a firm grasp of Chapter 2
 - Just as the chiasm that runs from Chapters 2-7 would suggest

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

B - God delivers Daniel's friends from Gentile persecution

C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

C' - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty

B' - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution

A' - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- So let's set the scene for the events of Chapter 7 by reading the opening passage

Dan. 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.

Dan. 7:2 Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

Dan. 7:3 "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

Dan. 7:4 "The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking

until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

Dan. 7:5 “And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’

Dan. 7:6 “After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

- We’re going back in time
 - Daniel dates this chapter to the first year of Belshazzar’s reign as king of Babylon
 - Remember, Chapter 5 described how Belshazzar’s reign came to an end
 - And then, Chapter 6 moved forward in time to the reign of the Medo-Persian king, Darius
 - But now we’ve moved backward to the beginning of Belshazzar’s reign
 - History records that he reigned 14 years, so we’ve gone back about 15 years in times
 - That timeline places Daniel in his mid-sixties and still serving the king of Babylon
 - And at that time, he receives a troubling dream
 - And with it, he also receives a personal interpretation from an angel sent from the Lord
 - This dream and its interpretation parallels the dream God gave to Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter 2, but it adds important new details
 - In fact, taken as a whole, this chapter reveals more detail about future events than any other chapter in the Old Testament
 - The only other place in the Bible comparable to this chapter is the Book of Revelation
 - So, the Lord is speaking to the final king of Babylon through Daniel in the same way He spoke to the first king of Babylon concerning the same subject
- In v.2, Daniel begins to describe his strange dream
 - Four winds were stirring up the great sea
 - When we attempt to interpret symbols in prophetic passages, we must be constrained by proper rules of interpretation
 - The meaning of symbols will always be given somewhere in the Bible
 - First, we consult the immediate context for an answer
 - If none is found, then we look elsewhere in the same book of Scripture for an explanation of the symbol
 - If still no answer is found, we look elsewhere in the Bible

- But in all cases, we will find an answer given
- In this case, the great sea is consistently a reference to the Mediterranean Sea, which was the greatest body of water in Israel's experience
 - In Scripture, the Mediterranean Sea is used symbolically to represent the population of the earth
 - It means the masses of humanity, but particularly the Gentile nations of the earth
 - This symbol is used in this way in Isaiah and Jeremiah
 - And Jesus uses the sea symbolically in the same way in Matthew 13, Luke 21, and multiple times in Revelation
- And the four winds is a reference to God's power over His creation
 - The Hebrew word for "winds" is a synonym for "spirits"
 - So, we could translate v.2 to say the four "spirits" were stirring up the sea
 - Four winds are used symbolically in this way in multiple places in both the Old and New Testament (e.g., Jer., Zech., Rev.)
- Next, Daniel says four beasts emerged from the sea
 - Each beast was different from the other, and Daniel describes each beast's appearance
 - Before we look at each beast in turn, let's first note the similarity to our matching chapter in the chiasm, Chapter 2
 - In Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a statue with four sections
 - Those sections described a timeline of kingdoms, each one replacing the prior one
 - But that chapter told us virtually nothing about the nature of each kingdom
 - Now in this dream, we have four beasts, and as we're going to see, these four animals correspond to the same four kingdoms
 - But beasts do not imply a timeline, as did the parts of the statue
 - Instead, the beasts emphasize the nature of each kingdom
 - So this dream confirms the earlier interpretation and adds important information about what to expect in each kingdom period
 - Most importantly, this chapter focuses our attention on the final stage of the fourth kingdom
 - Remember, Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue was actually a dream of five kingdoms, not four
 - At the conclusion of the fourth stage of the statue, a new Kingdom was established from Heaven
 - As we learned in Chapter 2, that final kingdom is the Kingdom of Christ that He establishes at His Second Coming
- Now in Chapter 7, we're going to learn important details about how the last kingdom

comes to its end in preparation for the Lord's return

- Naturally, this is our primary interest in the prophecy
 - The four kingdoms have already appeared in history
 - Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome have all come and gone
 - So as the world moves to the final period of the fourth kingdom, our interest naturally moves to how the Age of the Gentiles ends
 - Therefore, the prophecy in this chapter fills in many of those blanks
- So at this point, we arrive at our interpretation of the sea, wind and beasts
 - The Lord tells Daniel He will move among the Gentile nations of the world supernaturally to raise up four kingdoms
 - The first of these kingdoms is Babylon (which we know from Chapter 2)
 - That kingdom is pictured by a lion with the wings of an eagle
 - At a point, the wings are plucked
 - Later, the beast is made to stand up like a man and a man's mind is given to the beast
 - As we would expect, all the details of this beast match the history of Babylon perfectly
 - First, the nation of Babylon used both a lion and an eagle as national symbols
 - In fact, statues have been found in Babylon of lions with wings
 - Furthermore, the beast's description matches Nebuchadnezzar's seven-year episode of exile
 - He had his authority and honor removed by God (*i.e.*, wings plucked)
 - But later, Nebuchadnezzar was restored from living like a beast
 - He was returned to his position as king and his right mind was returned to him, as we saw in Chapter 4
- Next, Daniel describes the second beast as a bear raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth
 - Here again, the symbol matched the history of the Medo-Persian empire that replaced the Babylonian Empire
 - In ancient Palestine, the bear was considered the second most fearsome predator, after the Lion
 - And the bear is a creature known for overpowering prey by its weight and strength
 - The bear crushes and rips apart its prey
 - Such was the military strategy of the Medo-Persian empire
 - They amassed huge armies that defeated enemies by sheer strength in numbers
 - And as they conquered, they utterly destroyed their enemies with a vengeance

- Furthermore, their empire arose out of two peoples, the Medes and the Persians, yet it was not a union of equals
 - The Persians were by far the more powerful people, having a much larger empire and superior army to the Medes
 - This is reflected in the bear leaning to one side
 - Heavenly voices told the bear to devour much meat, meaning to conquer many nations
- And the kingdom defeated three major adversaries in its rise to world domination
 - First, it defeated the Babylon
 - Later, it conquered Lydian
 - Finally, it conquered Egypt
 - These three conquests are represented by the three ribs in the bear's mouth
 - This empire ruled for 208 years, having conquered an area greater than even Babylon possessed
- Next, Daniel describes a beast resembling a leopard with four heads and four wings
 - This beast corresponds to the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, which conquered the Medo-Persians
 - In fact, history reports that Alexander pointed to the Book of Daniel in his day as proof he was destined to conquer the world
 - So, taking confidence in Daniel's prediction, Alexander's armies moved swiftly from West to East, completing a victory in record time
 - In three years, Alexander conquered territory stretching from Greece to Africa to India, which reflects the swiftness of a leopard
 - During Alexander's life, he delegated governmental control over this vast territory to four divisions with a single governor in charge of each
 - This division is represented by the four heads of the leopard
 - At Alexander's death, he had no heirs, so his empire was divided among four generals in four geographical regions
 - There was an East, West, North and South division, which is represented by the four wings
- All these details track with history and with the earlier dream in Chapter 2
 - They are also of little interest to us, beyond simply confirming the accuracy of Daniel's prophecy
 - The real interest has always been with the fourth kingdom
 - Not only does the fourth kingdom receive the most attention both in Chapter 2 and here in Chapter 7, but it's the most important historically
 - This kingdom will be the one that ushers in the Kingdom of Christ one day
 - Therefore, we are most interested in knowing how this kingdom will proceed over time and in particular, how it ends

- Since we know we are currently living in the fourth kingdom period, then these details will naturally be very important to us
- In fact, they speak of our own future, looking ahead to the end of this age
- So then, Daniel describes the next visions he sees in his dream

Dan. 7:7 “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

Dan. 7:8 “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

Dan. 7:9 “I kept looking
Until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;
His vesture was like white snow
And the hair of His head like pure wool.
His throne was ablaze with flames,
Its wheels were a burning fire.

Dan. 7:10 “A river of fire was flowing
And coming out from before Him;
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;
The court sat,
And the books were opened.

Dan. 7:11 “Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire.

Dan. 7:12 “As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

Dan. 7:13 “I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.

Dan. 7:14 “And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;

And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

- The first thing we notice about Daniel's description of the fourth beast is his inability to compare it to any living creature today
 - In the case of the earlier beasts, Daniel drew comparisons to real-life animals: a lion, eagle, bear, leopard
 - But in this case, there simply was no comparison possible
 - This beast was unlike anything else, dreadful and terrifying
 - And this detail alone piques our interest, as God intended
 - This creature was very strong, with iron teeth, and it trampled and crushed all the prior kingdoms
 - This beast corresponds to the fourth kingdom in the statue and, as with the earlier beasts, several details confirm our interpretation
 - First, this kingdom devours the prior kingdoms, confirming this kingdom is the one that follows the Greek Empire
 - Second, this beast has iron teeth, which reminds us of the iron legs of the fourth kingdom of the statue
 - Third, it has ten horns
 - We're going to look at these horns more closely in a minute, but already, we see a confirmation that this matches the fourth kingdom of the statue
 - In the statue, the fourth age ended with "ten toes"
 - In Chapter 2, the meaning of the ten toes wasn't explained, but now, the ten horns in this dream will give opportunity for the Lord to explain
 - Speaking of the horns, we learn that among the ten horns, an eleventh horn suddenly appears on the beast
 - This horn was unique, in that it had facial features of a man and was able to speak
 - It uttered great boasts, meaning it made audacious claims about itself
 - And it did violence to three of the other horns, resulting in only seven remaining
- Next, in v.9, we see the end of all the beasts and the arrival of an entirely new Kingdom
 - Once again, this detail matches the ending of the statue prophecy
 - In Chapter 2, the statue was destroyed by the arrival of the rock not cut by human hands
 - That rock represented Christ's Second Coming
 - And of course, the statue itself represents the Age of the Gentiles
 - So, we learned that the Age of the Gentiles will end when the Lord returns to set up His Kingdom on earth

- Now, we find a similar pattern in Daniel's dream
 - The 4 beasts here represent the same 4 kingdoms of the Age of the Gentiles
 - And now in v.9, we see a description of Jesus' return and the Kingdom
- First, we're told that thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days took His seat
 - This is a reference to the Father God
 - He has taken a seat, in the sense of a judge preparing to pass judgment
 - His description is similar to the description that John gives us of the glorified Lord in Revelation 1

Rev. 1:13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

Rev. 1:14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

- Though one describes the Father and the other the Son, nevertheless, the similar appearance of both is purposeful
 - Jesus appeared to John in Revelation to explain what events would bring the age to an end
 - And Daniel is receiving a dream describing very much the same thing
 - Therefore, these two moments are intended to be linked in our minds
 - Hence, the similar description of both members of the Godhead
- Around the Father was the court of Heaven
 - His throne was ablaze and a river of fire flowed around Him
 - He was attended to by thousands and myriads, whether angels or others
 - And with books being opened, it's clear that a judgment according to Law is about to take place
- After the Father has sat down to judge, our attention is turned to events on earth, where the Father's judgment is directed
 - First, the beast (and his boasting horn) is slain and destroyed, given over to a judgment of fire
 - This is a direct result of the Father's judgment in Heaven
 - This pattern of heavenly judgment followed by earthly consequences mirrors the events of Revelation
 - We're seeing that Daniel's vision is a preview of the events described in Revelation
 - In effect, Daniel 7 is a "little Revelation", describing the way the Heavenly judgments of Tribulation result in earthly destruction
 - Furthermore, not only is the fourth beast destroyed, but so are the remnants of the

earlier beasts, so that all they represented was also taken away

- Interestingly, before this judgment is concluded, this age is permitted to continue for a time
- We will learn more about this time period later
- Finally, as judgment comes against the Gentile kingdoms that rule during the Age of the Gentiles, a new Kingdom arises
 - This new Kingdom begins with the Son of Man coming from the clouds of Heaven
 - This reminds us of the rock coming out of Heaven and it confirms that the rock is Jesus
 - Daniel says in v.13 that the Son of Man is “presented” before the Father before coming to earth to begin His rule
 - This scene is described in detail in Revelation 4 & 5

Rev. 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.”

Rev. 4:2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

Rev. 4:3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

Rev. 5:1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

Rev. 5:2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?”

Rev. 5:3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.

Rev. 5:4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

Rev. 5:5 and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”

Rev. 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Rev. 5:10 “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they

will reign upon the earth.”

Rev. 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

Rev. 5:12 saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

- Notice the description of the scene
 - Myriads of angels attending to the Father on the throne
 - And the Son of God being presented before the Father and receiving the right to judge the world
 - Finally, the Son being granted a Kingdom on earth, having purchased the earth with His blood
- Compare that description to the one we have in Daniel v.14
 - All the same features are present
 - People from every tribe, tongue and nation serving Christ
 - The Son of Man presented before the Father
 - The Son granted a dominion
 - And Christ’s dominion will last forever
 - There will never be another Gentile nation or any kingdom to take power away from Christ
- By the way, when Jesus referred to Himself as Messiah in the Gospels, the title He used most often was Son of Man, found here in Daniel
 - He uses the title 31 times in Matthew alone
 - It seems Jesus was emphasizing He was the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy
 - Jesus is the One coming to end the fourth kingdom
 - He is the One granted authority to rule over the world
- So to this point in Daniel’s dream, we see a consistent parallel with Daniel 2
 - The four beasts represent the four kingdoms of the Age of the Gentiles
 - The final kingdom is different than the rest
 - It possesses an unique final stage, involving the symbol “ten”
 - And it leads the world into the Second Coming of Christ
 - We also learned some new details
 - The symbol “ten” is more complex than we saw in Chapter 2
 - It involves an eleventh that makes great claims about itself and contends with the other ten

- And these things accompany a brief period of intense judgment poured out from God in Heaven against the fourth kingdom
- Obviously, there is still a lot of questions we want answered, and Daniel feels the same way, so we see what he does next

Dan. 7:15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

Dan. 7:16 “I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

Dan. 7:17 ‘These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth.

Dan. 7:18 ‘But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’

- Daniel says his spirit was distressed at these visions, for obvious reasons
 - Just as Nebuchadnezzar had been disturbed by his dream, Daniel was preoccupied in seeking answers for his visions
 - It seems when God sends messages by dreams, the receiver will always sense that the dream has unique importance
 - This may be a good rule of thumb for us to know if a dream is truly spiritually meaningful
 - Does the dream stick in your mind in a unique way? Do you feel compelled to understand it?
 - If not, it's probably just too much pizza the night before
 - But Daniel knows this dream is important
 - In fact, even while he is still in his dream state, Daniel addresses a fellow observer in the dream visions, asking for answers
 - Wouldn't it be nice to have someone in your dreams with you to explain why you went to school in only your underwear?
 - In this case, the one who could interpret dreams needed an interpreter
 - This little detail reminds us why the Lord works through interpreters
 - The kings of Babylon received visions, but they lacked answers
 - So when they received their answer supernaturally, they understood the dream had been a divine message
 - Similarly, even the prophet needed divine intervention to understand the message, which validated it was from God
- In this case, we don't know the identity of the divine interpreter, but given what we see happening later in the Book of Daniel, it was likely an angel
 - In the interpretation, we find confirmation of all the interpretations I proposed in

the earlier passage

- First, the four beasts are four kingdoms, the same kingdoms as in Chapter 2
- And the final kingdom is the Kingdom of God that comes to rule the earth after the end of these four Gentile kingdoms
- Again, no surprises here
- But Daniel had other things he wanted to know, just like us

Dan. 7:19 “Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet,

Dan. 7:20 and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates.

Dan. 7:21 “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them

Dan. 7:22 until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

- Daniel’s attention was focused on the fourth beast because it was so unique
- Of course, God made it unique to draw Daniel’s attention and to draw our attention as well
- In particular, Daniel wanted to know about those horns and the eleventh one
- Notice, Daniel gives us a little more detail about the boastful horn’s behavior
 - He adds that this eleventh horn is waging war against the saints
 - A saint is not a special person above other believers
 - The term “saint” in Scripture is always a reference to any and all who belong to God, His children by faith, those who believe
 - We would say today those who are “saved” or “born-again”
 - So at the end of the Age of the Gentiles, an eleventh “horn” is trying to kill believers
 - And Daniel says the horn was overpowering them
 - That is, the horn was succeeding in killing believers
 - But the horn’s power only lasted until the Ancient of Days passed judgment in favor of the saints
 - Interestingly, Daniel then says that the saints, including those who have been overpowered, were now taking possession of the earthly kingdom

- In other words, those who were killed by the eleventh horn lived again
- And in their living, they took back the kingdom that the fourth beast and his eleventh horn had fought to obtain
- So the eleventh horn may have won a battle here or there, but he lost the war
- The saints and their King, Christ, win in the end
- This now brings us to the heart of the chapter, when the angel interprets the meaning of these new symbols for Daniel

Dan. 7:23 “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

Dan. 7:24 ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

Dan. 7:25 ‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Dan. 7:26 ‘But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

Dan. 7:27 ‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’

Dan. 7:28 “At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”

- The angel’s interpretation fleshes out the last days of the fourth kingdom in remarkable detail
 - And as you’re going to see, these details map perfectly to later prophecy given to the Apostle John in Revelation
 - First, the angel says in v.23 that the fourth kingdom is a different type of kingdom
 - It’s different in comparison to the three that came before it
 - This reminds us of the statue description from Chapter 2
 - In Chapter 2, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar this:

Dan. 2:40 “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

Dan. 2:41 “In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of

iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

Dan. 2:42 “As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.

Dan. 2:43 “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

- Notice in this description, the fourth kingdom will consist of alliances being broken apart only to join back together in new ways
 - When we studied this chapter, we concluded that the fourth kingdom was different than the prior three
 - It wasn't a monolithic government or empire
 - It began as the Roman Empire, which itself went through numerous phases over its existence
- But eventually, it broke up into pieces, which later recombined in various alliances
 - Even today, we see that pattern continuing
 - Just as the alliances have changed, so have the names it calls itself
 - But in all cases, the fourth kingdom continues to exist and to exert its controlling authority over Jerusalem and the Jewish people
- Now in Daniel 7, we see the angel confirming this pattern in v.23
 - This kingdom is different than the rest
 - Don't try to find a single nation or government to represent the whole of this kingdom
 - Because God has designed it to be different than the pattern He established in the earlier three kingdoms
 - This is one of the primary mistakes interpreters make in trying to label the fourth kingdom in historical terms
 - The amillennialist (those who don't believe in a literal 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ on earth) commonly makes this mistake
 - They hold that the fourth kingdom was nothing more than Rome, so that once the Roman Empire disappeared, the Age of the Gentiles ended
 - Therefore, this leads them to conclude we must now be living in the promised Kingdom
 - This view is wrong for many reasons, according to Scripture, but one reason is found here in Daniel
 - If we assign the fourth kingdom to the Roman Empire alone, then this kingdom can't be said to be truly different from the rest
 - In fact, it would be very much like the rest

- No, the meaning of the angel's words in v.23 (and Daniel's in Chapter 2) tells us to look for something unlike what has come before
 - Specifically, the fourth kingdom period may start with a monolithic power in Rome, but it doesn't end that way
 - After Rome, the fourth kingdom lives on, dividing and recombining into new alliances
 - These alliances being formed from among the crushed "pieces" of the earlier kingdoms
 - This is exactly what we've seen in the centuries after Rome, and it continues today (Brexit, anyone?)
- Then in v.24, the angel begins to explain the horns
 - Each horn represents a king, he says
 - Out of this fourth kingdom, ten kings will arise
 - These are the ten horns Daniel saw initially
 - Notice that these ten horns are contemporaries
 - They exist and rule at the same time
 - All ten are together
 - Just as the statue in Daniel 2 ended with ten toes lined up together
 - Also, remember that the statue was a timeline, so therefore, the toes represented the very end of the Age of the Gentiles
 - Now we know that the ten toes symbolize the ten kings again
 - So this tells us that the ten kings must come at the very end of the age, right before the Lord's return
 - We are living in the fourth kingdom now, and yet we don't see ten rulers controlling the entire earth
 - In fact, we have never seen this come to pass during this kingdom period
 - Therefore, we know this prophecy still lies in our future, too
 - Some (particularly amillennialists) have interpreted the ten kings as ten successive caesars of Rome
 - There are numerous problems with this interpretation
 - But a key problem is that the symbol of ten horns requires these kings rule at the same time
 - And again, the world has yet to see ten world rulers during the time of the fourth kingdom
 - Therefore, this must be an unfulfilled prophecy
- The angel continues in v.24 to explain the meaning of the strange eleventh horn
 - This extra horn is also a ruler, as the symbol suggests
 - But he is not like the rest

- We wonder in what way he is different, and we get more detail later, in Chapters 9 and 11
- We also get details in the New Testament, particularly in Revelation
- For now, the angel says this horn will subdue three of the existing kings
 - This detail confirms that the ten kings must be contemporaries, since three are being deposed by the eleventh
 - The word “subdue” could have been translated “humbled”
 - These kings are brought low, taken out of power
 - Apparently, the eleventh king doesn’t need to humble the other seven, since presumably they don’t oppose him
- Once the eleventh king has consolidated his power, he begins to go to war against God Himself and the saints of God, that is, believers
 - During this time, he will intend or try to make changes to “times” and to “law”
 - These statements are obscure, being by themselves, so we can only propose possibilities
 - A change in times suggests a change to our calendar
 - Remember, our calendar is centered on the First Coming of Christ
 - So it makes sense that someone who opposes God would seek to change a calendar that honors His Son
 - And a change in law could be almost anything, but considering what we know, it seems to relate to opposing the saints
 - Perhaps he outlaws worship of Christ
 - Perhaps he determines that those who are professing Christians are to be executed
 - We will see confirmation of this in Revelation
- Then, the angel says this king will have his way on earth for a period of time, specifically a time, times and half a time
 - This phrase is well-known to students of prophecy, especially in the book of Revelation
 - The phrase is a simple arithmetic equation
 - The word “time” represents the number 1
 - The word “times” represents the number 2 (plural of time)
 - And then “half a time” represents .5
 - So the phrase can be written $1 + 2 + .5 = 3.5$
 - Later in the book of Revelation, which describes this same period of time, we come to learn that this phrase describes 3.5 years of time
 - So the eleventh horn reigns over the earth, persecuting the saints and opposing God, for three and a half years

- This is what Daniel meant earlier, when he said the kingdom was granted an extension of life for a brief time
 - The Ancient of Days has already sat for judgment and the sentence has been decreed
 - But for a short time, this king is allowed to continue, though his fate has already been fixed and his judgment is sure
- So, the final thing the angel describes is that coming judgment and the kingdom to follow
 - In v.26, the angel says the court sits for judgment and the eleventh king's dominion is taken away and he is destroyed forever
 - In his place, rule of the whole earth is handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High
 - We will live in this Kingdom with our King
 - We serve Him and obey Him
- Before we leave this chapter, let's compare what we've learned in Daniel 7 to a passage from Revelation 13
 - In Revelation 13, we're told of a coming world ruler, called "the beast", who will conquer the entire earth

Rev. 13:1 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

Rev. 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

Rev. 13:3 I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast;

Rev. 13:4 they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

Rev. 13:5 There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.

- This beast of a man is described as having ten horns with ten crowns
 - Notice he comes up from the sea again, as did the beasts of Daniel 7
 - And notice this particular beast is constructed of parts of all four beasts from Daniel 7
 - And he had ten horns on which sit ten crowns
 - Clearly, these details are intended to connect Daniel 7 to Revelation 13
- Then at some point, this leader is killed and yet, after a time, his "fatal" wound is healed

- In other words, he is resurrected
- As a result of his miraculous resurrection, the world is amazed and begins to follow this man, thinking him all powerful
- After this event, he begins to boast arrogantly
- Finally, notice he has his time in the spotlight for 42 months, which happens to be 3.5 years
- All these details confirm that this man is the eleventh horn of Daniel 7
 - He is coming into power in the final three and a half years of the fourth kingdom, which is also the final 3.5 years before Christ's return
 - He goes by many names in the Bible, including "the eleventh horn" and "the beast"
 - Later, in Chapter 9, Daniel will call him the "prince to come"
 - Paul calls him the "son of destruction" and the "man of lawlessness"
 - John labels him the "son of perdition" and most famously of all, "the antichrist"
 - He rules the entire world for the final half of a seven-year period called Tribulation
 - And he is able to gain rule over the world by defeating the ten kings that rule in his day
 - And by his miraculous resurrection, he convinces the world he is the Christ, God Himself
 - This is the boastful thing he claims, the arrogant blasphemy he commits
- How is he able to do these things?
 - In Revelation 13:2, we were told that the dragon gave his power to the beast, enabling him to resurrect and command the world's obedience
 - Revelation 12 tells us that this dragon is Satan himself
 - He brings this man to power, and through a coup, he takes control of the ten kings
 - Daniel says he humbles three of the ten, and Revelation says he is killed and then resurrected at the mid-point of Tribulation
 - It would seem, then, that in his effort to gain control of the world, three of the ten conspire to kill this eleventh man
 - They succeed in killing him, only to see him return to life by the power of Satan
 - At that point, the beast uproots those three kings while the other seven fall in line
 - Revelation 17 explains it this way

Rev. 17:12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.

Rev. 17:13 "These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to

the beast.

- So the ten toes of Daniel 2 and the ten horns of Daniel 7 both point to a confederacy of ten kings that rule the world
 - Revelation confirms that these men rule at the same time in history at a point in the future, shortly before Christ's return
 - They exist for the purpose of enabling the antichrist to rise, when they may give their power to him
 - That is the final state of the fourth kingdom
- Therefore, we know that the Second Coming of Christ could not happen tomorrow
 - That event depends on several things happening first, beginning with the emergence of ten world rulers in place of the hundreds we have today
 - Later, an eleventh man must appear, the antichrist
 - Then he must gain full power for 42 months
 - Only then can Christ return, according to Daniel
 - In fact, we can precisely date the return of Christ
 - It will be exactly 42 months (3.5 years) after the antichrist gains control of the entire world
 - Some might wonder about Christ's words, that no one will know the day and hour of His Coming, not even the angels or the Son Himself?
 - That statement comes from Matthew 24:36 in the Olivet Discourse
 - When Jesus spoke those words, He wasn't referring to His Second Coming
 - He was referring to His return for His Bride, the Church
 - The moment Christ returns to claim the Church and remove us from the earth is a moment that has no warnings, no prerequisites
 - We cannot know that moment, nor does even the Son
 - It's a moment chosen by the Father alone
 - But Christ's second coming to earth to establish His Kingdom is a date dependent on a series of other events, which Daniel and Revelation describe
- So now at the end of our chiasm, we have a clear understanding of the Age of the Gentiles
 - It is a period God brought to pass judgment against his own people
 - It will be many centuries of Gentiles ruling over Israel
 - The period is marked by four major empires
 - Daniel saw the arrival of the first two
 - We are living near the end of the fourth
 - Despite subjecting Israel to this Age of the Gentiles, the Lord hasn't forgotten them

- He will continue to act to preserve a remnant among Israel
- When they are persecuted by Gentiles, the Lord will be their strength
- Daniel and his friends experienced this lesson personally
- And finally, the fact that Gentile rulers have control over Israel doesn't mean they act with impunity
 - God Himself retains His sovereignty over every ruler on earth
 - So that even as Gentiles will command Israel, God will command them
 - This is a final assurance to Israel that God is not moving to destroy them, but to discipline them
 - And so that He may extend mercy to Gentiles as well

- We move into the second part of Daniel's book
 - Chapters 2-7 were written in Aramaic, and therefore, they were directed at both the Jew and Gentile
 - In those chapters, we followed a chiasm that traced the Lord's working to bring world empires into and out of power
 - The chiastic structure served to emphasize that the Lord was in control and that all things were according to His purposes for Israel
 - They would be conquered and oppressed by Gentiles
 - But, they were also under God's hand through it all
 - Now, Daniel returns to writing exclusively in Hebrew, indicating he's speaking only to the Jewish audience in Israel
 - And the events that he describes are some of the most fascinating and important prophecy in the whole of Scripture
 - In Chapters 8-12, Daniel receives visions that address each of the remaining Gentile nations in the Age of the Gentiles
 - Beginning today, Daniel will explain how the Medo-Persians will transition to the Greek Empire
 - And then in later chapters, we learn how the Greek Empire will proceed
 - And then, how the fourth kingdom will proceed
 - Finally, we learn details of how that fourth kingdom will come to its end
- But obviously, Daniel doesn't offer us a complete accounting of everything these empires do during the hundreds of years they will rule
 - Instead, his prophecies focus on how these kingdoms impact Israel
 - In particular, how each kingdom will accomplish the central purpose of the Age of the Gentiles
 - That is, how they trample Jerusalem and the temple
 - Tonight, in Chapter 8, the focus is on the second and third kingdoms
 - How will these kingdoms deal with Israel and the city of Jerusalem and the temple?
 - The visions come to Daniel during the final years of the Babylonian empire
 - So for Daniel and Israel, they were truly prophecy
 - But of course, the events in this chapter are just history now, and therefore, we might ask why it matters to us today?
 - The answer is that this chapter serves to authenticate later chapters' prophecies
 - When we see how accurately Daniel described the events of the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires, we have greater confidence in his later prophecies
 - Because just as it was with the statue and beasts prophecies, the focus in these four chapters is squarely on the final days of the final kingdom

- So let's start with the first part of Chapter 8
 - In this chapter, we learn about an unexpectedly powerful world leader who comes from out of nowhere to dethrone a supposedly undefeatable opponent...

Dan. 8:1 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously.

Dan. 8:2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal.

Dan. 8:3 Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last.

Dan. 8:4 I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

- Daniel dates this prophecy to the third year of Belshazzar
 - Remember, Chapter 7 was dated to the first year of Belshazzar, while Chapter 5 was set 12 years earlier in the final hours of the king's rule
 - So we're jumping around in time, but clearly chronology is not Daniel's first priority
 - His book is organized to convey the significance of these events
 - Daniel's vision begins with the citadel at Susa
 - Susa was an important city in the Babylonian Empire
 - It was located about 200 miles east of Babylon and 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf
 - The Code of Hammurabi, a series of 7-foot tall stone obelisks and tablets was found there in 1901
 - The code was the law of the Babylonian king, Hammurabi, and it described various rules for justice and civil contracts
 - Susa was in Elam, a province of Babylon in modern-day Iran
 - It sat on the edge of the Babylonian Empire
 - But the city later became the capital of the Medo-Persian empire, after it defeated Babylon
 - So the city has dual meaning
 - It represents Babylon's power giving way to the next empire
- In Daniel's vision, he's been transported to the city standing next to the Ulai Canal, an artificial waterway that connected two rivers near Susa
 - Daniel's personal involvement in the vision may explain why he moves to talking

about himself in the first person

- Previously, he's been talking in the third person
- Now he's telling of his personal experiences
- When we remember he is now writing in Hebrew, this change suggests Daniel was speaking as an eyewitness directly to the Jewish people concerning their shared future
- Then we're told of a ram with two horns standing in Susa
 - The ram had two horns, but one horn was larger than the other
 - As we try to understand the meaning of the symbol of a ram, we notice that the lopsided nature of the horns reminds us of the bear in Chapter 7
 - The bear stood lopsided to represent the unequal union of the Medo-Persian Empire
 - The Persians were far more powerful and in short order, they took control of the union
- So immediately, we begin to think that the ram with unequal horns may be another representation of the Medo-Persian Empire
 - And when we look more closely at the symbol of the ram itself, we find confirmation
 - The ram was an important symbol for the Persians
 - In their pagan religion, the Persians represented their primary god as a ram
 - A ram's head was carried by the commander of the army when going into battle
 - Even in the ancient zodiac of the night sky, Persia was associated with Aries, the ram constellation
- So the horns represent the two parts of the Empire, the Medes and Persians
 - A lopsided ram standing in the future capital city of Persian is a uniquely appropriate symbol for the rise of the Medo-Persian empire
 - The Persians were the more powerful, thus the longer horn
 - And the horn comes up "last" because the Persians took control away from the Medes, who held it earlier
 - Finally, the horns sit on a ram, reflecting the way the Medo-Persian empire becomes a Persian empire by the end
 - And the ram's behavior also reflects that nation's ascent to power over Babylon
 - The ram in the vision did as rams are wont to do
 - It butted everything within its reach north, south and west
 - It doesn't go east, though
 - The nation of Persia was the power of the east, so it conquered in the other directions
 - These three directions were pictured in the three ribs of the bear's mouth

- The power of this ram was unchallenged, doing what it wanted, we're told in v.4, because it is the world power
- Next, we hear of another power coming to challenge this supreme ram

Dan. 8:5 While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

Dan. 8:6 He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath.

Dan. 8:7 I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

Dan. 8:8 Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

- Now a goat arrives on the scene and contends with the ram
 - Rams are male sheep, which are obviously a different animal than a goat
 - So this change in type of animals would seem to indicate a change in kingdom
 - That conclusion is based on what we saw happening in Chapter 7
 - Each beast represented a different kingdom
 - We've already seen that the ram is the Medo-Persia empire, so we're looking at a kingdom with the capacity to challenge the Persians
 - Clearly, that leads us to assume that the goat represents the Greek Empire
 - No other empire challenged the Persian Empire until the Greeks destroyed them
 - As we look back to the Alexandrian Empire, we find that the goat was the ancient symbol for Greece
 - The constellation Capricorn, which is latin for "goat horn", stood for Greece in the ancient zodiac
 - And the features of this goat match other aspects of the Greek Empire
 - First, this goat had a single conspicuous horn
 - Normally, goats have two horns, so possessing only one horn suggests a single powerful ruler of this kingdom
 - That certainly fits with the history of Alexander the Great
 - He ruled alone and single-handedly conquered the vast territory that would become the Greek Empire
- Next, the way this goat took control away from the ram fits history

- In v.6, it says the goat “rushed” at the ram
 - Certainly, speed was an essential element in Alexander’s strategy for victory
 - He reached world domination in only 10 years from the beginning of his military career
 - He defeated the near east and middle east in barely three years
- And he defeated the Persians in a series of decisive battles that resulted in the end of their reign over the world
 - The Persians greatly outnumbered the Greeks in battle, as was the Persians’ style of warfare
 - But Alexander was a brilliant military tactician who defeated Persia with movement and disciplined troops
 - So in v.7, we’re told the goat completely ends the strength of the ram
 - So far, all the details match with what we know of these two Empires
- The confirming detail, as if we needed one, is found in v.8
 - Daniel predicts the early death of the leader of this kingdom
 - He says that the one horn on the goat will magnify himself, yet at the moment he becomes mighty, the horn is “broken”
 - In other words, this leader doesn’t stay in power after he has conquered the ram
 - Sure enough, this is a perfect description of Alexander
 - After conquering Persia, he went further east into India before turning back because his troops were homesick
 - He eventually returned to Babylon, determined to make the massive city his capital city
 - But before he could even plan the next steps of his government, Alexander died suddenly
 - This detail is a stunning confirmation of the accuracy of Daniel’s prophecy
 - Years before the Medo-Persia Empire rose to power, and centuries before the birth of Alexander, Daniel predicted his early death
 - Or we should say the Lord predicted it, because the Lord desired it
 - Alexander was said to point to the Book of Daniel to say he had a divine appointment with destiny as a world ruler
 - He must have conveniently overlooked how the horn came to its end
- After Alexander’s death, there was a struggle for control over his kingdom
 - Eventually, civil wars resulted in the kingdom being divided four ways under the control of four of Alexander’s generals
 - The divisions of the empire ran along compass directions
 - There was an east, west, north and south division of his kingdom
 - That result is also mirrored in this uncanny prediction

- In v.8, we're told that in place of the large horn were four conspicuous horns
- And these were pointing toward the four winds of Heaven
- Notice it's the four winds (or in Hebrew, it says the four spirits) of Heaven
- That is, these matters are appointed by God, as they must be, since it's all being described in perfect detail hundreds of years in advance
- Up to this point, the prophecy is treading over old ground, albeit with new imagery
 - We're still waiting for the new information
 - And so now it comes

Dan. 8:9 Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land.

Dan. 8:10 It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.

Dan. 8:11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.

Dan. 8:12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

Dan. 8:13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?"

Dan. 8:14 He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."

- We're still looking at the goat and its four new horns that replaced Alexander
 - By logical conclusion, we see the four new horns as representing the rulers of the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom
 - And if so, then the new, smaller horn that grows up among them must be yet another ruler
 - It also draws our attention to the earlier mention of a "little horn" in Chapter 7
 - In that chapter, the little horn described a man who arrives in the fourth kingdom at the very end
 - We identified him as the antichrist who will come 3.5 years before the Lord's return
 - Yet this little horn is part of the third kingdom, and he comes soon after Alexander's death
 - So clearly, this little horn is different than the one described in Chapter 7

- And the events surrounding his appearance are different than those at the end of the age
- Nevertheless, the fact that this symbol is being used for the second time is not a coincidence
 - The Lord is purposely reusing the little horn symbol to draw our attention to similarities between these two men
 - Though they lived in very different times and circumstances, they are connected in spirit and in actions
- To understand the connection, let's look at what this little horn does
 - He grows great in three directions
 - He goes south, east and toward the Beautiful Land
 - The beautiful land is always a reference in Scripture to Israel or Palestine, generally

Jer. 3:19 **“Then I said,**

‘How I would set you among My sons

And give you a pleasant land,

The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!’

And I said, ‘You shall call Me, My Father,

And not turn away from following Me.’

- Daniel also uses this term several more times in the same way
- These details help us identify a man who fits this description
 - Antiochus IV, who was the eighth king of the Seleucid empire
 - The Seleucid empire was located in present-day Syria
 - And it was one of the four divisions of the Greek Empire after Alexander's death
- He fought against the other Greek divisions, seeking to gain power over them
 - He fought to gain territory in the east and the south
 - And most famously, he invaded Palestine and conquered the land of Israel
 - So far, Antiochus IV fits the description of the little horn in this chapter
- Then in v.10, we get to the point
 - The little horn kept growing until it reached the heavens, where it caused stars in the sky to fall to the earth and be trampled
 - Remember, Daniel is describing the things he saw in a vision
 - And these things are symbolic, not literal
 - Just as the horns stood for kings, so do stars falling in the night sky stand for something else
 - What do stars represent in Scripture?

- Here, we get a chance to exercise two important principles of symbolic interpretation
- First, we look to see how the Bible interprets this symbol
- If we did that homework, we find that when stars are used symbolically, they represent angels
- So we might be tempted to stop there and declare that these falling stars are fallen angels, that is, demons
- But before we can come to that conclusion, we must apply another major rule of interpretation
 - We must check to see if our interpretation fits the context of this passage
 - For example, does it make sense that a man, Antiochus IV, can reach up into the heavenly realm and cause angels to fall?
 - And can that man trample (*i.e.*, destroy) these beings?
- Suddenly, our interpretation doesn't make much sense, since we can't expect that a man would have the power to bring angels down from Heaven
 - So what do stars mean then?
 - In this case, we go back looking for other uses of stars as a symbol
 - And we find this in Genesis 37

Gen. 37:9 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Gen. 37:10 He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"

- Joseph had a dream in which the sun, moon and stars are used symbolically
 - Jacob gives the interpretation of the dream
 - He declares that the stars represent the sons of Israel
 - Now we have an alternate way in which the Lord has used stars symbolically
- If we return to Daniel 8 and use the symbol again in that alternate way, the context fits perfectly
 - Antiochus IV comes into the Beautiful land, which is Israel
 - And when he arrives, he defeats the sons of Israel and brings them to destruction
 - Not only does the symbol now fit the context, but it also fits Daniel's purpose in writing
 - He is explaining how each of these kingdoms will impact the people of Israel

- History records that when Antiochus arrived in Palestine, he came with a particular vengeance against the Jewish people
 - In just one campaign against Israel, he killed 40,000 Jews and took another 10,000 into slavery
 - Having conquered the land, he continued moving south to defeat the Romans in Egypt
 - Instead, he lost to the Roman commander Popilius Laenas
 - So he was forced to retreat back north into Palestine, angry and seeking to take his anger out on Jews
 - In December 168 BC, he seized Jerusalem on a Sabbath and began to do everything he could to offend the Jews
 - He placed a statue of the pagan god Zeus in the temple
 - He ordered that a pig be sacrificed in the temple and the animal's blood poured out on the altar
 - This act was the most horrifying thing Israel had seen in the temple's history
 - It was so bad, that the Jews gave the event a special title that stuck in their collective memory
 - They took to calling it the "abomination of desolation"
- We see a veiled reference to this event in v.11
 - The little horn will magnify himself to being equal to the Commander of the host
 - The host is a reference to the stars, collectively
 - And the word for "Commander" could mean the high priest or even God Himself
 - Putting this together, the little horn magnifies himself as the greatest in Israel, stops sacrifices and desecrates the temple
 - Antiochus did all these things
 - First, he added the term *Epiphanes* to his name, which means "the manifestation of God", comparing himself to God
 - Later, the Jews changed the word slightly to *Epimanes* which means "madman"
 - Furthermore, in 171 BC, he removed the legitimate high priest of Israel and appointed a wicked man to serve him in that role
 - This prevented the legitimate daily sacrifice in the temple
 - Since his man was not truly the high priest, there could be no true daily sacrifice in the temple
 - His actions against Israel culminated with the desolation in 168 BC
- In v.12, Daniel is told these things come to pass because of Israel's transgression
 - This is a reference to Israel's failure to keep the Old Covenant
 - It was Israel's failure to keep their Covenant with God that brought about the Age of the Gentiles

- And this passage is confirmation that these terrible events are ordained by God in keeping with the promised penalties of the Old Covenant
- The host of Israel will be given into the hand of this man for a time
 - And he will also fling truth to the ground
 - Israel and the temple were intended to be a testimony of the truth to the world
 - But it has been (temporarily) flung to the ground
- Then in vs.13-14, Daniel overhears a conversation between two angels, or so it would seem
 - One angel turns to another and asks how long will Israel be subjected to these things?
 - The angels are having this conversation for Daniel's benefit, of course
 - It seems that Daniel didn't even know what questions to ask
 - The answer to the question is 2,300 evenings and mornings
 - The phrase "evening and morning" is a clear reference to the Jewish way of reckoning a 24-hour day
 - So all these things will last 6 years, 4 months and 20 days
 - Once again, history bears out the truth of this prophecy
 - Beginning on September 9, 171 BC the regular authorized sacrifices were not possible, without a legitimate high priest
 - But the Maccabean revolt, ending with the rededication of the temple on December 25, 165 BC, allowed Israel to reinstate the sacrifices
 - That's where *Hanukah* comes from
 - There are 2,300 days on the Jewish calendar between those two dates
 - Here again, the accuracy of Daniel's prediction is uncanny
 - We should expect nothing less from God, of course
 - But that's the point: that these prophecies are clearly from God
 - And He's not merely predicting the future, He's controlling it as He chooses
- Now at this point, I have been working through the vision and its interpretation, based on an analysis of the symbols and a comparison to history
 - But of course, Daniel didn't have the benefit of hindsight as he received this message the first time
 - So he's thoroughly confused about its meaning
 - And so the Lord provides Daniel with an interpretation of the vision in the second half of the chapter
 - Having this interpretation will serve as confirmation to us that we have properly understood the prophecy
 - But the interpretation introduces a new understanding as well, one built upon that connection to the little horn symbol of Chapter 7

Dan. 8:15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man.

Dan. 8:16 And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, “Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.”

Dan. 8:17 So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.”

- First, notice that Daniel is assisted by one in his vision who looks like a man
 - In v.16, we discover that this man was no man at all. but was actually the angel Gabriel
 - The name Gabriel means the man of El, or the man of God
 - He is an archangel, the leader of the angels
 - The angelic realm is divided in Scripture into cherubs (at the top), seraphim (somewhere below) and then angels (the working class)
 - Gabriel and Michael are the only angels named in Scripture
 - And both are archangels, which suggests they have high positions of authority
 - The voice of a man “between the banks” of the channel calls out to Gabriel telling him to give Daniel the interpretation
 - We will hear more about this mysterious man between the banks later
 - Meanwhile, Gabriel carries out these instructions
 - His first comment to Daniel is that this vision pertains to the time of the end
 - This is our first clue that the thing in this dream looks forward to something beyond even the Persian and Greek empires
 - In fact, the vision has a second layer of meaning that draws our attention once more to the end of the fourth kingdom

Dan. 8:18 Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright.

Dan. 8:19 He said, “Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.

Dan. 8:20 “The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.

Dan. 8:21 “The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

Dan. 8:22 “The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.

- Daniel’s faint into a coma-like sleep in v.18 is significant

- It reflects a new stage to his vision, moving to a new phase of revelation
 - That gives us some license to understand these visions in another way
 - And in v.19, Gabriel says these things relate in some way to the final period, the indignation at the appointed time of the end
- And then, Gabriel moves to explaining the ram and goat and horns
 - And his explanation tracks exactly with our earlier interpretation
 - These things describe events in these two periods of the Age of the Gentiles
- But then, the archangel moves to explain how these symbols also allude to other events in a later day

**Dan. 8:23 “In the latter period of their rule,
When the transgressors have run their course,
A king will arise,
Insolent and skilled in intrigue.**

**Dan. 8:24 “His power will be mighty, but not by his own power,
And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree
And prosper and perform his will;
He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.**

**Dan. 8:25 “And through his shrewdness
He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence;
And he will magnify himself in his heart,
And he will destroy many while they are at ease.
He will even oppose the Prince of princes,
But he will be broken without human agency.**

**Dan. 8:26 “The vision of the evenings and mornings
Which has been told is true;
But keep the vision secret,
For it pertains to many days in the future.”**

- As we consider what the archangel tells Daniel, don't forget that we know the little horn is a symbol of Antiochus IV
 - Everything we saw in the prophecy matched his actions
 - The places and dates were a perfect match
 - And he is a part of the third kingdom, of Greece
 - Nevertheless, we're starting to hear new things in this description
 - What Gabriel tells Daniel fits Antiochus to a degree
 - But some of the details go beyond what Antiochus does
 - So, we need to understand how these two truths are working together
 - How these visions can certainly describe Antiochus

- And also, how they can describe someone else in the end of the age
- First, Gabriel says in v.23, that these events are set in the latter part of “their rule”
 - “Their rule” must refer to the rule of the Persians, and particularly, the Greeks
 - So here again, this must refer to Antiochus
 - But Gabriel goes forward in time
 - He says that when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise
 - The plural “transgressors” is a reference to all the events described in the earlier vision
 - To all the sins Antiochus commits against Israel and the temple
 - After this, a king arises
 - So now we move into new territory, to something we didn’t detect the first time in the vision
 - The vision told a story of not only what Antiochus would do in his day, but also of what another king would do in another day, at the end of the age
 - These two are connected such that the same vision can tell both their stories
 - And yet, they are different kings living in different times
- Therefore, we must conclude that the first king, Antiochus, is a type of the second king
 - A type in Scripture is the use of one set of circumstances to prefigure a later set of circumstances
 - The earlier set of circumstances is a type of the later circumstances
 - And in that way, a type is always a lesser in relationship to the fulfillment of the type, which is the greater
 - For example, the Bible says Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac on the top of Mt. Moriah is a type
 - It pictures the Father sacrificing Christ on the very same mountain in a future day
 - Clearly, Abraham’s attempt to sacrifice his son was not nearly as significant as Jesus’ actual sacrifice
 - So the type is a lesser to the greater fulfillment that came later
 - In this case, the life and circumstances of Antiochus is a lesser type to the circumstances that surround this later king Gabriel is describing
 - In v.23, Gabriel says this coming king is insolent and skilled in intrigue
 - The Hebrew word translated “insolent” means to be strong in a rough or outrageous way
 - And “skilled in intrigue” means having an understanding of puzzles and enigmas
 - This is a man who is very strong, but also a man with special insight to understand his place in history

- Those are a very effective and potentially dangerous combination of traits in any aspiring world leader
- Next, in v.24, we learn this man is powerful, but not by his own power
 - He gets his power from somewhere else, somewhere outside himself
 - And with that great power, he is able to destroy to an extraordinary degree
 - He will destroy like no one before him
 - It's details like this that tell us we're looking at someone beyond Antiochus
 - First, Antiochus relied very much on his own power
 - And it wasn't overwhelming
 - He couldn't even conquer Egypt, though he did control Israel for a time
 - And that's one thing these two men share: they both prosper and are successful to at least partially destroy the holy people, the people of Israel
 - Remember, these last four chapters deal with how these coming Gentile nations will impact the people of Israel
 - And so, that's the recurring theme we see here again
 - Both Antiochus and the future king will have a measure of success against Israel and the temple
- The heart of the message is in v.25
 - Because of this coming king's shrewdness, he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence
 - This statement is a little enigmatic
 - And we wouldn't have much luck understanding it, except for what we studied last week, in Chapter 7
 - Remember, we learned that the little horn of the fourth beast will be a ruler in the last days of this age
 - He will gain power 3.5 years before Jesus' Second Coming
 - He rules the entire world, calling himself God and directing the whole world to worship him
 - He is able to convince the world to accept this lie because he has been resurrected from death
 - The resurrection happened by the power of Satan, who gave his power to this king whom Revelation calls "the beast"
 - So now Gabriel says that this king, once again portrayed as the little horn of Chapter 8, will cause deceit to succeed by his influence
 - The deceit that this coming king will cause to succeed is the lie that he is God, the resurrected Messiah
 - And he will cause this deceit to succeed because of his influence, that is, his power given to him by Satan

- Speaking of this coming deception, Paul says

2 Th. 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

2 Th. 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

2 Th. 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

2 Th. 2:10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

2 Th. 2:11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

2 Th. 2:12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

- The man of lawlessness is a reference to this same man, the antichrist, as we called him last week
 - Paul says he will come according to the activity of Satan
 - He comes with Satan's power and with false wonders
 - And he comes with deception of wickedness
 - This is the deluding influence that the Lord sends upon the world
 - It's the false testimony that the resurrected antichrist is the Messiah
- Then, having received Satan's power and having been resurrected, the antichrist will magnify himself in his heart, Gabriel said
 - Of course, we know that Antiochus did this, but so will the antichrist
 - Again, Paul tell us this too

2 Th. 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

2 Th. 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

- Here again, these two men align in their activities
- Antiochus did it in his day, and the antichrist will do it in his day to come
- Next, Gabriel says this man will destroy man while at ease
 - The antichrist will come into power promising peace
 - But destruction comes upon those with him

- Jesus confirms this as well

Matt. 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Matt. 24:37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

Matt. 24:38 “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

Matt. 24:39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

- The time of destruction that accompanies the rise of this man will lead many to think that they have entered a period of great peace and tranquility
 - Instead, they are experiencing a calm before the storm
 - They will be destroyed while at ease
- Finally, we’re told that this coming king will oppose Jesus Himself
 - Here again, Antiochus opposed God too
 - But he didn’t oppose Jesus personally
 - But Christ is opposed by the antichrist
 - That is the meaning of “antichrist”...it means one who opposes Christ
 - The Bible says this opposition culminates with the Lord’s Second Coming to destroy him
 - As we read a moment earlier in 2 Thess. 2:8

2 Th. 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

- Notice at the end of v.25, Gabriel says this king will be destroyed without human agency
- Clearly, that’s a reference to Jesus defeating the antichrist at His Second Coming
- And by the same token, it precludes us from concluding that these verses are only describing Antiochus
- Finally, notice that Gabriel ends by saying this vision pertains to many days in the future in, v.26
 - That footnote confirms that we’re looking at something beyond what Antiochus alone did
 - Yes, Antiochus mirrors these things in many cases
 - But we’re learning he is a type of the antichrist
 - God brought him to Israel in the time of the third kingdom to give a preview of what was coming in the last days in a greater way

- The antichrist is Antiochus on steroids
 - He will do similar things, but in greater and more terrible ways
 - In particular, the abomination of desolation will be repeated in a day to come
 - But it will be much more severe than Antiochus' pig sacrifice
- Jesus refers to this coming abomination as the breaking point in Tribulation when all Hell breaks loose (literally)

Matt. 24:15 “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Matt. 24:16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

- Notice Jesus says there will be another abomination of desolation in the temple in that day to come
- And He adds the reader should have understanding of what He's talking about
- Jesus is expecting His reader to go back to Daniel to understand what this abomination involves
 - It involves someone eliminating sacrifice from the temple
 - And the process of desecrating it, by seating himself in the temple declaring himself to be God, as we read earlier
- So the little horn of Chapter 7 was a vision of the coming antichrist, and the little horn of Chapter 8 is also a reference to the same man
 - In the case of Chapter 8, the little horn also stands for Antiochus IV
 - But that association is merely for the purpose of creating a picture of the antichrist
 - By that picture, we can come to understand even better what the antichrist will do
 - Why do we need this prophecy?
 - In a sense, we don't, since we are destined to never see the antichrist while we are on earth
 - Paul says in 2 Thess. 2:7 that the spirit of the antichrist, that is Satan, is being restrained by the Holy Spirit for now
 - Only when the Holy Spirit is removed, will Satan have freedom to act in raising up the antichrist
 - And the removal of that restraining influence happens when the Church is removed from the earth
 - So who does need this prophecy?
 - Again, it was written to help Israel understand how the Age of the Gentiles would impact Israel

- In Antiochus' day, the people of Israel could take comfort, knowing from Daniel that they wouldn't be oppressed by Antiochus forever
- Once Antiochus died, they could see the faithfulness of God toward Israel, even in the midst of this age
- Now again, in a future day, Israel will have this Word to explain how the antichrist's terrible reign isn't intended to destroy the nation
 - He will gain a measure of success
 - But in the end, he will be destroyed
 - And even more importantly, the people of Israel can see that Jesus is their appointed Messiah, sent to rescue them from this oppression
- Next week, we look at the timing of the Age of the Gentiles, particularly how long Israel will have to wait for all these things to come to pass

- In Chapter 2 of Daniel, we were introduced to God's plan to place Israel under Gentile authority for an age – the Age of the Gentiles
 - Prior to the start of that age, prior to the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar, Israel was the chief nation on earth
 - Under David, and later Solomon, the Nation of Israel rose to the peak of its power
 - No Gentile nation could challenge Israel
 - But after Solomon died, a number of tribes elected to rebel against the rule of Judah
 - They split away and tried to form a separate kingdom
 - Ultimately, the Lord brought discipline to those rebellious tribes at the hands of the Assyrian army
 - Meanwhile, Judah, Benjamin and Levi in the south, remained under God's protection until the days of Daniel
 - By the time Daniel was serving in the Jewish court, Judah was equally due judgment
 - The Lord declared that if He was willing to judge the North for their sin, how could He overlook Judah's sin?
 - So, He sent prophet after prophet to Israel, warning them of the coming judgment
 - In the end the people of Judah failed to heed the warnings
- If Judah would ignore the Lord's warnings spoken through the prophets, they couldn't ignore the message when it came at the point of a Babylonian sword
 - The Lord called for Babylon to do His bidding in judging Israel
 - They were under judgment for failing to keep the Old Covenant
 - And they were no longer under God's protection
 - But as Daniel explained to King Nebuchadnezzar, the Lord had sentenced Israel to remain under Gentile oppression for a long time
 - The Babylonians would be merely the first of multiple Gentile kingdoms to capture the city and the temple
 - The Lord would no longer defend Israel as He once did under David and Solomon
 - Instead, the Lord said He would send wave after wave of Gentiles against His people
 - First the Babylonians, then the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans
 - And even in centuries after Rome's fall, the remnants of the Roman Empire would continue to judge Israel
- Daniel foresaw this future for his people, and it has left him astounded, exhausted, speechless and even sick for days, he said in Chapter 8
 - Nevertheless, Daniel's visions did not foretell the destruction of the Jewish people

- On the contrary, his visions of the Age of the Gentiles always ended with the Promised One returning to save Israel
 - At the end of this age of Gentile rule, the Messiah will return to establish a new Kingdom to replace all Gentile authorities
 - In that day, Israel receives the promises God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- So Daniel's prophecies are bittersweet
 - They present a troubling premonition of dark times to come for Israel
 - Yet the dark period eventually ends with Israel in glory
- But up to this point in Daniel's visions, the Lord has given no indication how long this age will last
 - So given the happy ending, it's only natural that Daniel would be hoping for the end to come quickly
 - Unfortunately for Daniel, the Age of the Gentiles isn't a short-lived period of history
 - It will run a very long time, certainly longer than Daniel's lifetime
 - Furthermore, the age proceeds through various stages and overlaps other prophetic events God has revealed for Israel
 - The people of Israel will go in and out of various situations, including bondage, exile, regathering, and exile again
 - Specifically, the Lord told Israel through another prophet, Jeremiah, that Judah would be held in captivity during the early years of this age
 - But then at a point, Israel would be permitted to return to Jerusalem, though they still remain under Gentile authority
- As we open in Daniel 9, we find Daniel reading this passage from Jeremiah

Dan. 9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans —

Dan. 9:2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

- Once again, Daniel dates his chapter by the reign of a king...this time, it's Darius son of Ahasuerus
 - We are in the first year of Darius, who was the first king of the Medo-Persian empire following Persia's conquest of Babylon
 - You may remember that the feast of Belshazzar in Chapter 5 occurred on the night the Babylonian kingdom fell to Persia
 - And Chapter 8 occurred several years earlier, in the third year of Belshazzar

- Therefore, the events of this chapter happened after Chapter 5 and long after Chapter 8
- At this time, we find Daniel reading a copy of Jeremiah's scroll
 - Jeremiah was a contemporary of Daniel
 - Jeremiah was already about 40 years old and a known prophet when Daniel was taken into exile to Babylon
 - Jeremiah was never sent to Babylon like Daniel was
- Instead, Nebuchadnezzar allowed Jeremiah to choose where he would live, because the prophet had advocated that Israel's kings should submit to Babylon's authority
 - Jeremiah continued to prophesy in Judah until 586 BC
 - In that year, he was taken against his will to Egypt by Jewish rebels seeking to flee Babylon's control
 - He finished his prophecies while in Egypt, and eventually died there, probably when Daniel was in his late thirties or forties
- Now in Chapter 9 of Daniel, we find the prophet holding a scroll of Jeremiah's writing
 - This curious scene is important for numerous reasons
 - Seeing Daniel studying Jeremiah demonstrates that Jeremiah's writings were understood to be prophetic from the beginning
 - Daniel interprets this work as a literal, historical prophecy
 - Also, Daniel's possession of Jeremiah's work proves Israel took great care to preserve, honor and share the Word of God among themselves as soon as it was available
 - Somehow, this book has made its way intact from Judah, or maybe Egypt, to Daniel in Babylon
 - Finally, it reminds us that even a prophet still needs the revelations of other prophets if they are to understand the whole counsel of God's Word
 - God revealed portions and parts to men until the whole counsel of His Word was completed in Scripture
 - And there is one more curiosity in this scene, one that sets up the rest of this chapter
 - Despite being a prophet himself, Daniel misinterprets the meaning of what he reads in Jeremiah's writings
 - In v.2, Daniel notes that he came across the number of years that God declared Israel and Jerusalem would experience desolation
 - He's reading from Jeremiah 29:

Jer. 29:10 "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.

Jer. 29:11 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for

welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Jer. 29:12 ‘Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

Jer. 29:13 ‘You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.

Jer. 29:14 ‘I will be found by you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’

- In this passage, Daniel learns that the length of time the Lord intended to hold Judah in captivity in Babylon and Persia would be 70 years
 - This was news for Daniel
 - He had not received that detail himself
 - And he had not seen Jeremiah since he entered captivity
 - So it required that the Word of God reach Daniel through Jeremiah’s writings
 - And as he comes to this passage, Daniel suddenly realizes that there was a firm time limit on Israel’s judgment of captivity
 - The Lord told Israel that despite their captivity, they shouldn’t doubt the Lord’s intentions toward them
 - He didn’t intend to destroy His people, but instead, He had good plans for their welfare
 - The Lord’s judgment was for discipline, not destruction
 - So, the Lord promises He will regather Judah after 70 years
 - They will return to their land, enjoy the Lord’s favor once more and see their fortunes restored
 - This in fact happened, as Jeremiah said it would
 - 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah record how Cyrus, king of Persia, released the exiles to return to Judah to rebuild the temple
 - That group returned after 70 years of captivity
 - And in the centuries that followed, Israel enjoyed a measure of prosperity in their land
- However, the people of Israel did not see an end to Gentile oppression over them and the city of Jerusalem
 - The Age of the Gentiles continues, as the Lord predicted
 - Even though Israel returned to the land, they still endured Gentile resistance, even as they built the temple
 - And in later years, Persian kings still threatened Israel from time to time
 - After Persia, Alexander the Great conquered the city and Greek generals

- desecrated the temple
 - Later, Rome came to do the same
- In other words, the end of exile didn't mean the end of the Age of the Gentiles, and that is an important difference
 - The Lord gave Daniel the big picture
 - While He gave Jeremiah the tactical view
 - Israel would be under Gentile authorities until the Messiah's return
 - But Judah's exile in Babylon would only constitute the first 70 years of the age
- But this distinction was lost on Daniel, so as he reads the account, he assumes that the end of exile is also the end of the entire period of the Age of the Gentiles
 - He sees the two periods as one and the same, and so Daniel believes it's time to put God's plan into action
 - Daniel begins to pray
 - His prayer on behalf of his people is recorded in vs.4-14
 - Many commentators assume that Daniel's prayer was prompted by what he read in Jeremiah's book
 - In Jeremiah 29:12-14, the Lord said that when Israel called upon Him in prayer, then He would listen and restore their fortunes
 - So perhaps Daniel is praying in obedience to that word, they assume
 - But looking at Jeremiah's text, this doesn't make sense
 - Jeremiah says that *after* the people have returned to Jerusalem they will pray, not before
 - Jeremiah is referring to the moment the people pray at the temple ruins when Zerubbabel leads the exiles back to Jerusalem
 - Jeremiah's prayer is after the exiles have returned, it's not the prayer to prompt their release
- So if Daniel isn't prompted to pray because of Jeremiah's text, why does Daniel pray?
 - The answer comes when we look carefully at the content of his prayer
 - Beginning with part 1

Dan. 9:4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

Dan. 9:5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.

Dan. 9:6 "Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.

Dan. 9:7 “Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day — to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.

Dan. 9:8 “Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

Dan. 9:9 “To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

Dan. 9:10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets.

Dan. 9:11 “Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

- First, notice in v.4 that Daniel said he prayed and confessed
 - That second word is important, because Jeremiah’s book never indicated that a confession was required
 - Yet, Daniel feels compelled to offer a confession here
 - And in fact, as we examine his prayer, it’s nothing but one long confession
 - As we scan down the content of his confession, it becomes clear that Daniel is thinking of another place in Scripture
 - He’s not thinking of Jeremiah’s prayer
 - Daniel is thinking about a prayer requirement found in the Law of Moses given to Israel in the Old Covenant
 - We can see this by noticing the major ideas found in his confession
 - First, in v.5, Daniel confesses on behalf of the entire nation
 - He says “we” have sinned, committed iniquity and acted wickedly
 - In fact, throughout the prayer, Daniel speaks as “we” on behalf of the entire nation
 - Daniel is attempting to offer a national prayer of confession
- Next, Daniel confesses that the people of Israel have broken the Covenant they entered into with the Lord at Sinai
 - He says in v.5 the nation has turned aside from the commandments and ordinances of the Law
 - And the nation didn’t heed the warnings of the prophets sent to her
 - And in vs.7-10, Daniel contrasts the Lord’s righteousness in keeping the Covenant with Israel’s unfaithfulness

- In particular, notice Daniel describes the way the Lord drove Israel into the nations as a punishment for unfaithfulness
 - Daniel is using this as an example of the Lord's faithfulness to the Covenant
 - Because the Old Covenant stipulated that scattering would be one of the penalties Israel would face for failing to keep the Covenant
 - So even in the punishment given to Israel, the Lord is completely faithful to His Word, while Israel was completely faithless
- Then in v.11, Daniel says indeed, the people of Israel have transgressed the Law, turned aside and a "curse" has been poured out on us according to the oath found in the Law of Moses
 - This is our confirmation that Daniel isn't praying because of Jeremiah's text
 - Daniel is on to something much bigger
 - He believes Israel has reached the moment when the Old Covenant of Israel is about to be fulfilled
 - In the Old Covenant the Lord made with Israel, He told the nation to obey Him in everything He instructed them
 - Most of the Law is dedicated to explaining what the commandments and ordinances of God required
 - But in a couple of places within the Law, the Lord gives a summary of the expectations of the Covenant itself
 - One of those places is Leviticus 26
 - That summary begins this way

Lev. 26:2 'You shall keep My sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary; I am the Lord.

Lev. 26:3 'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out,

Lev. 26:4 then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit.

- The Lord says to the people of Israel that if they do as He instructed, they would see many blessings as a nation
 - The Old Covenant is a national covenant
 - It was not made between an individual and God, but between a nation of people and God
 - So whatever comes of the Covenant, it will affect the entire nation for better or worse
 - So the Lord says that if the entire nation obeys the Covenant, the entire nation will see many blessings
 - From v.2 to v.13, the Lord lists the ways in which He is prepared to bless the nation for their obedience under the Covenant

- But then, the chapter changes tone dramatically

Lev. 26:14 ‘But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments,

Lev. 26:15 if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant,

Lev. 26:16 I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.

- The Lord says, starting in v.14, that if the nation failed to keep the Covenant, they would receive many curses, He calls them
 - And then from v.14 to v.39, the Lord lists calamity after calamity that will befall Israel for their disobedience
 - This list is a dramatic and scary accounting of the wrath of God against sin
 - The nation will bear great tragedy because of their inability to keep the Law of God perfectly
 - As Daniel sat reading Jeremiah, he reflects on the many calamities Israel has experienced over the past 70 years
 - And then, he remembers the list of calamities listed in Leviticus 26
 - So he concludes that this period of exile is the promised time of curses for failing to keep the Covenant
 - And in particular, Daniel draws a connection between one passage in Leviticus 26 and Jeremiah’s promise to return Israel to their land after 70 years

Lev. 26:31 ‘I will lay waste your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your soothing aromas.

Lev. 26:32 ‘I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it.

Lev. 26:33 ‘You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.

Lev. 26:34 ‘Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

Lev. 26:35 ‘All the days of its desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your sabbaths, while you were living on it.

- Israel was supposed to leave their farm land fallow every seventh year
 - To prepare the people for that year, the Lord would provide a double harvest on the

sixth year to carry the people through the seventh year

- Instead of obeying this commandment, sinful Israel decided to farm on the seventh year anyway
- This way, they gained a double portion on the sixth year AND gained an additional harvest on the seventh year
- The Lord allowed this sin to continue for nearly 500 years, so that eventually, the nation “owed” God 70 Sabbath years
 - So in Leviticus, the Lord foretold that He would force the nation to leave their land for that time to recover those lost Sabbaths
 - Jeremiah said the 70 years Israel has spent in Babylon has been that payback
 - So naturally, Daniel concludes that Jeremiah is also calling for the end of the period of curses in Leviticus 26
- We can see that conclusion in what Daniel says next:

Dan. 9:12 “Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem.

Dan. 9:13 “As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth.

Dan. 9:14 “Therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.

- Daniel says the Lord has been doing exactly what He said He would do in the Law
 - He has brought calamities for the nation’s failure to keep the Law
 - The nation was scattered, as God proclaimed
 - He has set them outside the land for seventy years because they didn’t observe the Land Sabbaths
 - And now, the Lord is prepared to return the people to their land as promised
 - All this is true, but then Daniel takes a step too far in his interpretation of events
 - He begins to assume that all the calamities spoken in Leviticus 26 have been fulfilled during Israel’s time in Babylon
 - Daniel believes that when the nation returns from exile, it will bring an end to the curses of Leviticus 26
- Why is this important? Because according to Leviticus 26, the end of the curses will come in conjunction with Israel receiving the promises given to Abraham

Lev. 26:40 ‘If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me —

Lev. 26:41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies — or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity,

Lev. 26:42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.

- Moses told Israel that if the people of Israel recognized their sins under the Old Covenant and confessed their sins, they could be restored
 - But notice the form the confession must take
 - First, Israel must confess both their own sin and the sin of their forefathers
 - Obviously, this is not a confession of faith, since confessions of faith don't depend on confessing our forefathers' sin
- This is a specific repudiation of Israel's violations of the Old Covenant
 - Leviticus 26 says they must confess their unfaithfulness
 - He means their unfaithfulness to the terms of the Old Covenant
- But more importantly, Israel must confess they acted in hostility toward God
 - This is a confession that Israel's forefathers crucified their Messiah
 - So the confession prayer of Leviticus is a prayer for all Israel to recognize that Jesus is Messiah
- Finally, Moses says that if Israel prays this specific confession, then the Lord will remember the Abrahamic Covenant
 - By “remember”, God doesn't mean He forgot
 - To remember means to enact or fulfill something
 - So the Lord is saying He will bring to fulfillment the Abrahamic Covenant
 - The Abrahamic Covenant promised Abraham's descendants a Kingdom, where they dwell with God in eternal peace and security
 - In other words, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant is the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom at Christ's Second Coming
 - So let's review what's going through Daniel's mind right now
 - He just learned from Jeremiah that Israel is scheduled to return to the land after 70 years of exile and captivity
 - Those 70 years have now come to pass, so Daniel realizes that the end of Israel's exile has come
 - Furthermore, Daniel remembers how the Old Covenant promised a period of exile and captivity for Israel violating the Old Covenant

- So as he learns that the exile is about to end, Daniel assumes Israel is also approaching the end of all the Old Covenant curses
 - Which means the Kingdom was about to arrive
 - Furthermore, Daniel knows from his own visions that the arrival of the Kingdom puts an end to the Age of the Gentiles
 - So putting all this together, Daniel sees an opportunity to bring to an end Israel's exile and the end of the Age of the Gentiles
 - And to usher in the arrival of the Kingdom
- Therefore, with that mindset, Daniel has launched into this confessional prayer on behalf of his people
 - He is praying the confession required in Leviticus 26, not the prayer described by Jeremiah
 - We can see his thinking reflected in the final words of his prayer

Dan. 9:15 “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day — we have sinned, we have been wicked.

Dan. 9:16 “O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us.

Dan. 9:17 “So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

Dan. 9:18 “O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.

Dan. 9:19 “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

- First, notice Daniel is thinking back to the days of the Exodus
 - Those were the days when the Old Covenant was inaugurated
 - Daniel is thinking of that time as he declares his people's guilt and the Lord's righteousness in bringing judgment
 - And then he asks that the Lord turn His wrath away from Jerusalem
 - Remember, the Age of the Gentiles is a period of judgment both on the people of Israel, and specifically, their holy city of Jerusalem
 - So Daniel is asking the Lord to bring the Age of the Gentiles to an end at this

moment

- Daniel repeats this plea eloquently in vs.17-19
- And all the way through to the end, he's asking for the judgment against the city of Jerusalem and the temple to be lifted
- That's a judgment unique to the Age of the Gentiles, which confirms Daniel's thinking
- But there's a problem with Daniel's interpretation of these passages
 - He assumed wrongly that these two periods of judgment are one and the same
 - He's assumed that the Age of the Gentiles is only 70 years long
 - And He's assumed that Jeremiah's prophecy of the end of Israel's exile in Babylon is also the end of the curses promised in Leviticus 26
 - And he's assuming that his confession on behalf of the people of Israel is the confession Moses described in Leviticus 26
 - And he assumed that praying that confessional prayer would lead to the arrival of Israel's promised Messiah and Kingdom
 - Unfortunately for Daniel, none of these assumptions are correct
 - His confession is not the one Moses described
 - That confession awaits a day in Israel's future
 - And the Kingdom was not about to arrive
 - And the Age of the Gentiles, which must take place prior to the Kingdom, will be much longer than 70 years
- Because Daniel has been assigned the mission of explaining these things to Israel, the Lord cannot afford for His prophet to remain confused
 - So the Lord intervenes in an unique way to offer Daniel a correction

Dan. 9:20 Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God,

Dan. 9:21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

Dan. 9:22 He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.

Dan. 9:23 "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

- As Daniel is praying this prayer, no less than the archangel Gabriel is dispatched to instruct Daniel

- Notice Daniel says he was praying and confessing the sin of both himself and that of his people
 - Once again, that phrase confirms that Daniel was seeking to fulfill the prayer of Leviticus 26
 - His goal is admirable, but his timing is way off
 - He also gets an “A” for effort, since he was up late into the night praying until he was extremely weary
 - That’s quite a testimony to this man’s faith, that even in his late years, he is still dedicated to praying to the brink of exhaustion
- So Daniel says that as he is praying in this way, a “man” Gabriel appears
 - This is the same man who appeared to Daniel in his visions in Chapter 8
 - In Chapter 8, Daniel had visions or dreams of this man, who we know was actually an angel
 - But now Daniel sees him in person, not in a vision or dream
- It makes sense that the Lord would send Gabriel to Daniel, because Daniel would recognize him from his vision
 - Since Gabriel had been in Daniel’s earlier dream, Daniel would know he was a supernaturally sent messenger
 - Daniel wouldn’t have reason to doubt Gabriel’s word
- So when God needs to send an archangel to correct a person’s understanding of Scripture, does it mean the person is really important or just really wrong?
 - I think it’s both in this case
 - In v.22, we’re told Gabriel gave Daniel instruction so that Daniel would have insight with understanding
 - The word “insight” could also be translated “wisdom”
 - So in this context, “wisdom” or “insight” refers to the knowledge God reveals to men
 - While “understanding” refers to comprehension of that revelation
 - So Daniel’s understanding was lacking in two ways
 - First, he lacked details of God’s plans
 - Daniel only had some of the facts, so he needed more data to have the full picture of what God was planning
 - And secondly, even the things Daniel did know from reading Moses or Jeremiah he had misunderstood it
 - Daniel needed someone to explain the meaning of those texts in a proper way
 - Finally, it’s worth noting that v.23 says the Lord sent Gabriel expressly to ensure Daniel gets this right
 - Not everyone is a prophet authoring Scripture, obviously

- So perhaps you assume God only sends supernatural teachers to someone special like Daniel
- But you would be wrong, for while Daniel received an angelic visitor a few times in his life, a believer has the Spirit of God Himself with us everyday
- And as Jesus said, our Teacher will explain all things to us
- We have a superior teacher, even to the one Daniel received
- So now we come to the heart of the chapter, the main message of Daniel 9
 - Daniel receives a correct interpretation of the length of time of the Age of the Gentiles

Dan. 9:24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

Dan. 9:25 “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

Dan. 9:26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

Dan. 9:27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain of offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

- It’s been said that there is no single prophetic utterance in all the Bible more crucial in the fields of Biblical interpretation, apologetics and eschatology than this passage
 - It’s no exaggeration to claim this passage holds the key to understanding the entire sweep of Israel’s prophetic history
 - And yet it’s written in a particularly difficult style, making interpretation tricky
 - I’ve found it easiest to understand when accompanied by a visual aid I will make available online with the study
 - The explanation begins in v.24, as Gabriel corrects Daniel’s misunderstanding
 - What did Daniel misunderstand again?
 - He thought the Age of the Gentiles was to last just 70 years
 - Which meant that the Kingdom would come immediately afterward
- So Gabriel begins by telling Daniel that the Age of the Gentiles will last not 70 years, but

seventy “weeks”

- In v.24, he says seventy weeks of judgment have been decreed (by God) for Israel in order to accomplish six things
 - First, to finish “the” transgression
 - Note this is a singular transgression...this isn’t all sin, but one particular sin of Israel
 - That sin is the rejection of the Messiah
 - So the Age of the Gentiles will result in all Israel accepting their Messiah
- Secondly, to put an end to sin in general
 - The Age will bring Israel to a point of sinlessness
 - This will require that Israel will be living in glorified, resurrected bodies
- Third, this age will serve as Israel’s atonement for their sin under the Old Covenant
 - That’s what Leviticus explained to Israel in advance
 - Their failure to keep the Old Covenant would result in a period of curses, and the Age of the Gentiles is that period
- Fourth, the age will bring in everlasting righteousness
 - That’s a clear reference to the Kingdom
 - And this agrees with Daniel 2 and 7, where we learned that the end of the age leads to the arrival of the Kingdom
- Fifth, to seal up vision and prophecy
 - This means the ending of such things
 - Presumably, they are put away because they are no long needed, since all things are known
- And sixth, a new temple is anointed in Jerusalem
 - This temple will be the Millennial Kingdom temple
 - The anointing is the presence of Christ Himself living in Jerusalem
- All these things will be accomplished by the conclusion of the Age of the Gentiles
 - Moreover, the events of this age will be used by God to bring about these outcomes
 - Obviously, all these outcomes are good for Israel, so Israel will be blessed by this age in the end
 - But in the meantime, it will be a period of suffering for Israel
 - God will use Israel’s enemies to discipline His people, leading to good things for them
- And how long will Israel have to wait for these things to come to pass?
 - Gabriel said seventy weeks, but this doesn’t make sense
 - By the time Daniel received this revelation, the Age of the Gentiles had been ongoing for much longer than 490 days

- But a closer examination of the Hebrew word translated “weeks” clears up the confusion
- The word in Hebrew for “weeks” is *shavat*, which is literally translated “seven”
 - So Gabriel literally said seventy “sevens” have been decreed for Israel
 - So we need to figure out what seven sevens stands for...is it seventy of (*i.e.*, 70x) seven days, seven months, or seven years?
- Traditionally, Israel only uses the word *shavat* to refer to a group of seven days or seven years
 - So we’re talking about 70 x 7 days or 70 x 7 years
 - Clearly, the length of the Age of Gentiles can’t be just 70 x 7 days, since that’s barely 18 months
 - The age lasts much longer than 18 months, which leaves us to conclude that Gabriel is speaking of 70 x 7 years
 - Plus, we just read that Daniel assumed this period was only 70 *years*, to which the angel has said no, it’s 70 x 7
- So the angel is telling Daniel that the Age of the Gentiles is a period of 70 x 7 years, or 490 years
 - We know that period began with Nebuchadnezzar conquering the city of Jerusalem in 605 BC
 - So all that is needed is to count forward 490 years and we arrive at Christ’s Second Coming and the start of the Kingdom, right?
 - Well, not exactly, because Gabriel gives more details that complicate our interpretation considerably
 - In v.25, Gabriel begins to count out the 490 in several increments
 - And as he does this, he gives historical markers, like distance markers along a highway, that act as anchors in time
 - These anchors help us track the passing of these 490 years
 - But following what he says will require careful observation of the text
- First, we know that the Age of the Gentiles begins at 605 BC, for that was given to us in Daniel 2 and 7
 - Jeremiah tells us that the first 70 years of that period are payback for the lost Sabbaths in the land
 - After those 70 years, Israel would be permitted to return to their land
 - Daniel did the math while reading Jeremiah and recognized he was at that point and the return was imminent
 - Cyrus was about to issue a decree to allow Israel to return to the land and rebuild the temple that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed
 - Only now, Daniel is learning that a new prophetic clock has started
 - Following the 70 years of exile, there would be another 490 years of judgement

for Israel

- That period begins, Gabriel says, with Cyrus' decree
- We find that decree described in 2 Chronicles

2 Chr. 36:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia — in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah — the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

2 Chr. 36:23 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!’”

- So Gabriel says that when Cyrus issues this decree, we start the clock on 490 years
 - But then, Gabriel begins to cut up the period of 490 into segments
 - And in typical Hebrew form, the sections are intertwined
- Specifically, in v.25, Gabriel lists three events (or time markers) and two spans of time measured in periods of sevens
 - The first event is the decree to rebuild the temple
 - The second event is the cutting off of the Messiah
 - The third event is the completion of the temple
 - The two spans of time are seven sevens and 62 sevens
- Logically, the two spans of time must separate the three events
 - And from history, we know how to assemble this puzzle
 - From the books of Ezra and Nehemiah we know that Israel took 49 years to complete the temple construction, including the city walls
 - So between the decree of Cyrus and the completion of the walls and pit surrounding the city, were “seven sevens”, or 49 years
 - Furthermore, Gabriel adds in v.26 that the Messiah is “cut off” after the 62 weeks
 - The term “to cut off” in Hebrew is a euphemism for “to die”
 - Therefore, the time from the completion of the walls until the death of Jesus Christ will be 62 sevens or 483 years
 - We know the 49 year period agrees with history, but what about the 483 year period? Is it correct?
 - First, can we date the year of Jesus' death?
 - Based on an analysis of the Gospels and astronomical records, we can determine that Jesus was born between 6-5 BC and died in April AD 27
 - For more, see [How do we count the seventy “weeks” of Daniel 9 in history?](#)

- If we count backward by 483 years, we arrive at 456 BC
- We learned in 2 Chronicles that the decree issued by Cyrus came in his first year of ruling
 - But the calendar adopted by historians reports Cyrus' first year of rule following his conquering of Babylon was 538 BC
 - So the common calendar places an additional 82 years between Cyrus and Jesus' death in 27 AD
 - So is the Bible wrong?
 - Well, before we answer that question, we need to ask where historians got the date for Cyrus' rule
 - Our calendar for ancient rulers is largely based on a timeline called Ptolemy's Canon
 - Ptolemy was an ancient Greek astrologer who developed a timeline of ancient rulers based on his analysis of astronomical references
 - Since his canon is the only scientific assessment of ancient events, it has served as the authority for all ancient dating
 - So is the Bible wrong? Or perhaps is Ptolemy wrong?
 - Simply put, there's no reason to accept Ptolemy's dating scheme above the Word of God
 - Dr. David Cooper made the following assessment of Ptolemy's accuracy as a historian:

Ptolemy (A.D. 70-161) was a great constructive genius. He was the author of the Ptolemaic System of Astronomy. He was one of the founders of the Science of Geography. But in Chronology he was only a late compiler and contriver, not an original witness, and not a contemporary historian, for he lived in the 2nd Century after Christ. He is the only authority for the Chronology of this period. He is not corroborated. He is contradicted, both by the Persian National Traditions preserved in Firdusi, by the Jewish National Traditions preserved in the Sedar Olam, and by the writings of Josephus.

- As Cooper points out, the Ptolemy Canon of dates doesn't have much to commend it, except popular acceptance
 - It doesn't agree with Josephus or other Jewish historical records
 - And it doesn't agree with the Bible
 - So as a matter of faith, we hold that the Biblical record is correct and Ptolmey was wrong
 - But don't expect to see the Bible's dates reflected in the common historical record
 - Just as the world rejects the Bible's Creation account, while preferring Darwin's fable

- Nevertheless, let's return to the angel's explanation
 - The angel tells Daniel that after the Messiah is cut off, the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed
 - The destruction will come like a flood, which is the Bible's term for an army that overruns with great force
 - And not only will the city be destroyed, but the temple will be desolated, he says at the end of v.26
- We know these events happened in AD 70, following Jesus' crucifixion
 - The city was overrun by the Romans
 - And the temple destroyed completely
 - But notice, the angel does not associate this event with a period of sevens
 - The destruction of the city is not intended to be a time marker
 - So why did the angel include it at all?
- The mention of Jerusalem's destruction is included for one reason: to give context for the final "seven" of the seventy sevens
 - Notice in v.26, the people who destroy the city are the "people of the prince who is to come"
 - The people are the Romans, who are the beginning of the fourth kingdom from Daniel's statue and beasts
 - These people, the fourth kingdom people, will one day produce a "prince"
 - And that prince is the key actor in v.27
 - This prince will be of the fourth kingdom
 - This isn't a prince from an earlier kingdom like Persia or Greece
 - The events of v.27 are associated with the final "beast" only
 - And who is this prince?
 - He is the same man we studied earlier in Chapter 8
 - He's the antichrist, the final ruler of the fourth kingdom
 - We come to this understanding principally by returning to our time markers
- Notice that in our count so far, we have already accumulated 483 of the 490 years
 - At the point of Jesus' death, the people of Israel have endured all but the final seven years of the Age of the Gentiles
 - Yet here we are today, still in the Age of Gentiles, for Jesus has not returned yet and the Kingdom has not come
 - Yet it's been 2,000 years since Jesus died
 - So how can the 490 years of the Age of the Gentiles still be incomplete?
 - Take a look at the time markers Gabriel gave us
 - There were 49 years between Cyrus and the walls completed

- There were 434 years between the walls completed and the death of Jesus
- We're still missing one seven-year period in the count of 490
- When that final seven-year period has run out, then Jesus will return and the Kingdom will come to earth
- We find that final seven in v.27, when Gabriel says that a covenant will be made for a "week", or for seven years
 - We have the time marker to start that final seven-year period
 - But notice, there is no connection between that event and the death of Jesus
 - Those final seven years are literally floating apart from the rest of the timeline
 - That separation tells us that there is a gap in the timeline
- The final seven years of the 490 is still waiting to complete, but ever since Jesus' death, God has suspended the countdown
 - The clock is on pause while the world waits for the prince to make a covenant
 - At the start of the covenant, the clock will begin to run again
 - And the final seven years will run
 - That period will lead us to the arrival of Jesus and the inauguration of the Kingdom on earth, as Daniel foretold earlier
 - So what is this covenant and who are the "many" who make the covenant?
 - Gabriel doesn't explain the covenant, but he does give us a very big clue
 - Whatever the covenant will be, it permits "sacrifice and grain offering"
 - We know this because Gabriel says the prince will make a covenant, but then at a later point, he will put a stop to these things
 - Therefore, the natural conclusion is that the covenant permitted the "many" to perform sacrifice and grain offering
 - But then at the midpoint of the seven years, he will violate the covenant, ending the practices
 - This tells us enough that we can deduce the rest of details
 - If we're talking about sacrifice and grain offering, then we must be talking about the Jewish temple where these things take place
 - And if the covenant permits these things to take place, then the many must be Jewish people who desire the right to sacrifice
 - They are the "many" because apparently, some of the Jewish people will not desire to participate in this covenant
- Putting all this together with what we learned earlier in Chapter 8, the prince is the antichrist, the man who comes to rule the world in the last days of the age
 - Remember, we said he comes to power at the midpoint of a seven-year period called the Tribulation
 - That seven-year period corresponds to the seven-year period in this prophecy

- And now we know that seven years will begin when this man brokers a covenant to permit Israel to return to their temple mount
- Today, that mount is controlled by the Arabs of Jordan
- So it will require a powerful world leader to negotiate an opportunity for Israel to sacrifice again
- Then at the midpoint of Tribulation (after a time, times and half a time or 42 months), the antichrist will suspend the sacrifices
 - We learned last time that at this point in the seven-year period, the antichrist is killed
 - Yet he is resurrected by the power of Satan, at which point, he will assume control of the entire world government
 - Paul said the antichrist will also seat himself in the Jewish temple calling himself god and demanding the world's worship
- Gabriel confirms this event in v.27, saying the prince will commit an abomination on the wing
 - The word "wing" is a Jewish euphemism that refers to the highest point of the temple
 - So the wing of abomination refers to an abomination over or above the temple itself
 - This describes the antichrist indwelt by Satan himself entering God's temple and declaring himself to be god
- This desolation of the temple is the same one Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24

Matt. 24:15 "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Matt. 24:16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

Matt. 24:21 "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

- Jewish believers in the city are told to flee at this point because a great tribulation will break out during the final three and a half years
 - But we know that as that final period ends, then the Age of the Gentiles will be complete
 - The judgment against Israel will have come to an end
 - Then the Lord will return and defeat the antichrist
- Gabriel ends, saying a complete destruction will come upon the one who desolated the temple

- The death of the antichrist is the final act of this age
- And with it, Gentile rule over Israel will finally be over after 70 years of exile plus another 490 years of judgment
- Plus an even longer period of time while the countdown is paused
- So the final thought for the night is why did the Lord pause the clock on the Age of the Gentiles
 - Israel is never told of the pause explicitly
 - But we saw it inferred in Gabriel's explanation to Daniel
 - The final seven years of the 490 wasn't connected the earlier timeline
 - So that made possible a gap of time
 - Nevertheless, the Jewish people didn't see that gap clearly and never understood it was planned
 - And that's because the gap wasn't intended for Israel
 - It's a gap made necessary by God's promises to Abraham concerning other nations

**Gen. 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."**

- The Lord promised to bless the entire world with the promises He gave to Abraham's descendants
 - The Church is the vehicle the Lord is using to reach all nations
 - And the Lord needed time in His plan to fulfill this promise
 - So He suspends the clock for 2,000+ years to make room for the Church to receive the New Covenant
- In a day to come, the gap made necessary for the Church will close and the Lord will return to counting down His judgment for Israel
 - Those final seven years is a period promised to Israel of the future
 - But it will not come upon the Church, for we are not destined for that wrath
- So with that, Daniel receives his correction from the angel
 - He now knows that Israel's time in exile may be coming to an end
 - But her time under judgment in the Age of the Gentiles is just beginning
 - And it won't end until numerous Gentile kingdoms have risen and fallen
 - And until the antichrist has ruled the entire earth



Daniel - Lesson 10

Chapters 10:1-21; 11:1-
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P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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- The final three chapters of Daniel are a single encounter, the final episode of Daniel's prophetic life
 - We will study them in two parts
 - The first part takes us through Chapter 10, which sets up the scene
 - In addition to Daniel, the chapter introduces three characters
 - These three characters will continue through the three chapters
 - And in this chapter, Daniel is given vision of both near and distant events concerning Israel and the Age of the Gentiles
 - Part 1 will continue into Chapter 11, where Daniel will receive an explanation of the near-term prophecy
 - Then at a point in Chapter 11, Daniel's vision shifts to an explanation of the far-term prophecy
 - That prophecy deals with events of the very end days
 - It looks ahead to the end of the fourth kingdom and to the tumultuous events that conclude the age
 - Part 2 continues to the end of Chapter 12
 - And at the end, it reveals a fascinating connection to the Book of Revelation
 - We'll cover part 2 next week
- For now, let's start with Chapter 10 and Daniel's encounter with the first of these three mysterious figures

Dan. 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.

Dan. 10:2 In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.

Dan. 10:3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

Dan. 10:4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

Dan. 10:5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.

Dan. 10:6 His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

- As he typically does, Daniel dates his vision to the reign of a king
 - This vision came in the third year of Cyrus' reign
 - Cyrus was the Persian king who released Israel to rebuild its temple in Judah
 - Chapter 9 was set in the first year of this same ruler
 - So Chapter 10 follows two years later

- This is the last vision Daniel received, as recorded in his book
 - Daniel is probably approaching 90 years old
 - We know he doesn't return to Jerusalem with the exiles
 - So he likely passes away soon after this vision, his work as a prophet having been completed
- Daniel says he received a message of great conflict
 - The Hebrew word for "message" is literally the word for "speech"
 - So Daniel received a speech, a spoken message
 - Chapters 10-12 are his description of what he received and how it came to him
 - It's a message of conflict, because it describes war between Gentiles and Jews, and between God and Satan
- Daniel opens by telling us he had been mourning for three weeks prior to this moment
 - His period of mourning was similar to fasting, though technically, not a full fast
 - He avoids any food or drink that represents joy
 - He avoided tasty food, which sounds like he ate airline food exclusively
 - But the Hebrew word for "tasty" means "desirable", "treasured" or "valuable"
 - So he ate nothing that he liked or desired, like meat or wine
 - Instead, he ate only plain, simple things to sustain himself
 - Daniel's practice was intended to mirror the feeling of his soul in the disposition of his flesh
 - Daniel's soul was anguished, he felt loss and suffering
 - So Daniel sought to bring his soul and body into agreement
 - Daniel felt loss and suffering for Israel
- Then Daniel gives a reason for his mourning, though the reason might be hard to see for a Gentile
 - Daniel says his three-week fast ended on the twenty-fourth day of the first month on the Jewish calendar
 - This date is significant for the Jewish people
 - On the Jewish calendar, the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread take place from the 14th to the 21st of the first month
 - Daniels seems to have mourned for about 10 days prior to Passover and he continued until three days after the feast period ended
 - Since Daniel gives us such a precise date for his mourning period, it suggests it was connected to this feast period
 - The Passover remembers Israel's freedom from slavery in Israel
 - And the Feast of Unleavened Bread remembers the exodus out of the land
 - For Israel, this holiday served as an Independence Day celebration
 - For Israel, it represented victory over oppressors
 - It stood for freedom

- Most of all, it remembered Israel's God defeating the so-called gods of Egypt and the world
- So we might imagine that as that feast approached, Daniel entered a period of mourning because he knew Israel had many generations of oppression still to come
 - He knew Israel's final exodus victory was a long way off
 - In the meantime, the nation would endure thousands of years of Gentile oppression
 - Daniel is mourning the weight of God's judgment against His own people
 - And perhaps he was hoping that his mourning might move God to alter the plan
 - Instead, the Lord takes favor upon Daniel by visiting him in an unique way
 - And what follows in this scene are both things that connect back to previous chapters of Daniel
 - And things that look forward to the final book of the Bible, Revelation
- Beginning in v.5, with the introduction of a new character
 - Daniel is standing by the bank of the Tigris river, which ran through Babylon
 - And he looks up to see a figure, which Daniel calls "a certain man"
 - Daniel's description of this man reminds us of the one Daniel saw briefly in Chapter 8, suspended over a river

Dan. 8:15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man.

Dan. 8:16 And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision."

- In that earlier moment, the "Man" between the banks called to the angel Gabriel to give Daniel an explanation of his visions
 - As we'll learn in Chapter 12, this Man is also suspended above the river Tigris
 - Which naturally leads us to conclude that this Man must be the same Man as the One Daniel saw in Chapter 8
- This time, Daniel provides a description of the Man, and by Daniel's description, the Man seems to be glowing almost white hot
 - First, His clothing is white linen, like the robe worn by a priest
 - White implies purity and the outfit of a priest implies an intercessor with God
 - His belt was pure gold, which signifies great importance and majesty and would reflect light, like a mirror
 - Daniel knew the gold's origin, a place called Uphaz (which is an unknown place)
 - Furthermore, His body is like beryl, which is a transparent, yellow stone that glows when light catches it
 - Then, His face is an intense white light, like lightening

- And His eyes look like flaming torches
- While the rest of His body is like polished bronze, which also reflects light brilliantly
- Finally, His voice sounded like a tumult, which means many different sounds combining together at once
- The overall effect is that of intense light and glowing reflections from every place, combined with an intense powerful sound
 - There is another place in the Bible where such a Person is described in a similar fashion

Rev. 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,

Rev. 1:11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Rev. 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

Rev. 1:13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

Rev. 1:14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

Rev. 1:15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

- This is the Apostle John's description of Christ's appearance on the island of Patmos
 - Immediately we see the similarity
 - In fact, John's description of Jesus varies from Daniel's only in terms of the comparisons made
 - For example, John says "robe", while Daniel says "linen"
 - John says a "sash of gold", while Daniel says "belt of gold"
 - John says "white like wool", while Daniel says "like lightening"
 - John says a "voice of many waters", while Daniel called it a "tumult"
 - Apart from these trivial differences, the two prophets are describing the same Person, appearing in the same way
 - This Man is specifically named to be Christ in Revelation
 - So based on that description, we must conclude Daniel saw the pre-incarnate Christ in Chapter 10
 - This is not unprecedented in Daniel, since the Angel of the Lord (Christ) appeared to Daniel's friends in the furnace
 - Here, we have the first of several important connections between the books of Daniel and Revelation

- Daniel's book has been called the Revelation of the Old Testament for good reason
- The two books are connected in several important ways, and not simply because they address similar end times events
- The books are linked in one especially surprising way, which we come to see in these three chapters
- Beginning with this common appearance of Jesus
- And like John, Daniel is terrified by the appearance of Jesus appearing before Him

Dan. 10:7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves.

Dan. 10:8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.

Dan. 10:9 But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Dan. 10:10 Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

Dan. 10:11 He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

- Daniel was apparently accompanied by others in this moment, though they did not see what Daniel saw
 - Daniel's experience reminds us of Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus
 - Paul saw and heard Jesus, though his companions did not
 - In both cases, the companions were terrified by something and were removed from the situation
 - For Daniel, the effect of this vision was dread and incapacitation
 - He physically became like a dead man
 - This is the uniform experience of sinful human beings when brought into the presence of God's holiness
 - It's more than a mental response...it's a physical response
 - Literally, our flesh reacts instinctively to the presence of God
 - This is what happened to Adam and Woman in the Garden following their sin
 - They instinctively reacted to God's arrival in the Garden by hiding themselves from His presence
 - The reason humanity responds this way to God is our sin, which places us in mortal jeopardy before a holy and just God
 - Even a man as good as Daniel experiences dread, because he was still sinful

- At this point, Daniel goes face-down to the ground in a coma-like state
 - Nevertheless, Daniel needs to be revived to receive the revelation of the Lord
 - So the Lord sends an angel to revive Daniel and continue to conversation
 - In v.10, a hand touches Daniel and brought Daniel onto his hands and knees
 - He's still trembling in fear, and who could blame him?
 - But he's no longer incapacitated
 - Here we see the essential difference between angelic beings and the Lord, and with it, we see the purpose for God creating angels
 - Angels are God's servants, created to bridge this gap between fallen men and God
 - As Hebrew explains

**Heb. 1:13 But to which of the angels has He ever said,
“Sit at My right hand,
Until I make Your enemies
A footstool for Your feet”?**

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- Angels are ministering spirits who provide service to God on our behalf
- They are the messengers sent by God to minister to the saints
- They can interact with men in ways that God can't, because of our fallen nature
 - Angels will still illicit strong responses in men, principally, fear
 - Fear is the natural response to something supernatural, much like we are scared by loud noises or large animals
 - But since angels are not our judge, we do not experience a feeling of dread or jeopardy
 - Men can work with angels without falling down or entering a coma, which is why they are God's messengers
- So the Lord hands off the conversation to His angel, probably Gabriel, again
 - How do we know that an angel has joined the scene in v.10?
 - First, this pattern matches exactly the last time Daniel encountered the Man over the water in Chapter 8

Dan. 8:16 And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, “Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.”

Dan. 8:17 So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.”

Dan. 8:18 Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright.

- The “Man” Jesus sent Gabriel to bring Daniel the interpretation
- And he approaches Daniel in the same way, touching Daniel to cause him to revive from a deep sleep and to stand upright
- Secondly, if we fast-forward to Chapter 12, we read this:

Dan. 12:5 Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river.

Dan. 12:6 And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?”

- Chapter 12 is still set in the same moment as Chapters 10 & 11
- And in that chapter, Daniel reveals that there is a total of three characters in this moment
- In addition to Jesus in linen over the water, there are two other men, one on each bank of the river
 - That means one of these men is standing on the same bank as Daniel
 - Once again, we can assume these men are angels in the appearance of men, as we saw in Chapter 8
- Thirdly, looking ahead to the next section of Chapter 10, notice that in v.16, Daniel describes the one speaking to him
 - Now Daniel says he is one resembling a human being
 - This must be a different person than Christ, since the description of Christ is nothing like a human being
 - This indicates a second character entered the scene at v.10
- Furthermore, we can also determine the identity of these two characters by looking at Chapters 10 and 12 again
 - In Chapter 10:13, the one speaking to Daniel mentions an angel, Michael, who assisted him in a battle against an adversary
 - Then later, in Chapter 12:1, this same character speaks of Michael again, in the third person
 - So it would appear the angel speaking to Daniel is Gabriel, the same angel that spoke to Daniel in Chapter 9
 - And the other character on the far side of the bank is Michael, who apparently isn’t much for speaking
- So continuing ahead with that conclusion, Gabriel has touched Daniel and Daniel is now on his hands and knees
 - From this point in v.11, Gabriel tells Daniel that he is a man of high esteem, as Gabriel said in Chapter 9
 - Daniel is esteemed in the sense that He has received a great measure of God’s grace
 - And then, by his faithfulness and devotion to obeying God, Daniel has commended himself

- With that, the angel directs Daniel to stand upright so he can receive a revelation of God by way of this messenger
 - And so, Daniel moved to his feet and is now standing
 - Though he's still trembling
 - Which, of course, prompts the customary angelic greeting

Dan. 10:12 Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.

Dan. 10:13 “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

- Gabriel tells Daniel he need not fear Gabriel, because Gabriel is an answer to his prayer
 - The angel came in response to Daniel's words
 - That prayer was probably one Daniel prayed at the start of his 21-day fast
 - This is the second time Gabriel has been dispatched in response to Daniel's prayer
 - That's a pretty powerful testimony to Daniel's prayer life
 - But in this case, Daniel continued fasting for three weeks because Gabriel was occupied for that time in withstanding an enemy
 - Based on what Gabriel tells Daniel, we can surmise Daniel was praying for understanding concerning his troubling visions
 - In earlier chapters, Daniel had received terrifying visions about Israel's future
 - They were a burden for Daniel, and so he sought divine intervention
 - So he entered a period of mourning and fasting, waiting for an answer
 - It seems he would have had it earlier, but the angelic realm was a little busy
 - Gabriel's words confirm that angels are bound by space and time, as is every created thing
 - A day for an angel is the same as a day for us
 - And they must travel to and fro...they can't be in all places at the same time
 - Secondly, the power of the angelic realm operates within boundaries set by the Lord
 - In this case, the Lord didn't permit Gabriel to prevail, nor did he permit Michael to relieve Gabriel until the time was right
 - So it appears the Lord wanted this delay for Daniel
 - That's an encouragement for all us to remember that the Lord may cause us to wait for a time
 - God answers our prayers on His timetable and according to His plan so He may accomplish greater good

- So why was Gabriel busy for those three weeks?
 - Gabriel says that the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding Gabriel
 - A prince is the Bible's term for a spiritual actor, usually an angelic being
 - We see in that same verse that Michael is called one of the chief princes, meaning one of the archangels
 - We know Gabriel is another archangel, so he too would be a chief prince
 - In Chapter 9, the antichrist was called a "prince" because he will be indwelt by Satan, who is a fallen angelic being
 - So then, who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia?
 - Well, he is an angelic being
 - And he opposes Gabriel, so he must be an adversary of God's heavenly host, which means he is a demon
 - And he has a special responsibility for Persia
- This statement suggests that demons may have responsibilities assigned by Satan for working in various kingdoms or regions on earth
 - In this case, perhaps the prince of Persia is no less than Satan himself
 - Persia includes the region of Babylon, which has been Satan's backyard, since Eden
 - But that seems unlikely because of something we read in Jude

Jude 9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

- In Jude, we learn that Satan sought Moses' body, probably to resurrect it by indwelling it, so He could deceive Israel
- The archangel Michael intervened to stop Satan, but because Satan is a superior angelic being, Michael didn't dare rebuke Satan
- Instead, Michael asked the Lord to rebuke Satan
- Yet in Daniel 10, we read that Gabriel held off this prince of Persia for 21 days (3 X 7)
 - It seems unlikely that the angel Gabriel could withstand Satan for 3 weeks if Michael couldn't even rebuke Satan
 - The more likely conclusion is that this prince of Persia is a powerful demon, perhaps Satan's righthand agent
 - Satan assigned this demon to Persia, since this is Satan's most precious territory on earth
 - And Gabriel and Michael battled this demon to stop him in his evil plans for the region
- This would also explain why the Middle East and the Arab nations of the world have historically been such dangerous places for Jews and Christians
 - Many missionaries can testify to the special spiritual darkness and persecution

they experience when working in these lands

- The demonic control of this region is far more pronounced and pernicious than in other places
- And not coincidentally, this region is the source of Islam, one of the most destructive religious systems in the world
- Yet Satan's power is never equal to God's, and so we see the Lord moving today in powerful ways to bring light into this darkness
 - Which means that when angels "battle" Satan or his agents, these battles are according to God's purposes
 - He allows the battles, as they serve some greater purpose
- Think of the evil work of Satan's forces like water rushing downhill
 - Both have great destructive power
 - But if that power is channeled and directed, it can be put to work
 - God uses His angels to channel and direct Satan's evil desires to produce good outcomes for God's people
- Finally, what was the nature of the conflict between Gabriel, Michael and the demon of Persia?
 - Based on a clue inside the text, plus a little history, we can guess at the answer
 - At the end of v.13, Gabriel says he had been left with the kings of Persia
 - "Kings" refers to human rulers over the region of Persia
 - These men seem to be the focus of the angelic conflict
 - The demon seemed intent on using these men to further some evil purpose
 - While Gabriel and Michael were intent on resisting the demon to prevent his success
 - And we know this is happening shortly after the exiles have returned to the land to rebuild the temple
 - And in Ezra, we read of how the powerful rulers of surrounding nations were opposing Israel's work in the land

Ezra 4:4 Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building,

Ezra 4:5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

- Notice, the people of the land were resisting Israel's rebuilding
- Perhaps these were the ones under the influence of the demon
- Or perhaps this battle was over something that we never experienced on earth, because Gabriel and Michael prevented it
 - The enemy is often seeking to do evil that never materializes on earth and the angelic realm battles to keep us out of harm
 - If you've ever wondered why Satan doesn't wreak even more havoc on earth, it

seems we have the angelic realm to thank

- As Paul says

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- Then the angel gets down to business

Dan. 10:14 “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.”

Dan. 10:15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless.

Dan. 10:16 And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength.

Dan. 10:17 “For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.”

Dan. 10:18 Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me.

Dan. 10:19 He said, “O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!” Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”

- In answer to Daniel’s prayer, Gabriel is prepared to give Daniel the answer to his questions concerning the visions he has seen
 - The mention of these visions sucks the life out of Daniel again
 - Once again, Daniel heads to the ground
 - He becomes speechless
 - Remember, these visions are things the Lord has imprinted on Daniel’s mind
 - They are like coming attractions of events that will transpire on earth
 - They are things of the Age of the Gentiles, of times when Israel will be oppressed by Gentiles
 - They are truly horrible things that God will permit because of the weight of Israel’s offenses under the Old Covenant
 - And it’s a sign to us of how terrible these things will be, that even a vision of them is enough to cause Daniel to faint and not even have strength enough to speak
 - Notice, he is literally speechless
 - He can’t talk, so the angel touches his lips in v.16 to strengthen Daniel’s

mouth to speak again

- And with that renewed strength, Daniel then starts talking again
- Daniel then asks the angel how could he talk with my “lord”
 - First, the term “lord” is simply a generic title of respect
 - It’s what someone says to a superior
- Secondly, Daniel is asking how he could be expected to continue in this conversation, since the visions have robbed him of his stamina
 - Notice, he adds that there is no strength in him and he can’t even catch his breath
 - Daniel is literally exhausted, just from the memory of these visions
- Later, we learn that Daniel is having visions of various calamities, including events in Tribulation
 - If just a vision of Tribulation brings a man to his knees, what will the real thing be like?
 - And what must Hell itself be like?
- In response to Daniel’s question, Gabriel touched Daniel again to give him greater strength
 - This is another typical function of angels
 - Angels bring strength to men in the midst of a difficult spiritual battle
 - We see the same thing happening to Elijah in 1 Kings 19
 - And even Jesus received this ministry from angels when He fasted for 40 days in the desert
 - Gabriel tells Daniel to be strong and courageous because there is prophetic work to do
 - Having been supernaturally revived, Daniel says “let’s go”
 - Tell me what I need to hear
- Before beginning the revelation, the angel asks Daniel if he understands why Gabriel has come to him now?

Dan. 10:20 Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.

Dan. 10:21 “However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.

- Earlier, Gabriel said he was fighting a demon of Persia for three weeks
 - Now, Gabriel has broken away for Daniel’s sake
 - But he can only afford to be here a short time because he says he has to return to the battle

- And I don't have a large army...I only have Michael standing with me
- And we already saw that it takes both of us to withstand this demon
- Furthermore, a new demon is about to arise to further the purposes of the next Gentile kingdom within the Age of the Gentiles
- So his question to Daniel is, really, do you see how important this revelation is?
 - It's so important that it necessitated an archangel leaving an important post, at great risk, to explain it personally
 - It comes at a crucial time and there are important things about to happen you need to record
- So he says in v.21, I'm here to tell you what you must inscribe in Scripture
 - And what Gabriel gives Daniel forms Chapters 11-12
 - It's an explanation of things Daniel has seen in visions
- Everything in Daniel's visions takes place long after Daniel has passed
 - But some details are fulfilled within a few hundred years of Daniel's life
 - While other events have yet to be fulfilled
 - They fall into a near-term, far-term grouping
- So Gabriel's speech begins in Chapter 11

Dan. 11:1 "In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

Dan. 11:2 "And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.

Dan. 11:3 "And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.

Dan. 11:4 "But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.

- The chapter opens with a verse that is actually the final verse of Chapter 10
 - Daniel typically started new sections with the reign of a king
 - So the men who constructed our canon placed this verse at the start of Chapter 11, in keeping with that pattern
 - But it's misleading, because we read v.1 in Gabriel's voice, not Daniel's voice
 - So the angel is telling Daniel that he has been working with the first king of Persia from the start of his reign to support the people of Israel
 - As a result of his work, the king of Persia had issued the decree to release Israel
 - And now, two years later, he's still at work for the needs of Israel

- But that work has a timeline and many things must come to pass before the timeline is complete
- Gabriel's explanation includes near-term and far-term events
 - Both events take place in the Age of the Gentiles and are related to Christ
 - The near-term events are related to Christ's First Coming
 - While the far-term events will be related to Christ's Second Coming
 - In that sense, the two sets of events are themselves related
 - The earlier events serve as a picture of the later ones
 - Then, Gabriel moves to the first part of his explanation
 - First, he tells Daniel that there will be four more kings over Persia
 - History confirms this prophecy
 - The four kings were Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, Darius I (a different Darius), and Xerxes I
 - Gabriel says the fourth king will have the greatest wealth and power, and again, history agrees
 - Xerxes became so powerful that he decided he could conquer a growing adversary in the West, Greece
 - According to the Greek historian, Herodotus, Xerxes assembled an army of a million men to attack Greece
 - They conquered virtually all Greece, including burning Athens to the ground
 - But, Xerxes was defeated in a famous naval battle and was forced to retreat
- But, his incursion laid the groundwork for the rise of Alexander the Great
 - In v.3, Gabriel moves to the third kingdom of Greece, speaking of Alexander the Great as a mighty king who does as he pleases
 - But as soon as he has ascended, his kingdom is broken into pieces
 - Again, this is an undeniable reference to Alexander the Great's premature death and the division of his kingdom into 4 parts
 - He had no descendants, so his kingdom is given to others
 - This part of the prophecy just gives us context, as does the next

Dan. 11:5 "Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed.

Dan. 11:6 "After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times.

Dan. 11:7 "But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength.

Dan. 11:8 “Also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years.

Dan. 11:9 “Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.

- The next section of the chapter runs until v.20, and it details the conflict that will take place between two of the four pieces of Alexander’s kingdom
 - Specifically, Gabriel explains how the Ptolemy and Seleucid kingdoms battle each other
 - The Ptolemaic kingdom occupied Egypt and extended up into southern Judea
 - The Seleucid Empire occupied present-day Syria into northern Judea and extended east, as far as India
 - Which meant that the border separating these two power empires ran right through the middle of Israel
 - So naturally, as these two empires fought back and forth for control, the front line was Israel
 - Daniel calls the Ptolemaic kingdom the king of the South
 - And he calls the Seleucid kingdom the king of the North
 - They are north and south, relative to an observer standing in Jerusalem
 - This is a clear fulfillment of Jesus’ words that the Age of the Gentiles would be a time of trampling of Jerusalem by Gentiles
- What follows is a history of these two powers, which we can address in summary, since it’s merely backdrop for more important matters
 - First, in v.5, Ptolemy I Soter, the king of the south, who was a general under Alexander, decided to make himself king or pharaoh over Egypt
 - He had been assigned the territory as a governor
 - But now, he decided he didn’t need to answer to anyone
 - He called himself pharaoh to gain acceptance from the Egyptian population
 - Meanwhile, another ex-Alexandrian general, Seleucus I Nicator, the king of the north, rose to power over Babylon
 - Seleucus I Nicator was forced to defend Babylon against a third of Alexander’s generals, the appropriately-named Antigonus
 - With Antigonus threatening to take over Babylon, Seleucus I Nicator sought assistance from Ptolemy I Soter
 - Because he asked Ptolemy I Soter for help, Seleucus I Nicator became his “prince”, as Gabriel says in v.5
 - So effectively, Ptolemy I Soter now had power over Babylon as well
- Then, as Gabriel mentions, some years pass and then new events take place
 - Eventually, these two men die and their thrones are inherited by their sons and then later by their grandsons

- Eventually, we have Ptolemy II ruling in the south and Antiochus II ruling in the north
 - These two were bitter enemies, but in 250 BC, they decided to bury the hatchet through marriage
 - Ptolemy II's daughter would marry Antiochus II, who had divorced his wife, Laodicea, in order to take Ptolemy's daughter
- When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus decided to take back his first wife
 - Once Laodicea was back in favor, she had the new wife, Berenice, killed, along with her infant son
 - And just for good measure, she poisoned her husband and tried to rule in his place (Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned)
 - Eventually, her son, Seleucus II, succeeded his father in the North
 - These are the events described in v.6
- Later Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III, came to power in the south and determined to avenge her death in the north
 - He launched an attack against Seleucus II
 - The battle took place in Syria at Antioch
 - He succeeded in killing Laodicea
 - And he gained control of much of the northern kingdom's territory and held it until his death
 - These are the events of v.7
 - After his conquest of the north, Ptolemy III returned to Egypt, bringing spoil from the way
 - Among the things he brought were religious artifacts from Syria
 - These are the things mentioned in v.8
 - Apparently, Seleucus II later counter-attacked by trying to invade Egypt, but the attack was unsuccessful
 - This campaign is not recorded in history, apart from the Bible
 - We know of it only from v.9
- Continuing forward

Dan. 11:10 “His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress.

Dan. 11:11 “The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former.

Dan. 11:12 “When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail.

Dan. 11:13 “For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great

army and much equipment.

Dan. 11:14 “Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.

- Eventually, Seleucus II dies and he is succeeded by his son, Seleucus III, who dies quickly, and is succeeded by his brother, Antiochus III the Great
 - These sons of Seleucus II sought to restore the glory of Syria lost to the Ptolemaic kings
 - So each attacked Egypt during his reign
 - Eventually, the Seleucids succeeded in driving the Ptolemaic Egyptians back into the Sinai
 - These battles are described in vs.10
 - As a result, Ptolemy IV Philopator attacks Antiochus III at the new border in Southern Israel
 - His attack was devastating, and he destroyed Antiochus III’s army
 - But, Antiochus regrouped and stopped the advance
 - In the end, Ptolemy IV Philopator recaptured just Palestine
 - This campaign is described in vs.11-12
 - Antiochus will direct his military efforts in other directions for a while, rebuilding his forces against lesser adversaries
 - But eventually, he returns to battle the Ptolemaic kingdom
 - He succeeds in retaking Palestine in 203 BC
 - This attack is described in v.13
- To this point, you should have noticed that the back and forth battle has centered on Israel
 - The Jewish people have been tossed to and fro with each new campaign
 - In this case, as Antiochus III entered the land again, the people of Israel sided with him
 - They opposed the Egyptians of the Ptolemaic kingdom and helped Antiochus repel them
 - This uprising of the “many” of Israel against the king of the South is recorded in v.14
- And so the campaigns continue

Dan. 11:15 “Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand.

Dan. 11:16 “But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land,

with destruction in his hand.

Dan. 11:17 “He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side.

Dan. 11:18 “Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn.

Dan. 11:19 “So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.

Dan. 11:20 “Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.

- In this battle, Antiochus III besieged the coastal city of Sidon in northern Palestine
 - When he defeated that city, he captured a key general, General Scopas, and his elite troops
 - This event is recorded in v.15
 - This was the final stronghold of the Egyptians in Palestine, so as it fell, it meant that the Seleucids had regained complete control over Palestine
 - Antiochus III now had the Beautiful Land of Israel to himself
 - These are the events of v.16
 - But meanwhile, a threat from a new enemy was rising in the west
 - Rome was gaining power and threatening to take over the world
 - So, Antiochus III initiated peace with Egypt
 - He offered his daughter, Cleopatra I Syra, as a wife to Ptolemy V
 - He hoped his daughter would secretly remain loyal to the Seleucid Empire in the north
 - Instead, she became loyal to her new Egyptian husband
 - These events are recorded in v.17
 - Meanwhile, Antiochus III struck Rome in Asia Minor, hoping to forestall their advance
 - A Roman commander succeeded in defending the coast from Antiochus III
 - That commander is the one mentioned in v.18
 - Antiochus III returns to his home and dies soon thereafter, having foreseen the rise of Rome and the eventual loss of his kingdom
 - These events are given in v.19
- Antiochus’ Son, Seleucus IV, succeeds his father and has to submit to Roman authority
 - Rome requires taxes from the Northern Kingdom, so Seleucus IV taxes his people, including the Jews, greatly
 - He assigns a Jewish man named Heliodorus to collect tax in Judea

- Heliodorus goes throughout the land, commanding taxes be paid, and obviously, he makes no friends
- Eventually, Heliodorus decides he must act against the king or else be killed by his own people
- During a return visit to Syria, Heliodorus poisons Seleucus IV and kills him
 - His situation is addressed in v.20
- This murder of the king by a Jew sets the stage for intense Jewish persecution
 - And that persecution leads us into the next part of this chapter, which is the main thrust of the near-term prophecy
 - In fact, all the history we've covered to this point was provided as background to what comes next
- From vs.21-35, a particularly despicable man takes center stage
 - His exploits against Israel become legendary
 - And he himself becomes a picture of another infamous historical figure
 - We will cover this figure and the one he pictures next week, as we conclude this chapter
 - And we will also cover Chapter 12

- From our study last week, we found Daniel receiving a long, detailed prophecy concerning the final kings of Persia and most notably, of the Greek Empire
 - The prophecies covered multiple generations of leaders in both kingdoms
 - In fact, when we include the earlier prophecies Daniel received, we find a relatively complete overview of the first three kingdoms of the Age of the Gentiles
 - We know how the age starts, with Nebuchadnezzar, and how it moves through a total of four Gentile empires
 - Each of these four kingdoms takes its turn at oppressing God's people in Israel
 - Until such time as the Lord is ready to set up His Kingdom and free Israel from Gentile oppression
 - And last week, we learned briefly about 4 of the Persian kings
 - But quickly, the angel Gabriel moved into an in-depth look at two kingdoms coming out of the Alexandrian empire
 - Daniel received incredibly precise and detailed prophecy about the "North" and "South" kingdoms
 - We saw how the North was the Seleucid Empire and the South was the Ptolemaic empire
 - The prophecies concerning these kingdoms ran from vs.5-20, and covered a span of several hundred years
 - During that time, the North and South warred almost continually
 - And their battlefield, for the most part, was Israel
 - Their conflicts served to accomplish the "trampling" of Jerusalem that God intended
- While the history of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms was interesting, its principle value to us is three-fold
 - First, the incredible accuracy of these predictions gives us complete assurance that Daniel received this knowledge from God
 - It means we can take the rest of his prophecy with the same assurance
 - Much of what Daniel recorded has yet to come to pass
 - So, we must look to his words with as much certainty concerning the future as we do the past
 - Secondly, we see how the Lord controls these kings and kingdoms like pieces on a chess board so as to accomplish His plan for Israel
 - Remember, the Lord numbered the kingdoms in the Age of the Gentiles
 - But more than that, He also explains why they must do as they do, indicating they are moving according to a plan
 - In other words, the rise and fall of these empires isn't merely happenstance
 - It was according to God's desires,

- Similarly, the age will end on a specific day God has determined, by the return of His Son
- So both the *degree* of detail found in these prophecies, and the *course* of every event, fit into God's plan and demonstrate the reach of God's sovereignty
 - We simply can't read a Chapter like Daniel 11 without acknowledging that all history lies in God's control
 - He's not a dispassionate observer of human behavior
 - He's in control and leading the world to the place He desires it will go
- So as we ended in v.20 last week, we had reached the point where the Seleucid Empire's king had been poisoned by a disloyal Jewish tax collector
 - As Antiochus III dies, his son Antiochus IV rises to power
 - Antiochus IV becomes a focal point in Gabriel's message to Daniel and the subject of Daniel's prophecy from v.21 to v.35
 - You may remember this man from our study of Chapter 8
 - In Chapter 8, Daniel saw a vision somewhat similar to the vision he saw in Chapter 7 of an animals with horns
 - In Chapter 8, he saw a goat with four horns, followed by a small horn that grew stronger than the rest
 - This small horn invades the Beautiful Land, Israel
 - That small horn was Antiochus IV
 - He was called a small horn because he serves as a type for another terrible leader of the future
 - That future leader will be the antichrist, who himself was represented by another small horn in Chapter 7
 - So we have two rulers, one near-term to Daniel (Antiochus IV) and one far-term (antichrist)
 - Both are symbolized in chapters of Daniel as little horns
 - The earlier one is a type of the later one
 - Now in Chapter 11, we will find yet another prophecy about Antiochus and the antichrist
 - And once again, Antiochus will serve as a type, or forerunner, to the antichrist
 - Remember, types in Scripture are always lesser to their greater fulfillment
 - That is, Antiochus IV will say and do things that are similar to the things the antichrist will eventually say and do
 - But the magnitude and effect of the work of the antichrist will be far greater than that of Antiochus IV
- Let's look at what we learn about Antiochus IV

Dan. 11:21 “In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

Dan. 11:22 “The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant.

Dan. 11:23 “After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.

Dan. 11:24 “In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time.

Dan. 11:25 “He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.

Dan. 11:26 “Those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain.

Dan. 11:27 “As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time.

Dan. 11:28 “Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.

- The passage begins with “In his place...” speaking of the murdered king, Seleucus IV Philopater
 - In his place, comes a man who is a truly evil person
 - Gabriel says he will be despicable, which means someone who is despised
 - He will be despised by the Jewish people for his cruelty
 - In fact, it’s likely this man shares another key quality with the coming antichrist
 - He was almost certainly indwelt by a demon, and perhaps by Satan himself, for reasons I’ll explain later
 - Antiochus IV was not the rightful heir of Seleucus IV Philopater
 - He was able to seize control of the throne because Seleucus IV Philopater’s oldest son was being held captive in Rome
 - After convincing the leaders of Syria to allow him to rule in place of the captive son, Antiochus IV quickly consolidated power
 - In v.21, we see his illegitimate rise to power described
 - He was a ruthless man
 - As we learned in Chapter 8, Antiochus IV declared that he was a god in the form

of man

- He took the name Antiochus Epiphanes, which means “a manifestation of God”
- But he was prone to unpredictable and strange behavior
- This led his subjects to call him Antiochus Epimanes, which means “madman”
- Further evidence that he was likely demon possessed
- The statements in vs.22-23 are an overview of the passage that follows
 - We’re told this king will push aside an overflowing force
 - He will also depose a prince of a covenant
 - And he will gain power over his adversary with a minimum of forces because he relies on deception
 - It begins in v.24, as Antiochus collects riches from among the vassals of his kingdom
 - He doesn’t use these riches for himself
 - Instead, he uses them to buy allegiances in preparation for war against the Ptolemaic Kingdom
 - In this way, he will achieve a victory his fathers never achieved, namely invading the heart of the Ptolemaic Kingdom
- Antiochus IV’s campaign against Egypt began in 170 BC, when he marched a large army southward into the Nile Delta without detection
 - Ptolemy VI responded by sending a much larger army to oppose Antiochus
 - But as we read in v.23, Antiochus was able to defeat Ptolemy VI’s forces with his smaller force
 - Antiochus IV managed to capture the Egyptian city of Memphis
 - As v.25 reports, Antiochus succeeded in part through deception
 - The deception came in two ways, as described in v.26 and v.27
 - In v.26, we learn that two of the king’s counselors who shared his table deceived him
 - These two counselors wanted to undermine the young king and replace him
 - So, they convinced Ptolemy VI to make bad military decisions, leading to his defeat and the loss of many lives
 - The second deception came when Ptolemy VI and Antiochus IV sat down to negotiate a peace, as described in v.27
 - Antiochus had Memphis, but could not capture the key Egyptian city of Alexandria
 - So Antiochus told Ptolemy VI that if he surrendered Alexandria, then Antiochus would allow Ptolemy to continue ruling
 - Meanwhile, Ptolemy agreed to let Antiochus have the city and vowed loyalty to Antiochus, but he was lying too
 - These were all lies, of course, as we read in v.27

- Antiochus IV kept Ptolemy prisoner under guard while he attacked the city
- And despite Ptolemy's assurances, the city of Alexandria did not surrender
- When Antiochus tried to take the city, the inhabitants fought back and named Ptolemy VI's younger brother king instead
- Antiochus eventually left for home, his battles for Egypt awaiting another day
- Finally, in v.28, we're told Antiochus IV returns to Syria with much plunder taken from Memphis
 - Along the way, he passes through Israel again
 - While he's in town, a Jew named Jason decided to take opportunity for his ambition
 - Jason desired to be made high priest of Israel, so he bribed Antiochus IV to install him in place of the real high priest, Onias III
 - Seeing Jason's success, a third man, Menelaus, also bribed Antiochus IV to be made high priest
 - Always a one for personal gain, Antiochus agreed to install Menelaus over Jason
 - Later, Onias III protests against these moves and the Jews begin to align their support behind one man or the other
 - Eventually, Antiochus, now back in Syria, tires of the political maneuvering within Israel
 - So he has Onias III killed, along with those who schemed with the various men
 - He then decides to pursue a vendetta against the Jewish people in the city of Jerusalem
 - His army entered the city in 168 BC and killed 80,000 Jews and desecrated the temple
- Before we move into the rest of Antiochus IV's story, we can already see some parallels to the coming antichrist
 - We learned in the study of Chapters 8 & 9, that the antichrist will rise to power over a period of time
 - He initially comes to power amidst 10 other world rulers
 - During those early years, he gains power through intrigue and military victories, leading three kings to conspire against him
 - Eventually, he dies as a result of their treachery, but he comes back to life again with greater power to deceive the world
 - After gaining power at the middle of Tribulation, he turns his attention to persecuting the Jewish people, especially in Jerusalem
 - This broad arc is foreshadowed in the events of Antiochus' life
 - He acts in similar ways, though on a smaller scale, in keeping with being a forerunner
 - But Antiochus IV's similarities to the antichrist only grow

Dan. 11:29 “At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before.

Dan. 11:30 “For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

Dan. 11:31 “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.

- **Back in v.27, Gabriel told Daniel that this king wouldn’t prevail against his enemy in the south until the appointed time, and now in v.29, that time has come**
 - In the same year that Antiochus rampaged Jerusalem, he also decided to continue southward to attack Egypt again
 - Upon his arrival, he discovers the Roman consul Popillius Laenas had sailed from Cyprus to secure the territory for Rome
 - In v.30, we’re told that ships from Kittim will bring this army to Egypt
 - Cyprus is the modern name of Kittim
 - Faced with a superior army, Antiochus IV had no choice but to return home
 - Antiochus was prevented from entering Egypt as he had hoped, as v.29 reports
 - His return trip took him once again through Israel
 - As v.30 explains, he’s enraged by his loss to Rome and so he decides to take the loss out against the Jewish people
 - The reference to “holy covenant” is always a reference to the Old Covenant by which the Jews received the Law and the temple service
 - Opposing this Covenant meant opposing the practice of the Law and temple service
 - Similarly, Antiochus IV showed favor for any Jew who would likewise oppose practice of the Mosaic Law
- **To stop the Jews from practicing the Law, the king used deception to gain entry into the city with his force of 22,000 men**
 - Once inside the city walls, he attacked the Jews on a Sabbath, when they were reluctant to fight back
 - His general, Apollonius, killed many in the city and took many Jews captive as slaves
 - He plundered the temple of its gold and set the city on fire
 - Antiochus set his mind on exterminating the Jewish people and ending Jewish religious practice forever

- So, in addition to the destruction done by his general, Antiochus banned the Mosaic Law, including temple services and the feasts
 - He burned all copies of the Law that he could find
 - He set up a statue of Zeus, his god, inside the temple along with an altar, where he made burnt offerings
 - And for good measure, he sacrificed a pig on the Jewish altar and demanded that Jews continue to sacrifice swine there on Antiochus IV's birthday
 - Pig blood in the temple prevented the Jews from using the temple until such time that it had been properly cleansed
- As we learned in Chapter 8, this event was so ignominious that it was given a name: the abomination of desolation, as mentioned in v.31
 - The abomination refers to all the steps Antiochus took to desecrate the temple in December 168 BC
 - Here, we find a very specific parallel to the antichrist of Tribulation
 - In Matthew 24, Jesus warned

Matt. 24:15 “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Matt. 24:16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

Matt. 24:17 “Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.

Matt. 24:18 “Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.

Matt. 24:19 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

Matt. 24:20 “But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

Matt. 24:21 “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

- Jesus spoke these words after Antiochus IV lived and died
 - Since Jesus was speaking about a future time, clearly, He was talking about a different event
 - Yet Jesus specifically referred back to Daniel 9, where the antichrist is described
- So we're seeing in Jesus' words confirmation that the account of Antiochus is a picture, or type, of something greater yet to come
 - In fact, Jesus adds the words “let the reader understand” to emphasize that a deeper understanding is required
 - That deeper understanding is knowing that Antiochus IV pictures the antichrist
 - Based on prior chapters of Daniel, along with Chapter 11, we see that picture coming together

- In Daniel 9, we learned that the antichrist will make a covenant with the people of Israel to allow them to restart sacrifices in their temple
 - But at the midpoint of Tribulation, the antichrist will stop the sacrifice and grain offering
 - Then, he will set up another abomination of desolation in the temple
 - Revelation 13 gives us a hint of what that future abomination will be:

Rev. 13:14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

Rev. 13:15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

- The antichrist will be supported by a false prophet who will deceive the world into worshipping the antichrist as god
 - To facilitate the world's worship, the false prophet will set up an image of the antichrist in the temple
 - This image will have supernatural power to speak, which only inspires the world's awe and devotion all the more
- Clearly, Antiochus IV pictures these events
 - He enters Jerusalem and puts an end to the Law so that he can supplant worship of Yahweh with his own system
 - And Antiochus IV set up an image in the temple, just as Jesus forewarned would be the calling card of the future antichrist as well
- And the parallels continue

Dan. 11:32 “By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.

Dan. 11:33 “Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days.

Dan. 11:34 “Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy.

Dan. 11:35 “Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.

- Antiochus convinced many faithless Jews to participate in Zeus worship
 - He was expert at pitting various Jewish factions against one another in order to gain what he wanted
 - He first gained the defection of the progressive elements of Israel who were already apostate and were quick to obey his demands
 - Once he had their loyalty, Antiochus IV turned to the conservative elements in Jewish society
 - He offered to help them root out the progressive elements within Israel if they pledged their loyalty to him
 - The conservative Jews were so threatened by the progressives that they agreed to Antiochus IV's terms
 - They adopted the view that the enemy of my enemy is my friend
 - So in the end, Antiochus was able to take both groups into idolatry through his manipulation
 - Because of Antiochus IV's atrocities, a Jewish revolt broke out, as v.32 alludes
 - A priest named Mattathias and his sons rose up in Ephraim and led an army of conservative Jews against Antiochus IV
 - Eventually, the movement pushed the Seleucids out of Israel altogether
 - In the battle, Antiochus IV's general, Apollonius was killed
- Interestingly, the Maccabean revolt didn't please every Jew in Israel
 - The apostate progressives feared the rise of the conservatives within Judaism
 - So they didn't favor the revolt and didn't fight against Antiochus
 - Meanwhile, Antiochus IV retaliated by killing many of those who had opposed him by both sword and burning
 - Though he inflicted great losses upon Israel, he wasn't able to retake the land
 - Within a few years, Antiochus IV died insane in Persia, probably the result of a lifetime indwelt by demons
 - Eventually, the success of the Maccabees won over all Israel
 - The progressives eventually united with the conservatives
 - And after their victory, the Maccabees founded a new conservative Jewish kingdom
 - In fact, the Jewish culture swung hard to the right
 - The Mosaic Law returned with far greater zealotry, which is described in v.33
 - Those who knew God's law began to spread its practice and understanding among the largely apostate Jewish population
 - Some of those leading this revivalist movement later became the Pharisees of Jesus' day
 - Others became the Essenes, who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls

- And many of those who were opposed to the revolt in the beginning later joined in support of the Maccabees, which is the hypocrisy mentioned in v.34
- Many in Israel fell during these battles, yet it served a godly purpose
 - Notice in v.35, we're told that those who have insight will fall
 - These are the godly who love the Lord and His Law
 - Why does the Lord allow some who are His to die in this way?
 - Gabriel says that it must happen in order to refine, purge and purify the rest until the end
 - "The rest" refers to the rest of Israel
 - So the death of some of the faithful was intended to push out apostasy in Israel
 - It caused the apostate within Israel to come into line with the conservatives
 - This purge was so powerful that it kept Israel orthodox until the end times
 - Over the millennia, the people of Israel have remained largely true to their Law in every generation since that time
 - While there have always been apostate Jews, even until today, Jewishness was forever associated with observing the Law
 - Judaism has never since reverted to the widespread apostasy of past ages
- Here again, we see a type for the last days with the antichrist
 - In the last days, the Jewish people return to a state similar to the time before Antiochus
 - The Jewish people will have become largely apostate
 - Apart from a small orthodox minority, most Jews today do not practice the Law in any meaningful way
 - And of course, the temple service is not possible today
 - But because of the rise of the antichrist, great war will break out
 - And in the midst of that conflict, there will be martyrs
 - As we read in Revelation, speaking of how Satan attacks God's people in the time of Tribulation

Rev. 12:17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

- And then the result of this turmoil is seen in Revelation 6

Rev. 6:9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

Rev. 6:10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

Rev. 6:11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

- These martyrs serve God’s greater goal of purifying Israel during Tribulation
 - As the prophet Zechariah explains

Zech. 13:8 “It will come about in all the land,”

Declares the Lord,

“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;

But the third will be left in it.

Zech. 13:9 “And I will bring the third part through the fire,

Refine them as silver is refined,

And test them as gold is tested.

They will call on My name,

And I will answer them;

I will say, ‘They are My people,’

And they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”

- The Tribulation leads some of Israel to be cut off
- But others will be refined and call upon the Lord
- Furthermore, in preparation for this time of purging, the Lord will promote the rise of conservative, orthodox Judaism in Israel
 - In the last days, God will supernaturally provoke Jewish desire to follow the Law, according to promises given in Malachi

Mal. 4:4 “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

Mal. 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Mal. 4:6 “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

- To bring Israel back to an observance of her Law, the Lord will bring an appearance of Elijah the prophet

- As Malachi explains, Elijah will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children
- This means giving the modern descendants of Israel the same heart for God's Law that their ancestors had
- And conversely, the hearts of the children will return to where their fathers' hearts were
 - This is a description of Israel returning from apostasy immediately before the "great and terrible day of the Lord"
 - That's a reference to Tribulation
- This is the end time Gabriel mentions in v.35
 - The nation of Israel was brought back into a degree of orthodoxy by the actions of Antiochus IV
 - It required the intense evil of such a man to unite the people of Israel in following their Law
 - That good work resulted in loss of life, even among the godly, but it also rescued Israel from apostasy for a time
 - And then in the last days, a new revival will be needed
 - And so another terribly despicable man will be required
 - The Lord will permit the rise of the antichrist so He may use this one to bring Israel back into the bond of the Covenant
 - As we read in Daniel 9 earlier
- And now in Chapter 11, we transition to the far-term prophecy concerning the one Antiochus pictures, the antichrist himself

Dan. 11:36 "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

Dan. 11:37 "He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all.

Dan. 11:38 "But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

Dan. 11:39 "He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

- This passage sounds at first as if we're still talking about Antiochus
 - In fact, the narrative is so subtle that it's easy to miss the break
 - One clue that we've moved to events of the last days is found in the final mention of an appointed time in v.35

- That reference is a clue that we've jumped ahead in time, starting in v.36
- Furthermore, the context of this passage makes it clear that we're talking about someone else
 - The events of this passage have no parallel in history, so they must still be future
 - That's our second clue that we have transitioned to the one Antiochus IV pictures: the antichrist
 - We're looking into the final of the 70 sevens from Daniel 9
- This future king will do as he pleases in a future day, meaning no one will challenge his power
 - In particular, he will magnify himself above every god everywhere
 - We know that Antiochus called himself a manifestation of a god, but he still acknowledged other gods as well
 - In particular, we noted earlier, he worshipped and sacrificed to Zeus
 - And we know that Antiochus couldn't do everything he pleased, especially where Rome was concerned
 - But this king will declare there is no other god above himself
 - And in the process, he will speak monstrous things against the true God
 - As he does these things, he will prosper, but only until the indignation is finished
 - "The indignation" refers to the state of suffering for Israel during this time
 - This period of judgment for Israel has been decreed and must be accomplished
- Then in v.37, we find that this man will have no regard for any god worshipped by his "fathers", which means his predecessors
 - So he will not have a religious past
 - He will not be an avowed follower of any religion himself
 - Instead, he will assume the role of icon
 - This is the moment at the middle of Tribulation we discussed earlier, when the antichrist is resurrected by the power of Satan
 - From that point forward, he declared himself to be god and the world will believe it, based on his miraculous resurrection
 - He will also have no desire for women
 - This line has intrigued many Bible students and led to some unhelpful speculation
 - It simply means this man will show no interest in normal human sexual relationships
 - The reason has nothing to do with his sexual preference, but rather, it's essential to his claims to being a messiah
 - God has no need for a human sexual relationship

- Jesus had no interest in women, so the antichrist counterfeits this quality of the Messiah
 - He forgoes romantic interests to project himself as a Messiah
- Then in v.38, Gabriel says this man will “honor” a god of fortresses, a god his fathers didn’t know
 - I believe this god is the same one called “a foreign god”, again in v. 39
 - This god is honored by the antichrist’s reign and rule
 - Even as the antichrist calls himself god, he likewise reflects glory upon a strange god who wasn’t worshipped in the same way before
 - This relationship sounds similar to the relationship between Jesus and the Father
 - Jesus Christ is the name above all names
 - He is God
 - And yet, He also honors God the Father
 - So here again, the antichrist continues to counterfeit Christ
 - As we learned in our earlier lessons, the antichrist will be resurrected at the midpoint of Tribulation by the power of Satan

Rev. 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

Rev. 13:3 I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast;

Rev. 13:4 they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”

- **The beast here is the antichrist, and the dragon is the serpent of old, Satan**
- Notice that Satan gives his power to the antichrist
- And then after the antichrist is resurrected, the antichrist causes the world to worship both the dragon and himself
 - Here, we see a counterfeit Trinity emerging in the time of Tribulation
 - The antichrist seeks to be a messiah and Satan is his foreign god who is worshipped because of the false messiah
 - The only Person missing is the Holy Spirit, and the false prophet and his freakish speaking image serves that purpose
- Then in v.39, we’re told that this king will show honor to those who honor him
 - He will parcel out land for a price, controlling commerce and the ability to produce food

- Revelation confirms this behavior in the antichrist of end times

Rev. 13:15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Rev. 13:16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead,

Rev. 13:17 and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

- The antichrist will control commerce with a mark that he assigns to all humanity
 - Only those who take the mark can buy and sell, the parceling out of land for a price
 - And those who fail to take the mark are beheaded, according to Revelation 20
- Finally, Gabriel describes how this man comes to his end

Dan. 11:40 “At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through.

Dan. 11:41 “He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

Dan. 11:42 “Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape.

Dan. 11:43 “But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels.

Dan. 11:44 “But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.

Dan. 11:45 “He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

- Similar to Antiochus IV, the antichrist will fight neighbors
 - Notice however, that this king is fighting both south and north, which means again, this can't be Antiochus IV, for he didn't fight himself
 - The most likely explanation is that these powers are the three “horns” that the antichrist uproots after his resurrection
 - These kings tried to kill the antichrist at the midpoint of Tribulation
 - So after he's resurrected, the antichrist seeks revenge by attacking these kings
 - According to Gabriel, the antichrist will succeed in moving through these nations

and subduing all of them, just as we learned in Daniel 7

- And also like Antiochus IV, the antichrist will make a special point of invading Israel, the Beautiful Land
 - Just as Antiochus tried to destroy the Jewish people, so will the antichrist place special emphasis on eliminating Israel
- The enemy's focus on destroying Israel is directly related to Israel's role in Christ's Second Coming
 - As Daniel's prophecies have taught us, the Messiah returns to put an end to Gentile rule and to set up a Jewish kingdom
 - But what if there are no Jews left?
 - What if the enemy has succeeded in wiping out the Jewish nation?
 - Then Jesus' Second Coming would be thwarted, or so Satan thinks
 - Therefore, Satan has always made it his goal to remove the Jewish people from the earth
 - He has been working through various means over the millennia to end the Jewish people
 - And once Satan is indwelling the antichrist, he will turn his full attention to that goal
- In vs.41-42, we also learn that his conquests will fell many surrounding nations
 - But all the nations we hear are neighbors to Israel...why don't we hear of other areas on the earth?
 - Because by this time in Tribulation, very little of the earth remains inhabited
 - The judgments of Tribulation have destroyed most of the earth, leaving only the area we call the Middle East
 - Within this small space, the antichrist operates
 - And he defeats his enemies in all directions, except for a few key areas
 - These areas, all east of Israel, are spared by God for the purpose of preserving a remnant of Israel
 - Edom, Moab and Ammon all refer to land east of the Jordan
 - In this area, the Lord will preserve a portion of Israel in protection in the desert
 - Calling Israel a "woman" and the antichrist indwelled by Satan a "dragon", Revelation 12 describes this defense of these territories

Rev. 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.

Rev. 12:14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

- Notice, Israel is held in safety in the desert for 3.5 years, the second half of Tribulation
- They are held in a place called the sheep's pen, or *botzrah*

Mic. 2:12 "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.
I will put them together like sheep in the fold;
Like a flock in the midst of its pasture
They will be noisy with men.

- This place is in present day Jordan, so the Lord will spare these places from the antichrist to protect the remnant of Israel
- Finally, like Antiochus IV, the antichrist will plunder many – yet in the end, he will be defeated in battle
 - In v.44, we're told that the antichrist will be drawn into battle with rumors from the East and North
 - These rumors draw him and his allies into battle against Jerusalem and the last fortress of Jews in the city
 - Unlike the Jews held in safety in Botzrah, these Jews are unbelieving, yet orthodox
 - It's these last remaining Jews who must call out for the Lord to bring about His return
 - To prevent that outcome, the antichrist camps his army west of Jerusalem, between the holy mountain and the great sea
 - He will attack the city on the western side
 - There, he meets his end as a result of Christ's Second Coming
 - Christ comes through the east gate of the city and leads the population out of the city to safety
 - Then he fights the antichrist and destroys him
 - Our study tonight doesn't permit me time to walk you through the entire battle that takes place at this point
 - Our Revelation Bible study will fill in those gaps
 - But for now, it's enough to know that Gabriel foretells the end of the antichrist in the battle for Jerusalem
 - For as we learned, the antichrist's death is the last act of the Age of the Gentiles

- Gabriel's prophecy continues from the end of Chapter 11, directly into Chapter 12 and still set in the same moment of the future

Dan. 12:1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Dan. 12:2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

Dan. 12:3 "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

- It's important to note how Chapter 12 begins: with a time reference tied to Chapter 11
 - The events of this chapter are "at that time"
 - The time is the time of Tribulation, as the antichrist rises to power and then is defeated
 - We could say, "in those days"
 - It is then that Michael, a great prince or angel, will arise
 - Interestingly, he's identified as the angel assigned to guard the people of Israel
 - As a great prince, Michael seems to be the highest angel
 - And therefore, it's noteworthy that the Lord has assigned his highest angel to protect the people of Israel
 - The arising of Michael implies he moves to accomplish something God has planned
 - He arises to bring the Age of the Gentiles to an end, so that Israel may be returned to her place of glory
 - And the first order of business for the angel is to battle against the antichrist and his forces
- But v.1 isn't strictly speaking of a single battle, but rather, it's describing the entire period of Tribulation
 - This period is a time of destruction and distress unparalleled in human history
 - This fact alone proves that the period described in Chapter 11 has yet to happen
 - For were it describing events of the past, we could say that worse things have come since (e.g., WWII, etc.)
 - But Gabriel says that Michael's rise for Israel happens in an unprecedented period of distress for the nation
 - But we also know from Daniel 9 that this seven-year period was decreed against Israel for six reasons that are all to Israel's benefit
 - It leads to glory for the people of Israel, since it brings Israel back into the bond

of the Covenant

- And this permits God to grant the people His promises of the Kingdom
- Therefore, the end of v.1 says that many of Daniel's people will be rescued
 - To be rescued could mean many things, but v.1 makes clear the context of rescue
 - Those who are rescued are those who are found "written in the book"
 - This book here is the Book of Life, the book in which are inscribed the names of all who will inherit eternal life
- The book is mentioned in various places in the Bible, particularly in Revelation

Rev. 3:5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev. 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- The Book of Life holds the names of all those who are saints and destined for eternal life in the Kingdom
- But those whose names are not found in this book are the unbelieving, the damned
- Obviously, the book holds the names of both Jew and Gentile
- In this case, we're talking about Daniel's "people", which refers to Israel
 - So Gabriel says those who are found in this book are being rescued in these difficult days
 - Therefore, to be rescued would mean to be saved eternally
 - It's an indication of a person coming to salvation during these difficult days
 - Revelation tells us about the evangelistic power of Tribulation

Rev. 7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

Rev. 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

Rev. 7:3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."

Rev. 7:4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Rev. 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

Rev. 7:14 I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- An army of 144,000 Jewish men are brought to faith in Tribulation by God’s grace
- And they then become His servants to bring the Gospel to an uncountable number of Jew and Gentile
- Furthermore, at the end of these days, the Lord will save the remaining Jews on earth, all those in the book of life
 - At Christ’s Second Coming, all remaining Jews on earth are saved

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Rom. 11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

“The Deliverer will come from Zion,
He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.”

Rom. 11:27 “This is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.”

- The covenant that promises all Israel salvation is the Old Covenant
- The final act of Tribulation will be to bring Israel back into the bond of that Covenant, so they may receive the Kingdom
- Gabriel is speaking of this group when he describes the great rescue at the end of Tribulation
- Then after they are spiritually saved, the Lord takes the final step of bringing these saints new bodies
 - In v.2, we’re told that many of Israel who “sleep” in the dust of the ground will awaken
 - To sleep means to die, to be without a body
 - At death, the body of a saint enters the grave, while the spirit continues to exist in full consciousness
 - That spirit awaits a new body in a day to come, at the time of the resurrection
 - So Gabriel describes the moment of Israel’s resurrection as an awakening of those in the dust of the ground to everlasting life

- The Church saints were resurrected before Tribulation began, at a moment commonly called the Rapture
- But the saints who died prior to Pentecost are not the Church...they are Old Testament saints
- So Gabriel says the OT saints receive their new bodies at the end of Tribulation
- Gabriel says “many” awaken to everlasting life, while others awaken to everlasting contempt
 - Within Israel, there are those who believed and those who didn’t
 - Just as today, we have those who are saved by faith and those who aren’t
- But all people are resurrected in the end
 - Notice that those in the Book of Life have everlasting life, while those who are not have everlasting contempt
 - Both groups have an everlasting existence
 - The only question is where we live eternally: Heaven or the Lake of Fire
- Revelation 20 says that the resurrection of the righteous throughout history takes place prior to the Kingdom
 - The Church is resurrected before Tribulation, while the OT saints are resurrected after Tribulation
 - Both groups are resurrected before the Kingdom
 - This allows all the righteous to live there together for the full 1,000 years
 - Notice in v.3, Gabriel says that those who have insight will shine brightly
 - Having insight means to have the faith in Christ that God grants by His grace
 - Those who have that insight will likewise have God’s glory in their resurrected state
 - This reference to shining could be metaphor or it could be literal
 - If it’s literal, it means that the new bodies glow in a fashion similar to the way Jesus appeared to Daniel and John
 - Meanwhile, the resurrection for those not in the book will take place at the end of the Kingdom, according to Revelation 20
 - Their resurrection waits until then so that all unbelieving humanity, including those who come out of the Kingdom, can be judged together
 - And it leads to all being sent to live forever in the Lake of Fire

Dan. 12:4 “But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

- Now we are getting close to that promised surprise ending, which connects the Book of Daniel to Revelation
 - After Gabriel tells Daniel about the resurrection of the Old Testament saints, he

instructs Daniel to conceal these words

- Specifically, Daniel is to seal up the book until the end of time
- At first, we may think Daniel is sealing up the words we're reading now, the prophecies of his book, or at least these chapters
- But that doesn't make sense, because we're reading them now
- The Book of Daniel was never sealed, as far as we know
- He must be talking about another book about the end times
 - This other book must contain more details than we have revealed in Daniel alone
 - What might we find in this other book?
 - And why did the angel ask Daniel to write it and yet not allow anyone to see it?
 - Our answers come later in this chapter
- In v.4, the angel says that many will go back and forth
 - "The many" here continues to refer to Israel, and so it's a summary of Israel's future during the Age of the Gentiles
 - They will go "back and forth" in the sense of coming in and out of the land, in and out of persecution
 - Israel must endure its ups and downs over the centuries as God directs, in keeping with the Age of the Gentiles
 - But none of these ups and downs will fundamentally alter their situation during this age
 - They will remain under Gentile oppression
 - And even if they gain a measure of security in their land, as they have today, it's fleeting, incomplete and ultimately, temporary
 - Only the Messiah's return will correct the situation
 - Furthermore, knowledge will increase
 - This likely refers to the increase of spiritual knowledge, resulting from more revelation from God
 - We know that more books of the Old Testament were written after Daniel's day
 - And the entire New Testament was yet to be written
 - To say nothing of the Messiah's arrival
 - Nevertheless, this increase of spiritual knowledge will not – by itself – change Israel's plight
 - Certainly, the Messiah's arrival will rescue many from within Israel over the centuries
 - But the nation as a whole will still encounter ups and downs, despite this increase
- Then Daniel takes over the narrative from Gabriel to tell us what he sees

Dan. 12:5 Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river.

Dan. 12:6 And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?”

Dan. 12:7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

Dan. 12:8 As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?”

Dan. 12:9 He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.

- He sees the man in linen, who we know as Christ, above the waters of the Tigris river
 - And on either bank, two others standing
 - We can presume these others include Gabriel, who has been speaking to Daniel
 - And perhaps the other is the other great prince mentioned in this chapter, Michael
 - Daniel then hears one of the angels asking how long until the end of these wonders?
 - What wonders is the angel talking about?
 - Is he talking about everything Gabriel described in Chapters 10-12?
 - Or some portion of it only? Or the things written in the sealed book?
 - Christ’s answer to the question gives us an important clue
 - Jesus swore by the One Who lives forever that these wonders will last a time, times and half of time
 - That phrase is another important link to the book of Revelation
 - In Revelation, that same phrase appears in Chapter 12
 - From the context of Revelation, it’s understood to mean 3.5 years
- And then Jesus adds that at the conclusion of this time, the holy people (Israel) will be shattered and all the events will be completed
 - Jesus’ words give us an anchor for the 3.5 years
 - At its end, the holy people will be shattered, that is, broken
 - And all the purposes in these events will have been met
 - If all the events of Tribulation have come to completion, then by definition, Tribulation must have come to an end
 - Furthermore, the Jewish people aren’t broken, that is, brought to faith in Messiah, until the end of Tribulation

- Therefore, the 3.5 years Jesus mentions must be the final three and a half years of the seven-year Tribulation
- So we know that Daniel was troubled by terrifying visions, and Gabriel came to give him additional insight
 - Some of that insight was recorded for our benefit in Chapters 10-12
 - These things covered kings of Persia, kings of the Greek Empire
 - And it even looked ahead to the antichrist of Tribulation
 - But then he was told to record wonders of the end times that must be sealed up and not be revealed by Daniel
 - Collectively, these things last 3.5 years, the final 3.5 years of Tribulation
 - The things Daniel wrote are in addition to the details he gave us in Chapters 10-11
 - Daniel himself was confused about these wonders and why he must know them, but not write them
 - In v.8, he asked the Lord what will be the outcome of these events?
 - He means explain what the events mean, what's their purpose and how does the story end?
 - But the Lord tells Daniel to drop it, go your way, because the meaning of these things won't be revealed until the end time
 - Those who live in the end time will be allowed to know what these things mean
 - In the meantime, Jesus gives Daniel a summary of life until that time
 - Speaking of the Jews, He says many will be purged and refined
 - The trials and persecutions Israel endures over the centuries of the Age of the Gentiles will produce a crop of many believing Jews
 - Secondly, the wicked will continue to act wickedly and they will not understand the truth
 - Circumstances, and even persecution, do not by themselves produce faith
 - The unbelieving heart cannot know the truth until God reveals it to them
 - But He will grant insight to some along the way, and this remnant of Israel will understand the Word of God and be saved
- So now this begs the question, what happened to Daniel's book?
 - If he sealed it and never shared it with the world, then how do those of the end times come to know what's in it?
- The answer is found in Revelation 10

Rev. 10:1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

Rev. 10:2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land;

Rev. 10:3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.

Rev. 10:4 When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them."

Rev. 10:5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven,

Rev. 10:6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer,

Rev. 10:7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.

Rev. 10:8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

Rev. 10:9 So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

Rev. 10:10 I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

Rev. 10:11 And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

- Do you see the similarities between this moment and the one we've been studying in Daniel?
 - John sees a strong angel descending from Heaven
 - This is the angel Michael arising, as promised in Daniel 12
 - And as he returns, he carries with him a little book
 - Why is it "little?"
 - Probably because it's a man-sized scroll, while the angel is much larger in appearance
 - As this angel arrives, he swears upon Him Who lives forever that there be no delay any longer
 - Earlier, Jesus swore in a similar manner when giving the length of these wonders
 - But at that time, the word was given to seal up the writing because it described things yet to come and not to be revealed

- Now, the angel is saying the time has come for the 3.5 years to transpire
 - Furthermore, he directs John to take the book and eat it
 - Once he eats it, his mouth will find it sweet, but his stomach finds it bitter
 - This is a classic description of prophecy of Tribulation
 - We find prophecy attractive, in that it's exciting to learn the future
 - But once we know what it says, we find the truth troubling and disturbing
 - This was to be John's experience
- As you can probably tell, the book John received was the one Daniel wrote
 - Daniel was given a detailed explanation of the events of the final half of Tribulation, including the bowl judgments
 - But of course, Daniel didn't understand them well and what he saw greatly disturbed him
 - When he asked for clarification, he received what we have in Daniel 10-12
 - But obviously, Gabriel's explanation didn't shed much light on what Daniel saw in his visions
 - But the Lord saw fit to give Daniel this preview so that he could write it for John
 - Then John received it and was commissioned to write it for us
 - So the events recorded in Revelation 11-19 are what Daniel wrote in the little book and sealed up
 - John then received them and was permitted to give them to us
 - Even then, the understanding of Revelation has alluded believers for centuries since John wrote it
 - But in the past century or so, the Spirit has permitted the Church to come to a proper understanding
 - So, if we now have an understanding of things reserved for the end times, what does that tell you about your day?
 - Moreover, why did the Lord bother with having Daniel write the little book?
 - The best answer is that this helped tie both books together and authentic John's writing
 - We can see that these two books are working closely together so that we can trust the prophecy in both
 - To accept Daniel is to accept Revelation
- Finally, the Book of Daniel ends with one last tantalizing prophecy about what follows the end of Tribulation

Dan. 12:11 “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

Dan. 12:12 “How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!

- The Lord gives Daniel another date range
 - He says begin counting from the midpoint of Tribulation, when the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up
 - This is the point when the antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, in the midpoint of the “seven”, as we read in Daniel 9
 - This begins the 3.5 years that Daniel recorded in his little book
 - Counting from that point, Jesus says there will be 1,290 days
 - The Jews count 360 days to a year
 - So there are 1,260 days in 3.5 years
 - Therefore, Jesus is asking us to count a period of time that last a full month after the antichrist dies and the Lord returns
 - Why count 30 days longer? What are we counting toward?
 - And even more confusing, Jesus goes on to say that those who attain or last until day 1,335 will be blessed
 - 1,335 days adds another 45 days to the 30 given earlier
 - So something important happens at day 30 following the end of Tribulation
 - And then something blessed happens 75 days after the end of Tribulation
- We call this period between after the Tribulation the “75-day Interval”
 - The first period of 30 days counts until the restoration of the temple, based on Jesus’ description in v.11
 - He specifically mentions the abomination of desolation in v.11
 - That suggests that the 30 days has something to do with correcting that abomination by cleansing the temple
 - Then, we have an additional 45 days before the Kingdom is ready to start
 - In that sense, a person is blessed to be able to reach the end of the 75 days
 - This statement suggests a choosing process takes place during the interval
 - Perhaps Jesus was describing this process in Matthew 25, when He described a separation of sheep and goats following His Second Coming?
 - Besides that process, there is likely to be a huge effort to repair the damage done during the judgments of Tribulation
 - Remember, the Kingdom takes place on the same earth that hosted mankind for the past 6,000 years
 - And the if the world is to return to a paradise, there must be some time given to that cleanup effort
 - Obviously, it will be accomplished supernaturally
 - Whatever happens in that time, 45 days pass before the Kingdom begins
- Finally, Daniel is dismissed from prophetic service

Dan. 12:13 “But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”

- Daniel is told to go his way
 - He will die and enter into his eternal rest
 - Then he will be resurrected, as will all saints (you will one day meet Daniel!)
 - And like all saints, he will receive a portion in the Kingdom as his reward
- Daniel was being assured that he would not experience the tribulations he foresaw, and we too share that promise
 - We don't see the Tribulation
 - We will enter rest and await these things to finish in due time
 - But be assured, they will all come to pass...and very soon