

Bible Commentary on Daniel

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Bible Commentary on Daniel

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Introduction

This is not your typical commentary, so I'd like to give a few words of explanation before you begin. As a child I was taught to read the Word of God on a daily basis. Our goal as a family was to read through the Bible once a year, and that is what we did. When I became an adult I kept reading the Bible from cover to cover.

One day, however, I realized that I wanted something more. Reading the Bible was good, but I wanted to actually *study* it. Could I explain what each verse meant? Did I really understand what each chapter was saying? I decided to start writing daily commentary instead of just reading the Word.

This commentary was put together to help me study the Bible. I have no plans to release it, for there are far better commentaries out there that were written by much wiser men. This document is simply a tool to help me understand what the Word of God has to say.

Jon Cooper
4/14/2019

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Introduction to Daniel

The book of Daniel begins in the 3rd year of the reign of Jehoiachim. According to the timeline that I put together (see Resource 2, "Timeline"), that corresponds to 605 BC. That's the time when Daniel was carried away captive to Babylon. Daniel prayed for Israel's release from captivity in the 1st year of Darius, which would have been 539 BC. Daniel received his final vision of the latter days in the 3rd year of Cyrus, which was 536 BC. That means this book spans 70 years.

7/31/2018, 8/11/2019, 7/17/2022

Daniel 1

"1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it."
(Daniel 1)

Notice that this particular exile took place during the reign of Jehoiakim, not Zedekiah. That means Daniel was carried away the first time Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. The second time, during Zedekiah's reign, was when he destroyed the city and burned everything down. Daniel was carried away in the *first* defeat, not the second one. (See 2 Kings 24.)

This event took place in 605 BC, the same year that Nebuchadnezzar became king. Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't destroy Jerusalem and the temple until 586 BC, which was 19 years in the future. The 70 years of exile had actually started in 608 BC when Pharaoh Necho conquered Jerusalem, imprisoned Jehoahaz, and put Eliakim on the throne (who he renamed to Jehoiakim).

Daniel's final vision (chapters 10, 11, and 12) was given in 536 BC. By that point he had been in Babylon for about 70 years.

The Jehoiakim in this verse is the king who hated God so much that he burned Jeremiah's prophecies (Jeremiah 36:9-31). God was so angry with him that he cursed him and said that none of his descendants would sit on the throne of David.

"2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god."
(Daniel 1)

During Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion he carried away the items from the temple, but he didn't destroy the temple itself. The temple wasn't destroyed until Zedekiah rebelled and Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem a second time. When Daniel was carried away from Jerusalem the temple was still standing.

Daniel points out that Nebuchadnezzar took the items from the temple in Jerusalem and brought them into the temple of the false god that he was serving. Apparently Nebuchadnezzar thought he was succeeding in battle because of this false god. The king was still a long way from realizing the power and might of the Lord God of Israel. Daniel, though, knows what is really going on. He knows that Nebuchadnezzar's god is a worthless idol. He understood that Nebuchadnezzar only won because the Lord gave Judah into his hand. Apparently Daniel had been listening to prophets such as Jeremiah who warned the nation what was about to happen and why it was happening. The Lord was in control and the Lord gave the victory to Babylon to punish Israel for their sins. It was the Lord's doing, which means the Lord was not defeated in battle by an idol.

"3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." (Daniel 1)

Many Jews were were forcibly removed from Jerusalem and transported to Babylon. Daniel was one of those who was carried away. Nebuchadnezzar wanted the best and brightest captives to be trained to serve him in his palace. Daniel was chosen for this assignment.

"5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king." (Daniel 1)

The people who were chosen for this position had to undergo three years of training (as verse 4 says, so they could learn the Babylonian language and how the Babylonians did things). During that time they would also need to be fed, so they were given provisions from the king. Now, Daniel lived under the Mosaic Law and there were a lot of restrictions regarding what he could and could not eat. Even though Daniel was in Babylon he still wanted to obey that law and do what was right. That was one of the defining characteristics of his life.

"6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego." (Daniel 1)

Ashpenaz renamed the children of Judah. He replaced their Hebrew names with Babylonian names that honored the false gods of Babylon. Naming something is a sign of ownership over it. I find it interesting that we refer to Daniel by his Hebrew name, but we tend to refer to his friends using their pagan Babylonian names.

"8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (Daniel 1)

We need to be clear that it wasn't wrong to eat meat or drink wine. Both of those things were actually required under the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law! As a part of the sacrificial system, depending on the sacrifices you offered, you were required to eat meat and drink wine. The Bible condemns the abuse of wine, but never the act of drinking wine. Those who condemn all drinking of wine in any quantity are going far beyond what the Scripture says. Jesus and His disciples drank wine, and there was nothing wrong with that.

The problem was that the wine and the meat which

Daniel was being given happened to be forbidden under the Mosaic Law. We aren't told a lot of details about why that was the case or what sort of meat and drink it was. It may have been contaminated in some way or it might have been sacrificed to idols. The point is that Daniel knew it was forbidden and so he tried to find another way.

Notice that Daniel doesn't throw a fit, demand his rights, and start a protest movement. Instead he treats Ashpenaz with respect and looks for a solution that works for both of them.

"9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."
(Daniel 1)

One thing to notice in this book is that Daniel gives God credit at every turn. It was the Lord who caused Babylon to triumph over Judah, and it was the Lord who gave Daniel favor in the sight of Ashpenaz. You will see this again and again.

"10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king." (Daniel 1)

Ashpenaz doesn't want Daniel and his friends to become weaker or less nourished than the rest of the group. He's afraid that if he changes Daniel's diet it will impact them negatively, which the king will notice and which will endanger Ashpenaz. Failing to do a good job was the sort of thing that led to an early

death. His concern here is very reasonable.

"11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah," (Daniel 1)

Ashpenaz was the prince of the eunuchs. However, Daniel didn't make this particular request to Ashpenaz. Instead he made it to Melzar, who reported to Ashpenaz. It's worth noting that the book of Daniel tends to refer to the Hebrew people using their Hebrew names.

"12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants."
(Daniel 1)

Daniel is trying to persuade those in authority over him by being reasonable. There will come a time later when reason won't work and Daniel will have to stand up and do what needs to be done, but whenever he can he tries to find a solution that works for everyone. He doesn't just launch into a protest movement.

Daniel asks for a test: let them try a different diet for 10 days and see what happens. By then they should be able to tell if this new diet is going to work out or if there are problems. Notice how Daniel approaches Melzar with humility: he calls himself "thy servants".

"14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days." (Daniel 1)

Melzar agreed to try it. From his perspective it was a short-term, low-risk test.

"15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse." (Daniel 1)

Melzar wanted those under his charge to be in good shape. That was his primary concern so that he wouldn't get in trouble with the king. When this new diet turned out to be better for Daniel and his friends than the old diet, that was all the encouragement he needed. He wanted to do the best he could for the king, and since the new diet was better that's what he was going to give them. So Daniel and his friends got put on the new diet that was compatible with the Mosaic Law.

"17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." (Daniel 1)

At every turn Daniel gives God the credit. Why did these four people have knowledge and wisdom? It was because God gave it to them.

Daniel was given great wisdom in understanding visions and dreams. Just for the record, the Lord no longer gives new

revelation to people through visions and dreams. As Hebrews 1:1-2 explains, we are in a different dispensation and the Lord no longer communicates to us in visions and dreams. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that the Bible is fully sufficient to equip us to all good works. If God continued to give us visions and dreams then that would mean the Bible was insufficient – but we know that's not the case! Since the Bible is fully sufficient, we have no need for visions and dreams. You cannot have a sufficient Word of God and visions and dreams at the same time! God used to give new revelation through visions and dreams but He doesn't do that anymore. He has given us His Word, and that's all we need. (For more information on this topic see Appendix F, "God Is Not Giving You New Revelation".)

"18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king." (Daniel 1)

The Bible consistently refers to these people using their Hebrew names, yet for some reason most people refer to them using their pagan Babylonian names. That's probably something we shouldn't be doing.

Nebuchadnezzar found that these four Jews were wiser than everyone else. Why? Because God gave them wisdom. The Lord was the one who put them into those positions of power in Babylon. The hand of the Lord runs all through this book – and through all the books of the Bible, and through all of history itself. (His hand also runs through our lives as well!)

You can see that Nebuchadnezzar was looking for the best

and brightest. He didn't care where they came from; he just wanted to be served by whoever was the very best. The fact that they were Jews didn't bother him at all.

"20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." (Daniel 1)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of both wisdom (Psalm 111:10) and knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). I don't find it surprising that these four men, whom the Lord had given great wisdom and understanding to, were far better than a bunch of pagan magicians and astrologers. What's amazing is that Nebuchadnezzar recognized their wisdom and appreciated it! The world usually hates the wisdom of those who believe in God.

"21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." (Daniel 1)

I don't know how long the other three Jews served. After a certain point they disappear and are never mentioned again. All we know is that they were faithful to the Lord. I don't know how their story ended.

Daniel continued to serve in some capacity in Babylon's government until the reign of Cyrus. He served for decades! I have no doubt that he did all sorts of things that aren't mentioned in the book of Daniel. He was faithful to the end, and the Lord said that he was greatly beloved (Daniel 9:23).

8/1/2018, 8/11/2019, 7/17/2022, 7/25/2022, 7/27/2022

Daniel 2

"1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." (Daniel 2)

I'm not sure how long Daniel had been in Babylon when this happened. What we do know is that Daniel and his friends were already there, and God used them in a mighty way.

The timeline is interesting, though. This event took place in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (which was 604 BC). Daniel 1:5 tells us that the captives from Jerusalem were put through a training program that was supposed to last for 3 years. If this chapter takes place after the first chapter then I wonder if Daniel graduated early or something.

It's interesting that God gave this dream to Nebuchadnezzar, and not to Daniel. God used this to show Nebuchadnezzar what was going on – and He also used it to promote Daniel and his friends into positions of power in Babylon. It's fascinating to think that while the Jews were in exile in Babylon, some of the highest positions of power in Babylon were actually filled by Jews who loved and feared the Lord! God was watching over them even during their 70 years of exile.

"2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king." (Daniel 2)

It's interesting that Daniel and his friends weren't called.

Apparently before this chapter took place they were not very prominent. (Perhaps they were still in those three years of initial training?) The king had a very troubling dream that he didn't understand, and he wanted to know what it meant. So he called all of his advisers and commanded them to interpret the dream.

"3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream." (Daniel 2)

The king is being very shrewd here. He wants to know what his dream means, but he realizes that if he just tells them the dream they will come up with some interpretation that pleases him. He doesn't believe they're going to be honest with him or tell him the truth. He figures that if they can tell him what the dream is, that will mean they really do know how to interpret it. The king is doing something very rare and unusual for a person in power: he wants to know the truth! It's rare for people to seek the truth; usually they are looking for someone to tell them whatever they want to hear.

"4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation."
(Daniel 2)

These people are incapable of interpreting dreams. All they were going to do was make something up that sounded somewhat plausible. The king knows this and he wants more than that.

It's interesting that verse 4 tells us they were speaking in Syriak. That's an odd detail to record.

"5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof." (Daniel 2)

It was very dangerous to work for Nebuchadnezzar. If you did what he wanted then you would be given great honor; however, if you failed then you would be killed and your home destroyed (which would probably impact your surviving family members). Failure was not an option, which explains the great fear we saw in chapter 1.

"7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it." (Daniel 2)

The magicians and advisers knew they were incapable of telling the king what he dreamed. That requires divine knowledge and they don't have that! Their only hope for survival was to get the king to back down. Unfortunately for them, the king was greatly troubled and he wasn't going to back down. He was not that kind of person.

"8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9 But if ye will

not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof." (Daniel 2)

The king knew his advisers couldn't be trusted. He knew they were going to lie to him. That's why he refused to tell them the dream: he believes that if they can tell him what he dreamed then they really do have some level of divine power and they can tell him what the dream's true interpretation is. The king is looking for the truth, and the people he is talking to cannot give that to him.

"10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." (Daniel 2)

The advisers tell the king that what he was asking for was completely unreasonable – which it was. They said that no king ever asked anything like that, and they were probably right. They said that only the gods themselves could possibly tell the king what he wanted to know, and they were right about that as well. They also said that the gods do not live among people, and that was correct.

The problem was that they were telling the king they were useless. They could tell a lot of lies, but they didn't have the

information the king wanted. Nebuchadnezzar wanted answers and they didn't have any to give. Notice how they all but admitted that although the gods had answers, they had no ability to interact with those gods and get that information.

"12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon." (Daniel 2)

The king said that if they did what he wanted he would honor them, and if they failed then he would kill them. Since they failed, he was going to carry out his command and kill them. Like I said earlier, it was very dangerous to work for Nebuchadnezzar. Failing the king was very bad for your health.

"13 And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain." (Daniel 2)

Since Daniel and his friends were among the wise men of Babylon, they were going to be killed as well under this general order of mass execution. This is the first time Daniel had heard about any of this. Apparently at this point in his life he was not well-connected with the court.

"14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: 15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel." (Daniel 2)

I like how verse 14 says that Daniel answered "with counsel and wisdom". In other words, Daniel is bargaining with Arioch, just as he bargained in the last chapter to have his diet changed. Daniel doesn't want to die but he's not in a position of power, so he's trying to find a solution that will save his life. Notice that Daniel doesn't protest or start fighting anyone; instead he tries to learn the reason behind the command. Daniel is very careful about what he says and how he approaches conflict. This was a very well-chosen question.

"16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation." (Daniel 2)

At this point Daniel doesn't know what the dream is or have any interpretation available. What he does is tell Nebuchadnezzar that if the king gives him a little time then he will tell the king what he wants to know. That is what the king was looking for – someone who could interpret the dream for him. Apparently the king didn't think that Daniel's request was unreasonable.

This was the first thing Daniel had to do, because the captain of the king's guard was rounding people up to kill them. Daniel had to buy some time so he could seek the Lord and wait on the interpretation.

"17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:" (Daniel 2)

Apparently Daniel found out about all of this first and

then went to the king to get some time. After he secured additional time he told his friends what was going on. Notice once again that the Bible refers to these people by their Hebrew names.

"18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." (Daniel 2)

Daniel and his friends were going to cry out to God to have mercy on them. They were going to ask for God to give them the dream and its interpretation so that their lives might be spared. It was a life or death issue! If God didn't have mercy on them and show them this secret then they were all going to die. This was a very fervent and passionate prayer. Their lives were literally on the line. They knew God had the power to reveal this secret, and they were praying that God would have mercy on them and tell them. They didn't demand it from God; instead they humbled themselves and asked.

"19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven." (Daniel 2)

I don't know how long it took for the answer to be given. It may have been a few hours, or it might have been longer than that. God didn't send an angel to give the answer, as He did later in Daniel's life; instead He showed the secret to Daniel in a vision. Daniel was extremely thankful.

"20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:" (Daniel 2)

Daniel makes it clear that God was the one who revealed the secret, and God was the one who knows all secrets and who has all wisdom and power. You can see how humble Daniel is! When the Lord revealed this secret Daniel responded with praise about the greatness and might of God. Daniel saw this vision as a revelation of the wisdom and power of God, and a reflection on God's greatness. That was his attitude! Daniel was focused on the greatness of God, not the greatness of Daniel.

"21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:" (Daniel 2)

Daniel understood the interpretation of the dream and he praised God for it. The dream showed that God was in charge of nations, kings, and the flow of history itself. It revealed that God creates one era of history and then ends it. Daniel praised the Lord for what this dream revealed about God's character. (That is really something we should be doing more often!)

Is there someone who has wisdom or understanding? They have it because God gave it to them. All good gifts come from the Father, and that includes wisdom. There is nothing we possess that did not come from God in some way. The Lord is behind all of it! If Daniel had any wisdom it was because God gave it to him. Daniel was very humble and glorified the Lord at every turn.

"22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." (Daniel 2)

God lives in everlasting light, but He knows what's in the darkness because darkness cannot conceal anything from God. The Lord knows all secrets; nothing is hidden from Him. That means He knows what's going on in our lives, including our problems and struggles and desires. The Lord knows what's going on and He wants us to trust Him. The Lord is controlling the rise and fall of nations and kings, and He wants us to trust Him.

"23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter." (Daniel 2)

Daniel's prayer of thanks shows a lot of wisdom and humility. It's no wonder God said that Daniel was greatly beloved! Daniel was very focused on the majesty and glory of God.

Daniel now knows what the dream was because God told him. He also knows the interpretation, because God told him that as well. It was now time to go and tell the king – and Daniel would do it in a way that brought glory to God, because that's what Daniel's life was all about.

"24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring

me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation." (Daniel 2)

Daniel is actually being very clever here. By going to Arioch he is stopping the person who's responsible for rounding up the wise men to kill them. Remember, he already asked the king for time to find out the vision, so presumably he could have just returned – but by doing it this way he was sparing the lives of the other wise men of Babylon.

If you think about it, that was a magnificent act of mercy on his part. Remember, Daniel had just been carried away from Israel by force after Babylon conquered Jerusalem. He hasn't been in exile for very long. Many people would have seen the death of all those wise men as justice – after all, they weren't followers of the Lord and they were part of the nation that just destroyed Israel! But Daniel took action to save them. In other words, he saved the citizens of an enemy nation that had just attacked and conquered his own homeland.

There's one other angle to this. Since Daniel is going through Arioch, that means Arioch is the person who is going to bring a wise man to Nebuchadnezzar that can interpret his dream. That is probably going to be good for Arioch's career!

"25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation."
(Daniel 2)

Arioch didn't find Daniel; instead Daniel found him! You can see how Arioch is trying to take some credit for this. Notice too that Daniel was brought to the king "in haste". Given what was at stake and how angry the king was, no time could be

wasted.

The Jews are still referred to as the "captives of Judah". None of them would have forgotten what just happened to their homeland, and yet we don't find Daniel full of bitterness or hostility toward those in Babylon. As we will see later in the book, he clearly loves Israel and wants to see his people returned to the land, so it's not because of a lack of interest. Daniel is a great example that's often overlooked of someone who loves his enemies.

"26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" (Daniel 2)

This is exactly what the king was looking for. If someone can tell the king what he dreamed then he trusts that person to also tell the king the interpretation. This is a great chance for Daniel to make a name for himself and get a lot of honor and glory. But that's not what Daniel is going to do. Instead he is going to take this as an opportunity to glorify the Lord. Daniel never tries to promote his "brand" the way so many religious leaders do today. Daniel is too busy glorifying God.

"27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these;" (Daniel 2)

Notice that Daniel never says that yes, he can do it. Instead he says that the king's astrologers cannot do it, but the God of Heaven can! Daniel doesn't take any credit for this information; he gives all the credit to the Lord. Daniel is extremely humble here – and not with fake humility. If the king favored you then that was a life-changing event; all sorts of good things could come from that! But Daniel side-steps the question and says that God is the one who gave the dream to him and God is the one who will provide the interpretation.

The prophecies in this book are very unusual. Instead of dealing with judgments that were coming upon Israel for her sins (which is what we saw in Jeremiah and Ezekiel), Daniel is focused on the rise and fall of Gentile kingdoms. On top of that, these prophecies give us a panorama of history from the time of Daniel until the Millennial Kingdom. Daniel's prophecies aren't focused on Israel, which really sets the book apart. God gave Daniel information that He didn't give to other prophets.

"29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass."
(Daniel 2)

Apparently the king was wondering what would happen in the future after he was gone, and so God told him. This is also astonishing. How many times did God give a pagan non-Jewish king a vision of the future? Usually visions were given to the prophets, not to pagan kings. Yet this vision was not given to any of the kings of Israel, nor to any of the prophets. Why did God do this? To bring glory to His name.

Notice how Daniel keeps giving God the glory for all of

this. Daniel makes it clear that God was the one who revealed this to Nebuchadnezzar because God is the one who reveals secrets. Daniel keeps drawing the king's attention back to God.

"30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart."
(Daniel 2)

Daniel actually backs away from taking credit for this. How many other people in his position would have done that? The kings in the ancient world had a staggering amount of power! Daniel didn't ask for power or money or anything in return for this revelation, and he doesn't even take the credit for it. He is very clear that God is the one who is revealing the secret to the king.

Notice how the verse says that this was done "for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation". In other words, the interpretation was given so that the lives of Daniel and his friends might be spared. That is what they were looking for. Daniel never said anything about desiring riches or honor. This also implies that Daniel wasn't standing there alone; his friends were apparently with him as well (although Daniel was doing all of the talking, which makes sense because God gave the interpretation to him).

"31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image's head was

of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." (Daniel 2)

We will get to the interpretation in a minute. But notice how the image starts out as valuable and great, and then decays over time. Each different layer is cheaper and more poorly made than the one before it. There is a decay of kingdoms, not a rise in quality. What came after was not as good as what came before, but it was still all one figure. There were different layers but it was the same creature.

"34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."
(Daniel 2)

Notice that what destroys this image doesn't come into being until after the final kingdom appears. This stone comes from outside the system and destroys the image entirely, and then replaces it! Once the stone replaces the image it fills the whole world. That means that just as the first kingdoms were real empires that governed the Earth, so the last one will be as well. The last one doesn't exist *alongside* the others; instead it appears after the others have had their day and then smashes them forever so they never rise again. The stone destroys the other kingdoms, takes their place, and rules in their stead!

This is talking about what we find in the book of Revelation – how Jesus is going to return and smash the kingdoms of this world, and will then reign over the whole world from Jerusalem for the rest of eternity. When Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation He is going to establish a literal kingdom on Earth that will literally reign over the nations and which will never be destroyed. (For more information see Appendix 5, "The Millennial Kingdom".)

"36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king." (Daniel 2)

Daniel no doubt had Nebuchadnezzar's attention by now. I'm sure he had the full attention of everyone in the court! This would have been a very intense, dramatic moment – yet Daniel isn't presenting this in a grandiose and flowery way. He's not making much of himself by dragging it out. Instead he is getting right to the point. I think we tend to miss the fact that if many other people had been in his place they wouldn't have approached this as humbly as Daniel did. Daniel wasn't seeking to make the most of this moment or drag it out. His focus was on the Lord and the task at hand, not himself.

"37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." (Daniel 2)

Nebuchadnezzar did indeed rule over nations. He was something like a forerunner of the antichrist in that regard (and in another way as well, which we will see in later chapters). Notice how Daniel makes it clear that Nebuchadnezzar's success has come about because of God's blessing. God was the one who put the king in that position. God was the one who gave him his kingdom, his power, and his glory. God was the one who gave the nations into his hand. It was God's doing, not the king's.

Daniel is not stroking Nebuchadnezzar's ego here. All of the king's success wasn't the king's doing; it was because of God.

"39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth."
(Daniel 2)

Babylon is the head of gold. Persia is the next kingdom that arises after Babylon (which we will see later in the book of Daniel). Greece is the kingdom that arises after Persia, and Rome and the antichrist is the one that comes at the end.

The Medes and Persians (the two silver arms) conquered Babylon in 539 BC. This took place 64 years after Daniel interpreted this dream. Alexander the Great (the belly of brass) completed his conquest of the Persian Empire in 330 BC, 273 years after Daniel spoke to Nebuchadnezzar. Finally, Rome (the legs of iron) put an end to the Greek Empire in 146 BC, 457 years after Daniel interpreted the king's dream.

All that remains to be fulfilled is the feet of the statue, which were partly iron and partly clay. That empire is discussed in verses 41 to 43.

"40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as

iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise."
(Daniel 2)

The fourth and last kingdom is said to be incredibly strong, perhaps even stronger than the others. It is a violent kingdom that spreads pain and suffering. It rules by the continual application of force.

Rome was the kingdom that conquered Greece and dominated in the world. You can make the argument that Western Civilization is an outgrowth of Rome, and in that sense Rome was never really destroyed but instead continues to rule over the world. One day the antichrist will rise to power within that system. He is going to spread a great deal of suffering and mass death as he conquers the whole world. The kingdom of Rome never really disappeared – but when the Lord returns at the end of the tribulation He will crush the kingdoms of this world and replace them with His own kingdom.

"41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." (Daniel 2)

I think this makes it a bit clearer that we are talking about

the final end-times kingdom of the antichrist, and not just Rome. Other translations butcher this passage but the KJV makes it possible to see what's going on. Why is the last kingdom partly strong and partly weak? It's because of verse 43. We are told that something will mingle itself with the seed of men, but since it's different and distinct from men it cannot cleave to them and form a strong bond. This thing that will try to mingle with mankind is strong, but it cannot really unite with men. Therefore, the last kingdom is strong (due to this external thing that has come in) but it's also weak as well.

It should be obvious that if this thing is trying to mingle itself with the seed of men, but it cannot unite with them and is distinct from it, then that thing must be outside of the seed of men. In other words, it must *not be man!* If it's not man then it has to be something else – something alien. We've seen something like this happen before in the days of Noah, when there were nephilim in the world. Then, too, something outside of the race of men took women and had children with them that were not human at all (Genesis 6:1-4). Christ told us that during the end times things would be like the days of Noah once again (Matthew 24:37) – so it makes sense that events that happened in Noah's time (such as the rise of the nephilim) would happen again. After all, it has happened before.

It sounds like a repeat of what happened in the days before the Flood: demons had children with women and produced a race of hybrid offspring. This race would be very strong, since they would have demonic power in human form, but since they aren't men they are going to be distinct and separate. It happened once before, and this verse indicates it will happen again. (For more information on this topic see Appendix K, "The Nephilim".)

There's another reason why this theory makes sense. The only part of the statue that hasn't been fulfilled is the feet, which are partly iron and partly clay. Feet have 10 toes. The reason this

is important is because the Bible teaches that in the end times the world will be ruled over by 10 kings (see Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12). Revelation 12:4 says that when the devil appears in this world before the rapture he will bring "ten horns" with him – and Revelation 17:12 says "the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings". That means Daniel's vision of the statue is directly connected with the antichrist's kingdom. The reason the last kingdom is said to mix iron with clay is because it's mixing the demonic (iron) with the human race (clay).

"44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2)

Notice how clearly this verse says that the kingdom of God will destroy these other kingdoms and then reign in its place, over the same territory that those other kingdoms ruled. The other kingdoms will never rise again or come back, and no other kingdoms will appear. Instead there will only be the new kingdom that God will establish, which will reign forever (into the Millennium and beyond).

This verse doesn't say that the church will set up this kingdom; it says that God will do it. The passage also doesn't say that the church will gradually take over the other kingdoms until they are in charge. Instead it says that God will violently smash all of the kingdoms in the world and replace them with His own new kingdom, which He will create. (Do you see the difference?)

When will this kingdom arise? Not until the final kingdom of the antichrist has appeared. That is when Jesus will return and utterly demolish that final kingdom. The kingdoms of this world

will not be changed from within or transformed; instead they will be shattered to pieces and entirely replaced. That is what we see both here and in the book of Revelation.

"45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." (Daniel 2)

The stone was cut without hands, which means the stone is not of human origin or human manufacture. Who is the great stone, made without hands, that is the foundation of the church? Who is the chief corner stone? It is the Messiah, of course! (It is not *Peter*, no matter what the Catholic church claims.) The Lord is the one who will do this. It will not be done by the will of men or the power of men.

The dream is certain and the interpretation is sure. God has told us what will take place in the years to come. We will live to see all of these things fulfilled, and it will be astonishing to behold. God's kingdom will never end! It will endure throughout all the ages of eternity – and we will be there as well, serving the Lord with great joy and gladness. Evil will be crushed once and for all and will never rise again.

"46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him." (Daniel 2)

You can see the enormous impact this had upon Nebuchadnezzar! He was given what he wanted, but I'm not sure he really believed it was going to happen. The king's reaction is overwhelming and intense. It's astonishing to see the king bow down before Daniel; that's not the sort of things that kings did! The king is showing Daniel tremendous honor.

So what is Nebuchadnezzar doing? Well, the word "worship" means to bow down. (It doesn't mean the king sang a song!) They are offering an "oblation" and incense, but as we will see in the next verse the king's reverence is toward Daniel's God, not to Daniel. Perhaps the king is honoring Daniel as the emissary of God, or perhaps he is actually honoring Daniel's God directly. The next verse shows where the king's focus lies. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 6, "Unbiblical Church Practices", subsection "What "Worship" Actually Means".)

"47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." (Daniel 2)

As you can see, God used this event to bring glory to Himself, and to glorify Himself in the sight of Nebuchadnezzar (and, no doubt, in the sight of everyone who heard what happened). In verse 47 the king doesn't honor and glorify *Daniel* for revealing this; instead he honors the Lord, which I think puts verse 46 into better context. The king realizes that God was the one who revealed this secret that only the king knew, and so the king glorifies God in return. In fact, he honors God as being above all other gods, and even above the kings of the world.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar wasn't saved at this point; that will come later. He is still full of pride and he hasn't humbled himself

before God. But we can see that he is starting to change. He has caught a glimpse of just how great God is.

This is why it is so important for us to redirect people's focus off of ourselves and back to God – because glorifying God is what really matters. It was important in this chapter for the king to see *God*, not for the king to see Daniel. Because of Daniel's humility that is exactly what happened.

"48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon."
(Daniel 2)

Daniel didn't ask for this but it makes sense that the king would do it. The previous chapter told us that the king found Daniel and his friends to be better than all the other wise men. Here the king has seen that Daniel could reveal a secret that no one else could, and that Daniel's God could reveal secrets that were hidden from everyone else. So it's no wonder that the king put Daniel in charge of everything – including Babylon itself and the other wise men.

Stop and think about that! Even though the Jews were in exile and captives in Babylon, God put Jews in positions of power in Babylon! Not only did He put Jews in charge, but He elevated men of astonishing character and reverence. This should have stood out to the people who were still in Jerusalem that God is powerful, that God keeps His promises, and that God can be trusted to watch over them and do what He said He would do. This should have been very encouraging and very convicting to Zedekiah the others who were still in Jerusalem. Yet they refused to see it and continued on to their destruction.

Did you realize that Daniel was in charge of Babylon

during the final years of Zedekiah's reign? Yet that astonishing fact apparently made no impression at all on the people of Judah. Daniel must have been there when the wicked king Zedekiah was brought before Nebuchadnezzar; he probably witnessed the entire thing. This just shows how hardened and wicked the Jews really were – and how merciful God was. The Lord could have done terrible things to Israel while they were being held captive, but instead He showed them tremendous mercy by putting a wise and godly *Jew* in charge of Babylon itself (under the king). The Jews didn't deserve this in any way; they never repented even after all this favor that God showed to them. Do you see how God is merciful, even to those who hate Him? Do you see how God continues to show mercy to His enemies, even when they have rejected Him time and time again? Do you see what it really means to love your enemies?

"49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king." (Daniel 2)

Daniel was the highest ruler in Babylon under the king, but he managed to get his friends (who were also very godly and devout Jews) into positions of power as well. This was surely beneficial to the captive Jews and to Babylon itself. It's a good thing for a nation to have wise and godly rulers, and not be ruled by corrupt and wicked men.

Daniel was held in tremendous esteem by Nebuchadnezzar and was the king's top adviser. He had a very important job! I'm sure he did many things that are not recorded in this book; we probably only know a tiny amount of his story. That, too, shows a great deal of restraint. If you wrote a book about yourself, wouldn't you be tempted to focus on your

greatness? Wouldn't you want to mention all the amazing things you did, and all your good deeds and acts of charity and so forth? But Daniel doesn't do that. He completely glosses over everything he did as ruler over Babylon, and instead focuses on things that glorify God. He makes very little of himself (after all, think about what he could have said!), and instead makes much of God. At every turn he focuses on what God did and what God said. In our day that would be unheard-of, but in these passages we find the quiet and humble example of Daniel. He is showing us how things ought to be done.

8/3/2018, 8/12/2019

Daniel 3

"1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon."
(Daniel 3)

A couple things. First of all, this was an enormous statue. A cubit was roughly 1.5 feet, which means this statue was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. There's no way it was made of solid gold! It's far more likely that it was gold plated. After all, if it was made of solid gold then it would have required a very large portion of all the gold that has ever been known to exist.

Second, this chapter doesn't mention Daniel at all. It seems he wasn't at this particular event. My guess is that Nebuchadnezzar didn't invite him to it because he knew Daniel would never bow down to the statue, and he didn't want to kill Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was pretty clear in verse 2 that all of his top officials should be there to bow down to him, and it's inconceivable that he would just happen to forget about the

person he put in charge of Babylon. It's more likely the king either deliberately didn't invite him, or sent him out of town on purpose so he wouldn't be around.

The fact that Daniel is missing without any explanation is, in my opinion, symbolic of the rapture. You see, in Revelation 13:15 we're told that the antichrist will set up an image of the beast and require the whole world to worship it. Those who do not worship it will be killed. However, the church will not be tempted by this idol because we will be raptured before the tribulation begins, and the idol will be created around the middle of the tribulation. In this chapter Daniel isn't present and so he isn't tested, but three Jews have to go through the fire. I don't think that is a coincidence! What Nebuchadnezzar is doing is a clear parallel to what the antichrist will do in the end times. We have two world rulers, two statues, and two threats of death to those who don't bow down. It's not merely similar; it's all but identical! I think there's a prophetic element to this chapter. After all, the book of Daniel is full of prophecy.

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar already had an encounter with the God of Daniel, who revealed his secret vision. The king acknowledged the greatness of Daniel's God but that didn't stop him from making a worthless, useless, and powerless idol and demanding people worship it. The king still had a long way to go before he realized who God really was.

"2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the

counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up." (Daniel 3)

Nebuchadnezzar specifically gathered all the rulers of the entire kingdom in order to make them all worship his idol. Yet there's no mention of Daniel, who was definitely one of the rulers of the kingdom! It's impossible that the king would have simply forgotten about Daniel. The most likely explanation is that the king excluded Daniel on purpose.

The fact that Daniel is missing from the temptation to worship the beast and his image is so striking that it must be a parallel to the rapture. Daniel wasn't present at this hour because he was removed so he wouldn't have to face it, and the same will be true of the church.

"4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."
(Daniel 3)

First, let me say that these verses are *not* a condemnation of rock music, as some claim. These verses aren't saying that if you use a certain music style in your worship service then you are evil and of the devil. What is evil in this chapter is *not* the use

of music, but the worship of the idol! If God wanted to say that certain musical styles or instruments were evil then He certainly could have done so. After all, the Bible covers some incredibly obscure subjects (like what to do if there's mold in your house). Yet God never says "using drums in your music is a sin". The *message* of the music might be evil; its words or content might be wicked. But you can't use the Bible to support the idea that certain musical instruments are sinful, or that any music that incorporates them (or uses a certain beat) is of the devil. It simply doesn't say that.

Nebuchadnezzar is making a proclamation that's very similar to the one that the antichrist will make in the middle of the seven-year tribulation: everyone has to bow down and worship the image, and those who do not will be killed. In Nebuchadnezzar's case it was by being burned alive; in the tribulation it will be by being beheaded. But in both cases it's worship or die. There is no option to opt out and do something else.

Incidentally, the word "worship" in verse 5 means to bow down. Nebuchadnezzar was commanding people to fall down in front of his idol and submit to it. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 6, "Unbiblical Church Practices", subsection "What "Worship" Actually Means".)

"7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." (Daniel 3)

When the music sounded the people did as the king commanded – but there were three Jews present who refused to

engage in idolatry. I would like to point out that there were surely many other Jews in this enormous crowd, but only three of them (the friends of Daniel) took a stand and refused to commit this idolatry.

"8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews." (Daniel 3)

The king didn't notice this transgression. The people who complained were their peers – in fact, they were probably people who worked for the Jews they were accusing. (This must have later led to an uncomfortable moment in their performance reviews.) They probably thought they were getting rid of some Jews that they hated, but instead God used this moment to glorify Himself in the sight of the whole nation.

"9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Daniel 3)

You can feel the hate here, can't you? The Chaldeans

wanted these Jews dead and they saw this as an opportunity to get rid of them. However, this isn't going to go the way they think it will. God has other plans.

It's really disappointing that out of all the Jewish captives held in Babylon, only these three were willing to take a stand. There should have been a lot more people who refused to bow down! I suspect this is also prophetic. When the image of the beast is created, virtually everyone will bow down and take the mark and be damned forever, and very few people will refuse it and be saved.

"13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king." (Daniel 3)

Nebuchadnezzar was angry that these men wouldn't bow down to his false god – to his idol that couldn't speak or walk or hear or help. Likewise, the antichrist will be angry at everyone who refuses to bow down to the image he will create.

This is what Jesus meant when He said that those who will save their lives will lose them, but those who lose their lives for His sake will find them (Matthew 16:25). Those who worshiped the image weren't actually saving their lives at all. They were all idolaters, and although they may have been spared for the moment they would one day face eternal damnation and Hell. Those who refused to worship this false god and instead chose to honor the Lord may have been condemned to death (and many throughout history have been killed), but since they were saved by the blood of Christ they will be resurrected and live forever in a much better country. Those who worshiped the idol (and nearly everyone did) chose a very short-term gain that guaranteed themselves an extremely long-term loss. It was the

wrong choice and they will spend eternity paying for it. It's better to lose your life for the sake of Christ than save your life but then face the eternal wrath of God.

"14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" (Daniel 3)

Of course it is true! The king must have known this by now. There should have been a lot more Jews who refused to bow down, but sadly there were only these three.

"15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Daniel 3)

Nebuchadnezzar made this personal. He was using this to prove that he was stronger than all gods. He was specifically trying to prove that he was greater than the God of Israel – and the gods of all other nations. The antichrist is going to do the same thing during the tribulation, and he will fail as well – at the end of those seven years the Messiah will return and kill him, and that will be the end of his reign.

Nebuchadnezzar was claiming to be greater and mightier than God Himself! That is exactly why God was going to humble him. The Lord resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

"16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Daniel 3)

These three Jews were powerful, wealthy, and influential men. They could easily have gone along with the crowd and kept their positions and moved on with life. But that's not what they did! They wanted to honor God above all else, no matter what it cost. They weren't going to bow down no matter what the price was. These three were remarkable men, and it's a great shame that we don't have more people like that in our own day.

What we see instead in many churches is sin and evil as far as the eye can see. We see pastors who are unwilling to condemn sin, preach righteousness, or even mention the name of Jesus. We see pastors who are ashamed of the Word of God and who refuse to preach the parts of the Bible that they know their congregations will not accept. The courage of these three men, who were willing to die rather than sin against God, is very difficult to find in our churches. Many pastors are unwilling to stand up against the culture and fight it; instead they seek to compromise and adapt to it in order to win its approval. But that's not what God wants.

Notice the message here. These three men told the king that their God was able to deliver them. Now, they didn't know whether He would or not; He might choose to save them, or He

might let them die. Throughout history there have been a great many people who weren't saved from martyrdom and death; instead God allowed them to die (just as Jesus died, along with nearly all of His disciples). But God does have the power to save. They told the king that even if God didn't save them they still weren't going to bow down. They didn't know what God was going to do, but they knew what they were going to do. Those three Jews were going to honor the Lord.

The men didn't hesitate. They didn't try to negotiate. They did not beg for their lives or try to find a middle ground. Instead they stood their ground and honored the Lord in their reply to the king. This was a great answer.

"19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace." (Daniel 3)

The king did what he said he was going to do. Since these men refused to acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as being greater than all gods (which was the issue at stake here), he became angry with them. The furnace was already hot, but he was so full of rage that he commanded it to be heated seven times hotter than normal. (This wasn't a good decision but it did have the effect of bringing even more glory to God, which probably wasn't what the king was trying to accomplish.)

These men didn't know what would happen next. They probably thought they were going to be burned alive in the

furnace, but they chose that fate over sin. If only more churches in our day took sin that seriously!

There was really no need for the king to command the mightiest soldiers in his army to fight these three men. They weren't going anywhere. They weren't trying to escape and they had no intention of putting up a fight – but the king was angry. Once again, all of this is just going to bring even more glory to God.

"21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace." (Daniel 3)

Apparently there was a big rush to get this done, because they were thrown into the fire while wearing their hats! The king's mighty soldiers tied them up and threw them into the furnace.

"22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flames of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." (Daniel 3)

It is evil to command people to do things that are wrong. But it's also evil to obey wicked orders and do things that are wicked. God had mercy and grace upon the three Jews who defied the king's commandment and refused to worship the idol, but He killed the people who obeyed the king's commandment and cast three innocent men into the fire. You can't say "I was only obeying orders". If you are sinning then you are sinning, and God will hold you responsible. You aren't guiltless, as this chapter

makes very clear. Obeying an order to sin is a sin and you will be held responsible. It's better to refuse and die (as these three men were willing to do) than obey a wicked order and sin against God.

Nebuchadnezzar lost some of the mightiest men in his army over this.

"23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace." (Daniel 3)

The passage makes very clear that they were definitely thrown into the furnace. The fact that the people who threw them into the furnace died testifies to how hot the furnace was and how far they were thrown into it.

"24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.
25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3)

Nebuchadnezzar always seems to be full of energy. He does things in haste, he flies into rage, and he quickly condemns all of his magicians to death. He is always moving from one activity to the next, and he doesn't seem to have very good control over his emotions.

It's easy to see why he was astonished, though. He thought that this would be the end of those three Jews, but it wasn't. They survived the furnace while the mightiest men in his

army did not. Their ropes were burned but their clothing was not. In fact, something even stranger happened: the king threw three men into the fire, but inside the furnace he saw *four* men. That must have been an astonishing moment for him, when he looked into the fire and saw three men and the preincarnate Christ. He had set up a lifeless idol to worship, but there in the fire was the living God.

There really can be no doubt that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ. The Lord was showing Nebuchadnezzar that he was *not* greater than all other gods. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords was able to deliver the Jews out of the king's hand. By making a personal appearance He was emphasizing to the king that He was even able to walk around in a fiery furnace with His worshipers without being destroyed (which is what would have happened if Nebuchadnezzar had cast his idol of gold into it).

This is *not* what the king expected would happen. Nebuchadnezzar is being humbled here. He still has a long way to go, but you can see how God is using Nebuchadnezzar to glorify Himself in the sight of all of Babylon. This is about the glory and power of God, and how God is greater than all gods and kings and rulers and powers.

During the tribulation, will the antichrist try to kill all of the Jews? Absolutely. Will he succeed? No he will not, because God will protect them.

"26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire."
(Daniel 3)

Nebuchadnezzar knew about the God that these three men served, and he built his idol to prove that he was greater than their God. Instead God proved that He was vastly greater than the king. Notice how Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges which God delivered them from the fire when he asked them to come out of the furnace. The king knew who was responsible and what it meant.

This was probably the worst-case scenario for the Chaldeans who betrayed these three Jews to the king. You don't ever want to try to assassinate your boss and then fail and get caught.

"27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." (Daniel 3)

When God saved these three men He really saved them! They were not burned alive and their clothes weren't damaged in any way. They didn't even smell like fire! God *completely* saved them, and He did to glorify His name in the sight of all. The Lord made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that he was not a god at all, and the Most High God was vastly greater than the king. God glorified Himself by showing who was in charge and who was not. This was a powerful testimony to everyone, and the reason it happened is because these three Jews refused to compromise but instead did what was right instead of what was convenient.

"28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said,

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." (Daniel 3)

In the Old Testament the preincarnate Christ was usually referred to as the angel of the Lord. As we can see, Nebuchadnezzar understood what just happened. He blessed and honored the Most High God. He understood that no other God could save people the way that the Lord can save. The king specifically honored the Most High God and even passed a law that protected and honored the name of the Lord. After this event no one in Babylon could speak against the Lord. The king understood that this was a power struggle and he lost. He realized that these men trusted in the Lord and He saved them – and no other god could possibly do that.

The king has started to realize the greatness of God, but he is far from humble. There is one more thing that must happen before the king will submit himself to the Lord. It's one thing to acknowledge that God is great; it is quite another to submit to God and bow down to Him. Nebuchadnezzar is not there yet.

"30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon."
(Daniel 3)

These three men were already in charge of the province of Babylon. Now it seems they were given even more authority and power! The underlings who betrayed them thought they were going to get a promotion by having these three men killed, but instead they are now in a very awkward position.

It's worth noting that during the tribulation the antichrist will hunt down Christians and will succeed in killing them in large numbers. He will try to set up a kingdom for himself and rule the world, but at the end of the seven years the Messiah will return and put an end to him and his kingdom. The Christians he killed will be resurrected and reign with Christ over the world. In the end the antichrist will lose everything, while those he put to death will live forever and reign over the very same world that the antichrist tried to conquer. There are clear parallels here and we should not overlook them.

8/4/2018, 8/13/2019

Daniel 4

"1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you." (Daniel 4)

It's interesting to stop and consider that one of the chapters in the Bible was written by Nebuchadnezzar. The fact that God was able to humble this proud and arrogant king is a testament to His tremendous power and glory. This is an amazing miracle that's overlooked too easily! God can humble and save anyone – no matter who they are or what they've done.

"2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward

me. 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." (Daniel 4)

This is exactly the sort of language we find in the book of Psalms. Nebuchadnezzar was clearly a changed man! God didn't save him the same way He saved the apostle Paul, but He did save him all the same. In the past Nebuchadnezzar talked about his own greatness, but here he is writing a letter to tell the world about the greatness of God.

Imagine what it would be like to tell the whole world that God humbled you, and broke you, and turned you into an animal for seven years so that you might learn that God's in charge and you are not. Now imagine that testimony was written by the most powerful person in the world. That's what is going on here! Nebuchadnezzar is giving his personal testimony here. His account shows how proud and arrogant he was, and how great God was, and how God humbled him and showed him who was really in charge. In the end Nebuchadnezzar glorifies God for humbling him and praises the Lord for His astonishing greatness.

Isn't it interesting how Nebuchadnezzar praises God for His great signs and His mighty wonders? Do we praise God for those things anymore? So many modern worship songs are completely self-centered and focus on how amazing *we* are, not how amazing God is. It's really jarring if you stop and listen to what they have to say. Whatever happened to songs that focus on the greatness of God? (I think the worst songs may be the ones that are written from God's point of view and have God spending the whole song telling someone else how great they are. They're awful! Do not ever, *ever* put words in God's mouth. Worship is supposed to be about making much of *God*, not making much of yourself at God's expense! Nebuchadnezzar shows how it's done.)

"4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me."
(Daniel 4)

The last time this happened Nebuchadnezzar refused to tell people the dream. This time he doesn't do that. (After all, Daniel had already established his credibility beyond doubt. There was no need for the king to test him again.) Another difference is that this vision brought him fear.

It's interesting that God gave him this vision. God warned the king what was going to happen before it actually happened. He did the same thing with the prophets, who warned Israel about the coming judgment before it took place. God told them judgment was coming in order to give them a chance to repent. Unfortunately, no repentance happened so the judgment came.

"6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof." (Daniel 4)

The astrologers were consistently useless – just like Pharaoh's magicians.

"8 But at the last Daniel came in before me,

whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying," (Daniel 4)

The king didn't hide his dream this time. I guess after Daniel interpreted his last dream, the king realized Daniel knew what he was talking about so there was no reason to do that again. The king knew there was something different about Daniel.

"9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof." (Daniel 4)

It's interesting that the king didn't start with Daniel. Instead he went to the rest of his advisers, and only turned to Daniel when all else failed. Yet the king was convinced that even if all else failed, Daniel would have the answer because he knew everything. The king held Daniel in exceptionally high regard.

"10 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh

was fed of it." (Daniel 4)

As we will see, this tree is the king. He is large, powerful, and in control of the nations.

"13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;" (Daniel 4)

Heavenly beings are usually called angels, which means messenger. Here, though, we have one that's called a watcher. That means this being didn't come with a message; instead he was watching over the world in order to take some kind of action. I don't think that this is the Lord; instead he seems to be some sort of heavenly counsel. There's more going on in Heaven than we realize! I suspect there's a great deal that we haven't been told. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 12, "Angels".)

"14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: 15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him." (Daniel 4)

It seems like it was a terrible punishment to be turned

into an animal for seven years, but it was actually a great mercy. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar, and that saved him. If God had not brought this judgment then Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't have been humbled and he never would have been saved. God used this judgment to save him.

It's interesting that he had to suffer for seven years, and then his eyes were opened and he was saved. Israel will also have to suffer for seven years during the tribulation, and then her eyes will be opened and she will accept Jesus as her Messiah and will be saved. I think there are prophetic implications in this passage.

"17 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." (Daniel 4)

Heaven is focused on the glory of God, isn't it? Heaven takes action so that men might know that God is in charge of the nations, not men. If you want to know what people are going to be focused on once they reach Heaven, you can find the answer right here. Eternity itself will be focused on the glory of God! In fact, the universe was created in order to bring glory to God. That is why we exist; that's what it is all about.

This action was done by the decree of the watchers, plural. Apparently there are multiple watchers, and they have the power and authority to do things like this. I find it difficult to believe that this is the only time the watchers took action in all of history. I'm sure they were responsible for other things as well, but the challenge is we haven't been told what they have been doing. All we know is what Jesus said about those who were crushed by the tower that fell: if we do not repent then we will

all likewise perish (Luke 13:4-5).

God is the one who picks our rulers. God raises up nations and cast them down. He gives power to some and withholds it from others. God is in charge of all of history and is guiding it to its end. Those who think they're in control of their lives are fools.

"18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee." (Daniel 4)

Nebuchadnezzar had complete faith that Daniel would be able to interpret the dream. There was no doubt in the king at all! You could make the case that Nebuchadnezzar trusted the Holy Spirit that was within Daniel to reveal this secret.

"19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." (Daniel 4)

Wouldn't you have been astonished as well? The interpretation of the dream is pretty far outside anything we've ever seen or experienced. How many other times has God taken a world ruler and turned him into an animal for seven years, and

then restored him to power? It's like something out of a fairy tale, but it is exactly what happened. God really can do above and beyond anything we can imagine.

Before we go any further, we need to remember that Daniel was taken away from his home by force and carried to Babylon as a prisoner. In this chapter he just learned that the man who did this was going to be punished in a very public and humiliating way – *and Daniel is upset about it*. Daniel really does love his enemies! He doesn't want to see the king go through this. He has compassion on the man who destroyed Jerusalem. Would we have had this same attitude if we were in Daniel's place and had seen all the atrocities that were committed by the Babylonian army? Daniel is troubled by the things that are going to befall the man who tried to burn three of his friends alive. Would we have been troubled, or would we have rejoiced?

"20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth." (Daniel 4)

As I said earlier, the tree is the king.

"23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the

stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24 This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:" (Daniel 4)

It's worth pointing out that the decree of the watchers (plural) is also said to be the decree of the Most High. In Heaven the Lord's will is done, which means everything that happens is the will of the Lord. (That is one of the key things that sets Heaven apart from Earth!) If the watchers decree something then they are doing so because it is the will of God. They will never act outside of God's will, and that is true of everyone who is in Heaven. The only exception to this is the devil, who approaches the throne of God in order to accuse the brethren – but even he is limited to doing only what God allows him to do, and one day his time of accusing the brethren will be ended forever.

Notice how Daniel approaches this subject with great care. He doesn't berate the king; instead he is respectful. He is clearly concerned about Nebuchadnezzar's well-being.

"25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Daniel 4)

As we will see, this is exactly what happened. Remember,

the person who is giving this testimony is Nebuchadnezzar himself. The king is telling the whole world what God did so that they would know how great He is and how the Lord is the one who controls the nations. Think about that!

I realize that many people are tempted to spiritualize this passage and claim that it's an allegory of some kind and didn't actually happen. But prophecy is always fulfilled literally! Verse 25 is exactly what God did, word for word. Yes, it's far outside anything we've seen before, but it is exactly what the Lord brought to pass. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

God was going to humble the king, and this is how He did it. God proved that He was the one who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom by taking away everything from the king and turning him into an animal – and by giving it back to him once the seven years were over. God really is the one who blesses us, and God is also the one who withholds blessings as well.

"26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." (Daniel 4)

Once the seven years were over and Nebuchadnezzar was humbled and knew who was really in charge, the kingdom would be given back to him. That is also exactly what happened! God is demonstrating His power in a very clear way.

"27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." (Daniel 4)

Do you see Daniel's mercy and compassion? Do you see how he's trying to spare the king? What Daniel is counseling here is *repentance*. Repentance is when you confess your sins to God and seek forgiveness for them, and then turn from them. The act of turning from them and doing what's right is a sign that God has given you a new heart; it shows that you are a changed person. You aren't saved by your works, but your works demonstrate who you really are. If you continue to do wicked things then you haven't repented at all and are still wicked. However, if you hate sin and try to do what's right, and your heart longs to please and honor the Lord, then that's evidence you have been saved and given a new heart. If you want to know what sort of tree you are then look at your life's fruit! If the king repented and turned to the Lord then the actions Daniel recommends would be evidence of his changed nature. But the king does not repent.

Notice how showing mercy to the poor is one of the signs of a changed person. We find this taught in both the Old and New Testament. The righteous will show compassion on the poor, the needy, the widow, and the orphan – but the wicked will oppress them. (One easy way to see this is the way that the righteous adopt children and care for them. The wicked, on the other hand, have carried out more than a *billion* abortions in the past century. The righteous love children and seek to take care of them; the wicked brutally murder them by the *hundreds of millions* and then brag about all the blood that's on their hands. That is the difference. The righteous love compassion; the wicked love death.)

"28 All this came upon the king
Nebuchadnezzar." (Daniel 4)

Nebuchadnezzar is testifying that the prophecy was fulfilled exactly as God gave it. Like all prophecy, it was fulfilled literally.

"29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon." (Daniel 4)

Nebuchadnezzar was told a year in advance that all of these things would happen to him. The king was given a year to repent of his sins and change, but he didn't. God sent the vision to tell him what was about to happen, but he didn't take advantage of the warning he was given.

"30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4)

This is exactly why God humbled him. Nebuchadnezzar looked around him and believed that his success was due to his abilities and his greatness. He further thought that everything that happened testified to his own greatness! The king was full of himself and had no humility at all. He believed that it was all about him, and had been done by him and for him.

So God taught him a lesson. God taught him that none of it was built by his power; it was all built by God's power. God taught him that all of his success was due to the Lord. God taught him that all things are done for the glory of God, not for the glory of Nebuchadnezzar.

This is still true today, isn't it? God is the one who gives us success and glory and honor and power, and He is also the one

who withholds it from us. All things are done for the glory of God, not for our glory. God is in charge and He is the one who guides our life, whether we realize and accept it or not.

"31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Daniel 4)

This is a message you never want to hear thunder down from Heaven! The king was warned this would happen, but he didn't listen and so it happened. God told him in advance exactly what would take place, and He then did what He promised to do. Just because it staggers the mind doesn't mean God won't bring it to pass. For the next seven years Nebuchadnezzar would be an animal.

God was able to take away everything from Nebuchadnezzar in an instant, and then give it back to him once the seven years were over. Do we really realize that God is in charge? Do we understand how much control He has over our lives and everything that happens?

You may argue that Nebuchadnezzar's transformation was impossible. That is the point! God did an impossible thing to Nebuchadnezzar – something that never could have happened in the normal course of events – in order to prove to him that God has all the power and God governs the nations. God wanted there to be no doubt about who did this and who was really in

charge. God can make an animal talk (as He did with Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22:28), and He can also turn men into animals if He chooses to do so. Nothing is too hard for God.

"33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." (Daniel 4)

Yes, this really happened. This testimony is not a fairy tale! The reason God did this impossible and astonishing thing is to demonstrate His power to Nebuchadnezzar and show the king who is really in charge of the nations – and what God can do if it pleases Him. God can lift up a man from prison and in a single day put him in charge of a nation (as He did with Joseph). God can also take the most powerful man in the world and, in a single hour, turn him into a literal animal who eats grass. That is the power of God!

Yet today people routinely ignore the Lord. They mock Him and His Word and claim that God is wrong. These proud fools say that they know better than God, and boast that when they get to Heaven they're going to set God straight and make Him apologize. They attack God and hate Him and refuse to bow down to Him. They think they're more powerful than God and wiser than God, but they are very wrong. They have no idea who they're dealing with or what is going to happen when God stops having mercy and compassion on them. They don't realize that the God they hate and despise is the only reason they're still alive and not being tormented in Hell! They have no idea what will happen when they stand before Him and are held accountable for all their wickedness.

Those who do not fear the Lord are fools. How do you expect to win a fight against an all-powerful God? Do you think that when you're in Hell, being burned alive and in unimaginable pain for all of eternity, that you will feel better about yourself for standing up to a righteous and holy God in an act of sinful wickedness? Do you think your sin will bring you comfort in Hell? Would it not be far wiser to repent and be saved while there is still time?

"34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:" (Daniel 4)

God did exactly what He said He would do. Once the time was over God restored the king's sanity. At that point Nebuchadnezzar realized it was all about God, not him. He knew from that day forward that God was in charge. Nebuchadnezzar didn't respond to this judgment with hate or outrage, but with praise and worship. Do you see how Nebuchadnezzar emphasizes repeatedly in this passage that God is in charge, that God's kingdom will last forever, and that God rules over everyone for all generations? He couldn't be any more clear that it is God who rules, not Nebuchadnezzar, and that He does so for His glory.

Nebuchadnezzar is clearly a changed man! In the past he said that he was in charge and it was all about him; now he is humble before the Lord and says that God is in charge and it's all about Him. That is a night-and-day difference.

"35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"
(Daniel 4)

Many of our churches are filled with people who attack God at every turn. They attack God the minute He does something they don't like. They criticize God for not giving them everything they want. Yet look at Nebuchadnezzar's attitude! He glorifies the Lord and makes much of God and little of himself; in fact, he says that he is *nothing*. The king is completely submitted to the will of God and says that God has a right to do as He pleases and He is beyond criticism for the actions He takes. The king says that no one has any power to resist God, and that the Lord will always accomplish His will and His purposes. This isn't the same man who looked at Babylon and used it to glorify himself!

How many people today believe the things that Nebuchadnezzar said in verses 34 and 35? Do we really believe that God is everything and we are nothing? Do we believe that God has a right to do all the things He does – that He is right in doing them and He is using them to accomplish His purposes? Do we believe that God has all power and we are nothing? Do we praise the Lord for these valuable truths and glorify Him for having all power and might, and for ruling over all people and nations for all of eternity? That is exactly what Nebuchadnezzar did! The king's testimony is a powerful statement of worship and adoration to God. The Lord rules in Heaven and He rules on Earth as well. There is no place that is beyond His power!

Remember, Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the *entire world*. He told his testimony to the nations! Think of that.

"36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me." (Daniel 4)

God promised to restore Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom to him and He did. God proved that He can take away kingdoms, and He can give them to people as well.

Some people have asked who was in charge of Babylon while Nebuchadnezzar was an animal. This passage doesn't say, but it was probably Daniel. He seems to have been the second in command under Nebuchadnezzar, so when the king was gone (so to speak) Daniel probably took over. It's odd to think that Daniel was running Babylon during the time of the Jewish exile, but once again we see that God is taking care of the Jews even when they were in rebellion against God. There's a lot we don't know, but we do know that God did exactly what He said He would do even though it seemed impossible. God isn't bound by the normal course of events, or what would usually happen in most cases. God does as He pleases – but there is no darkness in Him at all. Everything that He does is right and just. God can even use acts of wickedness – like the conquering of Jerusalem and the captivity of an innocent man like Daniel – to bring about the salvation of another, and to glorify Himself. We often see the evil that is done, but sometimes we miss what God does with that evil and how He uses it to accomplish His greater purposes. That is where faith comes in! We must learn to trust God even when we don't see all of the pieces.

"37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." (Daniel 4)

This easily could have been written by any of the prophets, or by the psalmists. You can see that the heart of the king is completely different now. Nebuchadnezzar is no longer glorifying himself; instead he is glorifying the Lord! He wrote this letter to the world in order to glorify God and show that God is much greater than the king. This is a magnificent testimony! Notice that Nebuchadnezzar never accuses God of doing anything wrong. Far from it! Instead he says that God is full of truth and everything He does is right. The king actually honors the Lord for His ability to humble those who are proud!

It's a sad thing that Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan Gentile king, understood this message and received it while the Jews – God's own people – refused to hear it.

8/4/2018, 8/14/2019, 7/25/2022

Daniel 5

"1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." (Daniel 5)

From what I understand, Belshazzar was a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar but not his direct son. He was put in charge while the main ruler of Babylon was away somewhere else. That's why he could only make Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom. Think of him as the substitute teacher who was in charge while the main teacher was absent.

This king decided to have a big, drunken party. Daniel did

not come – which I'm sure wasn't an accident. A man like Daniel would never agree to be involved in drunken and idolatrous debauchery.

Isn't it interesting that the king would decide to throw a party like this while Babylon was surrounded by an invading army? The city was only a few hours away from being conquered and their leader was getting drunk instead of defending the kingdom! Belshazzar was was clearly terrible at his job and wasn't taking the defense of Babylon seriously. He should have been out there doing his job, but instead he stayed home and got drunk. That tells us a lot about his character.

"2 Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein." (Daniel 5)

Ancient cultures often referred to their male ancestors as their father, even if they were a more distant relation. An example of this is the way the Jews referred to "father Abraham", even though Abraham was one of their distant forefathers and not their direct father. Belshazzar was one of the more distant relations. However, the point is the same: Belshazzar was a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. He knew what had happened to the king and how God humbled him. He had heard the king's testimony and chose to ignore it. He then did something really terrible that no king had done before: he took the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem and used them to worship idols. Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels out of the temple but even he never used them in acts of idolatry. Belshazzar had plenty of other vessels that he could have use (I'm sure there was no

shortage of cups in the royal palace!) but he made the decision to take God's holy instruments and use them in acts of drunken idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar honored the God of Israel. Belshazzar knew that and deliberately chose to dishonor the Lord. That is why he took that which was holy and use it in the most profane method he could conceive of. He was taking a stand that the God of Israel was nothing. He was deliberately mocking the Lord and showing Him contempt, even though he knew what God had done to Nebuchadnezzar.

So God destroyed him – *that very night*. Belshazzar was well aware of the awesome power of God, but instead of repenting he chose to mock the Lord. That was the last thing he ever did.

"3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." (Daniel 5)

Everyone there did it! Everyone participated. They all knew the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar and yet they decided to join in this outrageous sacrilege – and so they were all punished for it. Can you see the outrage that Daniel felt? What these people were doing was astoundingly stupid. Daniel emphasizes the fact that they took the holy vessels of God and used them to worship worthless idols in a drunken revelry. This was a really bad decision on their part! They crossed a huge line. God punished Nebuchadnezzar and turned him into an animal for doing far less than this. Belshazzar was deliberately insulting the Lord. He knew it and God knew it. This wasn't an accident; this

was a deliberate provocation to prove that Belshazzar was greater than God – so God killed him that very night.

God doesn't always do this. Sometimes God waits a long time to bring judgment, but in the end judgment always comes. No one can escape the Lord. Your only choices are to repent and be saved by the blood of Christ, or else be damned forever.

"5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." (Daniel 5)

When a voice thunders from Heaven and pronounces judgment upon you, it's bad news. When a giant hand that isn't attached to a body appears out of nowhere and writes a message of judgment on the wall of your palace (so that it will be there as a memorial for future kings), that is also extremely bad news. God doesn't usually do these things, but people don't usually take the holy vessels from His temple and use them to worship idols in drunken idolatry.

Sometimes it seems that God waits a very long time before taking action. It is true that God is far more patient than we are. Abraham did have to wait a long time before he had Isaac. So far we've waited around two thousand years for Jesus to return and we're still waiting. It's true that God sometimes tests our faith by making us wait longer than we expected. However, there are other times when God takes immediate, direct, and decisive action.

You can tell that Daniel was very familiar with the palace. He was very specific about what part of the palace this happened to. This isn't a fairy tale; this really happened, exactly as it is written.

"6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." (Daniel 5)

I think anyone would have been terrified! If a giant hand appears out of nowhere and writes a message on the wall of your palace, that's not a good sign. One moment the king was mocking God; the next moment he was full of terror. That is how quickly things can change.

"7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5)

I find it interesting that God wrote the message of judgment in a language that the king and his magicians couldn't read. He did *not* give them something they could understand! The same was true for Nebuchadnezzar. Although God gave him the vision, that vision had to be interpreted by Daniel, God's servant. In the days of the kings of Israel and Judah God gave many messages of coming judgment and trouble – but He sent those messages through the prophets. The Lord has chosen to speak through His servants many times.

I suspect that if sometime today God gave a sign to the world that judgment was coming (and His Word lists numerous signs we can watch for that indicate judgment is coming and the

Day of the Lord is near), the world wouldn't be able to understand it. They might see the sign and have some questions about what is going on, but only the people of God would be able to understand it. Any signs the world saw would have to be interpreted by the people of God. The world will never be able to see them and understand them on their own. (The exception to this will be during the seven-year tribulation. In those days God will pour out His wrath so clearly that everyone in the world will know God is doing it. But we have not yet reached that point in history.)

The king is desperate to know what's going on. He promises great honor and power to anyone who can translate this message, but no one can help him. Notice that he can only make this person the third ruler in the kingdom. That's because he is only the second ruler in the kingdom.

"8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof."
(Daniel 5)

The king's wicked wise men can't interpret what God wrote. The same is still true today! The world will never be able to interpret what God had written or what God is doing. They cannot understand God's signs, or God's Word, or God's message. They need the people of God to explain it to them. The Lord has given wisdom and spiritual insight to us, but not to them.

"9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished." (Daniel 5)

The king was very upset. Something disturbing was going on, but no one could explain what it meant. It's very likely that all those who were with him at the party were troubled as well. As a general rule, giant hands that appear out of nowhere to write on walls never bring good news.

"10 Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:" (Daniel 5)

It seems that the queen wasn't at this party. Other women were present, but the queen did not attend. That was a good move on her part – it means she wasn't involved with the sacrilege.

Apparently word of this strange event spread quickly around the city, so the queen came to take care of the situation. However, the king was *not* going to live forever. In fact, he only had a few hours left to live.

"11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;" (Daniel 5)

It seems that once Nebuchadnezzar died, the next ruler fired Daniel and put someone else in charge. That was a bad

move on their part. However, Daniel wasn't killed; apparently he still lived in the city. Later on in this book we will find out that in the days of Belshazzar he went around doing the king's business. I don't know what that business might have been, but even when Daniel was no longer in charge he still had a reputation among certain people in the city.

I find it interesting that whenever people talk about Daniel they keep saying that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. That is really a powerful testimony to have!

Incidentally, do you see how the queen says that Daniel had the wisdom of the gods? James 1:5 tells us that the Lord will give wisdom to all who ask. You can find the wisdom of God in the pages of His Word.

"12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation." (Daniel 5)

Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel as Belteshazzar, but here the queen calls him Daniel. It's interesting how his name changes from one chapter to the next depending on who is speaking. The queen apparently knew him by his Hebrew name.

The queen tells Belshazzar that Daniel can interpret the message for him. The queen has no doubt about Daniel's abilities. It's interesting that none of the magicians or wise men of the city thought to ask him, even though they knew about Daniel and knew that he was the real thing. No, the queen had to come from another part of town to tell Belshazzar that he had that option. (That is what you call "professional jealousy", I

suspect.)

There is also the fact that Belshazzar must have known about Daniel. Based on what Daniel says in the next few verses, he knew who Daniel was and what he had done in the days of Nebuchadnezzar – and yet even when he was in a panic he pretended that he had never heard of him! I suspect that Belshazzar only called for Daniel because he had no other choice and he was truly desperate. He must have hated Daniel. (After all, the darkness hates the light.)

"13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?" (Daniel 5)

This passage doesn't say that Daniel was brought in with haste, which is how Nebuchadnezzar handled things. I suspect that the king was very reluctant to bring in Daniel. Notice how Belshazzar starts the conversation by going out of his way to insult Daniel. He emphasizes Daniel's captivity and the conquest of Jerusalem, all of which happened many years earlier. He doesn't ask if he was the Daniel who ruled over Babylon for years and interpreted dreams and did many great things. The king is being as insulting and demeaning as he can possibly be. He clearly knows who Daniel is and he hates him – and his audience probably does as well. Nebuchadnezzar never treated Daniel with this much disrespect.

Belshazzar needs Daniel's help, but he doesn't like Daniel and he's trying to humiliate him. You can see how small and petty this man is! He is insulting both to God and to God's servant, Daniel. If a man spent years serving as president but you refer to him as a captive slave when you meet him, you are

definitely trying to offend him.

"14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee." (Daniel 5)

Even Belshazzar had to admit that Daniel was filled with the Holy Spirit. Daniel must have been a remarkable person to have that reputation even among his enemies!

"15 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: 16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5)

Belshazzar wanted Daniel to translate the writing, and he promised Daniel great rewards if he could do so. Belshazzar doesn't realize that his rewards are useless. He is going to die in a few hours and his kingdom is about to be conquered. He thought that he was in a position of power, but he was not.

The queen told Belshazzar that Daniel could definitely read the writing. Belshazzar makes it clear that he doesn't believe Daniel can do it – after all, no one else could! The use of the phrase "if thou canst read the writing" is an important clue.

Belshazzar insults Daniel and then says he doesn't think Daniel is better than anyone else.

"17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." (Daniel 5)

Daniel doesn't want anything that Belshazzar has to offer. He accepted the gifts from Nebuchadnezzar, but not from this wicked and petty man. Still, he does what he is asked. He shows the king far more respect than the king showed him. Daniel has a lot of class.

It's interesting that the writing seems to be standard Hebrew. God wrote the message in the language of Israel. Daniel knew immediately what the writing said and what it meant. Yet he doesn't ask Belshazzar to repent, nor is he troubled by the message. There is a completely different attitude here compared with the time he learned that judgment was coming upon Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel probably knew that it was far too late. Belshazzar wasn't going to repent, and he was out of time.

"18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: 19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down." (Daniel 5)

Daniel starts with a brief history lesson. As always, Daniel

begins by glorifying the Lord and saying that God is in charge of all things and is above all things. It's true that Nebuchadnezzar once ruled the world, but that was only because God put him in charge and gave him that power. Daniel is telling Belshazzar that the God he has been mocking by using His holy instruments to worship idols is, in fact, the God who is in charge over all nations, the God who put Nebuchadnezzar in power, and the God who was above all other gods. Make no mistake; this is a rebuke to the king for the drunken idolatry he has been engaged in that evening. Daniel delivers the messages graciously but he is still clear. This is a great example of speech that is seasoned with salt.

"20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will." (Daniel 5)

Notice how Daniel testifies that this amazing event is something that really happened – and that's because it is a historical fact that that really happened! When Nebuchadnezzar was filled with pride, God took his kingdom away from him and humbled him until he understood that God was in charge. This is another rebuke to Belshazzar: is not he filled with pride as well? Isn't he exalting himself above God, just as Nebuchadnezzar had done?

You can see that Daniel is not "seeker sensitive". He is

gracious about it, but he's still giving a clear and direct message about repentance and the sovereignty of God. He isn't mean about it but this is still a direct rebuke to the king. Daniel had an opportunity to preach to Belshazzar and he took it. He is clear, direct, and concise. Daniel isn't trying to "build bridges" or "dialog"; he is direct and to the point.

"22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;" (Daniel 5)

This is what I was getting at earlier. Belshazzar knew all of these things! He knew what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. He knew about Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (which were later fulfilled), and he knew about Nebuchadnezzar being turned into an animal and back again. Belshazzar knew all of these things. He was a witness, but he disregarded it. That may be why Daniel wasn't troubled about his fate. Here we have a king who knew the power of God and was a witness to His greatness, but instead of repenting he decided to deliberately mock God. He is like a man who has known about the gospel since childhood. He knew the truth but rejected it and decided to commit gross sacrilege instead. The Lord extended mercy to him for years and he refused it, so his blood was on his own hands. In other words, Belshazzar knew better. He knew what he was doing and did it anyway. His fate was sealed. He knew the truth but chose to mock God, so God destroyed him. Belshazzar had his chance to repent; now judgment was coming. The people of that banquet hall knew these things too, but they didn't repent either – so they shared the king's terrible fate.

Daniel gets right to the point, doesn't he? He doesn't mince words. If only all pastors had his boldness in them!

"23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:" (Daniel 5)

Belshazzar knew the truth and deliberately rebelled against God. He knew the truth and yet chose to dishonor the Lord by abusing His holy instruments to worship false gods. He and all those who were with him made that choice even though they knew who God was and what He had done. That was a terrible thing to do, and God killed them for it. God extended mercy to them through the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar, but they rejected it. Since they rejected God's mercy they did not receive mercy.

Daniel condemns the idolatry of the king. He is very clear that the idols the king is worshiping are utterly stupid and useless; they can do nothing and they can save no one. He then tells the king that his very life depends upon God and yet the king has refused to honor God. That is some very bold preaching! Daniel was given an audience with the king and he used it to preach the truth and condemn the idolatry that was all around him. Daniel didn't take this opportunity to build his brand and get into a position of power, which is what many people would have done. Instead he took the path that brought the most glory to God, which is what Daniel always did. Daniel isn't mean or insulting, and he doesn't mock the king, but he does tell the king the truth with great power and boldness. He sets a great example of how to handle these situations.

"24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written." (Daniel 5)

The king didn't ask where the hand come from; he only wanted to know the meaning of the words. But Daniel told him anyway that the hand came from God. Specifically, the hand came from the God who owned the holy vessels they were abusing, the God who put Nebuchadnezzar on the throne, the God who was above all gods and all kings, and the God who had all power. That was the source of the hand: the very God they had spent the evening mocking and blaspheming.

"25 And this is the writing that was written, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." (Daniel 5)

There is more going on here than it seems. The Bible and its prophecies have layers that are not immediately apparent:

"A MENE can mean numbered or mina. Likewise, TEKEL meant weighed or shekel. The last word PERES can mean divided or Persia or a half mina. By using the monetary units, a mina is equal to 50 shekels. Two minas (MENE, MENE) then would equal 100 shekels. A half mina (PERES) would be 25 more shekels. Add in the final shekel (TEKEL) and that makes 126 shekels. According to Ezekiel 45:12, a shekel can also be divided into 20 gerahs. So 126 shekels is equal to 2,520 gerahs." (Daniel Matson, watchfortheday.org)

From 537 BC (when the first captives returned from

Babylon) to 1948 (when Israel became a nation again) is 2520 years. From 518 BC (when the Jews began rebuilding the temple) to 1967 AD (when Israel captured the rest of Jerusalem and the temple mount) is 2520 years. (Note that these are years of 360 days, which seems to be the length of years that the Bible uses for prophetic purposes.) I don't think that is a coincidence!

From the time of the first Babylonian captivity in 606 BC to the start of WWI was 2520 solar years. From the time the temple was destroyed in 587 BC to the time Hitler came to power in 1933 was 2520 solar years. Once again I don't think this is a coincidence. I think these are signs that the kingdoms of this world are about to be brought to an end and replaced by the kingdom of God – just as God told Nebuchadnezzar so long ago.

"26 This is the interpretation of the thing: Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." (Daniel 5)

I think we can take all of this on two levels. First, it's true that God did put an end to Belshazzar's kingdom. That very night he was going to be killed and lose both his kingdom and his life. But we also know that God has numbered the days of the kingdoms of this world, and has finished them as well. We don't know the day or hour when the final blow will fall, but we do know that it's coming. The world's days are numbered, and when those days are over the kingdoms of this world will be destroyed and replaced by a better and more glorious kingdom that will never be destroyed.

Remember, mene is repeated twice. That emphasized the fact that the end was near! The kingdom is over and the fulfillment is at hand.

"27 Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." (Daniel 5)

The wicked king Belshazzar was weighed by God and found wanting. He knew the truth and rejected it and chose to blaspheme God – so God killed him. Likewise, the kingdoms of this world have also been weighed and found wanting. God has judged them and found to be wicked, so God is going to destroy them.

"28 Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5)

Belshazzar's kingdom was given to the Medes and Persians. They were going to conquer Babylon that very night and reign over it, thus ending the golden part of the statue and moving on to the silver part (the torso, which has two arms – perhaps a reference to the Medes group and the Persian group?). The kingdoms of this world will one day be taken over as well, but instead of being given to the Persians they will be taken over by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will reign over the world forever. (You could make an argument that since the resurrected saints will reign with Christ the kingdoms will be divided among the Jews and Gentiles, but I'm not sure how far to go with that.)

Daniel told the king a message that he probably didn't want to hear: he had rebelled against God, God had found him wanting, and God was going to end his kingdom and turn it over to his enemies, who were currently outside the city trying to conquer it.

"29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they

clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5)

This was an idiotic thing to do. It would have made far more sense if the king had repented or cried out for mercy. Clothing Daniel in scarlet and going back to their drunken party wasn't a good move on their part! Were they mocking Daniel? They definitely weren't taking his message seriously.

"30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." (Daniel 5)

Belshazzar only had a few hours left to live. He was warned in advance of what was coming, but he chose to do nothing. Nebuchadnezzar repented but Belshazzar did not. He blasphemed the Lord, even though he knew about the Lord's power and might, and that very night God killed him for it. The writing on the wall came true just a few hours after God wrote it. Belshazzar didn't have decades, or years, or even months; he only had hours left – and he used them poorly.

Notice that even here God offered mercy to the king! The Lord could have wrote nothing and just had Belshazzar killed that night, but instead God sent a hand to write a message of judgment on a wall – a message that came while there was still time to do something about it.

Belshazzar was killed in 539 BC. At that time Daniel had been in Babylon for 67 years.

"31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old."

(Daniel 5)

Darius became ruler when he was 62. That's pretty old, especially for the ancient world. God said He would give Babylon over to the Medes and Persians, and a few hours later God did exactly that. There is now a Mede in charge.

8/5/2018, 8/16/2019

Daniel 6

"1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage." (Daniel 6)

Daniel was second in command under Nebuchadnezzar, and years later he was second in command under Darius. This is a tremendous testimony to his character and ability! By this point in his life he would have been an old man. It's quite possible that the Medes found out Daniel had predicted their conquest of Babylon and were pleased by this. (I'm sure the writing was still on the palace wall when the Medes took over, and that would have led to some interesting questions and answers.) What we do know is that Daniel is once again in a position of power – and the reason he's there is because God wanted him to be there.

Daniel had a lifelong career of public service. He was apparently very good at his job. In fact, his character and reputation were said to be beyond question. No one could find fault in him – not even his enemies! (We could use more public servants like that, couldn't we?)

"3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." (Daniel 6)

Daniel was in a class by himself. His exemplary character made him the favorite of Darius (who wanted to find good people to work for him). It also made the corrupt officials of the kingdom hate him. It should be our goal to have this same sort of character and spirit. What a testimony that would be!

"4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." (Daniel 6)

Can you imagine having this kind of testimony? Daniel was so faithful that no one could find any fault in him or anything to complain about! These corrupt officials were upset because they wanted to get rid of him but there was no argument they could make. Even Daniel's enemies agreed that he was faithful and uncorruptible. Daniel was extraordinary, wasn't he?

This is the sort of person we should be striving to become, and this is the kind of reputation we should seek.

"5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (Daniel 6)

The wicked officials decided to adopt the same strategy

that's been used against the righteous so many times in the past few thousand years. In order to get rid of the honest and upright person who was standing in the way of all their corruption and wickedness, they decided to make his religion illegal. Once it was illegal they could kill him and then be as corrupt as they wanted.

Notice that none of the corrupt officials were the least bit convicted by Daniel's upright behavior. No one looked at Daniel and thought "He is such an inspiration! I should try to be more like him." No, they looked at him and hated him because the darkness hates the light. Their only thought was how to kill him so they could engage in all the wickedness they wanted. When the darkness comes after us we shouldn't be surprised; that's what darkness has always done.

"6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." (Daniel 6)

All of these people are lying. It was *not* true that all of the presidents agreed to this. If the king had been told that Daniel was against it he probably wouldn't have done it – which is why they lied. These princes went in without Daniel's knowledge and told this lie in order to get the legislation passed, so they could get Daniel killed and then take his place. (Yes, politicians use lies to get legislation passed. They also pass laws that benefit themselves while hurting others – and they do it on purpose.

This has been going on for a long time.)

I'm not surprised the king would agree to this. The law essentially said that the king was greater than all gods. This is exactly what Nebuchadnezzar tried to prove by making people bow down to his golden idol – and the Lord used the three Hebrew men to rebuke him. God proved to Nebuchadnezzar that the king was *not* above the Lord, and He is going to do the same thing here.

What we have to realize is that people do things like this all the time. It's extremely common for people within the church to believe that they are more powerful than God Himself. Just look at the way they reject the Word and claim that God is wrong. Look at how they accuse God of gross error and say that they know better than what God wrote in the Scriptures. Anytime people look at the Bible and decide that it doesn't apply to them, they are exalting themselves above God. Anytime people decide to do their own will instead of the will of God, they are exalting themselves above the Lord.

"8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." (Daniel 6)

This is why Daniel didn't try to negotiate or find an alternate path. Once the law was passed it could not be repealed. He knew there was nothing that could be done, so he didn't try to do anything.

"9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree." (Daniel 6)

The king didn't do any research. He did not consult with Daniel. In fact, he didn't even ask why Daniel wasn't a part of the group that came before him to propose this law. He didn't ask for a few days to think about it. Instead he agreed to it immediately because it appealed to his pride. He was very comfortable with a law that said he was greater than all gods. He liked that idea – just as so many people like that same idea today. When you see people sit in judgment on God and His Word, you are seeing people who think they are greater than God.

"10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." (Daniel 6)

Daniel knew that the law could not be changed. Daniel also knew that he was in a position of power in Babylon, which meant he couldn't just run. He had a habit of praying three times a day and he was not going to change. If he stopped his public prayer until the law ended he would be bowing down to the idea that Darius was above all gods. The action that would bring the most honor to God would be to continue to do what he had always done – to take a stand.

Notice that Daniel wasn't pragmatic at all. He didn't argue that it would be better for everyone if he just stopped praying for a few days because the Jews needed a powerful friend in the government. Daniel didn't try to figure out all the angles and make a strategic compromise! No, to him it was very simple issue: he was not going to change the way he served the Lord.

Did you notice that Daniel's prayer was one of thanksgiving? Daniel's life is on the line here, and yet he calmly

prays in public (which is now illegal) in order to *give thanks to God*. That is a very strong testimony! Daniel was given an opportunity to take a stand and he took it. He chose to honor God in the face of opposition even though his life was on the line. When 2 Chronicles 16:9 says that God is looking for those who put their faith in Him so that He might show Himself to be strong, this is the sort of moment God is looking for.

Daniel's habit of prayer didn't start the day the law was passed. This was something he had always been doing. He didn't go out and deliberately violate the law just to cause a scene. The city was watching to see if Daniel would continue to serve his God once it was made illegal to do so, and Daniel didn't waver. He stood firm even though it was pretty clear that he was going to be executed. Daniel was an old man, after all. He knew he was going to be thrown into the den of lions, but he prayed anyway.

Daniel did the right thing. In our day people come up with all sorts of excuses to explain why they're not going to do the right thing and instead are going to compromise and do the wrong thing. We really need more men like Daniel.

"11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." (Daniel 6)

These men were very clever: they found a way to use Daniel's faithfulness against him. It's very easy for the wicked to do this – and normally it works very well. Most of the time the wicked get what they want and are able to slaughter the righteous with impunity (although the wicked will answer for it on the day of Judgment, and will be burned alive for all of eternity in the lake of fire). Normally the wicked win, but this time God had another plan.

"12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day." (Daniel 6)

This is probably when the king realized what was really going on: these men were using the law to assassinate someone they didn't like.

Notice how these men insult Daniel by referring to him as one of the captive Jews. They couldn't stand to refer to him using his actual job title! They had to find a way to be as insulting and crude as possible. The wicked hate the righteous and will never show them any respect. They will go out of their way to be as hateful as possible – such as in John 8:41 when the Pharisees referred to Jesus as the product of adultery (which He most definitely was not). It's just one more thing they will have to answer for when they stand before God and are eternally condemned to the lake of fire.

"14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him." (Daniel 6)

Do you see how the verse says the king was displeased with *himself*? Darius clearly wanted to save the only official he had that wasn't completely corrupt and wicked, but there was no way to do it. I'm not sure why he even tried in the first place. There was nothing that could be done.

"15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed." (Daniel 6)

These men were not the least bit sorry. They wanted to have Daniel executed and they were going to make sure he was thrown in the lion's den. Normally their plan would have worked and they would have gotten their way. God has put the justice system into the hands of men and commanded the government to protect the righteousness and prosecute the wicked. However, when people decide not to do that and instead protect the wicked and kill the righteous, God rarely intervenes. Usually God waits until after death to punish the wicked for all the evil they have done. However, in this case God did something different.

In the book of Esther we saw another case where a law passed against the Jews could not be revoked. Instead another law was passed which said the Jews could defend themselves, so one law canceled out the other. It seems that no loophole could be found this time.

This passage doesn't say that Daniel tried to find a way to save himself. That was something the king did. Daniel took his stand and let it rest. He didn't go around in panic and fear (which is remarkable).

"16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." (Daniel 6)

The king was hoping that Daniel's God would somehow save him from the den of lions. In spite of what the king said, I think it was more of a faint hope than an actual statement of faith. The king really wanted to see Daniel saved. Perhaps that's why Daniel was saved: it gave God a chance to glorify Himself.

So why does God so rarely deliver His people the way He saved Daniel? Well, think about the disciples. They were eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ, and they chose death rather than recant their testimony and admit it was all a lie. The fact that all of them were willing to die over their testimony of Jesus is extremely powerful evidence that what they were saying was true! They could have saved their lives if they had just recanted, but none of them did that. They were all willing to die instead. That is the evidence on which the church is built, and it is a great blessing to have it. Not only do we have eyewitness accounts, but the eyewitnesses chose *death* over confessing that it was all a lie. They were clearly telling the truth and so we can have confidence in what they said. Their death adds credibility to their testimony. Likewise, throughout history God has used the testimony of the martyrs to bring many to salvation. It is often the case that their death, instead of their miraculous escape, will bring more glory to God. But in a few cases God is more glorified when the person is rescued. It just depends on the situation.

Notice how Daniel had a reputation for continually serving God. Everyone knew it, from Daniel's friends to his enemies. Do we have that sort of reputation?

"17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel." (Daniel 6)

Daniel was definitely thrown into the den of lions. The stone was sealed in order to prove that no one moved the stone and tried to release him during the night. This actually gave even more glory to God, because it established beyond doubt that the Lord was the one who saved Daniel.

If you think about it, the same thing happened with Jesus. The Pharisees thought they were being clever when they used a giant stone to seal the tomb and then set a guard outside to guard it, but what they really did was provide beyond a doubt that the resurrection of Christ really happened. The twelve disciples were physically incapable of moving a stone that large, and the presence of the guards meant that no one slipped in during the night and stole the body. If Jesus had been buried in a field where no one was watching, then people could plausibly claim that the disciples dug up His body at night. But a sealed tomb with armed guards was a completely different situation.

"18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him." (Daniel 6)

The king was deeply distressed! He was really hoping that Daniel would somehow survive. It seems that Daniel had made quite an impression on him.

"19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions." (Daniel 6)

The king didn't sleep at all and spent the night fasting. He raced to the den as soon as he could in hopes of finding Daniel alive. Daniel really must have had a big impact on the king.

"20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (Daniel 6)

The king saw this as a test of the saving power of Daniel's God. Was God powerful enough to save Daniel from the den of lions? The king wasn't sure what kind of powers the Lord had. Perhaps that's why God saved Daniel: it showed Darius His power and might, and that brought glory to God. If Daniel had died then king would have thought God wasn't as powerful as the lions.

It's interesting that Darius calls Daniel's God the living God.

"21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." (Daniel 6)

Daniel immediately gave God all of the credit, which is

what Daniel always did throughout his life. Since Daniel was innocent, God saved him and used this event to bring glory to His name.

It's interesting that God didn't silence the lions Himself (which He surely could have done, using His divine power). Instead He sent an angel to do it. I wonder if this was the Angel of the Lord, which would have been a preincarnate appearance of Christ. There's no way to know. Since Daniel met other heavenly beings that really were angels, it could have gone either way.

The book of Daniel strongly testifies to the greatness of God! The Lord was greater than the fiery furnace and the den of lions. He was greater than scheming presidents and princes. He was greater than Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and Darius. God's greatness comes through loud and clear!

"23 Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." (Daniel 6)

Yes, the king had Daniel taken up out of the den. The law said that he should be thrown in, so he was thrown in. Since the night was now over Daniel was released. Daniel was completely unharmed – just like the three Hebrew men were unharmed after being cast into the fiery furnace. But don't miss the last part of this verse! Daniel was saved *by his faith*. He had faith in God, and so God saved him.

Now, that doesn't mean he expected God to save him. Earlier in this book we saw the testimony of the three Hebrew men: they didn't know if God would save them or not, but either way they were going to do what was right and would not bow

down to the king's idol. Daniel had that same kind of faith: he was going to serve the Lord no matter what the law said.

"24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." (Daniel 6)

A few things to keep in mind. First of all, the Mosaic Law prohibited punishing family members for the sins of the father (Deuteronomy 24:16). If the father sinned then he alone was punished; none of his children were to be touched. Each person was only condemned for their own sins, not for the sins of others! That means what Darius did was not in accordance with the Mosaic Law.

History tells us that in ancient times it was common for kings to punish entire families for the sins of one family member. The Medes and Persians were especially legendary for doing this. It wasn't the right thing to do, but it's what they did. The king must have been enraged at them because of their transparent attempt to get Daniel killed. This was typical of that era (which doesn't make it right).

The corrupt presidents and counselors tried to use Daniel's faithfulness against him in order to get him killed. Because God intervened, they were the ones who were cast into the den of lions and killed. Now, even if they had succeeded they were still going to have to stand before God on the day of judgment, where they would be condemned and cast into the lake of fire. No matter how this turned out they were going to pay a terrible price for what they did. (In fact, they are still paying

the price to this very day, and they will continue to pay for it for all of eternity. Wickedness and sin *is not worth it.*)

When Daniel was cast into the den, no lions hurt him. However, when these other people were cast into the den just a few hours later the lions immediately ripped them apart. That also gives God glory because it shows that the lions would definitely have eaten Daniel if it hadn't been for God's divine intervention.

"25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." (Daniel 6)

I don't know if this is a statement of faith or not. The book of Daniel is clear that Nebuchadnezzar changed. He had an amazing testimony that he shared with his entire empire. This is very similar, isn't it? In both cases the message is the same: Darius came to realize that the God of Daniel was a God of tremendous power who reigned over the nations, and whose kingdom would be established forever and never end. The king understood that God was the one who rescued Daniel from the den of lions, and he knew that was a reflection of God's divine power.

Nebuchadnezzar and Darius both understood the greatness and power of God. They understood that God ruled

over the nations, and no idol could match His saving power. Both of these kings understood that God's kingdom would one day rule over all the world and would never be destroyed. If you stop and think about it, these kings had a better grasp of end-times theology than most people have today! How many people within the church understand that one day Jesus will literally rule over the nations from Jerusalem? Almost no one believes that – but Darius and Nebuchadnezzar understood what God was going to do.

"28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."
(Daniel 6)

I think these are two different people. Darius was a Mede, after all.

8/5/2018, 8/10/2019, 7/25/2022, 7/27/2022

Daniel 7

"1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters." (Daniel 7)

This vision was given to Daniel in the 1st year of Belshazzar's reign. That happened in 553 BC. At this point Daniel had been in Babylon for 53 years.

The first part of the book of Daniel is story. That's the part that gets taught in Sunday School classes. The second part of the book is composed of visions, which are usually ignored and rarely get mentioned outside of prophetic circles. I suspect the reason

this part of the book doesn't get discussed is because these visions are not easy to understand. (Even Daniel struggled to understand them!) If you look up these chapters in other commentaries you will find out that there is very little agreement about what this all means. However, we are going to dive into the text and make the best of it!

The first vision was given during the reign of Belshazzar. It was not just Nebuchadnezzar who had visions; Daniel had them as well. But Daniel's visions were far more detailed, and far more confusing as well.

"2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." (Daniel 7)

In the Bible the great sea is usually symbolic of the Gentile nations. One thing to think about is that Daniel 7 has a lot of similarities with Revelation 13. It's really fascinating! In Daniel 7 the four winds strive upon the sea; in Revelation 13 the beast rises out of the sea. Daniel 7 mentions a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a terrible animal; Revelation 13 mentions a beast with the characteristics of a lion, a bear, and a leopard. If you take a look at those two chapters you'll see what I mean. I don't think these similarities are a coincidence, but these chapters are not talking about the same thing. Revelation 13 is talking about the time of the tribulation. The beast that arises during the end-times has the same characteristics of the four beasts that Daniel is talking about in this chapter.

"3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the

wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it." (Daniel 7)

There is pretty universal agreement that this is Babylon. The Bible refers to Babylon as both a lion (Jeremiah 4:7, 49:19-22, 50:17, 50:44) and an eagle (Jeremiah 49:22, Lamentations 4:19, Ezekiel 17:3, Habakkuk 1:8), so it fits pretty well. As we saw in Daniel 4 there was a time when Nebuchadnezzar was turned into an animal (which would have removed his ability to conquer other nations), and yet one day he was turned back into a man and given a new heart. So this is a good fit for ancient Babylon.

The reign of the lion came to an end in 539 BC when the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon. That happened 14 years after Daniel received this prophecy.

"5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." (Daniel 7)

After Babylon came the Medes and the Persians. Remember, this vision was given in the first year of Belshazzar. That means that when the hand wrote those famous words on the wall, Daniel already had some idea about what would come after Babylon. He might not have known exactly when it would happen, but when he interpreted the writing on the wall he had already seen this vision.

What does it mean when it says that the bear was raised up on one side? Well, in this kingdom the Persians were stronger than the Medes. The bear had three ribs in its mouth, which

represents the fact that the Medes and Persians conquered Lydia, Egypt, and Babylon.

For the record, the Medes conquered Lydia in 547 BC. That was 6 years after Daniel received this prophecy. Babylon was conquered in 539 BC. Egypt was conquered in 525 BC, 28 years after Daniel was given this prophecy.

"6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it." (Daniel 7)

The leopard is a fast animal, and if it is given four wings then it's even faster. After the Medes and Persians came Alexander the Great, who finished conquering the world in 330 BC (when he was just 29 years old). He had great speed and he had four generals. After Alexander died in 323 BC his kingdom was split into four kingdoms, each ruled by one of his generals. So we're on track so far.

Alexander the Great finished conquering the Persian Empire 223 years after Daniel was given this vision.

"7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and

a mouth speaking great things. 9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." (Daniel 7)

There are a lot of different interpretations of these verses. The majority teach that this last beast is Rome, but I think it's more complicated than that. If you go back to Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 2 there were four kingdoms in the statue (just like the four kingdoms in this chapter), but the last kingdom is destroyed by God and replaced with a kingdom that never ends. That means whatever the last kingdom is, it has to be the one that's in place when Jesus returns and destroys it and establishes His Millennial Kingdom. Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 both say that the last kingdom is destroyed by the Ancient of Days, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two ways to look at this. One argument is that Rome was never really destroyed, and Western Civilization (which is the dominant force in the world and has been for a long time) is an extension of Rome. When the antichrist arises he is just continuing on in the path of Rome, so it's really all one kingdom. The other argument is that there's a gap. The book of Daniel definitely has prophetic gaps: later on we will see that there is no mention of a 2000 year "church age" between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel. In the prophecy of Tyrus we saw that there was very little hint that Nebuchadnezzar would conquer part of Tyrus and Alexander the Great would finish it. Sometimes the Bible has gaps. Perhaps there's a gap between the kingdom of Alexander and the kingdom of the antichrist. Perhaps the Old Testament deliberately left out all mention of the Church Age, and looked at history from a vantage point that ignored that entire dispensation.

In any case, what we see in verse 7 is a very close parallel to the beast in Revelation. This is not an accident; I believe they are one and the same. The little horn is definitely the antichrist. Daniel and Revelation go hand in hand. Verse 9 makes this very clear because the little horn is destroyed by the Ancient of Days, who establishes a kingdom that never ends. Notice that the description of the Ancient of Days in verse 9 is the same as the description of the risen Lord in Revelation 1. I believe it's the same person.

Do you see the mention of "his wheels as burning fire"? I think that might be a reference to Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God. Perhaps Daniel saw it as well.

For what it's worth the Romans finished their conquest of the Greek Empire in 146 BC, 407 years after Daniel was given this vision.

"10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." (Daniel 7)

This is a vision of the throne room of God. Judgment was set and books were opened, which sounds like the last day of judgment that is spoken of in Revelation 20. Once again we see that what we find in the New Testament was first mentioned in the Old Testament.

"11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." (Daniel 7)

This is exactly what we find in Revelation 19. Jesus Christ will return and destroy the antichrist and the false prophet. They will indeed be cast into the lake of fire. What we find in Revelation was mentioned first in the Old Testament. Revelation is just putting the events in order and adding more detail and context. This makes it even more clear that the last beast is the kingdom of the antichrist, and the little horn is the antichrist himself. It is not ancient Rome; it is something that's still to come.

"12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." (Daniel 7)

Is this a reference to the fact that Satan was cast into the bottomless pit, but would be released one day for one final conflict before the day of judgment? (See Revelation 20.) I'm not sure. Given the timeline presented in this chapter, that may be the most likely conclusion.

"13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7)

This passage is a little difficult to understand because it seems to say that the Son of man and the Ancient of Days are different beings – and yet the description of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 matches the description of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1. If the Son of man is distinct from the Ancient of Days, then that would mean the Son of man is Jesus and the Ancient of Days is the Father. Or perhaps, since they are both God, they both share that same title. God the Father is never really given a physical description in the Bible; after all, He is not a flesh-and-blood man and was never incarnated. It's a little confusing.

But you can still see the very clear parallels between Daniel and Revelation. Revelation says the Son of man would return with the clouds of Heaven (which is a reference to His return at the end of the tribulation to destroy the antichrist) and that's what we see here. God the Father will give all nations to His Son, who will establish an everlasting kingdom that will never be destroyed. Revelation and Daniel both teach that message. The prophets talked about this kingdom quite a bit; it was not a new idea that Revelation introduced out of nowhere.

This passage in Daniel looking forward to the moment when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God, and He will reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:15). That moment is coming and we will live to see it. This is talking about the Millennium. At the end of the tribulation Jesus will conquer the antichrist and establish His kingdom in this world, which will continue throughout the Millennium and then on throughout all the rest of eternity.

"15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me." (Daniel 7)

There are many people today who talk about having

visions. However, the truth is that their visions did not come from God because He does not do that sort of thing anymore. You cannot have an all-sufficient Bible and visions at the same time! (For more information on this topic see Appendix F, "God Is Not Giving You New Revelation".) What I want to point out is the huge impact that this vision has. When Nebuchadnezzar had a vision from God he was greatly troubled. When Daniel had this vision from God he was greatly troubled. He was grieved in his spirit even though this vision wasn't evil! That is the impact that a real vision from God has. When people today claim to have had visions from God they act like they're watching a TV show or something. It's obvious they didn't have a real vision because it had very little emotional impact on them. This verse tells us what it's like to have a real vision, and it's not a pleasant thing.

"16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things." (Daniel 7)

This means there were multiple angels standing around and Daniel picked one of them. I wonder how many angels Daniel saw on a day-to-day basis. Were angels standing around him all the time, or was this a part of the vision? It sounds like the vision was one thing and Daniel talked to angels after the vision was over. If so, that's a little strange.

Still, notice that Daniel couldn't understand the vision until an angel explained its meaning to him. Today people who claim to have visions understand them immediately without any interpretive help at all. Are they wiser than Daniel? I don't think so.

"17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." (Daniel 7)

We've already discussed this so I won't repeat it here. We've identified who the four kings are. I do think the last king is the antichrist. Notice what it says in verse 18: the saints of God will inherit the world and possess it forever. The saints of God may be persecuted and hated now; they may be rounded up and killed and their lives may be difficult. But in the end the meek will inherit the world just as Jesus promised (see Matthew 5). During the Millennium the righteous will delight themselves with the abundance of peace (Psalm 37:11). Jesus will reign over all the world (Psalm 2:8-12), and He will share His throne with the saints (Revelation 2:26-27). That is a promise we need to hold onto! This is not some vague, spiritual promise; it is meant to be taken literally. We will be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:51-54)! We will indeed return to this world with Jesus at the end of the tribulation. We will live *here*, on this planet, during the Millennium and we will literally reign with Christ over the nations. We will continue to live in this very physical and real world until the day of Judgment, when Jesus will destroy the old world and create a new physical world that will never see death or pain. We will spend all of eternity living in that new, physical world in the literal and physical kingdom of God, where we will serve the Lord and glorify Him forever. That's what is going to happen, and it will be glorious!

"19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron,

and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;" (Daniel 7)

There is only one time in all of history when someone will make war with the saints and will overcome them, and that is during the reign of the antichrist (Revelation 13:7). Remember, in this age the world can make war with the church but it cannot overcome us (Matthew 16:18). But during the tribulation (and only during the tribulation) the antichrist will not only make war with the saints, but will be given the ability to overcome them. That clearly identifies the fourth beast of Daniel, and the fourth kingdom, as the kingdom of the antichrist.

"22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." (Daniel 7)

The fourth beast is not defeated until the Ancient of Days comes and defeats him. That is more evidence that we are talking about the tribulation, the antichrist, and the Millennium. Notice that the person who comes and defeats the antichrist is called the Ancient of Days. Revelation 19 tells us that Jesus is the one who comes and defeats the antichrist. That makes me think that both the Father and the Son are called the Ancient of Days.

The judgment that's given here is not the final judgment, but is most likely the sheep and goat judgment that takes place

at the beginning of the Millennium. In that judgment the wicked are killed and the righteous go on to live in the kingdom. The saints who were murdered during the tribulation are raised from the dead so they can live and reign with Christ throughout the Millennium. There is a final judgment after the Millennium is over, but given the timeline of this chapter I think verse 20 is referring to something else.

"23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." (Daniel 7)

The fourth kingdom is distinct from the others. That could mean there's a prophetic gap between the third kingdom and this last kingdom. It seems that the fourth kingdom will conquer the whole world before the antichrist rises to power and seizes control over it.

"24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings." (Daniel 7)

This is the rise of the antichrist. When he rises to power the fourth kingdom is already in place. He doesn't create it; instead he conquers it and rules over it. This kingdom is apparently ruled over by ten kings, and the antichrist seizes power by defeating three of those kings. (It's quite possible that the rise of this kingdom and its ten kings happens after the rapture but before the tribulation.)

"25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." (Daniel 7)

The tribulation will last for 7 years; it is the 70th week of Daniel. The antichrist will spend the first half of the tribulation conquering the world to gain power, and will spend the second half of the tribulation reigning over the world and persecuting the saints. Christians will be persecuted during the first half of the tribulation, but the second half is when the antichrist will gain absolute mastery over the world and institute both the mark of the beast and the image of the beast. That is when things will get *really* bad. That is when the saints will be overcome, which does *not* mean they will lose their salvation but does mean they will be suffer martyrdom on a scale the world has never seen before. The antichrist will round them up and kill them by the millions, and very few will survive.

I'm not sure what it means when it says that the antichrist will think to change times and laws. I suppose people will find out once it's fulfilled. I'm very grateful that the church will be raptured out of this world before that happens and will not have to endure that terrible time!

"26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." (Daniel 7)

This goes back to that writing on the wall. It wasn't just the kingdom of Belshazzar that was going to be destroyed after it

was judged! The kingdom of the antichrist will be judged as well, and it will also be destroyed. God will take away His dominion and give it to His Son Jesus Christ, who will reign forever and ever.

"27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Daniel 7)

This is one of the themes of the book of Daniel: God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. When His kingdom finally comes at the end of the tribulation it will destroy all of the kingdoms of this world and take their place. That means it will not reign *beside* them or *over* them, but rather literally *in place of them*. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom that will *never* be destroyed! Moreover, the saints of God will reign with Jesus over the world *forever*, and *all* kingdoms and nations and people will serve and obey the Lord *for all of eternity*. That is one of the core messages of Daniel! Nebuchadnezzar understood it and Darius understood it.

It's a great pity that so few in the church today understand these amazing promises. They think God's kingdom is a vague spiritual thing, and not a literal kingdom that literally reigns over the world. Some people try to claim that the church is reigning over the world today, but that's simply not true. Revelation 20 is quite clear that the saints will literally be *raised from the dead* in order to reign with Christ in His kingdom. The resurrection has not happened yet, so this must be looking forward to a future event! Today the church is persecuted and killed, but one day we will reign with Christ. That day has not yet

come, but it's coming.

It's quite a challenge to read through the Old Testament and miss the coming literal kingdom of God. The only way to miss it is to do great violence to a lot of very clear passages. These verses are not allegory! They are very clear and mean exactly what they seem to mean. Remember, prophecy is always fulfilled literally.

"28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart." (Daniel 7)

This is what happens when you have a real vision: it troubles you. This is not because the vision was evil; as you can see, it has a happy ending. But the experience of having a vision is overwhelming and greatly troubling. That is why Nebuchadnezzar was so desperate to know what it meant: it's that sort of experience. It's not something that causes mild interest! Nebuchadnezzar was willing to kill all of his counselors if they couldn't help him, which should tell us something about the impact his vision had on him. Daniel was greatly troubled about it even after he was told what it meant! He was not the same person afterward.

8/6/2018, 8/10/2019, 7/25/2022, 7/27/2022

Daniel 8

"1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first." (Daniel 8)

Daniel received this vision in the 3rd year of Belshazzar's reign. That means it happened in 551 BC. Daniel had been in Babylon for 55 years at this point.

This vision also happened during the reign of Belshazzar. That means when the writing appeared on the wall, Daniel actually had already had two different visions about the coming kingdoms and the end of days! That puts the writing in more context.

Daniel doesn't seem to have told anyone about these visions. In the last chapter we are told that he "kept the matter in my heart". He may have done this because Belshazzar already knew the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar. He heard the truth and blatantly and openly rejected it, so there was nothing more to say. Daniel was not going to cast his pearls before swine.

"2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai." (Daniel 8)

Daniel was not in charge during the reign of Belshazzar. (At the end of this chapter we are told he went about the king's business, which is probably why he was at the palace, but his position doesn't seem to have been an important one.) This was probably a period in Daniel's life where he was simply waiting patiently – just living his life without knowing what God was going to do with him next. He couldn't know that Darius would soon gain control over Babylon and put him in charge. All Daniel would have known was that he wasn't doing much of anything. His glory days of influence appeared to be over and nothing hopeful was on the horizon. But the truth is we never know what God is doing or what might be coming next.

"3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great." (Daniel 8)

All of Daniel's visions are different versions of the vision that was given to Nebuchadnezzar, but Daniel's visions have additional detail. This vision starts with a ram with two horns – the Medes and Persians. One was higher than the other, which reflects the fact that the Persians were stronger than the Medes. This kingdom was going to conquer land that was to the west, north, and south, which is exactly what it did: it went as far west as the Aegean Sea, as far south as Egypt, and as far north as Armenia.

Don't miss the fact that God knew all of this in advance. In fact, God didn't just *know* it; God was the one who made it happen! These events would not have taken place were it not for the will of God. The Lord is the one who governs the rise and fall of nations. The Medes and Persians gained power over the world because God wanted them to do so.

The Medes and Persians began pushing "west, north, and south" in 547 BC.

"5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat

had a notable horn between his eyes. 6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. 8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven." (Daniel 8)

This is Greece and Alexander the Great. He was the one who destroyed the Medes and Persians and who conquered the world in 330 BC (221 years after Daniel was given this vision). No one could defeat him! He moved with incredible speed. However, at the peak of his power (and at a young age) he suddenly died, and his kingdom was divided among his four generals. That took place in 323 BC.

Once again, the reason this happened is because God wanted it to happen. This was all God's doing. Just as God gave the world over to the Medes and the Persians, so God gave the world over to Alexander as well.

"9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." (Daniel 8)

Most commentators teach that the little horn is Antiochus

Epiphanes. However, I don't think that interpretation fits the text very well. First of all, verse 7 says that this ruler started out very small and then greatly expanded his territory. Antiochus, however, started out as one of the principle rulers of his day, and he didn't extend his territory very much through conquest. Verse 11 tells us that this person destroyed the temple and did great physical damage to it, but Antiochus didn't do that. Verse 14 tells us that the temple was desolate for 2300 days, but that doesn't fit what Antiochus did. Finally, Gabriel says that this vision will be fulfilled in the end times, and Antiochus is very much a historical character. If all that isn't enough, there's also the fact that Jesus said the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of was a future event – which means Daniel couldn't possibly have been talking about Antiochus (Matthew 24:15).

I think the little horn is the antichrist. We are dealing with a prophetic gap, which is common in prophecies. We are told that the little horn came out of one of the four areas that were ruled by Alexander's generals. We aren't told in this particular passage what area he came from or when this will happen. But as we will see in the next few verses, the identity of this person becomes pretty clear. This isn't talking about the Rome of ancient times; this is looking forward to the end.

"10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them." (Daniel 8)

We find this same teaching in Revelation 12 as well. After the rapture takes place the devil will launch his war against Heaven, and a third of the angels will join him in rebellion against God. They will lose the battle and be cast out of Heaven down to the Earth. The war in Heaven hasn't happened yet, but it is going

to happen in the future. Ancient Rome never did anything like this, but it will be the opening move of the demonic powers that are behind the antichrist.

"11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down." (Daniel 8)

Some people teach that this was fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes, but Jesus Himself said that these events were still to be fulfilled in the future (Matthew 24:15). This is something the antichrist will do at the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation. The Jews are going to rebuild the temple (most likely after the rapture), and when they do this the antichrist will enter into the temple and proclaim himself to be God. He will stop the daily sacrifices and command that all men worship him instead. That will start the second half of the tribulation, which will be much worse than the first half.

"12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered." (Daniel 8)

The book of Revelation tells us that the antichrist and the false prophet are going to start a new world religion. They are going to do their best to stamp out the truth, and will make war against the saints and will overcome them and kill them. The antichrist will prosper greatly and do all sorts of wicked things. He will have an enormous army and great power and might, but in the end Jesus will return and kill him.

"13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." (Daniel 8)

Apparently the antichrist will have control over the temple for 2,300 days. Then his control over it will be broken and his reign will be put to an end. I think that means when these things begin you can count down the days until the end arrives. There is an exact day count in play here! Before any of this happens, God is already in control of it. The antichrist cannot extend his control one day beyond the limit God has set.

Once the antichrist has been defeated the Lord will also destroy the image of the beast that he has placed within it. The temple will then be replaced with the Millennial temple that we find described at the end of the book of Ezekiel, which is a completely different building from the third temple.

"15 And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." (Daniel 8)

This is the angel Gabriel, who seems to be the same angel

that appeared to Mary. There are very few named angels in the Bible; Gabriel is one of them, and Michael is the other. (It's likely that all angels have names, but we usually aren't told what they are.) I'm assuming that Gabriel is the name of the angel and not his title (like "Pharaoh").

Once again it seems that Daniel had a vision, and then outside the vision an angel came to him and explained what was going on. Ezekiel had his vision of God's throne by a river, and Daniel had this vision by a river as well. (I don't know if that's significant or not. It's just interesting.)

Daniel is the one who understands secrets and dark sentences, but notice that even he can't understand any of these visions from God until the Lord provides the interpretation! That should tell us something.

"17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision." (Daniel 8)

Angels are terrifying! The Bible is very consistent about this: when people see angels they are *terrified*. Mary was troubled (Luke 1:26-30) and Daniel was troubled as well. These angels didn't come to these people in order to scare them, but their appearance instilled great fear to the people they were talking to. This tells me that the way our culture depicts angels is completely wrong. (Angels are also always depicted as *men*, but that is another topic.)

Notice how the angel clearly says that what Daniel is seeing are end-times events. This is more evidence that rules out Rome as the final beast, and points us to the time of the seven-year tribulation.

"18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright." (Daniel 8)

It looks like the angel's appearance was so overwhelming that Daniel collapsed and had to be revived! That is what it is *really* like to see an angel. (It's probably a blessing that we can't usually see them. Remember, when people saw angels in the Bible they were terrified. Think about that the next time someone tries to tell you that they saw an angel.)

"19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be." (Daniel 8)

I'm guessing that the indignation is the rise of the antichrist and the terrible things he's going to do. Notice that the end times are "appointed". They will happen when God wants them to happen! God has their appointed beginning and their appointed end. They are a part of God's plan, not a departure from it.

"20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." (Daniel 8)

This is how we know what's going on in this chapter: the angel tells us! That simplifies things.

"21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." (Daniel 8)

The king of Greece is Alexander the Great.

"22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." (Daniel 8)

Once Alexander died his territory was divided into four kingdoms, which were governed by his four generals.

"23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up." (Daniel 8)

I suppose you could make the argument that Alexander's kingdom laid the foundation for Western Civilization, which continues today and still holds control over the world. But the point is that the next kingdom doesn't follow directly after the time of Alexander. In this verse we are passing over a great deal of time until we reach the time of the end.

The fierce king is the antichrist. He will arise when the world is as it says in verse 29 – when "the transgressors are come to the full". In the days of Noah we are told that every thought of everyone was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). That sort of horror will come to pass again, and when it does – when everyone is pure evil all of the time – that is when the antichrist will arise.

"24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people."
(Daniel 8)

The book of Revelation tells us more about this. The antichrist will enter the temple and claim it. He will conquer Jerusalem, and the Jews will have to flee to Petra and remain hidden there until Jesus comes to save them. The Jews will not be a mighty people during the second half of the tribulation; instead they will be a conquered people in hiding.

The antichrist will not rule by his own power. He will be powered by the devil, who will enable him to do all the wicked and horrible things that he does. But his reign has a tight limit on it, for God will not allow him to reign one day beyond his appointed time.

"25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." (Daniel 8)

The antichrist is going to destroy many people through peace. Is he the one who will make that famous peace treaty – the covenant with death that Isaiah 28:15-18 condemns Israel for agreeing to? I think it's very likely.

When Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation the Lord will slay the antichrist with the breath of His mouth. Jesus will

not have to lay a hand on him; the antichrist will fall down and be killed. Then Jesus will throw him alive into the lake of fire (which means he will have to be resurrected first, which is something to think about). Despite all of the power of the antichrist, he is still going to fall easily and quickly before the returning Jesus. He isn't going to stand a chance.

"26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days."
(Daniel 8)

This verse clearly says the vision is not going to be fulfilled for a long time. It's not talking about the coming kingdom of Rome! It is speaking about the end times – events that have not happened yet even in our day.

"27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." (Daniel 8)

This is what we were told in the New Testament as well: even the prophets of old didn't understand the visions they were given! The angel gave the interpretation, but Daniel was missing other prophecies that would have enabled him to understand everything that was going on. We have the key to interpret all of this, but he did not. The Lord has revealed material to us that He didn't reveal to the Old Testament prophets. That is really remarkable! We have been greatly blessed.

Notice that this vision (and talking to the angel) was so overwhelming that it overcame Daniel and he was sick for days

afterward. When people claim to have visions from God today, does this ever happen to them? Nope. This is what it's like to have a *real* vision: it is overwhelming and a rather negative experience. It's not fun or exciting! This is the real thing, and you can see what a huge impact it has.

Verse 27 tells us that after he recovered Daniel rose up and did the king's business. Who was the king? Belshazzar. This means that even though Daniel wasn't in the same position of power that he was in before, he apparently had some sort of small role in his administration. (After all, if he had been in the same job then Belshazzar couldn't have promoted him to third in the kingdom!) That means Belshazzar already knew who Daniel was, which means when he called Daniel to the party he was going out of his way to be insulting and rude. This also means that when Belshazzar invited his officials to his drunken party, either Daniel wasn't invited in the first place or Daniel was invited and didn't go.

8/7/2018, 8/10/2019, 7/25/2022, 7/28/2022

Daniel 9

"1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." (Daniel 9)

This happened in the first year Darius was king, which means it was after Belshazzar was killed by the Medes and Persians. As we can see, Daniel had been paying attention to

prophecy! He has been counting down the years and knows what the prophetic time is. Daniel knew what the prophecies were and was paying attention. (How many people today can say the same thing?)

Daniel was an old man now. If 70 years had passed and he had lived through all that time then he was at least in his 80s. It's amazing he was still alive! Remember, this was in the age before modern medicine. How many people today who are in their 80s could have survived that long without prescriptions, surgery, or medical care?

There's one other piece to this that's easy to miss. There were actually multiple different times when people were carried away into exile from Judah. The first one took place in 608 BC, when Pharaoh Necho conquered Jerusalem during the reign of king Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1, Daniel 1:1-6). The second one took place in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and carried Daniel away captive. The third one took place in 597 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar imprisoned the king of Judah and carried Ezekiel away captive. The final one happened in 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple.

Daniel was praying that God would count the 70 years from the time of the first exile in 608 BC, instead of adding 22 years to it and counting from the time of the last exile. Daniel didn't want to wait another two decades! He wanted to go home. (Was Daniel's prayer granted? Yes it was. The Jews were released from captivity in 538 BC, 70 years after Pharaoh Necho conquered Jerusalem in 608 BC.)

It's interesting that Daniel was one of the few people of his day who paid attention to Jeremiah's prophecies. Daniel was very familiar with what he wrote and took it seriously.

"3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and

sackcloth, and ashes:" (Daniel 9)

Daniel knew that the reason Judah was exiled in the first place was because of their sin. Now, the nation as a whole wasn't interested in repenting; in fact, they still haven't repented even in modern times! So Daniel is going to try to repent on behalf of the nation. He is making intercession for them, just as Moses did in the days of their wilderness wandering. He wants God to have mercy on them and bring them back. In this chapter Daniel seeks the Lord with urgency and great passion.

"4 And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;" (Daniel 9)

Daniel is bringing up the covenant here – the one that God made, in which He promised to bring the Jews back home after 70 years. Daniel's only plea was that God would do what He promised to do. God promised mercy to those who love Him, and Daniel very clearly loves Him. God promised mercy to those who kept His commandments, and Daniel had faithfully done that his whole life. Daniel wasn't demanding his rights; instead he was seeking mercy. Daniel was approaching God from a position of great humility. He wasn't saying that God owed him anything, or that Daniel had done a lot of great things so therefore God owed him a favor. Instead Daniel magnified God greatly and humbled himself.

"5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even

by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: 6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land." (Daniel 9)

Daniel clearly paid attention to what Jeremiah had to say. What Daniel says in these verses is exactly right! This is exactly what the Jews had been doing.

"7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8 O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee." (Daniel 9)

Daniel understood why they were exiled and scattered to the nations. He has read Jeremiah and understood his message. Daniel doesn't attack God for doing this (which is what so many people do when God does something they don't like); instead he says that God had every right to do what He did because they deserved it. Judah really *had* been wicked. They really had violated the covenant, and all of the judgments that fell upon them were exactly what God told them was going to happen if they disobeyed.

I think this prayer is a preview of the sort of prayer that the Jews will pray at the end of the tribulation when they finally repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Messiah. This is a great prayer, and the fact that it's recorded in the Bible should

tell us something. This is the prayer that Israel needs to praying!
This is the heart that they need to have.

"9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;" (Daniel 9)

Daniel isn't demanding forgiveness, nor is he taking it for granted. Instead he is humbly asking for it. He is seeking mercy and forgiveness from God on behalf of the nation of Israel.

"10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him." (Daniel 9)

Daniel was obviously a student of the Word. Not only was he familiar with the prophecies of Jeremiah, but he also knew the Mosaic Law. He knew what the covenant was, he knew what its terms were, and he knew what the consequences were if the Jews broke the covenant. He knew that God was doing exactly what He said He would do all those years ago in the days of Moses. So Daniel is earnestly and passionately seeking God's forgiveness and mercy so that the Jews might be regathered and sent back to their home.

"12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he

spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem." (Daniel 9)

Jerusalem had been destroyed. The houses were burned, the wall was torn down, the palaces were gutted, and – most importantly – the temple itself was destroyed. God sent an army to destroy the one place in the whole world where He manifested Himself. God destroyed the one place where men gathered together to worship Him and offer sacrifices. Nothing like this had ever happened before – but it would happen again in 70 AD. The Jews didn't learn their lesson from the first time God sent His judgment upon them.

"13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth." (Daniel 9)

Daniel understood that the Jews had broken the law of Moses. Daniel understood that they were experiencing the consequences of breaking God's law. Daniel knew that God had given them a chance to repent and be saved from these judgments, but the nation had refused to repent. Daniel clearly understood the message of Jeremiah.

How do you escape the coming judgment? By turning to the Lord, repenting of your sins, and having faith in God. Daniel understood that very well.

"14 Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the

evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice." (Daniel 9)

Daniel understood that the consequence of disobedience and rebellion was judgment and pain. This isn't true only for the Jews; it is true for all nations and people! Those who rebel against God and refuse His mercy will receive His wrath. However, those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus will have their sins covered by the blood of the Lamb, and will find mercy and forgiveness.

"15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly." (Daniel 9)

Daniel knew his history. He knew about Jeremiah. He knew about the Mosaic Law. He knew about Egypt. He knew the things that God had done for Israel, and he knew how much Israel had sinned in response to all the good that God had done for them. This is exactly the attitude that Israel as a whole needs to have! This is the attitude they will finally have when they repent at the end of the tribulation. This prayer needs to be their prayer!

"16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are

about us." (Daniel 9)

Daniel is asking God to have mercy on Jerusalem – to send the Jews back to rebuild the city and make it inhabited again. As we know from the rest of the Old Testament, that is exactly what God did. The Lord raised up Nehemiah to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem, and He raised up Ezra to rebuild the temple. God did have mercy on the Jews – but to this day they still refuse to serve Him. They rejected their Messiah and are hardened against God. But God still had mercy on them in spite of all their rebellion and sin.

"17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake." (Daniel 9)

Daniel wanted to see the temple rebuilt – and it was rebuilt. The second temple wasn't as glorious as the first temple which Solomon constructed, but it was built and it was the temple the Lord Himself entered into.

"18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." (Daniel 9)

Daniel isn't making the case that they deserve God's

mercy, because he knows they don't. Instead Daniel is humbly asking for God's mercy. He is asking God to do things for them that he knows they don't deserve. He is asking for compassion and forgiveness on behalf of a people that don't deserve either of those things! And that is exactly what God did – He showed them mercy and compassion.

"20 And whiles 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 for the holy mountain of my God;" (Daniel 9)

I suspect that Daniel said a lot more than what is recorded here. It seems that Daniel's prayer went on for a long time – perhaps hours or even days. Daniel was very passionate about this and he wasn't going to stop.

Notice that Daniel starts his prayer by confessing his own sins. Daniel doesn't claim to be sinless! There are no recorded sins for Daniel anywhere in the Scripture, and yet Daniel began his prayer by confessing his own sin and asking God to forgive him for the things he had done. Daniel is one of the three most righteous people in the Old Testament, and yet Daniel still saw himself as a sinner. (How do we know he was on that list? Because Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20 gives us the list: it was Noah, Daniel, and Job.) How different Daniel was from the self-righteous Pharisees!

"21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening

oblation." (Daniel 9)

Daniel had talked with Gabriel before in an earlier vision, and here he returns. It's worth noting that Gabriel doesn't appear *inside* the visions; instead he appears outside them, in real life.

It also seems that Gabriel could fly. His physical appearance is never described, so we don't know if he had wings or not. The cherubim had wings, but other angels look exactly like men so it's hard to say.

"22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding." (Daniel 9)

As it says in James 1:5, the Lord will give wisdom to those who ask for it. Daniel sought wisdom and the Lord gave it to him. Are there others who seek wisdom? Sadly, it seems that many people are more interested in rejecting what the Bible has to say, and instead believing whatever they wish were true.

It looks like God sent angels to Daniel on multiple occasions in order to explain to him what was going on. Notice that Daniel couldn't figure it out on his own; *he had to be told*. We are no different! The only way we can accurately interpret the Bible is if God opens it for us through His Holy Spirit. Apart from God we won't be able to make sense of the Word either! On top of that, we can only understand the prophecies of God when the Lord explains the interpretation to us. No Scripture is of a private interpretation. If God hasn't provided the interpretation of something then we will never be able to figure it out. God must reveal it!

"23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." (Daniel 9)

The angel was sent when Daniel began praying, and it apparently took quite a bit of time for the angel to arrive. This tells me that either it takes time for angels to travel from place to place (perhaps a lot of time), or there was some kind of opposition. I don't know what kind of opposition an angel might face, or how that opposition is overcome, or what war between immortal angels looks like. The Bible doesn't tell us these things because it isn't our concern. What we can see that angels have limits. We can also see that there are times when God chooses to work through angels, just as He chooses to work through us.

Daniel is greatly beloved. Wouldn't that be a great thing for God to say about us? Look at how much Daniel loved, served, and obeyed God. Look at how much Daniel studied the Word, and how he prayed with great passion! It is any wonder that he was greatly beloved?

"24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Daniel 9)

Daniel wanted to see all the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled. He wanted to see the Jews regathered, their sin ended, the temple rebuilt, and the Millennium begin. That is what he is praying for, so God is going to tell him how things are going to

work out. God is going to answer his prayer by giving him information that we cannot find anywhere else.

This is one of the key passages of the Old Testament when it comes to understanding how the prophecies fit together. God set aside 70 "weeks", or periods of 7 years (which comes to 490 years of 360 days each). Once those 490 years are over Israel's sin will be done, the Millennium will begin, and Israel will finally be who she was meant to be – a godly nation that fears the Lord and that is ruled over by her Messiah. Just read the verse: after 490 years Israel's sins will be over, the prophecies will be fulfilled, and she will be a righteous nation that will never again stray from the Lord! God has promised that this will happen, and that means *it will happen!* This promise doesn't depend on Israel in any way; it is a unilateral promise from God. The Lord said that He would do it, and nothing can change that or stop it.

Who is the most Holy? The Messiah. He is going to come and bring in everlasting righteousness, isn't He? Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and will literally rule over all the nations of the world (which is exactly what we find in the book of Revelation).

"25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." (Daniel 9)

The 490 years is divided into three pieces. First there were 49 years (of 360 days each). From the time Cyrus made the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time the temple and the wall were rebuilt was 49 years. This prophecy was literally fulfilled.

So when did Jesus die? Well, Matthew 12:40 says that Jesus would be in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights. There's no way to get 3 days and 3 nights from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning no matter what calendar scheme you use. That means Jesus must have been crucified on a Thursday. The only year around this time period where Passover falls on a Thursday is 30 AD. That year also matches the 69 "weeks of years" prophecy of Daniel, and means that God's judgment came upon Jerusalem exactly 40 years later.

According to the Mosaic Law the day after the Passover is always a Sabbath regardless of what day of the week it falls on. Jewish days go from evening to morning (Genesis 1:5). In 30 AD the Passover began Wednesday night (March 22, when Jesus was arrested) and finished Thursday afternoon (March 23, when Jesus died). That Friday was a Sabbath because it was the day after the Passover. Saturday was then the regular Sabbath, so there were two Sabbath days in a row. It's worth noting that the word "Sabbath" in Matthew 28:1 is plural, not singular. That fits with the theory there were two Sabbath days between the crucifixion and resurrection, which only happened in 30 AD.

"26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." (Daniel 9)

The next section was 434 years. 434 years (of 360 days each) after the wall was rebuilt, Jesus came and died on the cross for our sins. The Messiah was cut off, which means He died. But He did not die for Himself; He died for us!

Notice that Jesus died *after* 69 periods of 7 years were

completed. (That's exactly what the verse says: *after* threescore and two weeks the Messiah will be cut off.) The 69th period of 7 years ended on Palm Sunday. When Jesus was crucified the prophetic clock was already stopped. There is still one more week left (which we will get to in the next verse) but it hasn't happened yet.

Interestingly, if the Jews had accepted Jesus as their Messiah (which they could have done, even though He still had to die), the 70th week would have begun immediately after the 69th week was completed. History would have been completely different – but as we know that's not what happened. Since the Jews rejected their Messiah, the Church Age began and created an interlude between the 69th and 70th weeks. The Church Age put the 70th week on hold, and that last period of 7 years will continue to be on hold until after God has finished building His Church among the Gentiles. Once He is done and has taken us home via the rapture, the tribulation will finally begin. (I realize there may be a significant gap between the rapture and the tribulation, but the tribulation will not begin until after the rapture.)

As this verse said, after the Messiah died for our sins the temple was demolished and Jerusalem was destroyed. Notice that the people who destroyed the temple are said to be the same people from which the antichrist will come. There's a lot of debate about whether this means Rome in general or is something more specific. I think we'll have to wait until the antichrist appears in order to answer that question (and he won't appear until after the church is gone, so thankfully we won't have to live through that).

All of these things happened just as God said. Notice that God told the Jews exactly what year the Messiah would come and die for the sins of the people! This means that if the Jews had been watching (as the Gentile wise men were), they would have known when to expect the Messiah to be born. The Jews

should have been watching for Him, but they weren't. God told them when the Messiah was coming and they still missed it! Daniel was paying close attention to prophecy, but the rest of the people were not.

"27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Daniel 9)

Here we reach the 70th week of Daniel. The last week is a reference to the 7 years of the tribulation. During the first half of the tribulation the antichrist will launch a world war. In the middle of the tribulation he will go into the temple and declare himself to be God, and demand that everyone worship him. In the last half of the tribulation he will massacre the saints of God and attempt to kill every Jew in the entire world. It will be a terrible time! The antichrist will cause the temple sacrifices to cease when he goes into it and declares himself to be God. This period will last seven years and no longer, because Jesus will end it when He returns and personally kills the antichrist without laying a hand on him.

The "he" in verse 27 is the antichrist. He is the one who confirms the covenant and causes the sacrifice to cease. The covenant that is being confirmed (or strengthened) is the one we saw in Isaiah 28:15-18 – the lying covenant that Israel makes with death. Israel refused their Messiah and instead will choose to make a covenant with death, and that is what begins the seven-year tribulation period. But when this is over, all of Israel will be saved. The Millennium will begin and the world will be a glorious

place of peace and righteousness.

8/8/2018, 8/11/2019, 7/25/2022

Daniel 10

"1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision." (Daniel 10)

The third year of Cyrus was after the first year of Darius, which is when the vision in the previous chapter took place. That means a number of years has passed since the previous chapter.

For the record, the third year of Cyrus was 536 BC. At this point Daniel had been in Babylon for 70 years. The Babylonian exile had ended two years earlier.

"2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." (Daniel 10)

Three weeks is 21 days. Verse 12 tells us that Daniel was trying to understand something. I think he was trying to make sense of the earlier visions he had seen and gain a clear understanding of what was going to take place in the future. As we will see, the reason it took 21 days is because the angel was resisted.

Usually when a person fasts they don't eat anything at all.

In this case that's not what Daniel did. The Bible describes this as mourning, not a fast. During these three weeks he humbled himself. He laid aside the things in life he enjoyed and sought the Lord with great earnestness and passion. He would have been a pretty old man at this point, but his passion for prophecy and the things of God had not faded.

Daniel wanted to understand what was going on. How many people today have that kind of interest in prophecy?

"4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel;" (Daniel 10)

These things keep happening beside rivers. I don't know if that has any significance, but we've seen this pattern quite a lot by now.

"5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." (Daniel 10)

If this is the same being that talks to Daniel in the rest of the chapter, it can't be Jesus because we're told the devil managed to resist him and he had to call for backup before he could get through to Daniel. It's unthinkable that Jesus couldn't overcome the devil and needed the help of an angel! On the other hand, it's possible that this is *not* the same being as the

one who talks to Daniel in the rest of the chapter. If you read verse 10 it says that *a* hand touched Daniel; it doesn't say "his" hand touched him. This opens up the possibility that there may have been two different beings after all. It's not completely clear. This does resemble the description of Jesus that we find in the first chapter of Revelation.

"7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves." (Daniel 10)

The same thing happened to Paul on the road to Damascus: although he heard the voice, those who were with him heard nothing but were still terrified anyway (Acts 9:7). Daniel was the only one who saw this being, but those who didn't see it were so terrified that they ran to hide. It's true that the appearance of angels causes dismay and fear, but not to this extent. This level of terror is more similar to the reaction that Isaiah had when he saw the Lord high and lifted up in Heaven (Isaiah 6:1-5). It's quite possible that Daniel saw the preincarnate Christ here and was overwhelmed by the experience. It's a terrifying thing for a mortal to see the holy God.

"8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." (Daniel 10)

This is the same reaction that Isaiah had when he saw the Lord (Isaiah 6:5). When you see the pure holiness of God, you

immediately realize how unholy and corrupt you really are. You see darkness that you never realized was there. The gap between the holiness of God and the unholiness of man is far greater than we realize. Events like this give us some idea of who God really is and what happens when a mortal man catches a glimpse of Him. We are far more sinful than we realize!

"9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground." (Daniel 10)

The same thing happened to the apostle John in Revelation 1:17. God is so great and so holy that men literally cannot stand before Him when He reveals even a small piece of His glory! Yet people who've never seen the Lord casually mock Him and refuse to obey His commands, thinking that somehow when judgment day comes they are the ones who will be judging God. If those people ever caught a glimpse of the Lord they would instantly realize what great fools they had been. It's impossible to even stand before God, much less overcome Him in a conflict!

"10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands." (Daniel 10)

The passage says that *a* hand touched him; it doesn't say he was touched by the hand of the being that he just glimpsed. I think it's possible that he was touched by a different being altogether, and the rest of the chapter is a conversation with the angel who lifted him up.

This is probably why we can't see into the realm of angels. We can't handle it – we aren't strong enough! We are too corrupt to be comfortable in the presence of such holy and righteous beings. Notice that even when Daniel has been helped by the angel, he's still on his hands and knees. He has to be told to stand up in verse 11.

"11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling." (Daniel 10)

Daniel had to be lifted up before he could stand, and when he did stand he trembled. This is what it's like to have a real encounter with God.

"12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." (Daniel 10)

Since Daniel wanted to understand, he sought the Lord with all his heart – and the Lord heard him. The challenge we have today is that no matter how much we chasten ourselves, God isn't going to send us an angel so we can get new revelation from God. The Lord has already revealed everything we need to know in His Word; it is fully sufficient for all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Since God doesn't need to add anything to it He's not going to send new information that isn't found in it. That means we will never get angelic visits with special knowledge of

the future. It's true that God will give wisdom to those who ask for it, but what God gives is wisdom to understand the Scriptures, not new wisdom! If you want to know more about God or end-times prophecy then you must study the Word. The route that Daniel took is not open to us today. (For more information about this see Appendix F, "God Is Not Giving You New Revelation".)

I think the modern church has two problems. First of all, a lot of people don't care very much about the Bible. If they did care then they would at least make an effort to *read* the Bible. There are many people who have been Christians for decades and yet haven't managed to read the entire Bible even *once*. That says a lot about what they care about – and what they don't care about. The second problem is that many people aren't interested in putting in effort to really study the Word. That takes a lot of time, and people are lazy and busy with other things. Since people won't study the Word there are a lot of things they will never understand.

There are other people who don't study the Bible but still think they understand it, because they believe whatever opinion they already have must be right. They will stubbornly insist that they are correct and ignore anyone who brings up evidence to the contrary. I suppose it's a lot easier to insist you're right than try to study the Word and find out the truth!

What I see in the church today is a lot of ignorance by people who insist they can't possibly be wrong, and who won't listen to anyone. (It's not a great time to be a Bible teacher.)

"13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." (Daniel 10)

There are a few interesting things about this. The Bible says that there is only one archangel, and that is Michael. The Michael mentioned here is almost certainly the archangel Michael, but in this verse he is called one of the chief princes. That tells me that there are other chief princes who are powerful but below the rank of the archangel Michael, and Michael is the one who came to help.

I don't know how the prince of Persia was able to withstand this angel. The prince of Persia mentioned here must be some sort of demonic entity. I don't know how demons resist the angels of God or how fights happen between immortal beings that don't have a physical body. We aren't told how this works, probably because it doesn't concern us. But we can see that there's a spiritual war going on that we really don't know very much about. Maybe this is why it sometimes seems like it takes God a long time to do anything: God has chosen to work through angels, and those angels not only have to make the journey to us but they also have to fight their way through enemy lines. It's something to think about. There is a lot going on that we are unaware of, which should humble us. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 12, "Angels".)

"14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days." (Daniel 10)

I think this means that the vision covers a great deal of history and a long span of time, and its final fulfillment is a long way off. Since we still haven't seen the final fulfillment of this vision even in our day, the angel was definitely right. I suspect even Daniel would have been surprised that thousands of years would go by and the prophecy would still remain unfulfilled

(although some parts of it have come to pass).

"15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me." (Daniel 10)

I don't know if Daniel was just really old and feeble and talking to angels put too much of a physical strain on him, or if the experience was just that overwhelming. This is certainly a more severe reaction than what we've seen in other passages when people talked with angels! People who want to talk to angels today should read these verses and understand that if they got their wish they wouldn't like it.

"18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me." (Daniel 10)

Daniel had to be repeatedly strengthened and lifted up

before this angel could even talk to him and deliver the message that he came to deliver! That says a lot about what happens when you meet someone from Heaven. It is an experience unlike anything we've ever known, and not in a good way. Mortal and corrupt men are simply not fit to have encounters with holy beings from the holy realm of God.

"20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince." (Daniel 10)

This seems like a pretty clear reference to the powerful demons who were in control of other nations. Right now the demon of Persia had control, but it seems that eventually he would be replaced by the demon of Greece. This angel had been fighting against Persia, and the battle with Greece was next. He may have been some sort of powerful warrior angel, which could explain why Daniel had such a hard time trying to stand before him.

There's a lot that we don't know, isn't there? We know that there's a war going on. We know that demons are controlling the nations and giving them some kind of power to do the things they do. We know there are angels fighting these demons, and some of the demons are powerful enough to resist some of the angels – although they aren't powerful enough to resist the archangel, apparently. We know that this war has been going on for a long time and probably continues today.

What we *don't* know is what they're fighting over. We also

don't know how they are actually fighting. (Spiritual and immortal beings probably don't fight with swords or guns, right?) We don't know why this angel only had Michael for backup and no one else. There are a lot of mysteries here.

The angel said he came to show Daniel what was noted in the Scripture, but where were these things taught? Maybe this is an exposition of the other visions that Daniel had already been given, but there's a lot of detail here that doesn't seem to be anywhere else. Perhaps the angel was sent to fill in the gaps of prophetic knowledge? (For more information on this topic see Appendix 12, "Angels".)

All in all, this is one of the most unique chapters in the Bible. There's a lot of fascinating information here.

8/9/2018, 8/11/2019, 7/27/2022

Daniel 11

"1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him."
(Daniel 11)

Now that is interesting, isn't it? It seems that demons strengthen some leaders while angels strengthen others. It sounds like the political wars that we see are actually the reflection of spiritual wars being fought just out of our sight. I wonder which leaders in our day are being backed by demons and which ones are backed by the angels. There is so much more going on than what we can see, isn't there? This is how the world actually works and this is what's really going on.

"2 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia;

and the fourth shall be far richer than they all:
and by his strength through his riches he shall
stir up all against the realm of Grecia." (Daniel
11)

There is widespread agreement about what is going on in
this verse:

Cyrus was king of Persia (539 BC)

1. Cambyrses II (530-523 BC)
2. Bardiya (523-522 BC)
3. Darius the Mede (522-486 BC)
4. Xerxes I (486-465 BC) ruled during the peak of the Persian Empire and sacked Athens.

"3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall
rule with great dominion, and do according to
his will." (Daniel 11)

Alexander the Great arose from Greece and conquered
the entire Persian Empire in roughly 4 years. His conquest was
completed in 330 BC, 206 years after Daniel was given this
prophecy.

"4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom
shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the
four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity,
nor according to his dominion which he ruled:
for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for
others beside those." (Daniel 11)

When Alexander died in 323 BC at a very young age, his
kingdom was divided among his four generals (Casander,

Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy). So far all of this is pretty clear and easy to understand.

Ptolemy conquered Jerusalem in 320 BC. At that point the nation of Judah fell under Ptolemy's rule.

"5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion." (Daniel 11)

Daniel 11 is a very difficult chapter. It's pretty clear that verse 21 and following is talking about the antichrist, but what about the rest of the verses? It's an excellent question.

If you look up this passage in commentaries you find very little agreement regarding what's going on. Scholars are all over the place and there is no consensus about what this chapter means. The main problem is that this chapter doesn't identify the kingdoms or people by name, so scholars have taken different parts of history and tried to make it fit. Some people have mapped this chapter to the events between Daniel's time and the Roman empire. They say that Ptolemy is the king of the south and Seleucus is the king of the north. After Alexander the Great died, his former general Seleucid took dominion over Syria in 301 BC and founded the Seleucid Empire.

Other people have mapped this chapter to events that have occurred all throughout the Church Age. Some have taken it symbolically (which I think is an error). It seems you can plausibly interpret it in a lot of different ways.

I think we might need to interpret this in reverse. Verse 31 talks about the abomination of desolation. Jesus told us in Matthew 24:15 that this is a reference to something that hasn't happened yet, but which will happen during the seven-year tribulation. That identifies the person in verse 31 as being the

antichrist, which puts those events in the end times. Verse 40 tells us that the king of the north and the south will oppose him. That means those kings must exist at the same time as the antichrist, which puts the kings of the north and the south in the end times. So if all that is true, this chapter has to be talking about end times events. Let's go with that and see where it takes us.

"6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times." (Daniel 11)

This seems to be a bit of backstory. The "end of years" looks like a hint that there's a prophetic gap of time between verse 5 and 6. Verse 4 is ancient history but verse 6 is the future.

That being said, there's a case to be made that although the events in these passages will ultimately be fulfilled in the future during the time of the antichrist, there were foreshadowings in ancient times. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes was a foreshadowing of the antichrist (and even set up an abomination of desolation of his own), so there are other foreshadowings as well. The daughter of the "king of the south" (Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II) did marry the king of the north (Antiochus II) in 252 BC. However, when Ptolemy II died in 246 BC, Antiochus II put away Berenice and took back his former wife Laodice. Laodice then poisoned her husband Antiochus II and killed both Berenice and her infant son (along with her attendants).

"7 But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: 8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. 9 So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land." (Daniel 11)

It would be nice if the Bible identified who the North and South were. Some people claim that one of them is Egypt, but that seems unlikely because Egypt is identified in verse 8 as being separate from the north or the south.

This looks like more backstory to events that will unfold in the end times. It seems that Egypt is going to be conquered and looted at some point. It's hard to say how this fits into the larger end-times picture. This is the only place we find this material, and it's hard to connect it to the larger picture that what we find in Revelation. It's very specific, but since it doesn't contain time details or country names it's really hard to pin down. Given how many years are covered by these events, these verses may be referring to pre-tribulation events.

There was a foreshadowing of this in ancient times. The verse mentions "out of a branch of her roots". Ptolemy III (the "king of the south") was the brother of Berenice. He avenged his sister's murder by invading Syria in 241 BC and humbling Seleucus II (the "king of the south" and the son of Antiochus II).

Verse 8 says "he shall continue more years than the king of the north". Ptolemy III (the "king of the south") lived longer

than Seleucus II (the "king of the north"). Seleucus II died in 225 BC when he fell off his horse. Ptolemy III died three years later in 222 BC.

"10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress." (Daniel 11)

Here we are dealing with the sons of the people in the previous verses. That means a generation has passed, or maybe several generations. That is why I said the previous verses were some sort of backstory. We haven't reached the time of the antichrist yet.

There was also a foreshadowing of this in ancient times. The verse says "his sons shall be stirred up" and "one shall certainly come, and overflow". Antiochus III (a son of Seleucus II, the "king of the north") took control of Judah from the Ptolemaic Kingdom in 219 BC.

"11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. 12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it. 13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and

with much riches." (Daniel 11)

The king of the north and the south are fighting one another. We still don't know who these people are, except that neither of them seem to be Egypt. In verse 13 we see that more years are passing. We are getting closer to the end times.

In ancient times there was a foreshadowing of this. The verse says "he shall not be strengthened by it". Ptolemy IV (the "king of the south") defeated Antiochus III (the "king of the north") at the battle of Raphia in 217 BC and took back control over Judah.

Verse 13 says "the king of the north shall return". In 200 BC Antiochus III (the "king of the north") defeated Ptolemy V (the "king of the south").

"14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall." (Daniel 11)

I don't know who the "many" is. Without knowing the timeframe in which all this is happening it's hard to connect it to historical events. I've seen some theories but there's no way to tell which one is right. Who are the robbers of the Jews? It doesn't say. We are missing information.

There was a foreshadowing of this as well. When this verse says that "there shall many stand up against the king of the south": in 200 BC the Jews helped Antiochus III defeat Ptolemy V (the "king of the south"). In 198 BC the Jews became part of the Seleucid Empire under Antiochus III and IV.

"15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. 16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed." (Daniel 11)

It would be really nice if we were given some names. Who is he that cometh against him? Is this a reference to the antichrist? The passage says that this person is going to conquer Israel. Is this something that happened before Israel became a nation in 1948, or is this specifically talking about the antichrist's conquest during the tribulation? Based on the latter part of the chapter it seems that the antichrist doesn't arise for another couple kings, so this must be a different person. Since Israel is only conquered once during the tribulation, and since the tribulation isn't long enough for several generations to come and go, that must mean this is talking about something that happened during the church age. (Or does "consumed" mean that the land is damaged but not necessarily conquered? Verse 16 raises so many questions.)

"17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. 18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause

it to turn upon him. 19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found." (Daniel 11)

I think this "he" is the king of the north. As you can see, time is still passing. We've seen a couple different leaders rise and fall and we've gone through a couple generations. This prophecy seems to be covering a lot of time.

There was also a foreshadowing of this. Regarding "he shall give him the daughter": in 196 BC Antiochus III gave his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V. (It wasn't the famous Cleopatra, but a different person with the same name.)

Regarding "he shall stumble and fall, and not be found": in 191 BC the Romans defeated Antiochus III at Thermopylae.

"20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle." (Daniel 11)

Another generation has come and gone. We're getting closer. It's difficult to tell how much time has passed, but at a minimum we've seen several leaders come and go. All of these events would surely require years, if not decades. If these verses are describing the rise of the end times one-world government and its associated ten kings, then it looks like there may be a gap of a generation or more between the rapture and the tribulation! It's possible that after the rapture happens it will take many years to put all the pieces in place for the tribulation to begin. The gap may be quite large.

Once again, if you work backwards from verse 21 then it's hard to escape the interpretation that the earlier verses in this chapter are a prequel to the rise of the antichrist. It looks like

we're being told what happens to lay the groundwork for his arrival on the world stage – which makes me think these are post-rapture events.

Even this was foreshadowed in ancient times. In 187 BC Seleucus IV tried to tax the land of Judah and pillage the temple. He was then assassinated in 175 BC ("he shall be destroyed").

"21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries." (Daniel 11)

Now we have reached the antichrist. That means the previous verses were talking about things that happened a number of generations before the antichrist arose. This gives us two options: the events earlier in this chapter took place during the church age (which is unlikely, since they don't seem to connect to anything), or the events took place in the gap between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation. I suppose we'll find out which is the case once the rapture happens and end-time events start to unfold.

The antichrist will eventually wage war on the whole world, but that's not how he initially gains power. As we can see, his initial rise is by peace and flattery. He establishes a position of power before taking action.

This, too, was foreshadowed in ancient times. In 175 BC Antiochus IV (the "king of the north") obtained power through flattery.

"22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken;

yea, also the prince of the covenant." (Daniel 11)

This is very specific, but it's missing key pieces of identifying information. Who is being invaded? Who is the prince of the covenant? Is this talking about the covenant of death that Israel will sign with the antichrist? Is it talking about the world conquest of the antichrist? Who is being broken?

"23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people." (Daniel 11)

Let's assume the covenant is the covenant of death. The antichrist gains power through peace treaties and flatteries. In verse 23 we are told that he doesn't have a very large force. The antichrist gains power through lies; he leverages the small people that he has in order to get what he wants.

"24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time." (Daniel 11)

Apparently he is able to use his peace treaties to loot nations. I'm not sure what nations he's looting, but lies and deceit are winning the day for the antichrist. He is getting great wealth and overcoming strongholds.

"25 And he shall stir up his power and his

courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain." (Daniel 11)

Apparently he attacks the king of the south (we still don't know who that is) and wins. I think the person who didn't stand was the king of the south, and the antichrist managed to win because he got people to betray the king of the south. The king of the south had a very large army, but in the end it didn't save him. The antichrist won through treachery.

This was foreshadowed in ancient times. In 168 BC the Roman navy (the "ships of Chittim" mentioned in verse 30) defeated Antiochus IV and forced him to surrender, putting him under Roman rule ("he shall not stand").

"27 And both of these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed." (Daniel 11)

More negotiations and more lies, but it seems that these lies don't achieve anything. Apparently God brought them to nothing because it was not yet time for the end of all things.

"28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land." (Daniel 11)

The antichrist came away from his battle with the king of the south with great riches. Next he turns his attention to Israel (whom I think he signed the covenant with). This verse makes it sound like we are now talking about events in the first part of the tribulation, since they seem to be taking place after the covenant was signed.

The antichrist is wealthy now. He is against Israel but he hasn't taken any action yet. Instead he does "exploits" (I have no idea what those might be) and then goes back home.

"29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." (Daniel 11)

The antichrist makes another trip south, but he is opposed and it makes him angry. It seems that Israel had something to do with this – or at least he blames Israel, because that's when he turns on them.

"31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." (Daniel 11)

At this point we have definitely reached the middle of the

tribulation. This is our identifying mark; this is what we must use in order to interpret the rest of this chapter. Jesus clearly identified this as taking place during the tribulation (Matthew 24:15). Since this person is the antichrist, it gives us a framework to understand what's going on. The temple has been polluted, the antichrist has identified himself as God (even though he's not God at all), and now we have entered the second half of the tribulation when things are going to get exceptionally bad. The Jews had built the third temple and started offering sacrifices, but here they come to an end. We now know where we're at in end-times history.

Here we've reached something very well-known. In 167 BC Antiochus IV persecuted the Jews and dedicated the temple to Zeus. He took away the daily sacrifice and installed the abomination of desolation – and yet Jesus said in Matthew 24:18 that the true fulfillment of this verse was in the future, not the past. That's how we know that although these events were foreshadowed in ancient times, the true fulfillment is yet to come.

"32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." (Daniel 11)

Notice how many times this chapter says that the power of the antichrist comes through flattery! He doesn't have a large army; instead he wins through deceit and lies and flattery. That is how he corrupts people and accomplishes his aims.

In spite of his successes there will be people who resist him. He won't convince everyone (although he will kill those he can't deceive). I don't know what exploits the people of God are going to do during this time. Perhaps this is a reference to the

miracles of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:5-6), or the 144,000 sealed Jews (Revelation 7:4)? The book of Revelation tells us that during the tribulation Christians will be hunted down and executed (Revelation 13:15), and very few of them will survive. The antichrist is going to be opposed by the people of God but they will not win. The antichrist will overcome them (Revelation 13:7) and he will only be defeated when Jesus returns and kills him (Revelation 19:20).

"33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days." (Daniel 11)

There will be preachers during the tribulation. There will be the two witnesses (probably Moses and Elijah), who will be killed (Revelation 11:7). There will also be the 144,000 Jews, who will go all over the world to preach the gospel to everyone – and they will be killed as well (Revelation 14:1-3). Multitudes will be saved, but they will be killed by the antichrist. The antichrist is going to kill a *lot* of people – the book of Revelation speaks of hundreds of millions of martyrs (Revelation 7:9-14). There is going to be a great deal of death during this time! Many will be saved, and many will be killed.

"34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries." (Daniel 11)

The two witnesses will be resurrected three days after they're killed and will ascend into Heaven (Revelation 11:11). There will also be an angel who flies over all the world and

preaches the gospel (Revelation 14:6). So there will be a little help, but the book of Revelation teaches that believers will be hunted down and killed in huge numbers.

"35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." (Daniel 11)

In the Old Testament it was possible to lose the Holy Spirit. We saw this with in case of Samson (Judges 16:20). King David also prayed that God would not take His Spirit from him after he sinned (Psalm 51:11). In the New Testament we are warned that the same thing will be true during the tribulation. That is what the parable of the 10 virgins is about (Matthew 25:1-12): some people will hold on to the Holy Spirit and maintain their faith during the tribulation, but others will not.

During the Church Age the Spirit is sealed within us. We are safe and cannot be lost, but that wasn't true before this Age and will not be true after it. We have been given a very special gift.

This verse tells us that some people – perhaps prominent leaders – will fall away from God. They will seem to be faithful, but when the hour of trial comes they will be proven to be liars. This will be a test to the people of God, to see if they will remain faithful and pursue God even when the people around them that they trusted fall away into evil. God will use this to purify people during the tribulation. (Now, it doesn't say that *everyone* will fall away. We know that there will be hundreds of millions of martyrs during the tribulation. But there will be some who fall away, and God is warning us in advance so that people aren't surprised and confused when it happens.)

"36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done." (Daniel 11)

People have made a lot of different claims about what the end-times religion will be. Some have said it's Islam, while others have said it's Catholicism. The Bible is clear that it's neither of those things! Instead it will be the worship of the antichrist. The antichrist will go into the temple and use it as his throne. He will exalt himself above God and speak terrible blasphemies against God – all while God is proving His power by sending plagues and judgments upon the world. During the tribulation it will be obvious to everyone that God exists and is very powerful, and yet the antichrist will continue to speak against God in terrible ways. In spite of all of this the antichrist will be prosper for a time. He will rule over the world. He will overcome the saints of God and kill them. He will be very strong – until Jesus returns and casts him down. The antichrist will claim to be God and demand that everyone worship him or die. That will be the end-times religion. Those who reject the antichrist will be saved; those who worship him and take his mark will be damned for all of eternity (Revelation 14:9-11).

"37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all." (Daniel 11)

This simply means he's not going to be a part of any

existing religion. He doesn't care what other gods people served, or what other religions existed before he came into power. He is going to create a new religion (the worship of himself) and will demand that everyone join him. The antichrist will magnify himself above all religions and will put to death everyone who resists him.

"38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things." (Daniel 11)

Since none of his ancestors worshiped him, this new religion is something that his ancestors didn't know. He will use his wealth to honor himself. He will also build the image of the beast, which he will require the world to worship on pain of death.

"39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain." (Daniel 11)

The worship of himself qualifies as being a strange god, in that it was a god which no one else knew or had ever worshiped before. He will use his vast wealth to glorify and magnify himself, and he will come to dominate the world and rule over many people.

What land will he divide for gain? I suspect it's the land of Israel. After all, Joel 3 is all about how Jesus returns at the end of

the tribulation to punish the nations that divided His land.

"40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over." (Daniel 11)

The antichrist will have a lot of power, and he will kill a lot of people and do a lot of evil things, but his power won't be absolute. He will still have enemies. This passage tells us that the kings of the north and the south will come against him. If I'm reading this correctly it sounds like he will fight against those countries and enter their land and defeat their armies. That means their attack isn't going to work; it will fail. (If he is entering into their territory and overflowing then their attack clearly isn't winning!)

"41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon." (Daniel 11)

The antichrist will conquer Israel but he won't be able to conquer Edom and Moab. I don't know why he will fail to defeat them, except that God is going to miraculously provide a refuge for the Jews so that he won't be able to kill them. It looks like the refuge is going to be in this part of the world. The antichrist will conquer a lot of countries and defeat a lot of armies, but a few nations will escape.

"42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape." (Daniel 11)

This may be when the prophecies against Egypt are fulfilled, but I don't really know. At some point Egypt will be defeated and abandoned for 40 years (Ezekiel 29:11-12). This may be when that happens.

"43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps." (Daniel 11)

The antichrist will amass a tremendous amount of wealth, which he will gain by stealing it from other nations. This is where his treasure comes from.

"44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many." (Daniel 11)

This passage doesn't tell us what these tidings are or who is coming against him, but apparently his enemies don't win. The antichrist seems to emerge victorious with a lot of captives.

"45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and

none shall help him." (Daniel 11)

This seems to be saying that the antichrist is going to build his palace in Zion itself. That is something I hadn't heard before. The antichrist is trying to exalt himself above God, but in the end Jesus will return and kill him and that will be the end of his reign.

8/10/2018, 8/11/2019

Daniel 12

"1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12)

It seems that Michael will play a key role during the tribulation, although I don't really know what that role is (since it isn't spelled out). We do know that this time only comes to an end when Jesus returns (see Revelation 19). Michael intervenes in some way when the worst part of the tribulation hits, which is before Jesus returns and ends everything. It seems that the angels of God aren't standing around doing nothing during the tribulation. They are actively engaged in battle.

Michael the archangel seems to be tasked with the welfare of Israel. Perhaps that's why he came and helped the angel who had a message for Daniel. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 12, "Angels".)

The tribulation will last for 7 years, but all of those years will not be equal. The second half will be much worse than the

first half (and the first half will see world war and mass death, so that's saying a lot). Jesus spoke of this time in Matthew 24:22 and said that if it wasn't cut short then *every living thing in the world would die*. It will be that bad!

At the end of this time the remnant of Israel will repent and seek Jesus their Messiah and will be saved, and Jesus will save them. That is when, as Paul said in Romans 11:26, all Israel will be saved.

This passage reminds us that those who are saved are those whose names are written in the Book of Life (Revelation 17:8, 20:12-15). That is a real book! It's not figurative or symbolic.

"2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."
(Daniel 12)

In this resurrection we see that both the righteous *and* the unrighteous are resurrected. This is the only resurrection that is specifically mentioned in the Old Testament, which means it's the only one that the people of Jesus' day would have been familiar with. That means when the Saduccees asked Jesus about marriage after the resurrection, this was the resurrection they were talking about.

But here's the thing: there are three different resurrections mentioned in the Bible. The first is the rapture, in which the church is resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). The second is at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, in which the tribulation saints and Old Testament saints are resurrected (Revelation 20:4-6). The third is at the end of the world in the final day of judgment, in which the wicked and those who died during the Millennium are resurrected (Revelation 20:12). Unless

I'm missing something, the resurrection in verse 2 has to be speaking of the final resurrection at the very end. It can't be speaking about the rapture or the resurrection before the Millennium because no wicked people are raised from the dead in either of those resurrections.

The righteous will be raised to everlasting life, which will be glorious and amazing! After the Millennium and the final day of judgment we will live forever in a world that will never see death or pain or any kind of suffering (Revelation 21:1-4). This new world will be an amazing place that's full of joy and the worship of God. However, the wicked will be cast alive into the lake of fire. Not only will they be tormented forever, but they will be abhorred forever. Notice how it says that their shame will be everlasting! It will never fade away and people will never stop caring. They will have everlasting shame, which is a very serious concept!

"3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12)

Wisdom is better than foolishness! God will honor those who diligently seek the Lord and study His Word. He will also give everlasting honor to those who spread the gospel and are used by Him to bring many to saving faith.

Do you see what this means? There are rewards for the things we do in this life, and those rewards last *forever*. Those who are wise will shine, but those who chose to live as fools and who couldn't be bothered with wisdom will *not* shine. These rewards and honors aren't given out to everyone! You can seek wisdom or you can ignore it. The choice you make has everlasting consequences, so give it some care! (For more information on

this topic see Appendix H, "Treasure in Heaven.)

"4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12)

Most scholars say that this verse means technical and scientific knowledge will increase in the end times, and there will be a lot of travel around the world. I think that interpretation is wrong because the angel hasn't been talking about either of those things! Remember, what Daniel specifically desires is knowledge of end-times prophecy. He earnestly wants to understand how things will play out. I think the angel is saying that when the time of the end draws near, people will come to a better understanding of what the book of Daniel has to say. They will go to and fro *through the prophecies* and knowledge of *prophetic interpretation* will increase.

One day people are going to understand these things much better than Daniel did – but until we reach the time for its fulfillment, the prophecies are sealed and no one is going to understand very much of it. The prophecies were written for a specific time, and when that time finally comes people will understand. It wasn't written for our age, which is why we're having so much trouble understanding it. Remember, we can only understand the things that God reveals to us, and if He chooses to seal up part of His Word then we are going to find it confusing and strange. These things will be revealed when the time is right and it's needed. After all, for us who will never experience the tribulation it's more of a curiosity than something we desperately need to survive.

"5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river." (Daniel 12)

I'm assuming these are angels. Once again, these appearances are happening by a river. I don't know if that's significant but it's a detail that keeps coming up.

"6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." (Daniel 12)

The angel wanted to know how long the antichrist would have power over the nation of Israel. He was told it would be for three and a half years, which corresponds to the second half of the seven-year tribulation. During the first half the antichrist is gathering his power; he doesn't move against Israel until the midpoint of the tribulation. The power of the antichrist isn't eternal! It will last for a few years and then Jesus will put it to an end to it personally.

Notice that the angel lifts up both hands to Heaven. It turns out that this is a Biblical way to worship and glorify God! Even the angels do it.

It would be nice if he had asked how many years it would be from that moment until the end of those things, but then we

would know when the end would come and that would defeat the point of watching for it by faith.

"8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." (Daniel 12)

This prophecy was told to Daniel but he didn't understand it. I don't think anyone will understand it until it's time for it to be fulfilled, and then it will all make sense. God will unseal it for the people who need it and will be living through these events. The book of Daniel will be opened when its time comes.

The New Testament tells us that the prophets often didn't understand the prophecies that they were given. Here we can see an illustration of that. God told Daniel many things, but He also withheld some information – including information that He has given to us.

"10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." (Daniel 12)

During the tribulation many people will be saved, and many people will be wicked and do terrible, wicked things. It will be a time of extremes. In those days the power of God will be obvious to everyone and world events will perfectly match what is written in Daniel and Revelation, but the wicked will *still* not understand. These things can only be understood by faith as the Spirit gives understanding, and since the wicked lack both faith

and the Spirit they will not be able to comprehend world events in spite of the clear prophecies of the Word. The wicked won't realize what's going on, but the wise will. The righteous will understand because they will have the Word and God will give them understanding. That is how it's always worked and that is how it will always work.

"11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." (Daniel 12)

This is exactly one month longer than 3.5 years. That is why some people argue that the tribulation has to occur in a time when there is a leap month in the lunar calendar – specifically, a leap month that occurs in the second half of the tribulation. I suppose that is entirely possible. What we can see is that there will be 1290 days from the time the antichrist goes into the temple and declares himself to be God, to the time when Jesus returns and kills him and puts an end to his reign.

"12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." (Daniel 12)

There is a difference of 45 days between these two times, which means there is a 45 day gap between the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium. This could be the time when the Millennial Temple is built, the world is cleansed after the destruction of the tribulation, and the nations are judged. That is the common interpretation and it makes

sense to me. Those who enter into the Millennium (either by surviving the tribulation as a saved person, or through resurrection or rapture) are truly blessed indeed!

"13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Daniel 12)

A lot of translations butcher this last verse, which is always disappointing. This verse is saying that before Daniel dies he will return to Israel and be in his appointed lot of land. Daniel was a young man when he was captured by Babylon and he lived for a long time there, but before he dies he will go back home to his land in Israel. That is a precious promise indeed!

Daniel did not understand these prophecies. If we are honest we have to admit that we don't understand everything they have to say either. These prophecies aren't for us, though. They are for the people who will live through the tribulation, and they will understand every word perfectly. For us it's enough to know the pieces that we can understand, and we trust God for the rest. Daniel was going to rest after a long life, and that was the portion God gave to him.

Appendix F: God Is Not Giving You New Revelation

Have you noticed how many Christians claim to have received direct, divine revelation from God Himself? It's become very common for Christians to claim that God told them to do whatever it is they're doing. People say things like "God told me to preach this message" or "God told me to phone that person" or "God told me to make that decision". In each case people claim that they were not acting of their own accord; instead God Himself ordered them to do whatever it was they did. They were acting under Divine Command.

This phenomenon greatly disturbs me because it is completely unbiblical. Whenever someone begins a sentence with "God told me..." I inwardly wince. Stop and think about it for a minute. As soon as someone claims that they are acting under the direct command of God, they make themselves unaccountable and it becomes impossible to criticize them. After all, it wasn't *their* idea; they were just doing what God told them to do! God told them to jump, so they jumped. You can't even have a rational discussion with them because any criticism of their actions becomes criticism of God. After all, if God told them to do it then who are you to question God?

However, does God actually speak to people in that manner? Does God *really* talk to people and send them Divine messages telling them what to do and when to do it? I am convinced that the answer is a resounding *no*. In this era of history God does *not* speak to us directly. He may use our consciences to convict us and He may use those around us to remind us of the truth, but God is no longer in the business of talking directly to His people. Instead He has given us the Bible, and He expects us to learn what it has to say and apply it to our lives. God wants us to guide our lives *by the Bible*.

All Means All

You see, the Bible tells us that it is all the divine revelation that we need:

2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto **all** good works."

This passage says that the Scriptures have been given to us so that we can be perfect. It tells us that the material it contains within its pages is enough to *thoroughly* furnish us for *all* good works. In other words, there are no good works that are outside its scope. The Bible claims that it has 100% of the divine revelation that we need in order to live in this era. No other revelation is necessary. This means that *we do not need extra messages from God in order to live our lives and do God's will, because God has already told us everything that we need to know*.

Now, the Bible's claim to be sufficient is either true or false. If it is true then we do not need a "personal word from God". We don't need God to speak to us because the Bible already contains everything that we need to know. In other words, it means that God has *already* spoken and all we need to do is read the Word that He has given to us.

However, if God *does* speak to His people today then 2 Timothy 3:17 is a lie. It means that the Bible is *not* enough and

that we need additional information that God failed to supply. It means that the Bible does not fully equip us for life but instead leaves us unprepared for many situations, and our only hope is for God to speak to us directly and fill in the critical information that He left out of the Bible. Since this train of thought is utterly ridiculous (because every word in the Bible is true, including 2 Timothy 3:17), that means that *there are no such things as personal words from God*.

But, some may say, isn't it true that God used to speak directly to His people? Didn't God speak to men through dreams, angels, and so forth? Yes He did, but the Bible tells us that He no longer does that. His method of speaking to us has changed:

Hebrews 1:1: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"

As you can see, things are different now. In the past God spoke to mankind in many different ways, but now God only speaks to us through His Son Jesus Christ – and Christ's teachings can be found written in the New Testament. The Bible that God gave to us is complete. He did not leave anything out.

Even In The Old Testament, God Rarely Spoke To People

I realize that people think that God has always led His people by speaking directly to them, but that is not the case. The

truth is that very few people in the Bible were *ever* spoken to by God. According to Dr. Sam Kurien:

"The only individuals who heard from God more than twice in the Old Testament are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Aaron, Joshua, David and Solomon. These eight and no more!"

Think about what that means! People commonly assume that God has always talked to His people to tell them what to do whenever they were faced with a decision, but that is not the case. Even in Bible times it was an extremely rare thing to hear from God. The Lord simply did *not* communicate with His people on a regular basis in order to guide them through life's decisions. There are large numbers of prominent Bible characters who never heard from God *even one time*, as Gary Gilley points out:

"Below are some of the important characters found in the Old Testament who never heard directly from God as far as we know: Caleb, Esther, Mordecai, Ruth, Joab, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jehoshapat, Jonathan, most of the judges, Ezra, Nehemiah, Shadrack, Meshach and Abd-nego (although they may have been comforted by the Son in the fire). In addition whole categories of key leaders never heard from God personally, including none of Jacob's sons except Joseph, none of the kings of Judah after Solomon, none of the judges except for Gideon, none of the returning exiles and none of David's mighty men or military leaders. This is just a sampling; many more could be cited." (Gary Gilley)

On top of that, when God did speak He *never* spoke through an "impression" or "feeling". As Dr. Sam Kurien pointed

out:

"When God spoke, it was in an audible voice, or on occasions through a vision or dream. There is not a single instance of God speaking to the mind or heart inaudibly through an inner voice."

People today like to say that "God spoke to my heart", but *nowhere in the entire Bible does God ever speak to anyone in that manner.* There is zero Biblical evidence that God communicates that way. It is true that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and helps us understand the Scriptures, but even the Spirit is never depicted as whispering to a person's heart. There is not one case of that anywhere in the Bible.

Moreover, when God did speak He talked about big-picture issues, not personal life decisions:

"When God did speak in Scripture it almost always dealt with the big picture of what God was doing in the outworking of His redemption program or the life of His people in general. You will search in vain to find God telling people what job to take, how many donkeys to buy, or what land to purchase — except as it was related to the bigger issue of God's dealings with His people." (Gary Gilley)

Today people believe that when they are faced with a decision they can ask God what to do and God will personally tell them what choice is right. The problem with this idea is that the Bible does not support it. That type of divine advice is exceedingly rare in the Bible. There were a couple men (like King David) who had the ability to inquire of God, but few people ever had that privilege, and those who did only used it in the most extreme circumstances. It has *never* been the ordinary course of

action for the average believer.

You will simply not find any verses in the Old or New Testament that say "When you are faced with a decision, ask God about it and He will divinely impress the correct decision upon your heart." Nor will you find any verses that say "Sometimes God will impress an action on your heart, and whenever God does that you should obey it immediately." I realize how common these two beliefs are, but they are not Biblical. It is true that God guides us, but He speaks to us through His Word, *not* through "impressions" or direct revelation. It is true that God shapes our lives, but He does so by His divine power – the same power He uses to raise up nations and cast them down. God is *not* sitting in Heaven hoping that you will make the right decision so that His plans will work.

But What About The Apostles?

Some might say, weren't there times in the Bible when God guided the lives of the apostles? Yes, there are – and in each case He did so through angels or supernatural revelation, *not* through speaking to their heart:

"...all of the examples which are selected to support individual guidance are clearly instances of *supernatural revelation*. In the book of Acts, such guidance came through visions (Acts 9:10-16; 10:3-8; 10:17; 16:9-10; 18:9; 22:17-21), angelic messenger (Acts 8:26; 12:7-8; 27:23), physical miracle (Acts 8:39), an audible voice from God (8:29; 9:3-6; 10:19-20; 23:11) or a prophet who had received direct

revelation (Acts 21:10-11). Are there other recorded examples where detailed guidance was given through some means other than supernatural revelation? No. . .

"At no point in Scripture do we read of a believer asking, "What is God's individual will for me in this matter?" Much of the terminology found in presentations of the traditional view is absent, either in vocabulary or on concept, from the pages of the Bible. One does not read of the "specific will," "center of God's will," "right decision," "putting out a fleece," or even "finding God's will."

"But even more startling is the fact that no decision is ever explained on the basis that it was "God's individual will." Today we commonly hear people say, "I did thus and such because I knew it was God's will for me." Or, "I felt in my heart God wanted me to do it." The apostles often gave reasons for their decisions, but never in such terms." (Garry Friesen, *Decision Making and The Will of God*, p. 91-92)

Many people believe that God has an individual will for their lives, and it's up to them to seek that will and figure out what God wants them to do. Does God want them to go into this profession, or that one? What house does God want them to buy? What car does God want them to own? People pray about it, get an impression in their mind, and assume that their impression is God's command for their life.

Yet people ignore the fact that *no one in the entire Bible ever lived their life that way*. Gideon's fleece was a real, actual fleece and a real, actual supernatural miracle. The still small

voice that spoke to Elijah was an actual, audible voice, not an "impression" or "feeling". Even in those miraculous cases there is no evidence that either of them spent the rest of their lives living out that example. Gideon did not spend his life putting out more fleeces. No Bible character ever sought a divine word from God for every decision that they faced in life – and the reason is because *that's not how God works*. Instead God gave us His Word and He wants us to live by its principles. Sadly, the modern generation has decided that the Bible isn't good enough for them. Instead they want God to "whisper the right decision to their heart" – even though God never promised to do that. God guides our life by His power, His providence, and His Word – *not* by "impressions" or "feelings".

Do Not Reject God's Word Based On Your Personal Experiences; Instead Judge Your Experiences By God's Word

But, you might say, isn't all of this negated by the fact that these "personal words" really do exist? After all, God really does speak to people and tell them to do things! People pray for guidance and then they suddenly know what to do. Sometimes people get the urge to call someone, and lo and behold something good comes of it. Isn't that proof that God really does speak to His children today?

I'm afraid not. You see, there is an enormous difference between "I suddenly knew what to do" and "God Himself told me which choice was right". Likewise, there is a big leap between "I heard a voice" and "That voice was definitely God". In each case *you* are deciding that the voice must be from God. You are ruling out the notion that it might have been your own idea, and the

reason you are ruling it out is because of *your belief* that God talks directly to His children. Therefore, if you ask God what to do and you suddenly think of something, your belief leads you to conclude that whatever you just thought of must have come from God. *But that is not the only possible explanation.*

There is an easy way to prove that these "impressions" do not come from God. You see, God cannot lie and *God cannot be wrong*. Whenever God speaks He speaks authoritatively. In fact, the way prophets were tested was by evaluating the outcome of their predictions. If they ever got *anything* wrong then they were false prophets, and God demanded that they be executed for lying:

Deuteronomy 18:20: "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?
22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

That is how serious it was to claim that God spoke to you. People who stood up and said "This is what God told me" were literally putting their very life on the line. If anyone ever claimed to be speaking for God when God had not actually spoke to them, *God commanded that they be executed*. This means that whenever you stand up and say that God told you something when it wasn't God at all, you are committing a sin as serious as murder. If you are wrong about the source of your "impressions" then you are committing a *very, very serious sin*. You may take it

lightly, but *God does not*. It is a very serious business to say "God told me".

It is even worse when you realize that there is no record of God ever talking to someone through "impressions" or "feelings". People who say "God told me" have invented an entirely new method of divine revelation that has no Biblical support whatsoever. That is a very dangerous thing to do. If you are wrong and that inner voice isn't actually God then *you are in a whole lot of trouble*.

So what about these "impressions" – are they 100% accurate 100% of the time? Absolutely not! Sometimes they work out and sometimes they don't. When something good happens people use that as proof that it was from God, but when things go terribly wrong they say that they "misunderstood" – or they blame God for giving them bad advice! On top of that, there are times when one person claims the Holy Spirit told them one thing while another person claims the opposite. Is God divided? Do you really think that God is so confused that He can't even figure out His own will for people? Of course not! The truth is that God isn't speaking to anyone. He doesn't do that anymore *because He wants us to live by the Bible*.

Since these "impressions" cannot be trusted 100% of the time, that means they cannot possibly be from God. A prophet that had that kind of track record was labeled a false prophet and was to be *put to death* for the serious crime of claiming that God said something *when God had not said anything at all*. Putting words in God's mouth is *that serious* to God.

The Bible has a lot of negative things to say about these "personal words from God". It says that the Scriptures are all we need in order to thoroughly furnish us for all good works. It says that we do not need *any* other revelation. It says that God has stopped speaking to people through dreams and visions and direct revelation. It says that very few people in all of history have ever heard directly from God Himself, and that God has

never talked to *anyone* by impressing something upon their mind. It also says that anything that is not 100% accurate 100% of the time is not the voice of God.

All of this makes it crystal clear that "personal words from God" are just our attempt to dodge responsibility for our own actions. Instead of being honest and saying "I decided to do that", we claim that it was God's doing. Instead of admitting that our dream really was just a dream (and not an actual guided tour of Heaven), we claim that God is giving us extra information that He did not include in the Bible – information that we *have* to have, even though 2 Timothy 3:17 says that the Bible is enough to cover all situations that we will ever encounter.

The Bible Is A Finished Book

That last point often gets overlooked. If personal words from God exist, then the Bible is an open book that can be added to at any time by anyone who claims to have heard from God. It means that the Bible isn't finished but is a work in progress that is being constantly enlarged. After all, it's impossible for Jesus to speak with anything less than absolute authority! If Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, told someone something then whatever He said is absolute truth and we should add it to our Bibles. If Jesus gave someone a tour of Heaven and revealed all kinds of new information about it then we should add a new book to the Scriptures. After all, Jesus has spoken and every one of His words is flawless. It means that we should be busy collecting all of this new revelation and adding it to our Bibles so that everyone can know what *else* Jesus had to say.

I realize that line of reasoning is ridiculous, but that is exactly where belief in "personal words from God" leads. The

Bible simply does not support the idea that the Word is an open book that can be added to as the need arises. After all, we are told that we should contend for the faith that was *once* delivered to the saints:

Jude 1:3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was **once** delivered unto the saints."

You can search your Bible from cover to cover and you will never find any verse that says "The Scripture is a work in progress. God is going to add a lot more to this as time goes on, so stay tuned!" The Bible is a closed book; you cannot add a Book of Mormon, a Book of Tours of Heaven, or a Book of Things That Jesus Revealed To Me. I realize how popular the "God gave me a tour of Heaven" books are, but guess what: that constitutes *new revelation from God*, and God is not in the business of giving people new revelation.

This is how one person put it:

"The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture does not imply that God cannot add any more words to those he has already spoken to his people. It rather implies that man cannot add on his own initiative any words to those that God has already spoken. Furthermore, it implies that in fact God has not spoken to mankind any more words which he requires us to believe or obey other than those which we have now in the Bible." (Grudem)

Does this mean that God will never speak to His people again? Of course not. But it does mean that for now, in this era

and in this life, the Bible is all that we need. When we crave a "personal word from God" we are telling God that His Word is not enough – that God omitted important information that we cannot live without. We are telling Him that His Word does not thoroughly equip us for all good works and that we need something more in order to get by. That does not honor God or His Word.

The truth is that God did *not* tell you to make that choice and God did *not* speak to you and give you new revelation. There are no personal words from God! The Bible is all that God has given to us, and it really is all that we need.

Appendix H: Treasure in Heaven

It's extremely important to give your life to Jesus. All too often we use that as a rather meaningless phrase, but the truth is that Jesus really *does* want you to give your life to Him. He wants you to give up who you are to become His servant, dedicated solely to doing His will, glorifying Him, and building His kingdom. God wants all of your heart, all of your passion, and all of your energy. He literally wants you to live for Him.

Now we are going to explore one of the facets of what it means to live for Him. Living for Christ means a complete change in the way that we think. It alters our priorities, our desires, our dreams, and our ambitions. It is a complete lifestyle change. It alters who we are and what we do. We can't possibly explore everything that it means in a single sermon, but we can take a look at one piece of it, and the piece that I would like to take a look at is our *stuff*.

In this life people spend a great deal of time getting as much stuff as they possibly can. This is a pretty universal trait for the entire human race. No matter how much stuff we have, people generally want even more. People who have thousands of dollars want millions of dollars; people who have millions want billions; people who have billions want billions more. People spend their entire lives trying to accumulate as much stuff as they possibly can.

Some people have responded to this in the past by saying that Christians should take a vow of poverty. They claim that since Jesus was poor then we ought to be poor as well. They condemn the accumulation of stuff and they condemn the wealthy. Wealth, they say, is bad. Christians just shouldn't live like that.

That all sounds very spiritual, but it's not Biblical. God gave Abraham an incredible amount of wealth – so much so that when Lot was carried away captive by an invading army,

Abraham trained 318 of his servants in order to defeat the army and rescue his nephew. You've got to be pretty well off if you have more than 300 servants! Likewise, God gave David an incredible amount of wealth – so much so that David donated *billions* of dollars worth of material in order to build the Temple. God also gave Solomon a *staggering* amount of wealth – not because Solomon asked for it, but just because God wanted to. God never chastised any of these people for being wealthy. *Having money is not a sin.*

Jesus had a lot to say about the subject of money, but He never condemned wealth. What He actually did say is quite startling. Jesus told us to **lay up our treasures in Heaven:**

Matthew 6:19-21: "19 Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

There's a lot in these verses and I'd like to take some time to delve into them. First of all, notice that Jesus doesn't prohibit the accumulation of treasure. Jesus has no problem with people storing up wealth. He could easily have said "Don't you dare lay up treasure; that is a sin, and it's bad." Instead He said something very different: He wants us to lay up our treasures in Heaven instead of Earth.

Now, this verse tends to get spiritualized quite a bit. People read this and assume that it's talking about spiritual blessings. They interpret these verses to mean something like this: "If I work for God then God will bless me spiritually." That may sound plausible, but it's *not* what the verse means.

Stop and think about it for a moment. Jesus said if we store our treasures on Earth then they are subject to decay and might be stolen; however, if we store them in Heaven then they cannot be stolen and they will last forever. These statements make a lot of sense if we are talking about physical treasure, but they make *no sense at all* if we are talking about spiritual blessings. It is absolutely *impossible* for moths to eat your spiritual blessings or for a thief to steal them. Just take a moment to think through the various spiritual blessings that God has given you. God has promised us eternal security in Christ; can a moth eat that? God has promised to always be with us and to never forsake us; can a burglar steal that promise while we're away on vacation? Of course not! The only things that moths can eat and thieves can steal are *physical goods*. Christ is saying exactly what He seems to be saying: we should relocate our physical goods to Heaven so that they can't be stolen. In other words, God wants us to use Heaven like an *offshore bank account*.

I realize this sounds crazy, but that's because we have a very unbiblical view of Heaven. When many people think of Heaven they picture a big white place with lots of clouds and harps, where people spend eternity strumming their harp and not really doing much else. That picture of Heaven is *not remotely Biblical*. The place that the Bible describes is completely different – and the Bible actually spends a great deal of time describing it. The Bible has far more to say about Heaven than we realize, and it's a real shame that we get most of our ideas about Heaven from Hollywood.

First of all, Heaven is not a vague place with clouds. The Bible tells us that ***Heaven is actually a city***:

Hebrews 11:16: "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a

city."

What has God prepared for us? A *city*. Notice that it doesn't say "a cloud"! We are *not* going to spend eternity floating on a cloud somewhere; we're going to spend it living *in a city*. The last two chapters of the Bible spend a lot of time describing this Heavenly city, which the Bible names "the New Jerusalem". This incredibly large city has trees, and streets, and a stream, and walls, and food, and God Himself.

Now, all of us know a great deal about cities; after all, most people have spent their lives living in a city or near one. One of the things we know about cities is that they have places for people to live, and the New Jerusalem is no different. The Bible tells us exactly what we can expect as far as living accommodations go:

John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

I realize that a lot of modern Bible translations have rendered this verse as "many rooms", and I think that's deplorable. I don't have time right now to delve into why that's the case, but I can say that Jesus is *not* talking about rooms here. Jesus is not saying "When you get to Heaven I've got a spare closet that you can spend eternity living in." That's ridiculous! The New Jerusalem is full of *homes*. It is an enormous city that covers more than *2 million square miles*. God is not hurting for space, and He does not have to stuff all of us in closets in order to make room for everybody. Do you seriously believe that your home on Earth, regardless of how nice it is, can even remotely compare to what God Himself has spent *two thousand years* preparing for you?

On top of that, I assure you that when you reach your

heavenly home you are not going to find a big building that is completely empty. You are not going to spend eternity wandering around an empty building, wishing you had a chair to sit on. Houses are furnished on Earth and they will be furnished in Heaven. They will have *things* inside them. There is nothing wrong with this; physical goods are not evil. If they were then Jesus would not be urging you to accumulate them in Heaven.

So, then, in Heaven you will have a place to live and your home will have stuff in it. What Jesus is saying in these verses is that you should take the stuff that you have here and relocate it to Heaven so that you will still have it when you reach Heaven. It's true that you cannot take it with you, but you *can* send it up ahead. That is the point of this passage.

Now, I'm not saying that there is some magical way you can mail your baseball card collection to Heaven so that you can have it in the ages to come. You cannot take your favorite shirt and mail it to the New Jerusalem so that you'll have it in the future. There is no way to actually move an item from this world into the next. However, there *are* ways that you can use your Earthly possessions in order to lay up real, actual treasures in your Heavenly home.

Now, there are some people who claim that there's no such thing as treasure in Heaven because in Heaven everyone is equal and everyone has exactly the same thing. They reject the idea that some people in Heaven might have more than other people, or that some people might have a higher status than others. This is a very common belief, but it's not Biblical. In fact, I Corinthians 3 says quite the opposite:

I Corinthians 3:11-15: "11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the

day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

This passage is clearly saying that every man's work will be tested, and anything that does not pass the test will be lost. A reward will be given to some people, and it will *not* be given to others. You see, ***God actually cares how we spend our lives***, and He will reward us accordingly. God is not going to say "Bob spent his life faithfully serving me, while Fred spent his entire life lying drunk on the floor; I'm going to give them both the same reward because I don't care what they did with their time." That's insane. As Paul explains, people who wasted their lives will still be saved, but they will suffer loss. They will attain eternal life but they will receive no reward. Those who faithfully served God, though, *will* be rewarded. The idea that "everyone will have the same thing" is just not Biblical.

So just how *do* you lay up treasure in Heaven? One key way is to **give to the poor**:

Matthew 19:21: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

Luke 12:31: "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves

bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Jesus is *very* clear about this: if you give to the poor then you *will* have treasure in Heaven. Jesus does not say "you might", but "you *will*". This is a guaranteed, ironclad way of transferring your wealth from this life into the next. If you give to the poor then God will give you "bags which wax not old", a treasure in the heavens that does not fail.

There are countless ways that we can give to the poor in the name of Christ. This church in particular is really great when it comes to giving to the poor; there are all sorts of opportunities all throughout the year. In fact, every time we have communion the offering goes straight to feeding the poor. The Navajo bucket ministry was another opportunity to give to the poor. If you don't want to wait until another opportunity comes up you could always give to Compassion International. They are a highly competent and respected Christian ministry that cares for poor people all over the world. They offer many ways to give – ranging from sponsoring a child to providing a family with clean water. If you want to give to the poor then there are a *lot* of poor people out there, and there are a lot of ways to do it. You really don't have to look very hard.

Now, I'd like to point out once again that Christ describes this Heavenly treasure as something that is *real and tangible*. He talks about bags that do not wear out and goods that are not eaten by moths. If Christ was talking spiritual blessings He could easily have said "Seek the kingdom of God and you will be drawn closer to God, which is your reward.", but that's *not* what He said. Instead He talked as if the treasure was some type of physical good that would ordinarily be subject to the wear and

tear of this life. (There is a reason for this, and I will get to it, but you'll have to wait until the end. Just be patient and bear with me.)

Another key way to amass Heavenly treasure is **to be persecuted for serving God:**

Matthew 5:11: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Luke 6:22: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake."

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets."

If you are persecuted and suffer for the sake of Christ then you will be rewarded. In fact, your reward in Heaven will be *great*. Keep in mind that *Jesus*, the creator of the Universe, is the one who is saying "Yes, your reward will be truly astonishing." *God* is the one who is saying that your reward will be so amazing and mind-blowing that you should be leaping for joy. You have hit the jackpot; you have it made.

As Americans we're really not very persecuted. Our life is nothing like those who live in nations like Iran, where being a Christian can send you to jail or get you killed. We simply don't face situations like that here. However, that is rapidly changing. The day will come when we will suffer greatly for being faithful to Christ and standing by His Word. When that day comes, Jesus commands us to *leap for joy* because of the great reward that we

will have in Heaven.

Now, a lot of Christians have this idea that rewards are somehow unspiritual or bad. Some people claim that wanting a reward is a sign of immaturity. I'd like to point out that the person who commands us to *want* these rewards and *get excited* over them is actually *Jesus Himself* – and He said this not once, but *twice*. He *wants* us to be excited about what He's going to give us.

This really shouldn't surprise us. After all, how would you feel if you gave a present to someone and found out that they weren't excited about it, didn't particularly want it, and were bored with the whole thing? Isn't it much better when you give a gift that you *know* is wanted and longed for, and will be enjoyed and appreciated? Do you really want to give someone a gift just to hear them say "No thanks; I'm not interested. I'm too spiritual to care about gifts. Just keep it."? Of course not – and God doesn't want that either. God is going to give us something, and He really does *not* want us to spend our lives saying "No thanks; I don't want it.". That attitude does not honor God.

We've talked about amassing Heavenly treasure by giving to the poor, and about amassing it by being persecuted for following Christ. There is another way to amass treasure, and that is to receive the servants of God as who they are, or by helping others in the name of God:

Matthew 10:40: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these

little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

This isn't as difficult as you might think. As the world becomes a darker place, the world will pressure us to distance ourselves from people who are the faithful servants of God. When the prophets were alive they were hated; people despised them, refused to hear what they had to say, and executed them. Those who stood by the prophets and supported them were doing something daring, and God promised to reward them. Likewise, when we stand by the faithful people of God and help them, instead of joining with the world to attack them, then God will reward us.

Also, as you can see, helping others in the name of God will result in a reward. Giving a cup of water in the name of Christ is not as hard as it seems. Compassion International actually has a program where they give water filters to families and villages that provides them with a clean and disease-free source of water – and they do so in the name of Christ, and use it as an opportunity to share the gospel. Their website allows you to sponsor a water filter for a family for \$50. That filter can provide a *lifetime* of clean water for a family that otherwise would not have it.

The reason I mention this isn't to single Compassion out, but to say that the world is full of people who need help, and there is no shortage of opportunities to help them. If we are willing to act then there is a lot that we can do.

Now that we've spent some time discussing *how* you amass rewards, I'd like to talk about an entirely different class of rewards. One of the things the Bible says is that it is possible to earn certain types of crowns. These crowns are not crowns of authority (although we will reign on the Earth) but crowns of

victory. The Bible refers to these as **incorruptible crowns**:

1 Corinthians 9:24: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

As you can see, you have to *earn* these crowns. Some people will get them and some people won't. Paul urges us to run the race faithfully and to discipline ourselves so that when we are judged we will not come away empty-handed. If you want an incorruptible crown then you are going to have to work for it. You see, God puts a difference between Christians who live faithfully for Christ and Christians who don't. Those who serve well will be rewarded, and those who couldn't be bothered will not. The way that we live our lives, and the choices that we make, really does matter.

One of the crowns that we can earn is the **crown of righteousness**:

2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

This crown is an easy one to earn: all you have to do is

long for the return of Christ. Those who are looking forward to the Rapture and who eagerly want Jesus to return will be given the crown of righteousness. That's all you have to do.

The sad truth is that if Christ were to return today there would be very few people who would receive this crown. There are many Christians in the world today who do not want Jesus to come back. They are actually terrified that Jesus might come back at any minute and interrupt all the stuff they have going on. They want Jesus to stay away until they've finished their plans and have accomplished everything they want to do. If God were to send us a message saying that He would return at noon tomorrow, a great many Christians would be beside themselves because that would interrupt their plans. The things of the world have so ensnared us that many people see the return of Christ as a serious problem.

This is a truly terrible attitude to have. Imagine a bride telling her groom "No, I really don't want to marry you just yet. I've got a life to live, and things to do, and dreams to accomplish, and you are just a hindrance to all of that. You just need to stay away until I'm done." No groom is going to be happy about hearing that – and Christ does not want to hear it from His Bride either. He wants us to long for His return, to eagerly hope for it, and to wish each day that perhaps today He would finally come for us.

Think of it this way: is your life, and your dreams, and your desires, really more important than the *Rapture*, the *raising of the dead*, and the translation of all saints into *incorruptible immortals*? I mean, *really*? You are more important than all of that? You want Christ to delay coming back and rescuing all the Christians all over the world who are being *persecuted, tortured, and executed* just so you can finish your plans? You are so important that you want all those people to keep on suffering just so you're not inconvenienced? If you seriously believe that then you have issues.

Those who long for the return of Christ will receive the crown of righteousness; those who do not will not receive it.

Another type of crown is the **crown of life**:

James 1:12: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

As we can see, the crown of life is given to those who *endure temptation*. Christ wants us to love Him, and the way we show our love for Him is by keeping His commandments (John 14:15). This means that those who keep His commandments prove that they really do love Him. Those who endure temptation and defeat it, choosing to walk in the ways of God instead of the ways of the flesh, will be given the crown of life. In other words, the way that you live your life *really matters*. It is not ok to just keep living in sin. God does put a difference between those who fight and overcome sin, and those who can't be bothered.

Peter speaks of the third type of crown – the **crown of glory**:

1 Peter 5:1: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not

for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The only people who are eligible to receive this crown are pastors, evangelists, and elders. This crown is given to church leaders who faithfully and selflessly take care of the Church. Those who are good examples, who preach the whole Word, who take care of the flock, and who do so not for wealth and power but out of an earnest desire to help, will receive a crown of glory. On the other hand, those who are faithless, or who set a terrible example, or who preach heresy, or who abuse the flock for their own gain, will lose this crown. Once again we see that faithfulness is rewarded. God really does care about what you're doing.

Some people will receive these crowns, and other people will go away empty-handed. Jesus Himself said that we must be careful because these crowns *can* be lost:

Revelation 3:11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Now, our *salvation* cannot be lost and *eternal life* cannot be lost, so Christ is not talking about either of those. What *can* be lost are our crowns, because they are rewards for a life well-lived. This also puts crowns in a bit of a different category from other Heavenly treasure. If you give to the poor then God will reward you, and that reward cannot be lost no matter what. Crowns, though, are trickier to earn because they can only be earned by a lifetime of faithful service. They are harder to get, and few people will get them.

The idea of being rewarded for our service makes some

people uncomfortable, but *this is Christ's idea*, not our own. God is *not* doing something wrong by generously rewarding people. We also need to keep in mind what people in Heaven will do with these rewards. On Earth people earn rewards by faithfully serving God. In Heaven people will take their rewards and use them to bring glory and honor to God:

Revelation 4:9-11: "9 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever,
10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

What are these people doing with their crowns? They are casting them before the throne of God and worshiping Him. The Lord had glorified them, and they have used their glory to worship the Father.

Which brings us back to where we started this morning. God wants us to use the possessions that He has given us to honor Him. When we do that – when we give to the poor, help others in the name of Christ, and suffer for His name – then God has promised to reward us. When we get to Heaven and receive the rewards that God chose to give us, we will take them and use them to glorify God – which is how we got them in the first place.

So, spend your life serving God. Lay up rewards in Heaven. Provide for yourself bags that do not wax old, and an incorruptible crown that does not fade away – so that when the day comes, you can honor the Lord and glorify Him with all the things He has given you.

When we glorify God, the Lord will reward us in Heaven. When we receive our reward in Heaven, we will use it to glorify God. You might say that the reason God rewards us is so we can use that reward to glorify Him. Of course, you have to have a reward in order to do that, don't you? After all, you can't cast your crown before the Throne if you don't have a crown in the first place.

Appendix K: The Nephilim

Genesis 6 begins with a tale of intermarriage between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men". This union created giants, or "nephilim" in Hebrew. This intermarriage was so evil that it prompted a terrible punishment from the Lord and led to the great Flood. The question is, who were these giants? This is not a topic that is commonly discussed but I believe it's worth investigating.

Let's start by taking a look at the passage itself:

Genesis 6:1: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,
2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.
3 And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.
4 There were giants⁵³⁰³ in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men¹³⁶⁸ which were of old, men of renown."

There are a few interesting things about this passage. First of all, no "daughters of God" married "sons of men" – it went strictly the other way. Second, the union resulted only in *sons*. None of the children became "mighty women" and there is no evidence that any *daughters* were born to these couples. That in itself is quite strange and hints that something unusual is going on.

Some claim that the "sons of God" refers to godly men

and the "daughters of men" refers to sinful women, and that the passage is speaking about the dangers of marrying unbelievers. But if that is the case then why weren't any daughters born to these couples and why did their offspring become giants? Verse 4 clearly says that each one of these children became "mighty men" of extraordinary ability. All of these facts make it highly unlikely that this is a simple case of believers marrying unbelievers. I think that something else is going on – something quite unusual and disturbing.

We can learn a little more about what is going on by examining the passage's key words. In Hebrew, they are:

Mighty men: 1368. Powerful, warrior, tyrant, champion, chief, giant, mighty, strong.

Giants: 5303. Hebrew: "nephil". "It means a bully, a tyrant, a giant. It appears three times in the OT (Gen 6:4, Num 13:33). Since the etymology is uncertain, there is much speculation among reputable scholars concerning the nature of these individuals. Until more evidence becomes available, perhaps it is wise to do as the RSV and NIV translations did: render it "Nephilim".

Right away we can see that we've stumbled across a mystery. The very definition of the Hebrew word "nephil" is so fraught with uncertainty that scholars recommend the word *remain untranslated!* Once again, if these people are simply humans then why is there all this mystery? If the author had wanted to describe sinful people then there are a lot of clear and well-understood Hebrew words that he could have used, but instead he chose a word that is cloaked in mystery and uncertainty. There is clearly something significant going on here.

For the record, the only other use of the word "nephilim"

(giants) in the Bible can be found here:

Numbers 13:33: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

Notice the description of these beings. The Israeli spies reported that the nephilim were giants of extraordinary size, which matches the description in Genesis 6. These were clearly not normal people and the Israelites were terrified at the sight of them. Of course, this just deepens the mystery. What is going on here?

I believe the key to understanding this passage can be found in the use of the phrase "sons of God". Each nephilim had two parents: a "son of God" and a "daughter of man". The phrase "daughter of man" literally means "female", so that's easy enough to understand. But who were the sons of God? As it turns out, that phrase is used in exactly three other places in the Old Testament. All three occur in the book of Job, and in each case the phrase refers to *angels*:

Job 1:6: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."

Job 2:1: "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord."

Job 38:4: "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.

5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou

knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it?

6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof;

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

As you can see, in each case the beings known as the "sons of God" are angels, not men. It's true that in the New Testament believers are called "sons of God" (John 1:12) but at the time when Genesis 6:1-4 was written that was not the case. Nowhere in the entire Old Testament are human beings ever referred to as "sons of God". Job is one of the oldest books of the Bible and it is not a stretch to imagine that the Hebrew phrase "sons of God" carries the same meaning in both Job and Genesis. Therefore, if "sons of God" means "angels" in Job then it also means "angels" in Genesis 6. In this particular case it refers to *fallen* angels, or demons. If the nephilim were the product of a demonic father and a human mother then they would be half-demon and half-human. It's no wonder they were beings of terrible power and breathtaking evil!

It's also worth noting the difference between a "son of man" and a "son of God": sons of men are *born* while sons of God are *created*. A son of God refers to a being that was created directly by God Himself, which would include Adam and the angels. Once Christ appeared He made it possible for others to become "sons of God" by becoming Christians, but that was not an option in the Old Testament. (Many Old Testament people were saved, but none of them were ever called sons of God. That only started happening in the New Testament after the appearance of Christ.) Aside from Adam and Eve, all humans are born from human parents and are not created by a direct act of divine will.

(As a side-note, notice that all angels were created

directly by God Himself. Angels do not have other angels as parents, nor do they bear offspring. They were all divinely created and therefore they are all "sons of God").

Some have objected to this interpretation and say that in the New Testament Jesus says that angels are not given in marriage:

Mark 12:25: "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."

That statement is true: the angels *which are in Heaven* do not marry. However, the Bible never says that angels are *incapable* of intermarrying with humans, nor does it say that fallen angels never marry *on Earth*. What *is* clear is that they are not allowed to marry humans, and that doing so is a great sin that damns the angel for all of eternity. It is not surprising that angels don't marry in Heaven because in Heaven the Lord's will is done. *Demons, however, have no interest in doing the Lord's will.*

I believe Genesis 6 teaches that in the days before the Flood, demons intermarried with humans and produced a new race of powerful, evil beings. This race (which was composed entirely of men) was destroyed by the Flood, which wiped out everyone except for the line of Noah. What's particularly interesting about this is that Noah's genealogy did not include any of these "sons of God". This is critically important because *the Messiah had to be a pure human*. No Messiah could be part human, part God, and part demon!

Incidentally, this is what the Bible means when it says that Noah was perfect in his generations:

Genesis 6:9: "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his

generations, and Noah walked with God."

First, the verse says that Noah was just, which means exactly that. It then goes on to say that he was "perfect in his generations". What that actually means is that he was perfect in his genetic lineage – in other words, he was a purebred human and had no demons in his ancestry. That is one of the reasons why the lineage in Genesis 5 is so important – it clearly demonstrates that Noah (and therefore, the Messiah) did not have any demonic ancestors.

The nephilim were actually a clever plan by Satan: he was trying to corrupt the genetic line of man in order to make it impossible for the Messiah to come. God solved that problem by wiping out the nephilim in the Flood. In this context the Flood makes a lot of sense – it was *vital* for everything that was tainted by demonic DNA to be wiped out. Of course, Satan wasn't content with attempting this just once; he later tried it again in the land of Canaan in order to stop the Israelites from entering the Promised Land. This could be another reason why God ordered every last Canaanite destroyed – He wanted the nephilim to be wiped out.

There are a couple of other passages that may be related to the nephilim. The first one can be found in 2 Peter:

2 Peter 2:4: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell⁵⁰²⁰, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;
5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;"

The word that is used for "hell" in this passage is a very

special one that is used *only in this one passage*. This is its definition:

Hell: 5020. "Found only in its verbal form in 2 Peter 2:4, meaning to consign to Tartarus (which is neither Sheol of the OT, nor Hades of the NT, nor Gehenna, nor hell, but the place where certain angels are confined, reserved unto judgment). This punishment for these angels is because of their special sin."

Notice what this says here. These fallen angels (or demons) are confined to a special place called Tartarus. This is actually *not* the same "hell" that we're all familiar with. When people die without accepting Jesus they go to hell, not Tartarus. Tartarus is a special place that is populated only by demons who committed a very special and terrible sin. To put it another way, there are actually *two* hells – the normal one and Tartarus. Humans cannot be sent to Tartarus. It is reserved strictly for a special class of demons.

Now it's obvious that there are many demons that are not bound in Tartarus. Quite a few of them wander over the surface of the Earth and cause all sorts of horrors. Yet there are some demons who committed a sin so terrible that they are no longer permitted to wander the earth. If this is an accurate reading of the text then what sin did they commit? Isn't it quite likely that the demons that are spoken of here are the "sons of God" that created the nephilim in Genesis 6, and that their great sin was intermarrying with humans?

I think it's worth noting that in the *very next verse* Peter speaks of Noah and the Flood. Isn't it possible that the two verses are related – that the great sin that these angels committed had something to do with the Flood that destroyed the old world? If fallen angels did intermarry with humans and

produced a race of evil offspring then it would make sense that the Lord would judge it, and it would make sense to mention the Flood when referring to this event. It would also be easy to understand why the Lord imprisoned these demons; He didn't want them to do it again.

There is one other possible mention of this event. It can be found in Jude:

Jude 1:6: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation³⁶¹³, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.
7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Here we have another mention of angels that are "reserved in everlasting chains" and waiting for the final judgment. The very next verse speaks of Sodom and Gomorrha and highlights it as *a second* example of what happens to those who engage in fornication and immorality. Note the use of the phrase "even as", which indicates that both the angels *and* Sodom were guilty of the same type of sin. If Jude is speaking of fallen angels that intermarried with humans then this makes a lot of sense, for in that case both the demons and the residents of Sodom were guilty of fornication and gross sexual misconduct.

Interestingly, the Bible seems to indicate that one day the nephilim will return. In the book of Daniel we find this passage:

Daniel 2:43: "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not

mixed with clay."

Notice the highlighted part: Daniel said that "they" would "mingle themselves with the seed of men". That's a rather odd phrase, isn't it? Who is "they"? What is this verse talking about?

If you look up this verse in other translations you will get mixed results. Some translations preserve this odd phrase (which is a direct translation of the original Aramaic), while others butcher it beyond recognition. The Geneva Bible preserves it, as does the ASV and the NAS. The ESV and the NIV butcher it, though: instead of just translating it they offer their own interpretation of it (although the ESV adds a footnote that points out what the original Aramaic actually says). Incidentally, that is one of many reasons why I dislike the NIV. I don't want their *interpretation* of the passage; what I want to know is *what the passage actually said*.

The original Aramaic really does say "they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men". This implies that something very strange is going on. If "they" are going to mingle with the "seed of men" then it seems rather obvious that "they" *are not part of mankind!* Daniel explains that this mingling doesn't work out very well: the iron and the clay just don't mix. We humans are clearly the clay; we were made from dust and we return back to dust. These others, though – the "they" – are depicted as being iron, which indicates a much stronger and more powerful race of beings. They are trying to mix with the clay, but what results is very brittle.

I think this is a reference to the nephilim. Before the Flood, the demons intermarried with humans and produced a race that was neither human nor demon – it was a mixture of "iron" and "clay". When Daniel gave this prophecy he was speaking about things that will take place in the end-times. In other words, what happened before is going to happen again: the nephilim are going to come back.

Interestingly, Christ told us that just before the Second Coming things would be like they were in the days of Noah:

Matthew 24:37: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,
39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Just as people were going about their lives right up until the Flood came and killed them all, so people will be going about their lives right up until Jesus returns. But there are other parallels as well. Just as the Flood was God's judgment upon a wicked world, so the Tribulation will be God's judgment on a wicked world. Just as Enoch was taken from Earth and spared having to live through the Flood, so the Church will be taken from the Earth and be spared having to live through the Tribulation. Finally, in the days before the Flood demons intermingled themselves with the seed of men – and we are told that in the last days "they" will intermingle themselves with the seed of men.

Some people have speculated that this might tie into the Mark of the Beast. One of the puzzling things about the Mark is that whoever takes it cannot be saved; they are lost forever and there is no way to repent of it. The Bible is very clear that taking the Mark is unforgivable:

Revelation 14:9: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Whoever takes the Mark *will* face the eternal and unending wrath of God. There is no forgiveness for this sin – only the certainty of unending fiery judgment. But how is that possible? Why would taking the Mark condemn someone for all of eternity? After all, isn't the blood of Jesus sufficient to cover all of our sins? Why would this sin be any different?

Here is something to think about: the reason the blood of Jesus can save us is because Jesus became *a man*. Jesus had to become a man in order to die in our place; the sacrifice only worked because He was fully man and fully God. His sacrifice, however, is only good *for mankind*. As I have discussed elsewhere, His death *cannot* provide atonement for fallen angels. Since the nephilim are not purebred humans, Christ's atoning sacrifice would not work for them. Someone who is partly demonic (not just demon-possessed but *actually demonic*) would not be eligible for salvation.

You may not realize this, but there is actually a great deal of research going on in a field called transhumanism. The purpose of this research is to alter the human genetic code to create people who are "trans-human" – in other words, to create humans that are no longer human beings. Transhumanists believe that mankind can perfect itself and attain both godhood and immortality by altering our DNA. If we just combine our own

DNA with a combination of DNA from the animal kingdom and synthetic DNA, we can create a race of beings that are smarter, faster, stronger, and that live forever.

Scientists have made a staggering amount of progress toward this goal. Not only have they learned how to create purely synthetic DNA, but they have already started experimenting with combining animal DNA with human DNA to create something that is neither animal nor human. They have even found a mechanism that can be used to alter the DNA of living, adult human beings. People are very serious about this:

The ability to tinker with our genes offers the astounding promise – and peril – of immortality, which mythically has been the defining difference between gods and mortals. It also offers the possibility of an even greater variety of breeds of humans than there is of dogs. (Joel Garreau, *Radical Evolution*)

The prospect of building godlike creatures fills me with a sense of religious awe that goes to the very depth of my soul and motivates me powerfully to continue, despite the possible horrible negative consequences. (Prof. Hugo de Garis, artificial brain designer)

There are large groups of people who are committed to making this a reality. Imagine if, halfway through the Tribulation, there is an announcement made that science has had a tremendous breakthrough. Immortality is now possible – all you need to do is take the Mark, which will rewrite your DNA. You will then become a superhuman – a new race of being.

If this comes to pass then Satan will have invented a new sin – one that cannot be forgiven. After all, your sins can only be covered *if you are a human being*. If the devil can trick people

into altering themselves on a DNA level so that they are no longer human, then the sacrifice of Christ would no longer apply. They would be beyond redemption for all of eternity. Once you crossed that line (and scientists are working day and night to cross it!) you would be permanently lost.

In summary, Genesis 6 teaches that before the Flood, demons took human women for wives and had children with them, producing a strange, fallen, depraved race called the nephilim. The Lord judged this act of wickedness by destroying that race in the Flood and imprisoning the demons who committed this sin in Tartarus, awaiting judgment in the last day.

Appendix 5: The Millennial Kingdom

In Revelation 20 we're told that in the future the Lord Jesus Christ is going to rule over the nations for a thousand years:

Revelation 20:4: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

This period is usually referred to as the Millennial Kingdom.

The Literal Reality of the Kingdom

There are some people who reject the idea of a literal Millennial Kingdom. They teach that it's a purely spiritual kingdom, and say that Jesus Christ isn't *really* going to physically return to this world and rule over the nations as a king. I believe that those people are wrong. The Bible claims in numerous places that the coming Kingdom isn't symbolic or spiritual but is *literal*.

One place where this can be seen is the book of Daniel. In chapter 2 of that book we're told that when King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed him, he demanded that his magicians tell him what he had dreamed and how to interpret it. Daniel did exactly that:

Daniel 2:31-35: "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

Daniel told the king what he had dreamed and then provided the interpretation. The statue represented four kingdoms that would control the world from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the end of days. The fourth kingdom, however, wouldn't last forever. Instead it would be broken into pieces by God Himself and replaced with an eternal kingdom that would never be destroyed:

Daniel 2:44-45: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the

iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

The eternal kingdom which God Himself establishes will *replace* all of the kingdoms that came before it! It's not going to coexist alongside them as some sort of spiritual kingdom. This final kingdom is going to rule over the Earth just as the previous four kingdoms did. That means the Kingdom of God *cannot* be a purely spiritual kingdom. After all, it *violently destroys and replaces all the kingdoms of the world!* The book of Daniel describes it as a physical kingdom, not a spiritual one.

The Binding of Satan

Revelation 20 tells us that at the beginning of the millennium an angel will bind the devil with a great chain. The angel will then cast the devil into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, where he will be unable to deceive the nations any more:

Revelation 20:1-3: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little

season."

People who are amillennial don't believe in a literal millennium, so they interpret these verses symbolically. They claim that this passage refers to the death of Christ on the cross, which is when Satan was bound. They teach that the millennium is simply the age that we're living in right now, and the phrase "thousand years" is just symbolic for a long span of time.

I think their explanation is wrong. First of all, the passage says that an *unnamed angel* bound Satan, not the Lamb that was slain! If Jesus is the one who bound Satan then why doesn't Revelation 20:1 say that? Why does Revelation give the glory for this incredibly important act to someone else?

Second, I find it *impossible* to believe that Satan is currently bound and unable to deceive or harm anyone. That's the opposite of what the New Testament teaches! Look at what the apostle Peter wrote:

I Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, **walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:** Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Did Peter say that the devil had been bound by Christ's death and was unable to deceive anyone? Did he teach that we don't need to worry about Satan because his days of deceiving people are over? Absolutely not! Peter warned us to be sober and vigilant, for the devil was "seeking whom he may devour". Peter was certainly not under the impression that the devil had been bound and rendered harmless. James echoed Peter's concern:

James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God.
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

You don't see James saying "Don't worry about the devil – he's incapable of doing any harm". Revelation 20:2 specifically says that Satan is *bound*, and yet 1 Peter 5:8 says that he "walketh about". If Satan "walketh about" then he's *not* currently bound, which means Revelation 20:1-3 hasn't happened yet.

There are also chronological reasons for believing that the binding of Satan is still in the future. In Revelation 4 the apostle John is told this:

Revelation 4:1: "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

John was told that he was about to see things "which must be hereafter". That means the angel was showing him *things that hadn't happened yet in his day*. Part of his vision included the binding of Satan. That means the binding of Satan couldn't have happened at the cross because when John was given this vision (which was more than 50 years after the crucifixion and resurrection), Satan had not yet been bound.

It's worth noting that a great many things happen between Revelation 4 and Revelation 20. Those events take place in chronological order. For example, in Revelation 6 the first seal is opened, and then the second seal is opened, and so forth. Revelation 7 starts with the phrase "and after these things". One event follows after another. There's a progression as the two witnesses preach and are killed, only to rise again (see Revelation 11); as the beast rises to power and prevails against the saints (see Revelation 13); and as Babylon falls (see Revelation 18).

Revelation 20 takes place *after* all of those things. If Satan was bound at the cross then that would mean Revelation 4 through 19 all happened *before* the crucifixion, which is silly. At that point John wouldn't have been seeing things "which must be hereafter"; instead he would have been seeing things that happened more than 50 earlier. It makes much more sense to put the binding of Satan in the future instead of the past.

I've heard people say that this passage must be symbolic because it's impossible to bind Satan with a chain, but I don't find that argument convincing. This isn't the first time the Bible refers to binding fallen angels with chains. There's this passage as well:

Jude 1:6: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

In this verse Jude tells us that certain fallen angels have been put in prison and are held captive *in chains* until Judgment Day. (Not all fallen angels are free to wander this world as demons; some have been imprisoned. Why some are imprisoned and others aren't is beyond the scope of this discussion.) In Revelation 20 we're told that Satan will receive the same treatment as the fallen angels in Jude 1:6: he will be bound in chains. It seems appear that it *is* possible to bind angels with chains after all.

Is Satan currently bound, unable to cause any harm? Of course not! Even the apostles didn't believe that. It doesn't fit with the chronology of Revelation or the world that we see around us. The claim that Satan is bound and unable to cause any more trouble is simply wrong. The binding of Satan is a future event, not a past one.

The Marriage of the Lamb

There's another reason to believe that the Millennium is a literal event which will take place in the future. Revelation 19 says that the "marriage of the Lamb" has finally come:

Revelation 19:7-8: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

All throughout the New Testament the church is called the Bride of Christ and Jesus is called the bridegroom. In Revelation 19 we're told that the long-awaited marriage will take place in Heaven at the end of the seven-year tribulation period. After the marriage takes place the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this world with the armies of Heaven:

Revelation 19:11-20: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ... And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him

the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

This passage says that the Lord will return to judge the world *after* the "marriage of the Lamb" has taken place. Chapter 19 is immediately followed by chapter 20, which tells us that Satan is bound in the aftermath of Christ's victory over His enemies on Earth. That means Satan is bound *after* the Bride of Christ becomes the Wife of Christ. It's important to remember that the New Testament calls the church a *bride*, not a *wife*. The church can only be called the bride if the marriage hasn't happened yet! That means all of these events *must* still be in the future.

If Revelation 20:1-3 is talking about the crucifixion of Christ then that would mean the "marriage of the Lamb" must have occurred *before* the church even existed! How is that possible? How could the bride be dressed in the righteous acts of the saints *before the saints even existed and performed any righteous acts*? It doesn't make any sense. If that was true then the New Testament should have referred to the church as the wife of Christ (just like the Old Testament referred to Israel as the wife of Jehovah), but that never happened.

I believe Revelation 20 should be interpreted literally. After the Marriage of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this world and defeat the army of the antichrist. Satan will then be bound for a thousand years, and during that time he will be unable to deceive the nations or do any harm. The devil will be completely removed from the scene for the duration of the Millennium.

A Thousand Years

Some people have argued that the thousand years should be interpreted symbolically. They base that on this verse:

2 Peter 3:8: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

The problem is that this passage uses symbolic language, while Revelation 20 doesn't. 2 Peter 3:8 clearly says that one day with the Lord is *as* a thousand years. Revelation 20 contains no such symbolic language! The book of Revelation repeatedly says that this period will last *a thousand years*. It doesn't say that it will *seem like* a thousand years, or that it will be *as* a thousand years. Instead it repeatedly says that it will last *one thousand years*:

Revelation 20:2-3: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

In both verses it clearly says "a thousand years". There's no hint that this time period is symbolic. But there's more:

Revelation 20:4-7: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the

word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,"

In the span of six verses the phrase "thousand years" occurs *six times*. I don't see how Revelation 20 could have made it any plainer that this is a literal period of time! If the duration of the Millennium was meant to be taken symbolically then it would have been easy to say "as a thousand years" or "was like a thousand years", *but it doesn't say that*. However, if the thousand-year period is meant to be taken literally then how could the chapter have been any more clear?

I believe that the thousand year period should be interpreted as a literal thousand year period. The reason it's said to last for a thousand years is *because it lasts for one thousand years*. I see no reason to interpret it any differently.

Thy Kingdom Come

Revelation 20 tells us that after Satan is bound, the martyrs of the tribulation period will be resurrected to reign with Christ over the world:

Revelation 20:4-6: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Not only does Christ reign for a thousand years ("they lived and *reigned with Christ* a thousand years"), but the martyrs do as well. Verse 5 specifically states that these people were *raised from the dead* so they could reign with Jesus. If the millennium is symbolic of the church age then this makes no sense. Have the martyrs been resurrected so they can reign with Christ during this age? Definitely not! Since the resurrection of the martyrs is still in the future, the fulfillment of this passage must be in the future as well.

The martyrs aren't the only ones who are reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. Earlier in Revelation there's a promise that the 24 elders will reign with Christ as well:

Revelation 5:8-10: "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors,

which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

I believe that the 24 elders are symbolic of the entire church. These elders identify themselves in verse 9: they're those who were *redeemed by the blood of the Lamb*. Their members come from *every nation*. What term does the Bible use to describe the leaders of the church? "Elders". How do we know that they represent the whole church? Well, in 1 Chronicles 24 the priests are divided into 24 different divisions that represent the whole priesthood. That's why scholars believe that when the number 24 is used symbolically it represents an entire group. (As an aside, some translations say "redeemed them" instead of "redeemed us" in verse 9. I believe the manuscript evidence supports the use of "us" over "them". These elders are claiming that *they* were redeemed, not someone else.)

Notice what these elders (who are symbolic of the entire church) are saying: God has made them kings and priests and they will reign *on the Earth*. Not "reign on the New Earth that will be created after Judgment Day", but reign on the Earth itself! God will one day turn His church into a nation of kings, and during the millennium we will reign with Jesus over the nations. When the Lord returns He will put this world under *His* management. Our assignment will be to reign with Him.

Many people believe that the idea that Christ will reign as an earthly king is shocking and unbiblical. To them the idea seems too strange to be true. Some people teach that Revelation 20 *must* be symbolic because the very idea of Christ reigning on

the Earth as a king is just too bizarre – and yet this idea can be found throughout the Bible! For example, the Lord's prayer hints at it:

Matthew 6:9-10: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

The Lord specifically commanded His disciples to pray that His kingdom would come *to Earth* so that His will would be done *on Earth*. That sounds a lot like a plea for Jesus to return and reign as King! After all, the Lord did make this promise:

Matthew 5:5: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

That verse echoes a passage from Psalms:

Psalms 37:10-11: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Ask yourself: when is this going to happen? When will the meek inherit the Earth as Jesus promised? After all, this world is ultimately going to be destroyed:

2 Peter 3:12: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

Revelation 20:11: "And I saw a great white

throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."

Revelation 21:1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

I don't believe that the promise that Jesus gave to the meek in the book of Matthew is talking about the New Earth which He will create after the Great White Throne judgment. Psalms 37:11 doesn't say "the meek will inherit a different earth" or "God will one day make a new planet for the meek to live on". Both Psalm 37 and Matthew 5 are talking about *this* world – so when are the meek going to inherit it? They certainly haven't inherited it yet!

The Millennial Kingdom is the perfect time for this promise to finally be fulfilled. When will the meek inherit the earth and delight themselves in the abundance of peace? Right after Satan is bound and Jesus reigns as King of Kings over the nations. That's when His promise will be fulfilled.

The Restoration of Israel

There are many other verses that talk about this millennial kingdom. For example, look at what Christ told His disciples:

Luke 22:28-30: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath

appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Jesus promised His disciples that they would reign with Him. Specifically, they would sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. This goes right along with Revelation 5:10 and Revelation 20:6. Jesus promised to give His disciples "a kingdom". If this kingdom was purely spiritual then this would have been a great place for Jesus to explain that to His disciples, but He didn't. It's true that Jesus told Pontius Pilate "my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), but I believe there's a great deal of Scripture that teaches that one day His kingdom will reign *over* this world. All things will be put under the dominion of Christ.

How do we know this? Well, right before the Lord ascended into Heaven He was asked a question:

Acts 1:6: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

When the Lord was asked this question He didn't say "No, no, you misunderstand. My kingdom isn't physical – it's purely spiritual. You've got it all wrong." Instead He said this:

Acts 1:7: "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

Jesus actually confirmed that He would one day "restore again the kingdom", but He told His disciples that it wasn't for them to know when that would happen. The reason the disciples asked Jesus about this is because the coming kingdom was talked

about frequently in the Old Testament. For example:

Isaiah 60:9-12: "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

Has this happened yet? Do all the nations of the world serve Israel, as it says in verse 12? Has God destroyed the nations that wouldn't serve her? Absolutely not! Israel is currently *oppressed* of all nations. She's despised and surrounded by nations that wish to see her completely and utterly destroyed. The fulfillment of this passage must be still in the future, and the Millennial Kingdom is an excellent candidate for its fulfillment.

The passage doesn't stop there:

Isaiah 60:14-15: "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of

many generations."

None of this has happened yet. Israel is despised and hated in this age, not loved and adored. What the Lord speaks of in Isaiah 60:15 hasn't been fulfilled yet.

But there's more! Not only did God promise Israel great honor, but He also promised her great wealth and peace:

Isaiah 60:17-18: "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."

Is the modern nation of Israel a place where violence is unheard-of? Absolutely not – but one day that will be the case.

Let us think that this prophecy will happen before the Lord returns, He added something astonishing:

Isaiah 60:19-22: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his

time."

In the coming kingdom the sun and the moon won't be needed to provide light to the land of Israel because *the Lord* will be the source of light. That means *the Lord Himself will be dwelling in the land of Israel!* Therefore, all of these verses must be fulfilled *after* the Second Coming – which makes perfect sense if the Millennium is taken literally. After Christ returns He will grant Israel honor, wealth, and peace.

I realize that this passage has strong parallels to the New Heaven and Earth which are mentioned in Revelation 21, but I don't think that's what it's talking about. Verse 12 speaks of the Lord crushing all nations that won't serve Israel, and verse 14 talks about forcing those who despised Israel to bow at her feet. The reason this is important is because in the New Heaven and Earth there won't be any more death, sorrow, pain, or evil. That means there wouldn't be anyone left to despise Israel or refuse to serve God! Since there are still some rebellious nations when this promise is fulfilled then that means this must take place *before* the Great White Throne judgment, which is before the New Heaven and Earth are created. I believe Isaiah 60 is a picture of what the Millennial Kingdom will be like.

But there's more. Isaiah 65 says this:

Isaiah 65:17-25: "For, behold, I create new heaven and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold I create Jerusalem rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a

hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

At first glance this passage seems to be talking about the New Heaven and Earth which are mentioned in Revelation 21, but I don't believe that's the case. I think this is actually a picture of the Millennial Kingdom because verse 20 clearly says that *people will still die*. This passage illustrates how long people will live by saying that someone who dies at the age of a hundred will be considered a child. That means these promises come to pass at a time *before* death has been done away with forever. However, Revelation 21:4 says that in the New Heaven and Earth *there is no more death* (or sinners, for that matter). Therefore Isaiah 65 must be talking about a different era.

If this isn't speaking of the New Heaven and Earth of Revelation 21 then when does it take place? It's certainly not happening right now! I think this is another picture of the Millennial Kingdom.

Here's another passage that talks about the Millennium:

Micah 4:1-7: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; And I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even forever."

Here we have more promises that haven't been fulfilled yet. It's hard to imagine that this world will ever become a place where nations will no longer wage war with one other, but that's the future God has planned for us! This passage speaks of a time when "the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion" – in other

words, a time when the Lord reigns as King in Israel! He will "rebuke strong nations afar off", put an end to war, and bring lasting peace.

I don't think this is talking about the New Heaven and Earth of Revelation 21 because in verse 3 the Lord rebukes sinful nations. After the Great White Throne judgment all evil, sin, and death will be done away with forever. Once the final judgment has taken place there will no longer be a need to rebuke anyone because everything that was evil was cast into the lake of fire. I believe this passage is speaking of the Millennial Kingdom.

Another chapter that gives us a glimpse into the Millennium is Isaiah chapter 11. That chapter tells us that just as there will be peace among nations, there will also be peace in the animal kingdom:

Isaiah 11:6-9: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

In the church age the animal kingdom is full of predators and prey. It's common for one species to hunt, kill, and eat other species – but during the Millennium that will change. Animals that used to be carnivores will become herbivores and "eat straw like the ox". Lions and bears will stop hunting and eat plants. Animals will no longer hunt man, and children will be able to play

with deadly serpents and not be harmed. Life will be radically different from the way it is now.

Another important fact is that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea". This will be a time when the world is *saturated* with the knowledge of the Lord! In the church age very few people know the Lord or walk in His ways. During the Millennium, however, things will be different. In that day the knowledge of the Lord will be everywhere, and the nations will keep His commands.

But that's not all that the Bible has to say about the Millennium. The book of Zechariah also has some things to tell us. Much of that book discusses the events that take place during the "Day of the Lord" (which the New Testament refers to as the tribulation), but Zechariah does mention the Millennium. One thing we're told is that before the Millennium begins the Lord will return to this world, stand on the mount of Olives, and tear the mountain in two:

Zechariah 14:4: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

That means the Mount of Olives will be torn in half and replaced by a large valley. Israel will then undergo a series of dramatic topographical changes:

Zechariah 14:10: "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate

unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses."

These changes are necessary because the Temple Mount isn't big enough to contain the Millennial temple that's described in Ezekiel (and which will be located on top of a mountain). As we can see, some pretty dramatic landscape work will need to take place before the Millennial temple can be built! This passage describes some of those changes.

There will also be a stream of living water:

Zechariah 14:8: "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be."

Most importantly, however, the Lord will assume the throne and will reign over the nations:

Zechariah 14:9: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

Every year the nations of the world will be required to come before the Lord and worship the King:

Zechariah 14:16: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."

Not only will the nations be required to travel to

Jerusalem to worship God, but they will also be required to *keep the feast of tabernacles*, which is one of the feasts mentioned in the Mosaic Law. The Gentile nations will be required to come to Jerusalem *in order to keep one of the Jewish feasts!* That's remarkable. Every year during the Millennium the *entire planet* will make a journey to Jerusalem!

The Lord is quite clear that everyone is required to attend. Any nations that refuse to come will be punished:

Zechariah 14:17-19: "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles."

This is another reminder that sin will still exist during the Millennium. Even though Jesus Christ will be reigning from Jerusalem in all His glory, there will still be those who refuse to come and worship Him. In this age the Lord is patient and longsuffering, and gives people an opportunity to repent. During the Millennium, however, He will reign with a rod of iron. All those who refuse to come worship Him will be punished, and the nations that won't obey Him will be sent a terrible drought. Jesus won't accept rebellion during His reign.

There's something else that Zechariah has to say about the Millennium:

Zechariah 14:20-21: "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness Unto The

Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts."

This passage is saying that during the Millennium there will be a tremendous manifestation of holiness. The Lord God will dwell in His temple and His holiness will saturate Jerusalem and Judah. Even the smallest and most minor things will be as holy as the vessels on the altar! The entire nation of Israel will be saturated with holiness. It will be everywhere.

Zechariah has more to say about the Millennium:

Zechariah 2:4-5: "And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."

The city of Jerusalem has had walls since ancient times. Those walls were created for its protection – but they won't be needed in the Millennium. In those days the city will have so many people and cattle that they will overflow the walls. In fact, the walls won't even be needed because the Lord will be a wall of fire around the city! (That will be an amazing sight, won't it?)

As you can see, the coming reign of Christ on Earth is a major topic that can be found throughout the Old Testament. In fact, nearly all of the prophets had something to say about it. It's not a crazy idea that suddenly appeared out of nowhere at the end of Revelation.

The Millennial Temple

One of the major topics of the Old Testament is that in the Millennial Kingdom there will be a new temple. In that era all nations will go to this temple to worship the Lord and learn His ways:

Isaiah 2:1-4: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

This short passage contains a great deal of information. First of all, during the Millennium the temple of the Lord will be established in the top of the mountains. It will be a centerpiece of the whole earth! All nations will visit it. People from all over the world will go to the temple to learn God's ways, and they will obey His words.

During this era the Lord Jesus Christ will reign from Jerusalem. Verse 4 tells us that He will judge the nations and rebuke "many people". In the Millennium the nations will no

longer fight each other. Instead they'll turn their weapons into farming equipment and they'll no longer learn the art of war. The Millennium will be a time of amazing peace.

The Lord's temple is going to be one of the most prominent features of the Millennium. The book of Ezekiel spends 9 chapters talking about it! First, Ezekiel tells us that God will establish His sanctuary in their midst:

Ezekiel 37:26-28: "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

The amount of detail that God provides concerning this coming temple is staggering. I'm not going to repeat it all here, or even attempt to summarize it. Instead I'll just mention a few of the key details.

First of all, the Ark of the Covenant will be missing. The Ark wasn't included in Herod's Temple (which is the one that existed at the time of Christ), and it won't be in this one either. We're told this in the book of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 3:16: "And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more"

The time of the Ark of the Covenant is over. It won't be in the millennial temple because it's served its purpose and is no longer needed. The new temple won't return Israel to the old way of doing things; instead it represents something new.

One of the surprising things about this temple is the fact that sacrifices will be offered there. However, this doesn't mean Israel is returning to the Law of Moses. This sacrificial system will have different rules from the old one. I realize it seems very strange that sacrifices will be offered after the return of Christ, but the book of Ezekiel is very clear about this:

Ezekiel 43:18-21: "And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord God; These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord God, a young bullock for a sin offering. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary."

This passage clearly describes burnt offerings which will be offered in the millennial Temple! There are other passages that have even more to say about millennial sacrifices. So what's going on here? What possible reason could there be for resuming animal sacrifices? After all, the New Testament teaches that the time of making offerings for sin is over:

Hebrews 10:18: "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

The sacrificial system which will exist during the Millennium will have a different purpose from the one that's found in the Mosaic Law. This can be seen from the fact that the two systems have different offerings, different rules, different holy days, and different procedures (all of which are outside the scope of this discussion). The sacrifices which are offered during the Millennium aren't focused on the forgiveness of sins, but on removing ceremonial uncleanness. Why would that be needed? Perhaps so that unholy and sinful mortals (such as the people who are born during the Millennium) can enter the holy presence of the Lord Jesus in His temple.

This is how one scholar put it:

"Critics of future millennial sacrifices seem to assume that all sacrifices, past and future, always depict Christ's final sacrifice for sin. They do not! There were various purposes for sacrifices in the Bible. An overwhelming majority of sacrifices under the Mosaic system were for purification of the priests and objects used in various rites. This is why atonement can be said in the past to be effective, yet still need Christ's future sacrifice, because many of the sacrifices did atone ceremonially, cleansing participants and objects in Temple ritual. Just as we never finish the task of washing clothes, ceremonial cleansing was an ongoing need. The same is clearly the case in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 43:20 and 26, the atonement is specifically directed at cleansing the altar in order to make it ritually fit for sacrifice. The only other uses of

atonement also refer to cleansing objects so that ritual purity may be maintained for proper function of further worship. . ."

"Since all the sacrifices of Ezekiel relate to purification of the priests for Temple service, they do not specifically depict or represent Christ's atoning sacrifice. The presence and purpose of sacrifices neither diminishes the finished work of Christ nor violates the normal and "literal" interpretation of the prophetic passages. Nothing in Ezekiel 40-48 conflicts with the death of Christ or New Testament teaching at any point. The supposed contradictions between a literal understanding of Ezekiel and New Testament doctrine evaporate when examined specifically." (Dr. Thomas Ice, *Pre-Trip Perspectives*, June 2000, pg. 4-5)

The sacrifices in the Millennial Temple aren't about obtaining forgiveness. Instead they will be used to maintain ceremonial cleanliness and keep the temple and its contents from being defiled. The reason this is important is because during the Millennial Kingdom God Himself will be dwelling on Earth, and His glory will be manifested in the temple. Since a holy God is dwelling in a sinful world among sinful people, there's an urgent need for a way to maintain ceremonial cleanliness. That seems to be the purpose of the Millennial sacrificial system.

The Last Battle

After the thousand years are over we're told that Satan

"must be loosed a little season":

Revelation 20:7-10: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, God and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Here we see the final end of Satan. After the thousand years "are expired" Satan will be set free. He will travel all over the world and deceive the nations so he can launch a rebellion against King Jesus. The devil will deceive many people, form a massive army, and use it to surround Jerusalem. However, that army doesn't stand a chance. Fire will come down out of Heaven and consume everyone. Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire, which will put a final end to his wickedness.

It's amazing to me that Satan will be able to gather such a large army. At this point King Jesus will have ruled over the world for a thousand years! There had been an entire millennium of peace, joy, and harmony. The kingdom of Jesus will be filled with many resurrected immortals, including the church, the Old Testament saints, and the tribulation saints. All of those people will provide enormous evidence that the teachings of the Bible are true – and yet when the devil is released, a great multitude will join him in rebellion.

Who will rebel against Jesus after the Millennium? Well,

many people will survive the seven-year tribulation period and enter into the Millennium as mortals. Those people will have children, and the human race will continue to grow. Those children will live in a world that's populated by the saints from the Old and New Testament. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and many others will all be living in the kingdom, and Jesus will be reigning as the King of Kings from Zion! That means the children of the millennium will be able to see many things that we must take on faith. Today we live in a world that's full of fear and doubt, but the Millennial Kingdom will be nothing like that.

In spite of all these amazing blessings, at the end of the thousand years an enormous number of mortals will rebel against King Jesus and attempt to destroy Jerusalem – a city that's inhabited by *immortals* and reigned over by *God Himself!* That's madness. Why would they do that?

I think it's a testament to the evil heart of mankind. Even living in a perfect world isn't enough to turn sinful people into righteous saints. The environment can't remove evil from our heart – only Christ can do that. Apart from Him we can do nothing. Given the chance, a great many mortals will fall away from God and join the devil, and will be killed in the last battle.

The Great White Throne Judgment

After the last battle, Satan will be defeated and thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever. That event is followed by the final judgment. Now, the resurrected saints have nothing to fear from this judgment. The only people who will be judged at this time are "the dead". Since the church, the Old Testament saints, and the tribulation saints were all resurrected long before this judgment, they won't be included in it. The only

people who will be judged at that time are all of the wicked who have ever lived, along with everyone who died during the Millennium.

Here is what Revelation 20 says about the judgment:

Revelation 20:11-15: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell we cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

The criteria for surviving the Great White Throne judgment is simple: if your name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life then you'll be freed and will enter into everlasting life. If your name is *not* found in it then you'll be cast into the lake of fire and tormented day and night forever and ever.

This is the moment when death itself will be done away with forever. After this judgment no one else will ever die. The reign of death will be put to an end.

It should be noted that Hell is *not* the final resting place of the unrighteous. Revelation 20 tells us that Hell will be emptied for this judgment. In fact, Hell itself is actually cast into the lake of fire (verse 14). Those whose sins are not covered by the blood of the Lamb won't be cast back into Hell; instead they'll

be cast into the lake of fire (verse 15). That means *no one will spend eternity in Hell*. Instead the wicked will spend eternity in the lake of fire, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Why will this terrible thing happen to them? It's because they never repented of their sins and put their faith in Jesus alone for salvation. The Lord will pardon all those who come to Him, but those who died in their sins never did that. All those whose sins are not forgiven will face His everlasting wrath. That's why it's so important to repent and believe now, while there's still time.

Summary of Events

The story doesn't end here! Revelation 21 talks about a new Heaven and Earth that Jesus will create after the final judgment. In that new realm (which theologians call the "eternal state"), all suffering and pain will be done away with forever. But that's a topic for another time.

This is how I believe events will play out:

- One day the Lord will return for His Church. All Christians who died between Pentecost (when the church began) and the moment of the rapture will be resurrected, and all living Christians will be translated so that they will never see death. The Lord will then take us with Him to Heaven.
- At some point after the rapture, the tribulation will begin. This will be a terrible seven-year period of judgment. The Lord will pour out His wrath upon a wicked world, and will use those judgments to bring Israel back to Him. (One of

the key purposes of the tribulation is to turn Israel's heart back to God.)

- During the tribulation the Marriage of the Lamb will take place in Heaven. The Bride of Christ will become the Wife of Christ.
- At the end of the seven-year tribulation the Lord will return with the armies of Heaven and put an end to the antichrist's kingdom. Satan will be bound for a thousand years, and during that time he will be unable to deceive the nations. The Lord will establish His kingdom on Earth and reign from Zion. The tribulation saints and the Old Testament saints will be resurrected.
- During the tribulation more than half of the world's population was killed by judgments and war. In the Millennial Kingdom the world will be repopulated by those who survived the tribulation. Jesus Christ will live in Israel, and the church and the resurrected tribulation saints will reign with Him.
- After the thousand years are over Satan will be set free. He will deceive the nations into launching a final attack against God. When the devil brings his armies to Jerusalem, fire will come out of Heaven and consume them. Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will be tormented for all of eternity.
- The Great White Throne judgment will take place. Only the dead will be judged. The only people who will be dead at this point in history are those who died during the Millennial Kingdom, along with all the wicked who have ever lived. Everyone whose names aren't found in the Lamb's Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire. Death itself will be done away with.

- Since the current Heaven and Earth were destroyed at the beginning of the Great White Throne judgment, the Lord will create new ones. In that new Heaven and Earth there will never be any death, pain, or suffering. That new creation will be perfect and will last forever. The Lord will reign over all things forever, and will make His dwelling place with men. (That's where the righteous will spend eternity: on Earth, as subjects of King Jesus.)

We have a great deal to look forward to! The Second Coming isn't the end of time but is actually the start of an exciting new chapter. The world won't always be a place that's filled with doubt and evil, because a King is coming who will put everything right. One day the meek will inherit the earth and delight themselves in an abundance of peace. I am very much looking forward to that day.

Appendix 6: Unbiblical Church Practices

If you take a look at the many different denominations that exist today, you will find some pretty significant differences when it comes to the doctrines that they teach. However, one thing they all seem to have in common is the way they do church. There seems to be almost universal agreement that there's only one way to have a church service. It's true there are some differences from one church to another, but those differences are largely superficial. This is very unfortunate, because I think the way we've decided to "do church" is very unbiblical. Not only is it unbiblical, but it might be one of the worst possible ways that a church service could be conducted.

What I'd like to do is take a closer look at our church services and the many problems associated with them. I want to explore what the Bible actually has to say about "doing church" – and how completely different its teachings are from the way we do things. There's an enormous gap between the Biblical church and what we have today, and it doesn't seem like very many people have noticed.

Nearly all churches hold their primary (and most important) service on Sunday morning. People from all over the city drive to a building that's universally called "the church". They typically show up a few minutes before the service starts and take their seat. An usher at the door hands them a bulletin, which tells them exactly what's going to happen during the service. The reason the bulletin is so detailed is because the church staff has spent the entire week planning this service. They know exactly what songs are going to be sung, what prayers will be made, what the sermon is going to be about, and how long the service will last (usually within a few minutes).

The service starts out with singing, which is led by the song leader. (In many churches this is a full-time paid position.) At some point the announcements are made and the offering is collected. Someone reads some Scripture, someone leads the congregation in prayer, and then the pastor starts his sermon. He's been working on it all week so he knows exactly what he's going to say. Usually he's prepared a PowerPoint presentation to go along with it. Once his sermon is over it's pretty common to have an "altar call", where people are asked to go to the front of the church and pray what's called "the sinner's prayer". As soon as the service is over the congregation immediately goes home.

There may be some differences from church to church, but that's very close to how all mainline Protestant churches handle their services. It doesn't matter what your denomination is: the service is going to be handled more or less the same way. Some churches may have responsive readings while others don't, but the differences are minor. No one questions the way churches do things. This is the way things have always been done, and it's widely accepted – but I don't think it's right.

If you go to church on Sunday morning, are you going to have any opportunities to meaningfully interact with another human being? Probably not. After all, most people arrive shortly before the service starts and then go home the moment it ends. If you're lucky you might be able to have a short and fairly meaningless conversation with whoever is sitting behind you (probably along the lines of "Hello!"). However, you can go to church every Sunday morning for *years* and never learn anything significant about the people who have been sitting behind you. That's just how it is. If you want to get to know people you'll have to find some other way to do it, outside of the service. (Good luck with that. It won't be easy.)

Once the service starts, you're going to spend the entire time doing exactly what you're told. You will sing whatever songs you're told to sing, and pray whatever you're told to pray. You will

give when it's time to give. When the pastor starts his sermon you will listen to it quietly. The only time the congregation will speak is when the pastor tells them to repeat some phrase he has said, and then they will say exactly what the pastor told them to say. Your job in the service is to be completely passive. There's literally nothing for you to do but sit there until it's time to go home.

Is there something you wanted to sing? Sorry, the songs are all chosen in advance. You can always sing at home, in the shower. Do you have a prayer request? Sorry, there's no time for that in the Sunday morning service (or the Sunday evening service, if your church happens to have one of those). You'll have to pray at home. Are you struggling with something in your life? Sorry, the church service isn't the place to mention that. Do you have a question about the pastor's sermon? Sorry, you can't speak up and ask him – his sermon is timed, and he has to finish at a precise moment so everyone can go home. Did the pastor make a terrible mistake and say the wrong thing? Sorry, you can't correct him. You just have to let it go, even if it means people will be misled and go away believing the wrong thing. Does the pastor's sermon cover material you already know? Sorry about that. There's nothing you can do but sit there and hope that next week he has different material.

If you don't show up at church for a month, is that going to impact the service? Nope. You weren't allowed to contribute anything anyway (except for your money). The people who normally sit behind you might notice that your spot is empty, but your absence isn't going to change the service. If half the church stayed home (which is actually pretty normal), the service would still unfold exactly as planned. The same songs would be sung, the same prayers would be prayed, and the same sermon would be given. This is because the only people who are allowed to participate in the service is the church staff (who are often paid and in full-time positions). They pick all the songs, and all the

prayers, and the sermon topic. The reason you are coming is to watch a performance, not participate.

While you're there you're probably going to spend 30 minutes (or more) listening to a sermon. Was that sermon written with you in mind? Nope. Since the congregation has hundreds or even thousands of people in it, the pastor can't possibly write something that's directed at your needs. Instead he will pick a passage from the Bible and preach on it, and hope that somehow you will find something meaningful in it. Since he's preaching to a lot of people (many of whom may be Biblically illiterate), he can't go very deep. If you've been attending church for a while it's quite likely that you've either heard that message before or you're already familiar with the passage, which means the pastor may have nothing for you at all. Also, since the pastor knows that many of the people in his congregation might not be Christians, he's going to spend time explaining the gospel and asking people to come forward and "get saved". That's why some people try to sneak out at the end of the service – they don't want to hear the same altar call for the thousandth time.

Our church services are very strange. If you want to pray, you can do that – at home. If you want to sing, you can do that – at home. If you want to study the Bible and really dig into a passage, you can do that – at home. If you want to get to know people, you can do that – at home. If you're struggling with something, you can get help – by reaching out to someone *outside* of the service and making an appointment. (Some pastors charge for counseling, so keep that in mind.) If you have questions then you can always go home and try to look up the answers online.

Suppose that people *didn't* go to the church building on Sunday and instead remained at home and watched the service online. Would anything change? Well, from the *pastor's* perspective it would be terrible because his audience was gone.

It's very difficult to preach to an empty room! However, from the *congregation's* perspective it would largely be the same. It's true they would miss out on the 15 seconds they spend saying "Hello" to that person who has set behind them for the past five years, but other than that it's pretty much the same. They would still sing what they're told, pray whatever they're told, and listen to a sermon that wasn't written with them in mind. The congregation has no way of contributing if they show up, and they also have no way of contributing if they stay home.

Suppose that instead of watching a *live* sermon, they listen to a sermon that was recorded 10 years ago by someone a thousand miles away. Would anything change? Nope. They're still listening to a sermon that wasn't written with them in mind. They're still singing what they're told to sing and praying what they're told to pray. They're still not participating in any meaningful way. They're just passive participants, listening to a service that doesn't actually need them at all and which can go on just fine without them.

Many people never question this. After all, church services have always been this way! This is just how things are. However, the truth is that services have *not* always been this way. In fact, the services that we find in the New Testament are *completely different* from the way we do things today. Not only would the apostles not recognize our services, I suspect they would be very unhappy at what we've done. The modern church has picked what might be the worst possible way to "do church". Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about the subject.

Church Buildings Are Unbiblical

Have you ever noticed that when people mention the building in which services are held, they always call it "the

church"? This is universal across all denominations. If you talk to pastors about this they will eventually say that the church is really the people, and the building is just a building. The problem is that no one seems to actually believe that. In *practice* the church really is the building. (I know that's hard to believe, but by the time we reach the end of this discussion I think you'll see what I mean. Actions speak louder than words.)

If a pastor has founded a church in a new city and is meeting in a location that's not a church building, he will earnestly desire a building of his own. He will ask his congregation to make painful financial sacrifices in order to raise the enormous amounts of money that are required to purchase a building. Once he has that building, he will want to renovate it and expand it. There is no point at which the building is considered to be "large enough": it can always be bigger and pack in more people. That's why there are church buildings that can seat thousands upon thousands of people, and which have restaurants and movie theaters and art galleries and gymnasiums. Pastors universally want to have the biggest building they possibly can. That's what they dream about. Preaching to ten thousand people every Sunday morning would be a dream come true.

Is that how things were done in the New Testament? Nope. The Bible never says that Christians should invest millions of dollars in buildings and then hold their church services there. In fact, there are no cases anywhere in the New Testament where anyone even *considered* doing such a thing! Instead churches met in people's homes:

1 Corinthians 16:19: "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."

Colossians 4:15: "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."

Philemon 1:2: "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:"

But that was a foolish way of doing things, right? After all, the early church was poor and didn't have many options. They were also fiercely persecuted, so it would have been impossible for them to buy real-estate and construct a building! They did they best they could under the circumstances, but we live in different times. It is only right for Christians to build religious buildings wherever they can. That's how many people think – but does the Bible actually say that? The truth is, *it doesn't*.

If God wanted Christians to build church buildings He definitely could have told us. After all, in the Old Testament He commanded the Jews to build the temple. We tend to think that since God told the Jews to build the temple in the Old Testament, Christians should build religious buildings as well because God really likes buildings. The problem is there's no Scriptural support for that. God never said "Go into all the world and build million-dollar buildings". Instead the pattern we find in the New Testament is *people meeting in homes*. In fact, that's the *only* pattern we're given!

Church buildings are actually a terrible idea. First of all, church buildings make it impossible for the pastor to do his job. What do I mean by that? Well, I think that pastors would universally agree that they're shepherds, and their job is to take care of their sheep. It's pretty clear that shepherds should model themselves after the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. He had a lot to say about being a shepherd:

John 10:11-14: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

Jesus contrasted a good shepherd with a hireling. The good shepherd knows all of his sheep, and they know him. He cares for them and watches over them and protects them when they're in danger – even risking his own life when necessary. When one of his sheep gets in trouble, he immediately notices and goes after him:

Luke 15:4: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

Suppose that your church is meeting in someone's house, and is composed of 15 people. Can the shepherd get to know everyone? Of course! In that sort of setting everyone could learn about everyone else, and form a very close bond. Would the shepherd notice if something happened to someone? Absolutely – it would be immediately obvious.

But that's not the way modern churches are, is it? If your

church has hundreds of members then it's possible the pastor may recognize you, but that's probably going to be the extent of your interaction with him. He's not going to know much about you at all, and if you're in trouble he's not going to be aware of it. If your church has thousands or tens of thousands of members then it's quite possible he will never notice you're there at all. In a case like that, if you get in trouble you'll need to fill out a form and file it with the right person and schedule an appointment to meet with a counselor, and possibly pay a counseling fee. That means if you're a lost sheep, you will have to rescue yourself. No one is going to come looking for you because the congregation is very large, and you are too small to notice.

But house churches wouldn't have that problem, would they? Since they're small they can form a community. Since they're small, everyone can get to know everyone else. Since they're small they can become involved in one another's lives. Since they're meeting in a house it's impossible for them to grow very large – there simply isn't enough space. That forces them to remain small, *which is a good thing*.

Here's another way to look at it. The world outside the church understands that small classroom sizes are much better and more desirable than large ones. If you're a student who's trying to learn something, it's much better to be in a classroom with 30 other students than a classroom with 3000 other students. Education can be improved by reducing the ratio of students to teachers and allowing each teacher more time to work with students individually. If you are one student in a classroom with thousands of other students, it's going to be almost impossible to get much of the teacher's time – which means you're largely on your own. Large classroom sizes are very bad for students – and yet *that's precisely how our churches are designed*.

Why are they designed that way? Because the truth is the building is more important than the people. We may never say

that out loud, but that's what our *actions* are saying. After all, we ask people to make great sacrifices in order to raise huge sums of money to pay for the building – and once they enter that building their reward is to be put into an enormous group and then sit passively until the service is over and they can go home. For many congregations the upkeep on the building itself is a crippling expense. People have to pay for the building itself, and pay to maintain the building, and pay to maintain the parking lot. If they're not paying off the mortgage then they're raising money to build a new building (because building projects never end). Millions and millions of dollars are spent building very elaborate and expensive buildings that do a very poor job of serving the people.

In the Sunday morning service that's held in these large and elaborate buildings, which is the only service that most people attend, can people make prayer requests? Nope – you must do that elsewhere. Can they ask questions during the pastor's sermon? Nope – it doesn't work that way. If they want to pray or sing or study or get to know people or build relationships, they have to do it *outside the building*. The building doesn't seem to be there to serve them; instead they are there to serve the building. They would actually be much better off without it! Not only would it save them an enormous expense (which would free up money for things like missions), but it would force them to meet in small groups in people's homes.

No, I'm not suggesting that we take the Sunday morning experience and transplant that into people's homes. The building is only part of the problem. We also need to take a closer look at what we're actually doing in our services, which is what we'll discuss next.

Modern Church Services Are Unbiblical

The early church did *not* conduct services the way that we do today. They had a very different approach:

1 Corinthians 14:26-33: "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

When the early church came together, everyone had a psalm to sing or something they wanted to say. Did Paul rebuke this? Nope. Instead he told them to conduct their services in an orderly manner. If people had something to say then let them say it, and let other people judge what was said. It was actually *good* for everyone to speak, one by one, so that everyone could learn and be comforted.

Did Paul say that all songs should be chosen by the song leader? Nope. In fact, the very position of "song leader" cannot be found in the New Testament! In order to find that position you need to go back to the sacrificial system. In the temple there

were priests who offered sacrifices and song leaders who led people in song – but the church wasn't designed to be like the temple. You won't find any passages in the New Testament where an apostle says "All songs must be chosen by the song leader, and everyone must do what he says. It's foolish and wrong for people to have their own songs."

Did Paul say that only seminary-trained pastors should speak in the service, and everyone else must remain silent? Nope. Instead he encourages *everyone* to speak so that everyone can learn. There's no passage anywhere in the Bible that says "If you aren't a pastor then you have no right to say anything. Let the pastor do all the preaching. Your job is to sit there silently." Paul seemed to think that everyone had something valuable to contribute and should be given an opportunity to say something. His only stipulation was that things should be done decently and in order.

Did Paul say that people should listen quietly to whatever the preacher said and accept it without question, because the pastor has attended seminary and you have no right to judge him? Nope. Instead Paul specifically stated that people *should* judge the message and comment on it. This means if the person who was speaking said something wrong, he could immediately be corrected.

Did Paul say that only one person is allowed to speak in a service? Nope. It may seem that "two or three" is a significant limitation, but you need to remember that New Testament churches met in very small groups in people's homes. Having three people teach in a setting where only 15 people were present is very different from having one person speak with three thousand are present (which is the situation we have today). Paul isn't saying that only the pastor has the right to speak. He's saying that things should be done in an orderly fashion.

We also need to remember that the early church met

every day:

Acts 2:46: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"

Acts 5:42: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

This doesn't mean that every day people drove across town and had a Sunday morning service. Instead people would gather to the home of their friend (who lived nearby). They would sing whatever songs they wanted to sing and pray whatever they wanted to pray. If they had something going on in their life they would talk about it. The group would study the Bible for a while and discuss it, asking whatever questions were necessary. The service had no predetermined length; it would last as long as it needed to. It might be only a few minutes long, or it might last all night and into the next morning:

Acts 20:7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

No one really cared how long or short the service was. There was no danger of running out of time. The people came together to worship God, and they were going to continue until they were done. They weren't interested in setting aside a fixed block of time on Sunday morning and then sticking to that schedule so they could get back home as soon as possible.

Since this was a small group, it was easy to get together

frequently. It's true that perhaps not everyone could gather every day, but they met so frequently that it wasn't a problem. Since the group was small, people could make prayer requests. Since the service wasn't timed, they had all the time they needed to sing and pray and teach and ask questions. The sermons could be as short or long as they needed to be. If multiple people had something to share or teach then they could do it.

This meant the order of the service wasn't determined in advance. Instead it reflected the needs of the people. If someone was struggling with a problem then the group could help them. Also, in a group that small there's no need to keep sermons simple and basic. Since everyone knows everyone else, the pastor can preach sermons that address people's specific needs and situations, instead of preaching a random passage and hoping that somehow works out. In a small group it becomes possible to address specific situations – especially if everyone has the freedom to speak up and contribute.

Since so few people are participating in the service, it makes a big difference if people stop coming for a few weeks because *those people are no longer there to make their contribution*. If half the people are missing the service is going to be *very* different – and not nearly as good.

A pastor of a large church can't possibly get involved in the lives of five thousand people. However, it *is* possible for a small group to gather in someone's home and get to know one another, and become involved in each other's lives. In a setting like that you could see enormous spiritual change because you would finally be able to address the problems that people were actually having. The pastor could focus his preaching on areas where it was actually needed. He wouldn't be preaching at random anymore.

Could you imagine if a pastor preached a sermon that addressed your situation specifically? That would be impossible in a large church, but not in a small house church. Which do you

think would be more helpful to the congregation: random sermons that may have nothing to do with what they're struggling with, or messages that were preached specifically with them in mind that give them the exact answers they're looking for? If the goal of the church is to have big buildings then we should probably keep doing what we're doing. However, if the goal of the church is to help people grow spiritually and make disciples then we need a better system. Do you *really* think you can help people by preaching passages at random, instead of finding out what's actually going on in their life and using the Bible to address that situation? There may be times when it makes sense to preach the same generic message to 5000 people. However, if your goal is truly to help people grow then you need to put all your effort into having your "classroom sizes" be as small as possible so you can work with people individually and address their specific needs. The world outside the church understands this. When is the church going to learn this lesson?

I realize that some churches have what they call "small groups". That is where people meet in small groups (usually in people's homes) in order to do the things that can't be done in the Sunday morning service (like make prayer requests and ask questions). Here's my question: if you already have small groups then *why do you have anything else?* If people are already meeting in small groups in people's homes then you don't need an expensive building, with all the upkeep and maintenance that it requires. People can sing and pray and preach *in the small group*. The only thing the building provides is a chance for thousands of people to sit passively in chairs while someone preaches a generic sermon at them, *and that's precisely what we need to get away from*. I am not at all opposed to small groups (provided they aren't just "the Sunday Morning service performed on a smaller scale in a house"). I simply find it foolish to spend all that time and money on a building that you don't need *because you already have small groups*.

It's A Bad Idea To Pay Pastors

One of the biggest problems in many churches is that congregations pay their pastors a full-time salary – in spite of the fact it's a huge burden on the church and puts them in a difficult financial position. Now, I realize it's not a sin to give the pastor a salary. After all, the apostle Paul does say this:

1 Corinthians 9:3-11: "Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

That's a very strong statement! Paul makes it very clear that there's nothing wrong with paying people for the spiritual services they provide. However, did Paul accept a salary from any of the churches that he ministered to? No, he did not. Instead he provided for his own financial needs by being a tentmaker so he

wouldn't be a burden to the churches. He knew it would be hard for them to pay a salary and he didn't want to burden them with his expenses. Even though Paul had every right to ask churches to pay him in return for all he did for them, he refused to exercise that right:

1 Corinthians 9:12: "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."

Paul chose to pay his own way because he didn't want to hinder the gospel. Paul's life would have been a lot easier if he had taken money from the churches, and he had every right to take that money, but he refused to do it. The gospel was too important to him.

There are many churches in this country that are struggling financially. Do you know what their biggest expenses are? The building and the staff. If they didn't have a building (because they met in small groups in people's homes) and they didn't have to pay their staff, they would actually be fine. In fact, without those expenses they would have plenty of money to devote to missions – *which is one of the key tasks of the church*. It's an enormous financial burden for a church to pay multiple pastors, and a youth minister, and a song leader, and a secretary, and someone to clean the building, and someone to mow the lawn. That takes a lot of money that could be spent on *actually spreading the gospel*.

But suppose we did things the way we see in the New Testament. If people met in small groups in people's homes then there would be no need to pay for a building. We wouldn't need to hire maintenance people or someone to take care of the church grounds. The pastor's job would be *much* easier because

the group is small and everyone is contributing and speaking. There wouldn't be a need for him to spend 40 hours working on a sermon, because each time the church meets (which is very often) they would talk about whatever needed to be addressed that day, or the passage of Scripture they were all studying. Sermons wouldn't have to be a predetermined length, and all of the responsibility for teaching wouldn't fall on the pastor. Since everyone was helping one another, all the work wouldn't fall on the pastor – which means he would have time to work and provide for his family. As you can see, everything changes once you get rid of the church building and start meeting in small groups in people's homes. (The next time you're given a copy of your church's budget in a business meeting, look at all the money that's being spent on salaries and the church building. Now imagine if all that money was going to missions instead. Do you see what a huge difference that could make? Shouldn't we be doing everything possible to reduce our expenses so we can maximize our work in the mission field?)

There's another reason why it's not a good idea for churches to pay pastors, and that's because money is very corrupting. Pastors know that their salary depends on keeping their congregations happy. The congregation voted him into his position, and he knows they can vote him out just as easily if he upsets them. That means his job depends on not stirring things up. If he rebukes them or tells them something they don't want to hear, the congregation can easily get rid of him – and that means he won't be able to provide for his family or put food on the table. The moment you start paying your pastor you give him an *enormous* incentive to compromise. There are many pastors who avoid certain passages in the Bible because they know what would happen to them if they ever preached them. There are many pastors who refuse to teach what the Bible actually says because they know they would be fired if they spoke up. Pastors really do avoid teaching certain truths in order to keep their jobs!

That's how it works. (Have you ever noticed that when a pastor is preaching through a book of the Bible, he will skip right over the controversial verses and act like they're not there? That isn't an accident. I realize that your church and your pastor may not do that, but it's *very* common.)

Here's something to think about: what if pastors *weren't* paid? In that case they would be free to preach the truth. If the congregation got angry and voted him out, his livelihood wouldn't be in danger. He could just go find another church. It would be harder to pressure him to compromise because all of that leverage would be gone.

This means paying your church staff actually creates *two* problems: it puts an enormous financial burden on the congregation that in many cases they can't afford, and it puts pressure on the pastor to compromise the truth so he doesn't lose his job. (Are you starting to see the wisdom of meeting in small groups in people's homes? Do you see how many problems that could solve?)

There's actually a third problem as well. Pastors have been taught to look at their job as a career. They go to seminary and learn how to be pastor, and then find a small church somewhere to get started. After they've been there a few years they will find a position at a larger church somewhere else, where they will stay until a better position opens elsewhere. By hopping from church to church they can eventually navigate the system until they land a high-paying position at a really large church. If you play the game long enough you might even be able to get into a leadership position in the denomination itself. Pastors who know how to play their cards right could find themselves living in a large mansion and getting paid a salary that's many times more than what anyone in their congregation makes. Some pastors even get private jets, which are paid for by people in their congregations who do *not* have private jets (or a mansion).

I realize that pastors don't usually come forward and say these things out loud – but their actions speak volumes. Have you never noticed that nearly all pastors move to a different church after a few years? Have you never noticed that pastors usually leave a small church to go to a bigger one, and then move to an even larger one after that? I realize this isn't always the case, but *this is extremely common*. Don't you find it a bit suspicious that somehow it's "God's will" for pastors to leave a small struggling church and move to a bigger church where they will be paid a larger salary – and then a few years later it will be "God's will" for them to leave that church to go to a church that's even bigger, and which pays them even more?

I have to ask: is it *really* God's will for pastors to change churches every few years? I think the answer is very clearly *no*, because that entire concept has no Biblical support at all. Jesus said that being a shepherd means taking care of your sheep, getting to know your sheep, and watching over your sheep. The person who abandons the sheep in order to enrich his own life is called hireling, and Jesus has nothing good to say about hirelings. In His eyes they aren't shepherds at all. A person who would lay down his life for his sheep is *entirely different* from someone who abandons his sheep the moment a better job becomes available at a larger church!

If churches met in small groups in people's homes then this would become a non-issue. If you're meeting with a few friends in your own house then you become focused on *nurturing them*, not trying to use them as a springboard to find a more lucrative job somewhere else. That's especially true if you're not getting paid in the first place! You also won't be tempted to leave for a bigger church because the congregation is already limited by the capacity of your home.

For that matter, the whole process of acquiring a pastor doesn't make sense in the first place. Wouldn't it be much better to raise up people from within the small group to hold that job?

After all, that's exactly how the church obtains deacons and elders! There's no reason for a church to hire someone from the opposite end of the country. It makes far more sense to find someone *within the church* who is qualified and help them grow into the job. If you pay someone to leave their current church and start preaching at your church, do you know what's going to happen? They're eventually going to leave you and go somewhere else. After all, *that's how you got them in the first place!* Besides, it's much easier to have an impact on someone's life if you've been with them for 20 years and they've stood by you the entire time. Why would you value the input of a pastor who's only there because you're paying them, who left other people to be with you, and who will leave you once someone gives them a better offer? How invested do you think someone like that is going to be in your church – or your life? Is that really what you want?

Church Membership Is Unbiblical

Let's suppose that you want to spend time with a group of people who are all Christians. Is that what you'll find when you attend a church service? Nope. Church services are open to everyone. Anyone can walk in – even people who aren't saved and who have never heard the gospel before. In fact, churches actually encourage this! They want as many people as possible to attend their services, and they *especially* want the unsaved to come. That's why they're always encouraging their members to invite people who don't know Jesus.

Pastors know that many of the people they are preaching to might not be saved. That's why services usually end with some sort of "altar call", in which people are asked to come to the front of the church and "give their life to Jesus". Some pastors

like to draw this part of the service out as long as possible. They think if they play enough songs and work hard enough, then maybe they can coax someone into coming down and "getting saved". This certainly does have an effect. Since you're telling Christians every single service that they need to come forward and get saved, some Christians start to question their salvation. This results in people who have been saved for years coming forward over and over again. Why? Because that's what their pastor is telling them to do. (Are there ever times when someone who is *not* saved comes forward? It is *extremely* rare.)

Pastors are preaching to a large group of people that they don't really know. Some of them might be saved and others are probably not. A few of them might know the Bible pretty well, but most of them probably don't. Since they are preaching to such a large mixed audience, they have to keep their sermons very simple and basic. After all, they can't assume that their congregation knows anything. They can't go into any depth, and there isn't enough time to get into anything that's complicated or advanced. The best they can do is preach simple sermons on basic topics. Once you've been at church for a few years you will probably have heard everything the pastor has to offer. For the rest of your life, all of his sermons are going to repeat stuff you've heard before. In fact, you may reach a point where if the pastor was sick one day you could get up and say whatever he was going to say, because you've heard it so many times before. You're not going to hear anything new because pastors have to stick to the basics. Going to the Sunday morning service is like attending first grade forever. There are other grades out there, but because of the mixed nature of the congregation you're not going to find them in the service.

Is that how the early church worked? Absolutely not. The New Testament makes it clear that the only people who are allowed to gather with the church were *saved people*. Those who were unsaved were *not allowed to come!* In fact, if a person was

living in sin and refused to repent then the Bible says he should be removed from the church entirely and not allowed to attend services anymore, because his sinful behavior might corrupt others:

1 Corinthians 5:7-13: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

When the church gathers together to worship God, no unrepentant people are supposed to be in their midst. The gathering was never supposed to be a mix of Christians, and non-Christians, and people living openly sinful lives, and people who hated God, and people who wandered into the wrong building. It was supposed to be *all dedicated Christians who were walking in God's ways*. Anyone who wasn't a Christian was excluded from the gathering. Anyone who was openly living in sin and refused

to repent had to be excluded until they repented.

Did Paul say that we should be *proud* that we have unrepentant sinners in our midst? Absolutely not. In fact, he actually rebuked the church for allowing that:

1 Corinthians 5:1: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

Paul said that anyone within the church who was living a flagrant life of sin should be a cause for *mourning*, and the church should remove this person from their midst. Instead of doing that, though, the Corinthian church actually *boasted* about having a sinful person in their midst! Paul told them that was the wrong thing to do:

1 Corinthians 5:6-7: "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. . ."

Paul is pointing out that it's very dangerous to have unrepentant people in their midst, because their wickedness will spread to other people. If one person is allowed to get away with sin, then other people will start thinking that maybe sin isn't so bad. They will think that there are no consequences for sin, and they will be tempted to start doing the same thing.

Some people might argue that Paul is just saying they should have their membership privileges revoked but still allowed to attend. The problem with that argument is that the

early church had no concept of "church membership", the way that churches do today. They viewed all Christians as belonging to one church – the church of Jesus Christ. The only question was whether people should be allowed to gather with them in their homes and attend their services. Paul was clear that these gatherings should *only be for Christians*, and no one else. Not only was it bad for people to attend who were living in sin, it was actually dangerous for the entire church!

This approach has a lot of advantages. It means that the pastor wouldn't need to spend time asking people to come forward and be saved because everyone he is preaching to is already saved. It means that Christians wouldn't be told every single week that they needed to accept Christ, because the pastor who was talking to them would know that they had already done that. If people met in small groups in people's homes, the pastor would be able to craft sermons that specifically addressed the people he was talking to. He would finally be able to preach deep and meaningful sermons because he knew what knowledge everyone had and could build upon that knowledge. The pastor wouldn't have to waste time preaching sermons that people had already heard a dozen times before. If we did things the Biblical way there would finally be a gathering place *specifically for Christians*.

How did the New Testament church reach the lost? They went out into the world and found them. They preached the gospel directly to the lost, and in their gathering places. They *went out to them*. They searched for them and found them instead of sitting back and hoping the lost would wander into their church buildings! That is a much better system for everyone.

How did Christians in the New Testament become a member of the church? They did it by repenting of their sins and believing in Jesus. That's quite different from the way it's done today! The modern church believes that the church is *the*

building, and in order to become a member in good standing with that building you have to go through a rite of passage. That process may involve a class or something else, but you can only become part of the church once you've passed through this rite. However, *there's nothing Biblical about that at all*. The Bible is clear that once you're saved you are part of the church, *period*. It's true that the Bible commands Christians to distance themselves from people who claim to be believers but who are living in open sin, but the Bible *never* calls any building "the church" and it never says anything about what we call "church membership". (There's also the fact that church membership is pretty useless. You can attend services for years without ever being a member. A lack of membership doesn't stop you from attending any classes or services that the church has to offer, and it doesn't stop you from taking communion either. The only thing it actually does is stop you from holding a church office – and, honestly, the only offices that are usually available to people are working in the nursery and being an usher. If you're not interested in doing either of those things then there's no real reason to ever join. It's true that it stops you from voting on things, but we'll get into voting a bit later in this series.)

The very language that we use demonstrates how unbiblical our views of the church really are. If we truly believed that the church was *the people* then we would never call a building "the church", and we would never call the process of giving people voting privileges "church membership".

Is it a good idea for churches to make sure that people who want to start fellowshiping with them really are Christians? Absolutely. But somehow people forget that *there is only one church*, and that is the church that Christ founded by dying for our sins and rising on the third day. We become a member of that church when we repent of our sins and believe on Him.

Modern Christians have vastly overcomplicated "going to church". The truth is that you "go to church" when you meet

with other Christians, because *Christians are the church*. From a Biblical standpoint, "going to church" has nothing to do with going to a specific building! This is what Jesus said about it:

Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

If two or three people are gathered together in the name of Jesus, then Jesus is with those people. They have "gone to church", even if they didn't drive across town and walk into a building.

Is it important for Christians to gather together in the name of Jesus? Absolutely. In fact, it is commanded:

Hebrews 10:23-25: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Are we supposed to assemble ourselves together in the name of Jesus? Absolutely! Does this verse say that we need a dedicated building in order to do that, and it only counts if we gather into that building? Nope. In fact, buildings aren't even mentioned! What *is* mentioned is the need to exhort one another. The verse has nothing to say about having a multi-million-dollar facility with a restaurant and a library and a basketball court, but it does say we need to provoke one another to good works.

Here's a question for you: if you attend a Sunday morning

service, can you provoke anyone to good works? Nope. Your job in the service is to sit there quietly along with everyone else, and then go home. Can you exhort anyone? Nope. Only the pastor is allowed to speak; everyone else must be silent. It may be true that *technically* a group of Christians have indeed gathered together into the same room, but that group has not been "assembled" in any meaningful way. The New Testament pictures the church as a dynamic body that's composed of many different parts, and each person has something valuable to contribute that the church needs. The modern church, however, is run by the paid staff, who (along with the deacons and elders) do everything while the congregation sits there passively and does nothing. Do you really think that's what the author of Hebrews had in mind when he told us to assemble ourselves together? Do you think he was hoping that we would gather together in a room, sit quietly for 90 minutes, and then go home without interacting with anyone else?

I realize it's possible to form relationships with other people who attend church. *But that must be done outside of the service.* It's possible to ask questions and get help and make prayer requests, *but that must be done outside of the service.* The reason people gather together on Sunday mornings is to attend that service, *but the service provides no opportunities for people to do anything!* If you want to provoke one another to good works and exhort one another, *which are some of the key reasons why we should assemble in the first place,* you have to do that outside of the service. Do you see the problem?

As if that wasn't bad enough, most people *only go to the Sunday morning service.* I realize that once a month the church might allow people to gather together and share a meal (which is a far cry from the early church, which ate together *daily*). There may also be the occasional church function. But the Sunday morning service is the primary way that the congregation interacts with each other, and it's specifically designed to *keep*

the congregation from interacting with each other. (Allowing people sixty seconds during the service to turn to their neighbors and say "Hi" doesn't count as a meaningful interaction.)

Voting Is Unbiblical

It's really amazing how much of a gap there is between the way the Bible says the church should be run, and the way the church is actually run. For example, nearly everything in the modern church is decided by voting. Deacons are voted in. Elders are voted in. Pastors are voted in. Major decisions are voted in. Churches hold business meetings to vote on church expansion, or new church policies, or even solving plumbing problems. The local church is run by the congregation, and they make their will known by the process of voting.

This has some very important consequences. Since churches can vote pastors in, they can also vote them out. This means the pastor knows his job depends on keeping the congregation happy. He knows that if he tells them things they don't want to hear, or he rebukes them for a sin that's common in their midst, they might get angry with him and vote him out. If the pastor wants to keep his job then he'll have to please the congregation. That puts a lot of pressure on him to avoid talking about hard doctrines and unpleasant truths. This is why it's very rare for pastors to call out a church for the sin in their midst that needs to be dealt with, or to address the big issues that have been crippling the church. His job depends on keeping people happy, so that's what he is going to do. If the church happens to find a pastor that isn't willing to compromise what the Bible teaches, they will usually get rid of him in short order and replace him with someone else. That means churches will usually be run by pastors who aren't going to challenge them, or correct

them, or rebuke them.

Is that good for the church? Definitely not. Do you know what would happen if children had the power to veto their parents, and could always get their way and reject all instruction? They would grow up to be uncontrollable, spoiled brats. I think that's exactly why so many churches are spiritually dead. The Bible puts it this way:

2 Timothy 4:2-3: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Paul warned of a time when Christians would hate sound doctrine and would get rid of sound teachers so they could listen to lies that they found more enjoyable than the truth. That's exactly the situation we are in today! Why would people listen to someone who was going to rebuke them for their sin when they could vote him out and replace him with a pastor who would tell them what they wanted to hear? That is exactly what's going to happen if the sheep are given the ability to vote out their shepherd. It's inevitable.

Is that how the Bible says that churches should be organized? Does the Bible say that congregations should vote for their pastors? Actually, no. You won't find that teaching anywhere in the Bible. In fact, no church anywhere in the New Testament ever made *any* decision by voting! Now, that is *not* because people in ancient times didn't understand the concept of voting. Ancient Greece predated the New Testament by centuries, and it was a democracy. By the time the New

Testament was written the concept of voting was hundreds of years old.

Do you know how people in the Bible *did* make decisions? They cast lots (which means, essentially, they flipped a coin). That's how the disciples chose the replacement for the traitor Judas:

Acts 1:23-26: "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

If the modern church wanted to choose an apostle today and had two equally qualified candidates to choose from, it would never consider casting lots! Instead they would put it to a vote, and the most popular person would win. In the Bible, though, *no church ever does that*. Why? Because it's a bad idea. It's much wiser to cast lots:

Proverbs 18:18: "The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty."

Why does casting lots cause contentions to cease? Because everyone understands that it's fair. No one can accuse anyone of partiality or underhanded dealing. On top of that, the Bible says that God governs the outcome of casting lots:

Proverbs 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

This doesn't mean that people in ancient times had some special mystical dice that they used to make decisions. The verse is saying that God controls everything – including the outcome of casting lots. When the disciples replaced Judas, they looked for candidates that matched the Biblical qualifications and found two who were equally qualified. Since either of them would work, they prayed that God would show them His will and then cast lots, trusting that the outcome of the lots would be the will of God. Why did they put that much faith in casting lots? Because of Proverbs 16:33. Do you see how different their thinking was from ours?

Notice that they didn't tell everyone to go home and pray, and then waited for someone to step forward and say "God spoke to me and told me that we should do X." After all, how could you ever prove that God really *did* speak to that person? Instead they cast lots, which settled the matter.

The point I'm trying to make is that what the Bible teaches is *completely different* from the way we do things in our churches. There's no Biblical support for church buildings, and no apostle ever suggested we needed them or should have them. There's no Biblical support for a church service that consists of the congregation being told exactly what to sing and what to pray, and then being preached at in silence for 30 minutes before being sent home. We may think that it makes sense for the congregation to sit passively and contribute nothing to the service while the paid staff does everything, but you won't find that model anywhere in the Bible. We may think it's natural to have 5000 people attend a single church service, which is held by a pastor who doesn't know the people who are attending his own church, but you won't find that in the Bible. We may think it makes sense for people who are in trouble to file a form and make an appointment and then pay for counseling services, but that's not how Jesus said churches should handle their lost

sheep. The truth is no New Testament church was ever operated the way that modern churches operate!

Did the early church vote on who should be pastors and elders and deacons? No. Did they have business meetings? No. Instead the Bible established a series of qualifications that must be met in order to take on certain roles within the church. People who didn't meet those qualifications were excluded from the position, and there was no restriction on how many pastors or deacons or elders there could be in a church. (The Bible never says there should be a "head pastor" or a "youth pastor". Those positions have been made up and have no Biblical support.) If for some reason there *was* a limit and you had more qualified people than you had open positions, then you could cast lots. No voting was needed.

What do you do if someone is living in open sin? You remove them from the congregation. What do you do if the pastor is wicked? In that case he is living in open sin, so he would be removed – without any need to vote him out. What do you do if the pastor is preaching heresy and false teaching? That would also be open sin, so he would be removed without any need to vote him out. What do you do if the pastor is not very good? You train him – and there's no reason why you can't have more than one pastor (especially if you aren't paying them a salary). What do you do if the pastor preaches something that's true but the congregation doesn't want to hear it? *You keep him*. If your church is organized along Biblical lines then there isn't a need to vote on anything. (You're not going to be voting on new air conditioners for the building if you don't have a building in the first place!) If your congregation finds a need to vote on things then there's probably something wrong with the way your local church is organized.

Churches Must Not Avoid Politics

In this country churches are organized as non-profit corporations. (That's right: from a legal standpoint *they are a business.*) The advantage to this is that all contributions made to these churches are tax deductible. The disadvantage is that in order to maintain their non-profit status they have to abide by certain rules, and one of those rules is that they can't be political.

You may not realize this, but before modern times it was very common for churches to preach on political topics. This is because pastors understood that the Bible governs *all* aspects of life, including the government. The Bible really does have something to say about healthcare, and the economy, and laws, and regulations. It really does talk about how society should work, and what laws should exist, and what justice looks like. Pastors used to preach sermons on the government all the time. In fact, during the colonial era they even preached about the constitution that had been proposed by the founding fathers. They wanted to analyze it from a Biblical standpoint and see if it measured up to the standard defined in the Word of God.

Today churches avoid politics altogether. In fact, churches actually take great pride in having nothing to say about politics and not taking any stance on any political issue. However, *this is not an improvement!* Since pastors avoid the subject altogether, congregations often have no idea how to look at the government from a Biblical standpoint. They don't know how to think about a law from a Biblical standpoint. People have been taught that politics has nothing to do with Christianity, so when people think about political subjects they keep the Bible far away from their thinking. *This is very bad.*

Does God have anything to say about what's right and wrong? Of course. Does God define justice? Yes He does. Does God have anything to say to kings, or nations, or governments? Absolutely! Does the Bible tell us how nations should treat each

other? Yes it does. Can the Bible teach us the difference between a just law and an unjust one? Yes, it can. Are pastors going to bring any of this up? Absolutely not.

The truth is that Christianity applies to *all of life*. It's not something that we should just do on Sunday mornings and then put on the shelf for the rest of the week! Christianity should impact how we think about *all of our life* – including the way that the government operates. Pastors should teach people how to have a Biblical worldview, and that worldview should apply to *everything*. Instead of doing that, though, pastors ignore politics and pretend that God has no interest in the subject at all.

One reason they do that is because there are a lot of different views in a given congregation, and if they took a stand on something it might make people angry. (This goes back to the fact that churches are attended by saved people and lost people and people who claim to be saved but who are living in sin. If congregations removed the unrepentant sinners from their midst, which is what the Bible commands, then this wouldn't be a problem. Do you see how many problems we could fix if we did things God's way?) If pastors make their congregations angry then that could cost them their jobs. (Do you see how much trouble is caused by voting?) Since churches pay the pastor's salary that would impact their ability to feed their families. (Do you see how much trouble is caused when pastors depend on churches for money?) The other reason is that if a church starts preaching on politics then it might lose its tax-exempt status, and that could have a big impact on the amount of money it receives (and the money they have to pay in taxes). Churches need a lot of money in order to pay for their large building and their large staff. (Do you see how much trouble is caused by having church buildings?) In the end churches need money, and to get that money they're willing to make whatever compromises are necessary.

Do you think God is honored when churches refuse to

teach what the Bible has to say in order to get more money? I very seriously doubt it. I can't imagine a pastor standing before God and hearing Him say "I'm so glad you sold out the Bible in order to keep your tax-exempt status! That was definitely the right call. It's important to throw out whatever doctrines you need to in order to keep that money flowing." Yet that is *exactly* what churches do. Pastors know there would be serious consequences if they taught the full counsel of God, so they don't teach it. (How do we know that they don't teach it? Well, ask yourself this: how many political sermons have you heard in your life? If you've been attending the typical Protestant church, the answer is *zero*. So clearly they're avoiding the subject.) Churches know they might get in financial trouble if they taught how the Bible applies to politics and the government, so they don't go there. They avoid the subject entirely.

Would this be a problem in a small home church? Nope. That church wouldn't need a budget to operate, so it would be fine. Its pastor would already be working a full-time job to pay his salary, so his livelihood wouldn't be in danger. The money that the church received could go directly to outreach and mission work. It's true that people wouldn't be able to claim their offerings as a tax deduction, but I think God would rather have a faithful church than a rich one. How do we know that? Because that's exactly what Jesus Himself said to the church of Laodicea:

Revelation 3:17-19: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou

mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

That congregation was convinced that God approved of them because they were rich and prosperous. Was God impressed? Absolutely not! God saw that their spiritual condition was appalling and wretched, so He rebuked them and commanded them to repent. They may have had money, but they didn't have the things that really mattered. They weren't faithful in the sight of God. They weren't zealous for the truth or passionate about preaching the full counsel of God. In fact, verse 15 tells us they actually didn't care about the truth at all. They were indifferent – so God told them they made Him want to vomit.

If the government ever comes to a church and says "I will give you money as long as you avoid certain subjects", the answer of the church should *always* be a firm "No". It doesn't matter how small or harmless the compromise may seem. God requires us to preach and teach *everything!* This is how Jesus put it:

Matthew 4:4: "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

There are no doctrines we are allowed to disavow in order to win the approval of others. God is never going to tell you "I'm so glad you sold out the truth in exchange for money. That was the right call." Do you honestly believe that the nation is better off when Christians have no idea how to apply Biblical principles to the operation of the government? That seems pretty unlikely to me!

I'm not saying that churches should endorse political

parties or specific candidates. What I *am* saying is that pastors ought to teach people how to think Biblically about *all* of life. Excluding politics from the discussion is very wrong.

Families Should Worship Together

When it comes to church services, the modern church is eager to separate families from their children as much as possible. Churches that have Sunday School have special classes just for children (which are strictly divided by age). At the beginning of the Sunday morning service, children are dismissed to go attend a separate service that doesn't include their parents. Churches often hold events that are specifically targeted at children (once again, divided by age groups). They even have a youth pastor whose entire job is to minister to children.

Is any of this Biblical? Nope. You won't find any youth ministers in the New Testament. You also won't find any churches that sent children to a separate service so they could worship away from their parents. No apostle ever suggested that people should be divided up into groups based on their age, or that it was best for children to not worship alongside their parents. That's not how things were done in the New Testament!

You know what we *do* find? We find that children actually stayed right beside their parents. When Joshua read the Mosaic Law to the nation, the children weren't separated from their parents and sent to children's church:

Joshua 8:34-35: "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all

the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."

How much of the Law did Joshua read to the people – including to the children who were present? Every single word. Did he leave anything out? No. Did he leave the curses out? No. Did he leave the unpleasant parts out? No. Did he send the children off so that the adults could talk? No. The family stayed together.

Are there any passages in the Bible that suggest children would be better off if they were taken away from their parents and taught separately? No. Do you know who God has put in charge of teaching children? Their parents. God wants *their parents* to teach them His Law:

Deuteronomy 6:6-9: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

Who can teach children when they are sitting at the house, and lying down to sleep, and rising up? The parents. Does God ever suggest that parents should outsource that responsibility to pastors? Absolutely not. Parents need to take responsibility for their children and raise them up in the Lord. Parents should teach their children about God, and children should worship God alongside their parents.

But what about the topics that aren't necessarily appropriate for children? Here's the thing: those topics are almost *never* mentioned in churches. It's extremely rare for anything to come up that might be inappropriate for children – especially since Joshua didn't have any qualms about reading the entire Mosaic Law to little children! If there's a need to talk about something that might not be wise to share with children then it makes sense to remove them for that specific conversation, but that is a very rare case. Children should be with their parents as much as possible.

In a small group setting this makes a lot of sense, because you're talking about a group of maybe 15 people that's meeting in a home. The services that we find in the New Testament are interactive. People talk to one another, they expound on the Word of God, they share a meal, and they contribute to each other's lives. In a service like that children could learn from others and from their parents because the family unit isn't a passive participant anymore! How do you grow wise? By spending time with wise people – *not* by spending time with people who happen to be the same age that you are.

I'm not saying it's bad for children to have friends that are their own age. What I am saying is that it makes no sense to send children away when it's time for the Sunday morning service. You aren't showing up at church in order to be entertained, and you don't need age-appropriate entertainment for your children. There are simply no Biblical grounds for diving a church service into groups based on age. How can the young possibly learn from the life experiences of the elderly if they're kept in separate classes?

God Never Gave Pastors The Power To Marry People

The procedure for getting married in our society is pretty well understood. First you have to go and get a marriage license, and then you have to find someone to perform the marriage. When it comes to performing the marriage ceremony people typically have two options: they can go down to the courthouse and get married by a justice of the peace, or they can find a pastor and have him do the job. This procedure is so commonplace that people don't even think twice about it. If you ask someone "Who married you?" they will typically give you the name of their pastor – because people believe that pastors have the ability to take two people and join them together in marriage.

But do they *really* have that ability? Stop and think about it. What gives pastors the ability to join people in holy matrimony? Who gave them that power? I'm being serious here. Where did this ability come from?

You can check the Bible, but you won't find it there. The Bible gives pastors many responsibilities: they are to preach the gospel, take care of their flocks, baptize people, and so forth, but the Bible *never* gives them the power to marry people. It's never even *mentioned!* Jesus Christ charged the church with going into all the world, making disciples, and baptizing people, but He *never* mentioned the idea that His church should be marrying people. He didn't even hint at it.

The apostles wrote a lot of letters to various churches and told them how to follow the Lord, but they never mentioned the idea that churches should be involved with marrying people. They talked about feeding the poor, healing the sick, making converts, and even church discipline, but they never mentioned churches holding marriage ceremonies – *not a single time.*

In fact, no church in the entire Bible ever performed a marriage! No disciple, apostle, or deacon ever performed a

wedding in the Bible. There are no cases where a pastor took two people and married them. *It never happened.*

What I'm trying to say is this: the idea that pastors have the ability to unite two people in marriage *doesn't come from the Bible*. There's absolutely nothing in the Bible that says pastors can do that, and there's nothing that says churches ought to be involved in performing marriages. *It's not there*. I understand that churches have decided to take that role upon themselves, but God didn't give them that responsibility.

That means pastors *do not* have the power to unite people in marriage. Pastors have no more power to marry people than insurance agents or electricians. I understand that people believe they need to find pastor in order to get married, but there's no Biblical basis for that. It may be traditional, but it's man's tradition – not God's.

So who *does* have the power to marry people? Well, according to Jesus Christ, only one person can do that:

Matthew 19:4-6: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore **God hath joined together**, let not man put asunder."

Who has the power to take two people and joins them together in marriage? *God does*. Only the Lord has that power! No mortal being can unite people in marriage because God is the one who does the joining. How does it work? Well, it's pretty simple. Jesus said that a man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife, and God unites them into one. That's literally what the

verse says. At that point they have been joined together. They are no longer two people; instead they are one flesh.

Here's what that means in practical terms. In the marriage ceremony, the marriage license itself means nothing. Regardless of whether or not it's required from a legal standpoint (which is a complex topic far beyond the scope of this discussion), that piece of paper carries no weight with God. Having a marriage license is *not* what makes you married, and *not* having one doesn't mean you *aren't* married. After all, Adam and Eve didn't have a marriage license but the Bible tells us they were husband and wife. There are many societies that never had marriage licenses or pastors to marry people, but that doesn't mean those societies didn't have marriage. To God a marriage license is just a meaningless piece of paper. It carries no weight with Him and has no authority.

Likewise, at the end of the ceremony, when the pastor says "I now pronounce you man and wife", his pronouncement means nothing. Saying those words does *not* make the couple married, and *not* saying those words doesn't leave them unmarried. What the pastor says is *utterly irrelevant!* The truth is *he should not be involved in this anyway.* God never told him to marry people, nor did the Lord give him permission to do that!

What unites people in marriage is when, as Jesus said in Matthew 19, the man takes the woman to be his wife, and the wife takes the man to be her husband, and the two make a lifelong covenant together in the sight of God. When the couple exchanges their vows and commits to being husband and wife, at that point they're married because *God* joins them together. You don't need a pastor to get married, and you don't need official recognition from the government. Marriages that don't involve pastors, churches, or governments are not somehow "fake". God never says you need a pastor or a license in order to have a binding marriage. The traditions of men aren't the same thing as the commandments of God! We should be looking to *the Bible* to

see how marriage works.

Does the marriage become official when it's consummated? Nope. That's *not* what makes two people a married couple! We know this because Adam and Eve were referred to as husband and wife long before they consummated their union. Take a look for yourself. This is Genesis 2:25:

Genesis 2:25: "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Eve is referred to as Adam's wife *immediately*, as soon as she was created and given to Adam. However, their relationship wasn't consummated until much later – after they sinned and were kicked out of the garden of Eden:

Genesis 4:1: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord."

If that's not enough evidence for you, here's something else to consider. God has always been very clear that sex is only permissible *within* marriage. Sex within marriage is good, but sex outside of marriage is a serious sin. This means you have to *already be married* before you can have sex. Therefore the marriage must take place *first* – which means that the act of the physical union *cannot* be part of the marriage process!

Adam and Eve are a great example of how marriage works. God brought Eve to Adam, Adam accepted her as his wife, and they became a married couple. This is despite the fact there was no marriage license, and there was no pastor to pronounce them married. (I would like to add that witnesses are a very good idea because they will provide evidence that the marriage happened, and will hold the couple to the fact that they truly are married). All it took to marry them was their covenant to each

other, which was made in the sight of God. That was enough.

The reason this matters is because we've come to believe that people are united in marriage *by other people*, instead of by God. This leads to the idea that since the marriage was *created* by other people, it can also be dissolved by other people. Since the government grants the marriage, the government can grant the divorce.

But as we've seen, the government has absolutely *nothing to do* with uniting people in marriage! Likewise, pastors are *not* part of the process (no matter what they claim). God is the one who unites people in marriage, which means only God can dissolve the marriage. You can go down to the courthouse and get a divorce, but all the government can give you is a piece of paper that carries no weight in the sight of God. The courthouse isn't the one who married you in the first place; God was the one who did that. This means *God has to grant your divorce*. If He doesn't then *you don't have one*; in His sight you are still married to your original spouse.

Divorce is a very complex subject, and I don't have the time to cover it in detail here. There are definitely valid reasons to get a divorce, and in some cases it is absolutely the right thing to do and God definitely recognizes the divorce. The point I want to make is that God is the one who united you in marriage in the first place (not your pastor or the government), and only God can separate you. If you divorce your spouse for an unbiblical reason (which is too complicated a subject to get into here), then God doesn't recognize your divorce *and still considers you to be married to your original spouse*. Just because you consider yourself to be divorced does *not* necessarily mean that God agrees with you. If you didn't get divorced for a Biblical reason (for example, if you left your faithful wife and children in order to move in with another, younger woman who you thought was hotter) then God considers you to be having an affair and living in sin with someone you are *not* married to. That may seem like a

technical detail, but we must remember that when it comes time for us to die we will stand before God and be held accountable for the things we have done. Our actions really do have consequences.

Altar Calls Are Unbiblical

Are altar calls Biblical? Now, I realize this might seem like a strange question to ask. After all, altar calls have become a staple of the modern church, to the point where it's hard to imagine a Sunday morning service that *doesn't* have an altar call. Who could possibly object to ending a sermon with an invitation to come forward and be saved? Isn't that just the natural thing to do?

Altar calls have become a tradition – in fact, they have almost become a sacrament in our churches. Because of this we don't stop to think about what we're actually doing. We simply accept them and assume that altar calls must be a good idea – but I think it's time we took a Biblical look at what we're doing. We should always be willing to compare every aspect of our churches to what's revealed in the Word of God. There should be nothing that's "too important" to examine from a Biblical perspective. If altar calls are a solid Biblical practice then it should be a simple matter to demonstrate that from the Bible, right? But if the Bible *doesn't* support this practice then that should tell us something.

The first point I'd like to make is that there are no altar calls anywhere in the Bible. Altar calls are completely unknown in the Old Testament. In the New Testament no church is ever said to have used one, and they aren't mentioned in any of the letters to the churches. The disciples never used an altar call in any of their sermons, and even Jesus Himself never used altar calls.

Some people try very hard to find an altar call in the Bible, but it can't be done because *there aren't any*. People are so desperate to find an example of this practice that they claim Melchizedek's meeting with Abraham was an altar call:

Genesis 14:18: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Just take a look at that passage for yourself! Does Melchizedek ask his audience to come to the front of the church and pray the sinner's prayer so they can be saved from their sins? Absolutely not. This isn't even *remotely* an altar call! No one is urging sinners to repent of their sins and put their faith and trust in Christ – and yet people still claim that this is Biblical proof that altar calls are Scriptural. A simple reading of the passage demonstrates that this simply isn't true.

There are no altar calls anywhere in the Bible! It's not a Biblical practice, and there's no Scriptural support for that idea. Now, that doesn't mean that no one in the Bible preached the gospel, because they most certainly did. Many people preached repentance and urged sinners to turn away from their sins:

Matthew 3:1-2: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to

preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

There are many more examples that I could give, but I think you get the point. There's no shortage of preaching in the Bible! What we *don't* find are altar calls. Even when Jesus ministered to thousands of people for several days in a row, He never wrapped up by urging people to come to the front of the group to be saved. That simply never happened.

In our days that would be unthinkable, wouldn't it? If a modern church had a group of thousands of people, they would conclude the service by playing some sort of emotional hymn. The pastor would ask everyone to close their eyes, and urge the people to pray a certain prayer. The pastor would then say that if they prayed that prayer then they're saved. (Instead of praying that prayer in their seats while no one is looking, some pastors invite people to come to the front of the church to pray that prayer.) This practice is so common that it doesn't usually cross our minds that no one in the Bible ever did anything like this.

But the truth is the altar call is a modern phenomenon. It's entirely absent from the Bible, and the early church didn't practice it. The altar call was popularized by Charles Finney, who lived from 1792 to 1875. There were a few isolated cases where altar calls were used before then in some special circumstances, but Finney is the person who popularized it. That means *altar calls were unknown to the church before the 19th century*. They are something new! I'd also like to point out that while Finney was a well-known evangelist, he was far from orthodox. Finney rejected the doctrine of original sin and he didn't believe in the

imputed righteousness of Christ (which is the doctrine that when we're saved God gives us the perfect righteousness of Christ, and that's why we are justified in His sight). He also rejected the idea of Biblical regeneration – that people are made new creatures in Christ after they're saved.

Finney believed that in order to save people, all you had to do was put the right kind of emotional pressure on them and use the right kind of tricks, and you could drive them to the altar and get them to say that magical prayer. He also believed in the "prayer of faith", which to him meant that God was required to give you anything you prayed for. If you prayed that 100 souls would be saved by your preaching, then God was required to save 100 souls no matter what. (Needless to say, there are very serious theological problems with that idea.)

This was the mindset of the person who created the altar call, and this was the theology behind it. People today have accepted Finney's ideas regarding what it takes to get people saved – and that's unfortunate, because what the Bible teaches about salvation is radically different. The modern approach to salvation is extremely shallow and produces many false converts. The church isn't doing a very good job of explaining to people what salvation actually requires.

For example, take this account:

I recall a conversation in America in which a pastor's wife narrated to me her experience as a counselor. In counseling someone who came forward [to the altar] she discovered that this enquirer had no concept of repentance or faith. She endeavored therefore to explain the gospel in a simple manner. The leader of the meeting in the meantime began to be impatient and after about ten minutes could stand it no longer. Sweeping the woman counselor aside, he took

over as follows:

"You don't want to go to hell, do you?"

"No!"

"You want to go to heaven, don't you?"

"Yes, I do!"

"You believe that Christ died for sinners, don't you?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Then let's give thanks that he died for you and has given you salvation."

Then the leader prayed as follows: "Lord, I thank you for giving this soul eternal life. Thank you, Lord, Amen."

Then, turning to the person in question, he said, "Now you have eternal life and you can praise the Lord! Go and tell your friends that you have been saved!"

(*The Great Invitation*, Hulse, p109)

Was that person actually saved? I very seriously doubt it. He had no idea what faith was and he had no concept of repentance. On top of that, the prayer itself was prayed by *the leader*, not by the individual! The person never repented of his sins or gave his life to Jesus. I'd like to point out that even *demons* believe that Christ died for sinners, and demons would much rather go to Heaven than be cast into Hell! Demons, though, *are not saved*.

You see, being saved isn't just a matter of believing that Christ died for sinners. You also have to *repent*. You must go to Jesus and ask Him to forgive your sins. You must submit yourself to Christ, which means turning away from your sins and walking in God's ways. Salvation is far more than just a mental assertion of "Yes, Jesus died for sins"! In order to be saved you must *surrender to God*. You must stop your rebellion against God and give Him complete control over your life, your will, your

thoughts, your possessions, and your actions.

You also need to understand who Christ is and what He did. For example:

Romans 10:9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Notice that belief in the resurrection is part of the requirements for salvation! The verse also says that you *must* make Jesus your Lord. You *cannot* be saved by saying "Yes, Lord, I believe that you died for sinners and I want to go to Heaven, but I'm not going to obey you and I don't want you to tell me what to do. Just mind your own business and do whatever I tell you, and we'll get along fine." That is *not* salvation!

During altar calls churches tell people that if they come forward and pray a prayer, they will be saved – but that is not a true statement. *It's not the prayer that saves you!* The prayer of salvation is not a magical spell that saves people by the mere act of repeating the words. It takes more than that! Does the sinner actually understand the gospel? Are they repenting of their sins? Do they actually believe in the person and work of Christ? Are they abandoning their rebellion against God and submitting themselves to His authority? The answer to these questions is *extremely important*. The only thing that can save people is *faith in Christ*. If that is absent then the prayer won't do any good. We are saved by *faith*:

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Notice that this passage *doesn't* say "You are saved by praying the sinner's prayer, regardless of what you believe or whether you've actually repented!" *But that is precisely how people treat the sinner's prayer.*

The great danger of altar calls is that they are extremely shallow. They don't get into any of these core issues about salvation. Instead they teach people that if they just say certain magical words then they can escape Hell. So what do people do? They come to the front of the church, they recite that prayer, and they go away believing they're saved. Doesn't that seem like a dangerous thing to be doing?

The church then makes things even worse by pronouncing that person to be saved right there on the spot. That is a terrible thing to do! How can you possibly know in that moment if that person was actually saved? Nowhere does the Bible say "If you go to the front of the church, recite a prayer, and feel good about yourself afterward, you are saved" – but that's how *countless* people verify their salvation. The Biblical way of making sure that you're saved is to examine your life for the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The book of 1 John has a whole list of tests that you can use to examine your life for evidence that you really have changed and you truly have become a new person. Do you love other Christians? Do you obey God? Have you confessed your sins? Are you growing in holiness? Have you abandoned your old wicked ways? Are you remaining in the faith?

The only way to tell if a person has been saved is to wait and see, and evaluate their lives against the objective criteria that the Bible has given us. The proof of their salvation can be found in the life that they lead. As Jesus said, a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. Genuine conversions always result in a changed life, because we become a new creature in Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in

Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

If there is no change in that person's life and they continue living sin and depravity then they aren't a Christian. The prayer that they prayed was a waste of time, and responding to the altar call did nothing. Their conversion was phony. But you know something? *That's not something you can determine during the altar call!* Churches have absolutely no business pronouncing anyone saved on the spot.

If the prayer "didn't work", the problem isn't with Christ. Jesus is clear that He will reject no one:

John 6:37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The problem is with what churches are doing. It's true that if you put a lot of emotional pressure on people and use the right manipulative tactics, you might be able to get people to come to the front of the church and recite a prayer that you've told them to pray. *But that's very different from getting saved!* Reciting that prayer doesn't mean that the person understood or believed the gospel. It doesn't mean have any idea what Christ actually did for them on the cross. It doesn't mean they're sorry for their sins or are willing to turn away from them. It *especially* doesn't mean that the person is laying down their life and pledging to submit themselves to Christ.

It's that last point which is especially relevant in our modern age. Churches are filled with people who believe that Christ died for sinners, but who have absolutely no intention of obeying God. These people love their sins and don't have the slightest intention of turning away from them. They believe that

they can continue to live a life of open sin, and God will have to take whatever He can get. The idea that you must repent of your sins and live a holy life is completely foreign to them. They would never agree to such a thing because they love their sins too much.

These people *are not saved*. The apostle John makes this point very clear:

I John 2:3-5: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

The modern church may call these people "carnal Christians" and say that they're just not very spiritual, but the Bible calls them what they are: *lost people*. In order to be saved you must accept Jesus as your Savior *and* your Lord. If you reject Him as Lord and insist that *you* will control your life, then you aren't saved at all.

But altar calls gloss over all these critically important issues. They don't give people a deep understanding of the gospel; instead they say "Pray this prayer and you'll go to Heaven". They don't test the person to see if he actually understands what he's doing or believes in the gospel; instead they use high-pressure tactics to get people to say a set of magical words. On top of all that, altar calls assure the person that they're saved right then and there – instead of applying the Biblical tests that separate true conversions from false ones. As a result, our churches are filled with people who may not understand the gospel at all, and who may not have actually repented, but who are nonetheless convinced that they're saved

because they once went to the front and recited a prayer. That is a very bad situation!

Here's something to think about: of all those people who come to the altar to "get saved", how many of them show any fruits of repentance?

Matthew 3:7-8: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:"

When ten thousand people respond in one of the great evangelistic crusades, do we see the lives of those people transformed? How many of those people lead holy lives and display the fruits of the Spirit? You know the answer as well as I do: most of those people are never seen again. They go right back to their sinful lives.

There are some people in churches who come to the altar to "get saved" over, and over, and over again. The reason they do this is because they don't understand the gospel and they have no idea how to tell if they're actually saved or not. They think that being saved is some kind of warm feeling, and since they don't have that feeling anymore they must not be saved. So they go to the front of the church to try to get that feeling again, and then announce to the world that this time they've *really* been saved. That entire line of thinking is completely unbiblical, but that's the sort of mindset the church has been encouraging. The church has exchanged the Biblical understanding of the gospel for a shallow one that's designed to drive as many people as possible to the front of the church.

It may seem completely harmless to urge people to come to the front of the church to be saved – but is it? The church has

taught generations of people that coming to the front of the church and reciting a prayer is the same thing as getting saved. That is completely different from what the Bible has to say about the matter! In fact, I'm very concerned that we're actually inoculating people from the gospel. After all, once a person has gone to the front of the church and recited that prayer, they believe they're saved *because that's what pastors tell them*. Even if they're leading an incredibly wicked life that's utterly devoid of faith or godliness, it's impossible to tell that person "You need to repent and believe". Since they believe they're already saved, they won't listen to anything you have to say. They have been taught a false standard of faith, and that blocks the Biblical standard from ever reaching them.

Now, if a person is feeling conviction for their sins and wants to talk to the pastor about it, I think that's a good thing. A thorough conversation could do that person a lot of good and lead them to Christ – but that's not what altar calls are. I fear that our approach to salvation has *not* been saving people at all, but instead has been immunizing them against the gospel and setting them on the road to Hell. Are there people who have been saved through altar calls? Of course – but the number of people who respond and then are never seen again is far, *far* greater. Should we really be using a method that rarely works, that produces many false converts, and which has no Biblical support whatsoever? I don't think so.

You might wonder: if altar calls are not Biblical then what should churches be doing? It's an easy question to answer. We should preach the gospel:

I Corinthians 1:18-24: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the

understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Notice that Paul didn't say "If you want to get people saved, play a soft hymn and urge them to come to the front of the church to recite the following prayer. If people don't want to come forward then plant a few people in the audience and have them come to the front, to make it look like people are responding and put more emotional pressure on the reluctant ones. Tell people that all they have to do to get saved is recite a certain phrase. Avoid talking about the cost of following Christ, and make no mention of repentance or a changed life. Keep it simple: people just need to come to the front of the church and pray a prayer, and then they're done." Even though churches follow those instructions as if they were a sacrament from God, you will not find them *anywhere* in the Bible. Instead Paul was simple and to the point: *preach the cross*. Preach the full gospel of God, because *that's* the mechanism God will use to save people.

I find it fascinating that Christ routinely offended those who came to Him. For example, after attracting a very large crowd by miraculously feeding thousands of people with a very small meal, Jesus said this:

John 6:51-53: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

After Jesus preached that message, many of those who had been following Him left:

John 6:64-66: "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

If the modern church had been in that situation it would have reacted very differently. First of all, the church would have had an altar call to bring as many people to the front as possible. They would have told the crowd that they could avoid Hell simply by reciting a prayer. They definitely would have avoided discussing any doctrines that might offend people! Once they prayed that prayer and started attending church, they would preach messages that the new people would accept. After all, if you preach hard truths then there's a good chance the new people would leave, and who wants that? The modern church is extremely focused on numbers. The more people you can pack in the better – and the easiest way to do that is to water down the

truth and make it acceptable to everyone. So that's what churches do.

But that's not what Christ did! He knew that many of those who were following Him didn't actually believe in Him at all, so He deliberately preached something hard in order to get the false converts to leave. He only wanted *genuine* converts, not phonies. He used hard doctrine to separate the wheat from the chaff. The modern church would never dream of doing that today. What God wants us to do, and what the church is actually doing, are two very different things.

Altar calls are a great tool if your goal is to maximize the number of people in your pews. However, if you're trying to create genuine Christians who will stand the test of time then they're a terrible thing to use – *especially* when used in the careless way in which so many churches use them. As we can see, Christ took a radically different approach!

Do you want to save people? Then preach the gospel to them. Make sure that people understand it – *all* of it. Preach the hard truths. Tell them that genuine conversions result in a changed life which bears the fruits of the Spirit. Those who believe will come to Christ and truly be saved – and those who don't will be offended and driven away. Offending people may seem like a bad thing to do, but it's *far* better than making them think they're saved when they actually aren't. After all, it's *much* easier for someone who knows that they're lost to come to Jesus, than someone who's convinced they were saved at the altar when they really weren't.

Modern Sermons Are Shallow

Sometimes when we're reading the Bible we come across passages that ought to startle us. The Bible says some pretty

amazing things if we'll take the time to stop and think about what it's saying. All too often we simply read right over a passage without giving it any thought.

For example, after Nehemiah finished rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, he did something else of great importance: he teamed up with Ezra to read the entire Mosaic Law to the people. Just stop and think about that for a moment! Imagine reading the *entire* Mosaic Law at once. That's quite a task!

The reason he did that was because the people of Jerusalem weren't very familiar with it. The Jews had been committing all kinds of sins, and living lives that didn't please God. To solve that problem Nehemiah and Ezra taught the people what God's commandments actually were:

Nehemiah 8:2: "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; ...

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

7 ... and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

As you can see, the Levites put a lot of effort into this. They read the entire law of God, leaving nothing out. They read it distinctly so it could be understood. They also expounded upon the law so that people could understand what it actually meant. They wanted to make sure that everyone had heard the Mosaic Law and understood what it required.

Now, this was no small task. The Mosaic Law is much longer than just the 10 commandments; it contains a great many other rules as well. Anyone who has tried to read through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy knows just how many commandments there actually are. While it's true that much of Leviticus deals primarily with priestly matters and regulations regarding sacrifices, there are *still* a lot of commandments in those four books.

The process of reading the Law would obviously have taken more than just a few minutes. We can see in Nehemiah 8:3 that Ezra read "from morning to midday". In other words, this process took *hours*. This wasn't a 30-minute sermon! I'd also like to point out that this was *not* light reading material: after all, it was an exposition on the Mosaic Law. It didn't have any funny stories and it was *not* entertaining. If you've ever read those four books of the Bible then you know exactly what I'm talking about. That material is difficult, hard to read, and at times hard to understand.

Yet how did the people respond? Well, we're told in Nehemiah 8:3 that even though this process took hours, all of the people listened attentively. In fact, they paid so much

attention that they became convicted of their sins and began to weep:

Nehemiah 8:9: "And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law."

Not only did people pay attention for *hours* as the Levites expounded upon the *entire* Mosaic Law to them, but they also applied it to their lives and realized that they fell short! The people were so overcome by the magnitude of their sin that they began to weep. That's how much of an impact this had on them!

Do you know what would happen if someone tried something like this today? Imagine for a moment a pastor telling his congregation that he was going to spend the next 4 hours preaching a sermon on the entire Mosaic Law. If any pastor was foolish enough to try something like that, he would probably find himself out of a job. The congregation would bounce him right out of the pulpit and into the parking lot, and his days at that church would be over. There would be a riot!

The reason the congregation would riot is because modern Christians tend to have incredibly short attention spans when it comes to spiritual issues. Yes, the congregation will sit there while the pastor preaches a 30-minute sermon, but the odds are good they're not going to pay much attention to what he's saying. Instead of taking notes you'll find people balancing their checkbooks or just sleeping through the message. There are a few people who will pay attention to it, but those are the exceptions. Many people will have already forgotten most of what he said by the time they get out to the parking lot. If the preacher dares to go over 30 minutes then people will start to

complain. Even going over the allotted time by seven minutes is enough to get people upset. However, if the pastor's sermon is short – say he only talks for 20 minutes instead of 30 – then there will be rejoicing. People love short sermons and dislike long ones. This is true no matter how good the sermon is or how relevant it may be to their lives.

Why is this? The answer is pretty clear: people have a very limited appetite for preaching. Interestingly, I've never heard anyone complain that a service had too much singing. It's common for people to sit through an hour-long musical presentation at church without making a single complaint – but if the pastor ever tried to preach for an hour there would be a lot of unhappiness. The reason for this is simple: people like to listen to music, and they don't like to listen to preaching.

Now, I don't think it's *just* a problem of attention spans. After all, the same people who complain if a sermon goes five minutes over its expected time are willing to stay up until two in the morning if the baseball game they're watching goes into nine extra innings. They'll gladly watch a three-hour-long movie, or spend six solid hours watching reruns of television shows they've seen a dozen times before. When it comes to something *they actually care about*, time is no object. People who would riot at the thought of a four-hour sermon have no problem spending four hours watching a football game. It's easy to understand why: they believe that football is fun and exciting, and they believe that sermons (even really good ones) are kind of boring. People want to limit their intake of sermons.

I understand that there are some terrible preachers out there. I've heard pastors preach long sermons when they had nothing to say, and it was pretty painful. If your point can be made in 10 minutes then make your point and stop. Don't stretch it out just to hear yourself talk.

But the problem that we have in our churches is not a dislike of *bad* sermons, but a dislike of sermons altogether. Many

people who go to church have very little interest in hearing the Word of God preached (which goes back to the fact that congregations are composed of a "mixed multitude" of saved people and unsaved people). This is in stark contrast to the people we find in the Bible, who *did* care and who *did* pay attention.

As we can see in the example of Nehemiah, the people stood there for *hours* and listened. They cared about what was being said so much that they were overcome by conviction. They took the message to heart. King Josiah had the same reaction when the Mosaic Law was read to him:

2 Kings 22:8: "And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. . .

10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

12 And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

13 Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

Here we have another instance where someone read the

entire Law! In this case the Mosaic Law was read to King Josiah. What was the king's reaction? The Bible says he was so overcome that he rent his clothes. Not only did he pay attention, but he understood what the Law meant. He knew that his nation had been disobedient and was in danger of facing the wrath of God. Conviction had set in and he knew the nation was in a lot of trouble.

I realize these are exceptional cases. The Israelites didn't have the entire Law read to them on a regular basis – but when it was read, they listened. Have you ever tried to read the entire Mosaic Law in one sitting? I can't imagine any congregation allowing their pastor to read the whole thing to them in a single service; they would revolt. It simply wouldn't be tolerated. By modern standards that would be seen as a terrible sermon: dry, boring, and lacking amusing anecdotes. But when Shaphan the scribe read it to King Josiah, it had such a huge impact on him that it changed the course of the nation.

Do you know why? It's because Josiah cared deeply about honoring God with his life, whereas many people in our churches primarily care about being entertained. That's why Josiah eagerly listened to an hours-long recitation of hundreds of commands. His goal in life was *not* the pursuit of entertainment, but the pursuit of God. That's what he was passionate about.

Many people in our congregations primarily want to be entertained. If a sermon is fun then they will listen to it for a short time, but it had better be short or they will lose interest. Many Christians are focused on the pursuit of pleasure instead of the pursuit of God. This is why they have no patience for long messages. They have *lots* of attention for things that they care about, but God had better keep His messages short and fun.

Did you know that Joshua also read the entire Mosaic Law to the people? In fact, when he read the Law there were children present (as we discussed earlier in this series):

Joshua 8:34: "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.

35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."

These children weren't sent off to children's church to get a more entertaining message. No, they had to behave and listen while Joshua spent *hours* reading the Law to them. That's pretty remarkable, isn't it?

This wasn't just an Old Testament thing. The apostle Paul also preached rather long sermons:

Acts 20:7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

Incidentally, his sermon didn't stop at midnight. He actually kept preaching until the following morning:

Acts 20:11: "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."

Can you imagine what would happen if the apostle Paul came to one of our modern churches and tried to preach a sermon that lasted *until morning of the next day*? I suspect the congregation's reaction would *not* be pretty! Now, if people were

watching a baseball game and it didn't finish until after midnight, then people will stay up for that because it's baseball. But a *sermon* lasting that long is completely out of the question. Didn't Paul care about those poor people in the audience?

I'm not saying that all of Paul's sermons were this long, and I'm also not suggesting that short sermons are evil. There's nothing wrong with preaching short messages, and in many cases that is very appropriate. If what you want to say can be said in just a few words then do that and don't drag it out! There's also the fact that (as we discussed earlier in this series) these sermons were probably interactive. The Levites who read the entire Mosaic Law to the people expounded on it. Things back then weren't like they are today, where people had to sit in silence. People were allowed to ask questions and get clarification. My point is that some of the sermons we find in the Bible were very long, and in spite of their great length they powerfully impacted the people who heard them. Yet if that same message was preached today the church would never tolerate it because of its length! Something has changed, and it's not the Word of God.

Do you know why Paul was able to preach to that group for so long? It's because they had a genuine heart for God and cared about what the apostle was saying. Christians used to care deeply about the things of God. For example, a 13th century Catholic Inquisitor by the name of Reinerius said this about the Waldensians:

"They can repeat by heart, in the vulgar tongue, the whole text of the New Testament and great part of the Old: and, adhering to the text alone, they reject decretals and decrees with the sayings and expositions of the Saints" (Faber, p. 492).

These days many Christians haven't even bothered to *read* the entire Bible. Yet these 13th century Christians cared so much about the Word of God that they actually memorized *virtually the entire Book* – and this was during a time when owning a single page of the Bible could get them burned at the stake! Their passion for Bible study actually endangered their lives. Many of them were killed for it – and yet they weren't deterred. Even though owning a Bible was punishable by death, they still owned them, studied them, and memorized them. *That* is how much they cared!

Can you imagine these devoted Christians limiting sermons to 30 minutes and complaining if they went five minutes over? Can you imagine this group becoming irritated if the pastor spent a few minutes too long expounding on what the Word of God had to say? Of course not – it would be unthinkable to them. Things are different today, aren't they?

There is a preacher online who I enjoy listening to, who preaches sermons that are an hour and 45 minutes long. Since he has so much time he's able to go into incredible detail. What people don't realize is that if you only have 30 minutes to cover an entire passage then you're not going to be able to say very much about it. Imagine taking a 2-hour movie and cutting it down to half an hour. You're going to lose a lot when you do that! However, if you have more time then you can accomplish a lot more. Think of it this way: if you have to cover all 12 chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes in four 30-minute sessions then you are going to be extremely limited in how much you can bring out. More time would make a big difference – but Christians are unwilling to devote serious amounts of time to studying the Word of God. People claim that they simply don't have the time, but I find that hard to believe. According to Nielsen, the average American watches *34 hours* of television a week. Why is it out of the question to sacrifice ten of those minutes to give the preacher a little more time?

The real problem is that many people in our churches find the Word of God boring. They just don't really care about it, and they have no passion for spiritual things. They have lots of time for secular things that they find entertaining, but they have no interest in reading their Bibles, or studying them, or tolerating a sermon that's longer than a half-hour TV sitcom. People are passionate about things, but God is not on that list. People praise God with their lips during the Sunday morning service, but their hearts are far from Him. It's easy to see where their heart truly lies: just look at where they spend their time!

If only people cared as much about the Bible as our forefathers did, how different things would be! Maybe then people wouldn't go around thinking that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham.

Churches Must Not Form Alliances With The Ungodly

In modern times it's common for Christian groups to join forces with non-Christian organizations in order to accomplish some social goal – be it protesting some injustice, or feeding the hungry, or whatever the hot topic of the day might be. Christians will join with Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, and whoever else they can find in order to accomplish their goals. The justification for this is that while we may have differences we can all agree on this one thing, so why not work together to accomplish it?

The answer is simple: it's because the Bible forbids it. Our generation has forgotten the principle of separation, and the consequences have been devastating. The church needs to learn that ecumenicism – the idea that we should all get along and work together no matter what we believe – doesn't come from God. In fact, God is so opposed to it that He promised to curse

those who are involved in such things.

I realize that's a strong statement, so let's look at the evidence. In 2 Chronicles 18 we can find the story of Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Jehoshaphat was a wise and godly king who the Lord gave great riches and honor. Ahab was an incredibly evil king who was married to the even-more-evil Jezebel. Despite their differences, Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea to join forces with Ahab and attack their common enemy:

2 Chronicles 18:1-3: "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramothgilead. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war."

This is exactly the sort of thing that the modern church does. Jehoshaphat was good and Ahab was evil; Jehoshaphat worshiped the true God while Ahab worshiped pagan gods. Since they had a common enemy, Jehoshaphat thought it made sense for them to team up and work together. After all, the Syrians were dangerous and posed a threat to both kings. As the modern church would say, this is the Lord's battle, and if we can get unbelievers to join us in our fight then so much the better!

Except the battle did not go well. If you read chapter 18 you'll see that the prophet Micaiah warned against going to war at all, and prophesied that Ahab would be killed. Sure enough, Ahab actually was killed in that battle. When Jehoshaphat returned home, the prophet Jehu rebuked the king for joining

forces with Ahab:

2 Chronicles 19:1-2: "And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

The Lord was *not at all* pleased that Jehoshaphat had made an alliance with Ahab. Even though they had a common enemy, Jehoshaphat was forbidden from joining forces with the wicked. The Lord didn't see it as two people attacking a common problem; He saw it as helping the ungodly and aiding those who hate the Lord. What the Lord focused on was the fact that *Jehoshaphat helped Ahab*, a king who hated God. What Jehoshaphat helped him do was beside the point. The Lord was upset that he had helped Ahab *at all*. Because of this, as the prophet Jehu said, "therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

Some may wonder, didn't the Lord command us to pray for our enemies and do good to them that hate us? Yes, He did. But the Lord did *not* command us to *join forces with them and help them accomplish their goals*. That is an entirely different matter! That's what Jehoshaphat did, and the Lord was very upset about it. The fact that the Syrians were evil and were also Jehoshaphat's enemy didn't matter to God at all.

Let's look at another case. After Ahab died another king arose named Ahaziah, who was also very wicked. Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea for the two of them to join forces and send some ships to Ophir to get gold (1 Kings 22:48). Once again we see a godly king teaming up with an evil king in order to accomplish something. Now, there was nothing wrong

with going to Ophir for gold; King Solomon also sent ships out looking for treasure and acquired great wealth. Jehoshaphat thought that if both kings teamed up then they could both be enriched.

However, the Lord was not pleased:

2 Chronicles 20:35-37: "And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

What upset the Lord was *not* the purpose of the voyage. No, what really upset God was that Jehoshaphat had teamed up with the evil king Ahaziah. Because Jehoshaphat joined himself with a pagan king who hated God, the Lord destroyed the ships they had made. The Lord *hates* it when His people team up with His enemies in order to accomplish something. It doesn't matter if their stated goal is something that's actually good. *He hates it!* In fact, He hates it so much that He promises *wrath* on those who dare to do such things. In the example above, God was so upset at their partnership that He actually destroyed the ships.

This same principle is repeated in the New Testament:

II Corinthians 6:14-17: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath

Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

People commonly apply this to marriage, but *Paul was not talking about marriage*. Marriage isn't even mentioned anywhere in the chapter! What Paul is saying is that Christians should *not join forces with pagans*. As Paul points out, light has no communion with darkness and righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness. They are *different teams entirely* and they are not to be "yoked together".

How many times did the apostles join forces with pagans in order to accomplish societal goals? *Zero times*. How many times did the church in the New Testament join with idol-worshippers to stamp out poverty, feed the hungry, or pursue some other goal? *Zero times*. Instead Paul condemns this practice – just as the practice was condemned in the Old Testament. God wants His people to be *separate* from the world. He doesn't want them building alliances with the wicked; instead He wants His followers to "come out from among them, and be ye separate".

This principle of separation is no longer followed by the modern church. It has ignored the clear teaching of 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. In fact, the church thinks it's *great* when they can team up with God-hating organizations in order to get things done! What God has to say about it is entirely forgotten – but God doesn't mince words about this:

2 John 1:10-11: "If there come any unto you,

and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

How does God say we should treat those who preach a false gospel? Does He say that we should join forces with them and try to find areas of commonality so we can build agreements? Nope. What He actually says is that we shouldn't even receive them into our home. In fact, we *shouldn't even bid them "godspeed"!*

Now, when John says "receive him not into your house" he's not forbidding us from sharing the gospel with them. What he *is* forbidding is helping them in any way, either in deed (by giving them a place to stay so they can keep preaching a false gospel) or in word (by bidding them godspeed). John is clear that those who help them, even verbally, become a "partaker of his evil deeds".

Sadly, this is a sin that the modern church *loves* to commit. I once saw a case where a church learned that a mosque was undergoing renovations, so they invited the Muslims to *borrow their church building* so they could keep worshiping their false god. That's exactly the sort of thing that John was condemning – but instead of being dismayed, churches brag about this sinful behavior as a great example of "outreach" and "building bridges" and "true love". God, however, calls it *being a partaker of their evil deeds* and hates it with a passion.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate", says the Lord. That is the commandment! God repeats it in Revelation and adds a threat:

Revelation 18:4: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye

receive not of her plagues."

In this case the verse is talking about Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations. God is commanding His people to come out of that wicked place and "be not partakers of her sins" – for those who *are* partakers of her sins will also partake of the plagues that God will send upon her. How do we become partakers of her sins? By joining forces with her and helping her in word or deed. We become partakers with the wicked when we refuse to separate ourselves from them.

The modern church has decided that it's not interested in separation, and instead eagerly tries to form alliances with as many God-hating organizations as it can possibly find. The church has no idea how much this angers God. The Lord didn't hesitate to discipline the righteous king Jehoshaphat when he committed this sin, and that is something we should take to heart.

The Importance Of Calling Out False Teachers By Name

Here's a question for you: is it right or is it wrong to call out false teachers by name? In the world today there are many people who call themselves Christian pastors who teach dangerous, heretical doctrines. Some of these teachers reject the Bible outright and claim that we need to look elsewhere for the truth. Others teach things that are contrary to the Bible or twist the Scriptures to their own ends. For example, there are pastors who deny the virgin birth, the resurrection, the identity of Jesus as God, the reality of Hell, and that salvation comes only through Jesus – just to name a few common heresies! Such people abound in today's world and have led many astray.

The question is, what should be done about it? Some pastors teach that it's wrong to ever call anyone a false teacher.

They say that calling someone a false teacher is the same thing as judging them, and Christians "aren't supposed to judge people." In their opinion the best thing to do is ignore them entirely. At most they might address the false teaching, but they never address the false teacher.

Others say that we should live by Thumper's motto. The rabbit from Bambi famously said that "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." I've heard people seriously suggest that this philosophy should guide everything we say. In other words, if we don't have anything nice to say about someone then it's best to keep silent. Calling someone a false teacher isn't nice, so we shouldn't say it. I'd like to point out that failing to deal with a situation is no different from ignoring it. The results are the same.

All of this brings up a question: what did people do about this problem in the Bible? Is this policy of ignoring false teachers actually Biblical? It's an excellent question, and fortunately it's easy to answer.

First of all, Jesus Himself made it quite plain where He stood. The Lord didn't hesitate to condemn false teachers in the strongest possible terms:

Matthew 23:27: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. ...

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

As you can see, Jesus didn't mince words! He called the

Pharisees hypocrites and a generation of vipers, and He did it *while they were standing there listening to Him*. There was nothing remotely "nice" about what He said! He actually told them, to their face, that they were very wicked men who were headed straight for Hell. The Lord *definitely* confronted both the false teaching *and* the false teacher.

Of course, Jesus was God, and that's an important distinction. Jesus has a right to judge everyone, and one day we will stand before Him and be held accountable for the way we've lived our life. God has every right to judge mankind, so the fact that He exercises that right shouldn't come as a surprise.

So let's look at another example. What did the apostles do when they were confronted with this sort of situation? Did they believe that confronting false teachers was wrong? Did they live by the "be nice at all costs" motto? Actually, they did not. For example, Paul had quite a bit to say about someone named Alexander:

1 Timothy 1:19-20: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

2 Timothy 4:14: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:"

These are remarkable statements! Not only did Paul call Alexander out by name as an evil person (which isn't a "nice" thing to say!), but he said that he *delivered him over to Satan*. Before you panic, I'd like to point out that the reason Paul did this was so that Alexander could learn not to blaspheme. Paul

hoped that by doing this Alexander would come to regret what he'd done and would repent of his sins. However, Alexander apparently didn't learn anything because in 2 Timothy Paul once again mentioned Alexander's wickedness and asked God to avenge Paul for all the evil things Alexander had done do him.

We can see that the apostle Paul called out two false teachers by name (Hymenaeus and Alexander). Paul didn't restrain himself to just addressing the false teachings themselves, and he didn't say "Well, let's be nice about it." Paul never said anything remotely like "Even though some people are teaching false doctrines, it would be wrong and judgmental to call them out on it. We need to get along with such people and be nice to them." No, Paul was pretty direct in saying that Alexander was evil and people needed to be aware of who he was and what he was doing.

This is not the only example of this that we can find in the Bible! There are many more cases where the apostles called out someone for being a false teacher or an evildoer:

Galatians 2:11: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."

2 Timothy 4:10: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."

III John 1:9-10: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth

them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

This isn't just limited to the New Testament; you can find the same thing in the Old Testament as well. For example, Nehemiah names quite a few names:

Nehemiah 13:7-8: "And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff to Tobiah out of the chamber."

Nehemiah 13:28-29: "And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites."

Another place where you can find this is in the Psalms. In fact, there's a whole class of psalms called imprecatory psalms, in which the psalmist asks God to avenge him for some evil that was done to him. For example, one psalmist wrote this:

Psalms 69:22-28: "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in

their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous."

That's some pretty harsh language! Now, lest we think that these verses were simply the ravings of a godless lunatic, it's worth noting that we find the same sort of thing going on *in Heaven*. Take a look at what the book of Revelation has to say:

Revelation 6:9-10: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Revelation 11:16-18: "And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth."

Revelation 16:5-7: "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

I realize that we've strayed a little bit from the original topic, but there's an important point here. The modern church has been infiltrated with the idea that its primary role in life is to be *nice*. Calling out false teachers for heresy isn't nice, so many people say we shouldn't do it. Asking God for vengeance is *especially* not nice. The church believes that it needs to be nice at all times and never say anything that isn't positive and uplifting.

If you look at the Bible, however, it becomes obvious that this philosophy isn't the least bit Biblical. We aren't called to be nice; we're called to be loving, and that's an entirely different matter! There's nothing loving about refusing to tell people that sins are sinful. After all, the wages of sin is death! If you don't call out sin then you're allowing it to continue to claim one souls after another. Condemning it and urging people to repent of it is the only way to save them from its terrible consequences. We *must* call it out!

Likewise, there's nothing loving about refusing to confront false teachers. Life isn't a game where everyone goes to the same place after death and receives the same meaningless prize. We are playing for keeps, and the reward is either everlasting life in paradise or everlasting torment in the Lake of Fire. There's no middle road or neutral ground! False teachers are denying everlasting life to millions of people and sending

them down the road to Hell. They're like angry bears roaming around in crowded neighborhoods, looking for the weak and disabled so they can tear them limb from limb. If there was a rabid bear in your neighborhood you wouldn't ignore it on the grounds that we should be nice to bears; instead you would hide your children and then call animal control so they could capture the bear before it hurts anyone.

Refusing to name false teachers is devastating for many reasons. If no one confronts them then how will they learn that what they're doing is wrong? If no one names them then how will those who are weak or new to the faith find out that they should be avoided? There's nothing loving about refusing to warn people against people who teach that there's no Hell or judgment for sin. How many people are going to hear these false teachers and go away deceived because no one warned them? How many souls will be lost forever because those who knew better refused to do something about it?

The call to be loving means that sometimes we have to engage in behaviors that aren't very "nice". Paul really did turn Alexander over to Satan, but the reason he did it was in the hope that Alexander might learn the error of his ways and change. Would it really have been better if instead Paul had done nothing and let Alexander continue down the road to eternal damnation?

Now, I realize that the imprecatory Psalms are a bit different. The key there is to realize that while God forbids *us* from taking revenge, He does *not* rebuke our thirst for justice. What God says is that when we've been wronged we should allow the Lord to take care of it. Those who have been martyred for the cause of Christ *do* thirst for justice to be done, as we saw in Revelation 6:9-10. The Lord doesn't rebuke this desire but instead promises that justice *will* be done. One day He will avenge His children, but that's a topic for another time.

Refusing to confront false teachers may be "nice", but there's nothing loving about it. I fear that our refusal to combat

false teachings *and* those who teach them only makes it easier for false teachers to guide millions of people down the road to Hell. After all, if you refuse to tell campers that a vicious wolf is roaming their campground, what do you think is going to happen? Is being "nice" really worth all the souls that it's going to cost?

What "Worship" Actually Means

It's pretty universal for churches refer to their Sunday morning services as "Worship services". I have to ask, though: are they really *worship* services? I'm not convinced that the church actually understands what the word "worship" really means.

We can find the word "worship" many times throughout the Bible. For example, the wise men worshipped Jesus:

Matthew 2:11: "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh."

Does this mean the wise men sang Jesus some songs and then listened to a sermon? Nope. It means they literally bowed down to Him.

Here's a time when a leper came to Jesus:

Matthew 8:2: "And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Did this leper sing a song to Jesus? No. He literally bowed down at His feet and then asked to be cured of his leprosy.

Here's a time when the disciples worshiped Jesus:

Matthew 14:31-33: "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

Did the disciples sing to Jesus? No. They bowed down at His feet in awe and amazement.

I could give a *lot* more examples, but I think you get the point. The Bible is extremely consistent in the way it uses the word "worship". That word does *not* mean to sing songs! We already have a word for that, and it is the word "praise". The word "worship" means to bow down to God.

When people gather together and sing hymns, are they worshipping Jesus? No, they are praising Him. Worship and praise are not the same! We worship Jesus when we bow down before Him. We worship Him when we do His will instead of our own. You will never find a "worship service" mentioned anywhere in the Bible. There are many times when people gather together to praise the Lord or listen to a sermon, but worship is something that each individual must do by themselves. It's not a group activity! You must make the choice to walk in His ways instead of your own. You must choose to submit to Him in your life instead of doing whatever you please. Those are acts of worship! What happens in Sunday morning services are acts of *praise*, which is a group activity.

It's very easy to praise God without worshipping Him. In

fact, God said that people do this all the time:

Isaiah 29:13: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"

Can you honor God with your lips while your heart is far from Him? Absolutely. I think that's very common in churches. Praise and worship are not the same thing, and churches shouldn't act like they're synonyms. If you come to church and sing a few praise songs, that doesn't mean that you've engaged in an act of worship. If you truly want to worship Jesus then you must submit to Him in your life and bow down to Him.

Churches should teach people what the word "worship" really means. We aren't doing people any favors by confusing the terms "worship" and "praise"! Churches do *not* have a "worship team". That whole concept doesn't even make sense! What churches have is a *praise* team. The fact that the word "worship" is so widely misused makes me think that people don't understand what worship is in the first place.

Should people praise God? Yes. Should people worship God? Yes. Are those two things the same? No, they are not.

Conclusion

If you've made it this far then it should be obvious by now why I think the modern church is very unbiblical. I'm not saying that the *doctrines* of churches are unbiblical (although that may be true as well, depending on what denomination we're talking

about). I am saying that the way people "do church" is completely unbiblical. Christians often say that the Bible is their sole guide for faith and practice, and claim that they want to obey the Bible and not go beyond it – but when it comes to the way we run our churches, we've tossed the Bible out completely and have come up with all sorts of traditions that have no Biblical support and cannot be justified. Our ways are *not* better than God's ways. The way we have come up with to "do church" is extremely ineffective and has had terrible consequences.

Is there any Biblical support for having church buildings? Nope. But we have them anyway, and we spend millions of dollars on them, and we go deep into debt to pay for them, and we ask the congregation to make huge sacrifices in order to fund them. These buildings are always growing larger and larger, and taking more time and resources to maintain and repair. The buildings are a huge burden and have led to a lot of other problems, but we want them anyway. If we met in people's homes, like *every church we find in the New Testament*, we would solve a whole host of problems. But that's not what we do.

Is there any Biblical support for a pastor to have a congregation of ten thousand people? Absolutely not. The whole job of a pastor is to know his sheep, and help them, and go after them when they're in trouble – but it's possible to attend a large church for *months* without the pastor even noticing you're there. If you want help from the church you're going to have to get in touch with someone yourself and make an appointment, and then possibly pay a fee for counseling services. The pastor doesn't know who you are and doesn't have time for you, and he isn't going to think about you when crafting his sermons. He has thousands of people that he's preaching to, and he can't possibly deal with each person individually and work alongside them. This wouldn't be a problem if people met in small groups in their homes, but that's not the way we do things.

Is there any Biblical support for pastors delivering every single sermon as a monologue that must never be interrupted with questions or corrections? Nope. Some sermons in the Bible were long and others were short, but people were allowed to ask questions. Paul even told people to judge those who were speaking and correct them if they were wrong. In the modern church a pastor picks a sermon and preaches it to 3000 people in the hope that somehow there might be something in it for someone. If we had small home churches then the messages could actually be directed at the problems people were struggling with. People could ask questions and get clarification. They could actually learn something, instead of being lectured and then sent home to work out any problems on their own.

Is there any Biblical support for services being exactly an hour or two long? Nope. In the Bible services were as long as they needed to be. People gathered together and then remained together until they were done. They prayed as long as needed, and preached as long as needed, and talked as long as needed. Sometimes the service only lasted a few minutes and sometimes it lasted all night. The length didn't really matter. Is that how we do things? Absolutely not. Our services are planned out in advance, right down to every song that will be sung and every prayer that will be prayed and the exact list of points the pastor will make in his sermon. The service will start exactly on time and end exactly on time (with very little variation). The service is going to be exactly the same regardless of who shows up that day or what their needs are. The number of people who come (or don't come) has no impact on how the service unfolds at all. There's no Biblical support for that, and no church in the Bible ever operated that way, but that's the way we do things today.

I could go on and on and on. Is there Biblical support for tithing? No. Is there Biblical support for pastors marrying people? No. Is there Biblical support for meeting exactly once a week on Sunday mornings? No. Is there Biblical support for voting in

pastors and voting them out? No. Is there Biblical support for having the entire congregation sit passively during the service? No. Is there Biblical support for pastors switching jobs again and again until they reach the peak of their career and land a prestigious position at a megachurch? No. Is their Biblical support for separating children from their parents once the service starts, and dividing people into different age groups so they can all be taught separately? No. Is there Biblical support for opening up church services to people who aren't Christians at all, and never having any services or events that are only for believers? Nope. There's not even any Biblical support for calling part of the church building "the sanctuary" and designating it as a holy place (which is how many people view it). The building isn't "the church"! The *people* are the church. God doesn't dwell in the building; instead the Holy Spirit dwells within us. The sanctuary is not holy! Instead it is the *people* who are holy.

Yes, this land is full of buildings that are called churches. They have pastors that don't know the people who attend the services, because there are so many people attending that the pastor can't possibly get to know them. You can go into these buildings and attend the services, but you can't expect people to know when you're in trouble because it doesn't work that way. The pastor is probably not going to come looking for you if something bad happens, but if you fill out a form and schedule an appointment then maybe you can get some counseling (although you may be charged for it). You can hear sermons in these buildings, but the sermons aren't designed with you in mind and may have nothing to do with what's going on in your life. If you've been going to church for a while then all the sermons will probably be things you've heard before. If you've been going a long time then you could probably give the sermon yourself because you already know all the points that are going to be made. You're essentially stuck in first grade forever because the pastor will never explore the Bible on a deeper level. He

can't, because his church is full of people who aren't saved or who don't really care very much about Christianity.

If you go to a church service, you will be able to say hello to the person who has been sitting behind you for the past three years – but that will probably be the extent of your conversation. You will sing whatever songs you are told to sing, and you will pray whatever you are told to pray. If there's a responsive reading then you will say whatever the pastor wants you to say. You can give when the offering plate is passed around, and nearly all your money will go toward paying for the building and the salaries of the staff (some of whom may make significantly more money than you do). You can then sit quietly while the pastor preaches at you. Once the service is over and you've finally left the building you can then pray your own prayers and sing your own praises to God. You can study the Bible and have friends over and build relationships with them. You can talk to someone about your problems and help them with theirs. You can bear one another's burdens – but you're going to be doing it outside of the very expensive church building, because that's not what that building is for.

I've heard it said that fewer people go to church these days than they did in the past. What amazes me is that anyone goes to church at all! Why would you want to drive across town in order to sit passively for a few hours and then drive back home? How does that benefit anyone? If you go to a small group then you can help others and be helped in return, but you have no options to do anything in a church service. If you miss church for a month it won't negatively impact the service at all, because there's nothing for you to do in the service but sit there quietly.

That might not be so bad if there was Biblical support for the way we conduct our services, *but there isn't*. In the Bible, services were held by small groups of people who met in homes. Christians talked to one another, and asked questions, and corrected one another, and helped one another. They noticed

when there were problems and they went after the lost. They met frequently (on a daily basis, actually), they shared meals together all the time, and they were actively involved in each other's lives.

Are there congregations that manage to get to know each other and become close to one another in spite of all this? Sure – but that is happening *in spite* of the way they conduct their services, not because of them. The service is designed to keep everyone passive, and it does a really good job of that. The only thing people are asked to do is stand when they're told to stand, sit when they're told to sit, sing when they are told to sing, and be quiet when they're told to be quiet. You don't have to do anything in a service at all! In fact, you *can't*. The paid staff will handle it all for you. Your presence at the service is not going to make it better, and your absence will not make it worse. (Was that true in New Testament churches? Definitely not. But that's exactly how our services are designed to work.)

Is there Biblical support for that model? Nope – not even close. So why are churches structured this way? *Because that's what people want*. The modern church is governed by the congregation. They have the power to vote in deacons, elders, and pastors, and to vote them right back out again. If the people didn't like the way things were being done then they could change it – but they don't. The truth is that the modern church has a lot of aspects that appeal to the flesh. After all, no one is going to expect anything from you and you're not going to be asked to do anything. The services are going to be kept short, and you will know exactly when you're going to be leaving. You don't have to establish close relationships with anyone or open up about your problems. You can keep living in sin all you want, and the chances are no one around you will even notice. The sermons are never going to challenge you, which means you don't have to worry about studying the Bible and making sure you know what's going on. All of the work will be done by other

people, which gives you the freedom to sit there quietly and vegetate. You're also not going to be held accountable for anything! If the church does somehow get a pastor who's a real firebrand, they can just vote him out and replace him. The church will carefully insulate you from anything unpleasant and make sure you don't hear anything that you don't want to hear. If you don't have a passion for God and want to remain in your sins then the modern church is a dream come true.

It's also a great system for pastors. They get a large building, and a large ministry, and a large staff, and lot of resources to play with. I realize there are a lot of small churches that claim to not have very much money, but even "small" churches often have budgets of *hundreds of thousands of dollars per year* (which is probably *far more* than the budget of anyone in the congregation). Besides, there's always the dream of "striking it big" – and if a pastor realizes that his church isn't going to grow then he can just jump ship to a bigger one. No pastor is going to want to have a small house church when he could have a multi-million-dollar complex with a large full-time staff! There's no prestige in a small house church at all. No one is going to be impressed by a congregation of 15 people. It's true that small class sizes are *enormously* beneficial for *the people who are actually in those classes*, but I think it's safe to say that spiritual growth is pretty far down on the list of priorities for most churches. (I know that seems harsh, so here's a question for you. Which do you think is more helpful for spiritual growth: allowing questions during a service, or refusing them? Even *schools* allow students to ask questions, because it's so obvious that it helps people understand the material – but not churches. What does that tell you about our priorities?)

The modern church is exactly the way that people want it to be. The problem is that *it's not the way God wants it to be*. The Lord has given us a pattern to follow in His Word, and He expects us to follow it. He's told us exactly how He wants the

church to operate. Jesus has also told us what He will do if the church ignores Him and does whatever they want instead:

Revelation 2:4-5: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

What did Jesus say He would do if the church didn't repent? He said He would remove it from His presence and cast it aside. Oh, the building might remain and the people might still show up, but from God's perspective it would no longer be a church at all. It would just be a group of people who were wasting their time doing things that God hated.

God commands us to walk in His ways. When are we going to stop and think about what we're doing and compare it to what the Bible has to say? If our traditions and ways of doing things have no Biblical basis then shouldn't we do something about that? Why are we fighting so hard to keep our church buildings when, honestly, we probably shouldn't have them in the first place? Why are we fighting so hard to make sure a church service is attended by 1500 people, when those people would be far better served if they were in a small group of only 15 people? Are we *really* serving God? Do we truly have the best interests of the congregation at heart?

I realize we have a lot of impressive buildings. There was once a time when the disciples tried to show Jesus how impressive Herod's temple was. Do you know what He had to say about that magnificent building which, at the time, was one of the greatest structures in the world?

Mark 13:1-2: "And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Do you think that God would have used the Romans to tear that temple apart stone from stone if that building was pleasing in His sight and a true house of prayer? I'm pretty sure the answer is *no*. God tore that temple apart because it was a den of thieves.

There may come a day when the government comes against our church buildings and tears them down. If that happens, I have to ask: is it possible that God is allowing the government to shut down the church because it stopped pleasing Him a long time ago? If our churches were firmly based on the Bible then that would be one thing – but are they? There are many people today who are fighting to preserve their church buildings. Wouldn't it be better to go back to the Bible and do things God's way instead?

Appendix 12: Angels

In our culture today angels are very popular. They are depicted in everything from books to paintings to television shows. However, even though they're popular, much of our culture's knowledge about angels is wrong. In this lesson I'd like to take a look at what the Bible has to say about angels and correct a number of common misunderstandings.

People Do Not Become Angels When They Die

There are many people who believe that when they die they become an angel. This belief is incorrect. The Bible tells us that angels are a separate race of beings – a *superior* race, as it turns out:

Psalm 8:4: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."

As you can see, mankind and angels are *two separate classes of beings*. Men do not become angels, and angels do not become men. Men are physical creatures who were created from the dust. Angels, however, are spirits:

Hebrews 1:7: "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth

to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Throughout the Bible angels sometimes appear in human form, but they are *not* human and they are *not* physical beings. They are **spirits**. However, angels are *not* divine and they are not to be worshiped. There was once a time when the apostle John tried to worship an angel, and the angel immediately stopped him:

Revelation 19:10: "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

As you can see, we are to worship God and God alone. Angels are our fellow servants; they are not gods.

Angels are also not eternal; they had a beginning. That brings us to our next point:

Angels Are Created Beings

Angels have *not* existed for all of eternity. The only being who has always existed is God Himself. God has no beginning and He has no end. Angels, however, were created by God, just like everything else:

Colossians 1:16: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones,

or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:"

When this verse speaks of "principalities, or powers" it is actually referring to angels. (This is not the only time when the Bible speaks of them in those terms.) An even clearer reference to their creation can be found here:

Psalm 148:1: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. . .

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created."

As you can see, the angels have not existed for all of eternity; they were created by Jesus Christ. The Bible does not tell us how many angels there are, but it does say that the number of angels is enormous:

Hebrews 12:22: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,"

The number of angels is fixed; it is not growing. This is because angels do not reproduce or get married:

Mark 12:25: "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."

They also cannot die:

Luke 20:36: "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

All of the angels mentioned in the Bible are male. There is no evidence that there are any female angels.

So when were the angels created? First of all, we know that they were created on a specific day. This is what the Bible says about Satan (who is a fallen angel):

Ezekiel 28:13: "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."

As you can see, Satan is also a created being. However, notice that the verse mentions the *day* that he was created. Unfortunately, that passage doesn't tell us *which* day. To find that out we are going to have to dig a little deeper.

Genesis 1:1-5 recounts the creation of light and darkness. God created day and night on the very first day:

Genesis 1:5: "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

It is important to realize that *there were no days before this day*. This was the *very first day*. God is eternal; unlike us, He does not need time and space. On the very first day in all of eternity God created day and night. Since the angels were also created on a specific day, that means they had to be formed either on that first day or after it. They could not have been made before it because *there were no days before it*.

So which day was it? Well, in the book of Job we are told this:

Job 38:4: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

The "sons of God" mentioned in verse 7 are angels. (They are obviously not men because mankind did not exist when God laid the foundations of the Earth!) The reason they are referred to as "sons of God" is because each angel was created directly by God Himself.

As you can see, the angels existed when God laid the foundations of the Earth. Since God laid the foundations of the Earth on the very first day, that means that God created the angels earlier that day. The angels may have been one of the very first things that God created.

So, then, angels are created beings, made by Jesus Christ, and were probably formed on the first day of the Creation Week.

There Is Only One Archangel

There are various cults out there that claim that there are multiple archangels. However, the Bible teaches otherwise. There is only one archangel, and his name is Michael:

Jude 1:9: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

As you can see, Michael is said to be *the* archangel. No other archangels are mentioned in the Bible.

Michael has several roles. The book of Jude tells us that he once contended with the devil about the body of Moses. Jude doesn't explain why the devil was interested in Moses' body, but apparently he was, and Michael resisted him and rebuked him. Michael is the only angel that we ever see directly fighting the devil himself.

It's worth noting that when Satan is finally cast out of Heaven, Michael is the one who will lead the charge against him:

Revelation 12:7: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

This verse is more evidence that Michael is the only archangel. After all, the other angels in Heaven are said to be *his* angels. There are two factions: Michael and his angels, and Satan and his demons.

Michael does have another role, however. The Bible refers to him as the great prince who watches over the children of Israel:

Daniel 10:21: "But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince."

Daniel 12:1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Throughout history the devil has tried very hard to wipe out the children of Israel, but Michael has stood by them and protected them. He is the one who stands for the Israelites.

Finally, it should be noted that some cults claim that Michael is actually Jesus Christ. That is *not* the case! Michael is an angel. He is a very important and mighty angel, but he is just an angel. He is not God.

Classifications of Angels

The Bible mentions two different classifications of angels

– the **cherubim** and the **seraphim**. The cherubim appear to function as guards. After Adam and Eve sinned, God placed two of them to keep men away from the Tree of Life:

Genesis 3:24: "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

The cherubims also carry the throne of God:

Psalm 18:9: "He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.
10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind."

Psalm 80:1: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwestest between the cherubims, shine forth."

Psalm 99:1: "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved."

So what do cherubims look like? The book of Ezekiel has a lot to say about this. Their appearance is very unusual:

Ezekiel 1:3: "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it,

and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber; out of the midst of the fire.

5 Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

How do we know that these were cherubim? Because Ezekiel identifies them a few chapters later:

Ezekiel 10:14: "And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

15 And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar."

As you can see, the cherubim have a very striking appearance – they have four faces, four wings, and "their appearance was like burning coals of fire". In the book of Ezekiel these creatures carried the throne of God – and they did it with great speed. These angels are *completely* different from the pictures of angels that you see in bookstores or on television.

So what about the seraphim? The Bible only mentions these angels one time. The word "seraphim" comes from a word that means "fiery ones". They are only mentioned in the book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 6:1: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with

smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

The seraphim have a very different appearance from the cherubim. These angels have six wings and one face (as opposed to the cherubim, who have four wings and four faces). The seraphim do not carry the throne of God; instead they appear to be His servants. They stand around the throne and say "holy, holy, holy", and are ready to do God's bidding at a moment's notice.

But what about the angels Gabriel and Michael? They don't appear to be cherubim or seraphim. The angels that God has sent to interact with mankind are very different. It seems that they are some sort of third classification of angels, but the Bible doesn't give their classification a name. It's also possible that the cherubim and seraphim are not angels at all, but are an altogether different kind of creature – but remember that Satan is actually a cherubim (as we saw earlier, the Bible says that he was once the "covering cherub").

What we can see, though, is that there are different types of angels, and these types have different appearances, different roles, and different positions. All angels are not the same.

The Power of Angels

God has given angels a great deal of power. Their wisdom is greater than man's wisdom:

2 Samuel 14:20: "To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth."

However, there are some things that angels do not know. Specifically, angels do not know when the Lord will return:

Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Angels have great strength and the power to do miraculous things:

Matthew 28:2: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it."

Acts 5:19: "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,
20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

2 Peter 2:11: "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord."

God once used an angel to destroy the Assyrian army:

2 Chronicles 32:21: "And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.
22 Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side."

However, angels do not have infinite power. Their power is limited:

Daniel 10:12: "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.
13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

This angel was unable to complete his task until the archangel Michael came to help him. Angels have great power, but sometimes even they need help. What we can see is that angels have a great deal more power than we do, which is why God uses them to protect His people – and that leads us to our

next point.

Guardian Angels

The Bible never says that each person has their own guardian angel. However, it does teach that angels watch over those who trust in God:

Psalm 91:9: "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Psalm 34:7: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

We can see an example of this in the story of Lot. God sent two angels to rescue him from the destruction of Sodom:

Genesis 19:15: "And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city."

This is actually part of the purpose of angels. The New Testament tells us that God uses the angels to minister to mankind:

Hebrews 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

This verse tells us that the angels (who are referred to as "ministering spirits") are actually sent by God to minister to us, the heirs of salvation. That is a comforting and encouraging thought!

The Message of Angels

Angels do more than battle demonic forces and protect believers. God also uses them to proclaim His messages. For example, they announced the birth of John the Baptist:

Luke 1:11: "And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."

An angel told Mary that she would give birth to Jesus:

Luke 1:26: "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus."

Angels also announced the birth of Christ:

Luke 2:9: "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

As you can see, God uses angels to do His will and to proclaim His messages. This is not the last time that God will send an angel to give a message to mankind. The Bible tells us that during the Tribulation, God will send an angel all over the

world to preach the gospel:

Revelation 14:6: "And I saw another **angel fly** in the midst of heaven, having **the everlasting gospel to preach** unto them that dwell on the earth, and **to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,**

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

For now, in this age, it is the responsibility of the Church to spread the gospel to all people. However, in the Tribulation the Church will be in Heaven, so it will not be possible for them to preach the gospel any longer. When that happens God will raise up others to do this task – and that includes the use of an angel.

We see that angels protect God's people, carry out God's judgment, and proclaim God's messages. That is not all that they do, though. There are also times when they give God suggestions – and that brings us to our next point.

The Council of Heaven

In the book of I Kings we find one of the strangest passages in the entire Bible. The prophet Micaiah tells us that there is a Council of Heaven that gives God suggestions on how to accomplish God's will on Earth:

I Kings 22:19: "And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw **the Lord sitting on**

his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the Lord said, **Who shall persuade Ahab**, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him.

22 And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, **I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.** And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: **go forth, and do so."**

To say that this is unexpected is an understatement. This is one of the most unusual truths in the Bible – so let's take a little bit of time to delve into the matter.

First of all, we need to understand that this is not a myth or a bizarre fantasy. Micaiah makes it clear in verse 19 that what he is saying is the "word of the Lord". This scene *actually happened*. God really did ask "Who will trick Ahab into going out and dying in battle?" and then took suggestions. The Lord then picked the suggestion that would work and commanded the spirit (and remember that angels are spirits!) to go do the job. It is entirely possible that this is something that God does on a regular basis.

Before anyone jumps to the wrong conclusion, I want to point out that God knows all things and has all power. God did *not* ask this question because He was genuinely at a loss and didn't know what to do, and He did *not* ask it because He was weak and needed help. He knew exactly how He would handle this situation before He even created the world, and He was fully capable of handling it without assistance from anyone.

What we are seeing here is something a bit different. We

all know that God works through people to accomplish His will. This passage tells us that God does something similar in Heaven with the angels. I don't know how often this happens, but God apparently brings situations before His angels, asks for their input, and then dispatches them to do His work.

This passage gives us a little glimpse at the way things are done in Heaven. It's certainly not what we would expect – which is what makes it so fascinating. Angels are actively involved in planning ways to carry out God's will. In fact, they do more than that: there are times when they even take the initiative, and that brings us to our next point.

The Watchers

In Daniel 4 we learn that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a dream that troubled him. During his dream a "watcher" appeared:

Daniel 4:13: "I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, **a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;**"

This watcher says a number of things and then concludes with this:

Daniel 4:17: "This matter is by **the decree of the watchers**, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that **the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men**, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

First of all, just who are the watchers? Verse 17 tells us that Nebuchadnezzar's insanity was being imposed by the decree *of the watchers*. The watchers decreed it so that people might know that God is the one who appoints kings and deposes them. In other words, the king's insanity was done for the glory of God *by the watchers*. Given that these watchers can enact binding decrees on the most powerful rulers on Earth *and then carry them out*, it would seem that these mysterious watchers have a great deal of power.

As far as I can tell, this is the only chapter in the Bible that mentions the watchers. In Revelation, however, we find this unusual creature:

Revelation 4:8: "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and **they were full of eyes** within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

The four beasts were said to be "full of eyes". Could they be the watchers? It's impossible to say, but it's interesting to think about. It may be that the watchers are a fourth classification of angels – separate from the cherubim (who have four wings and four faces), the seraphim (who have six wings and once face), and the angels that God sends to Earth.

What the book of Daniel tells us is that there is a council of "holy ones" that has great power and that does things on behalf of God's glory. If the watchers really are angels then this expands the scope of angelic activity. Not only do angels watch over God's people and battle the forces of darkness, but they also issue binding decrees.

We are used to the idea of *people* taking the initiative to do something for the glory of God, but it's a bit jarring to think that *angels* might do the same thing. We tend to think of angels

as a race of robots that only acts when God gives them an order. It is true that angels act when God commands them – but is it possible that in some cases they might take the initiative? Might there be more to them than we think?

Angelic Oddities

As we mentioned at the beginning of this lesson, a lot of the popular common knowledge about angels is actually wrong. For example, all of the angels in the Bible are men (there is no mention of any female angels), and no angels sang at Christ's birth. I realize that everyone "knows" that angels sang when Christ was born, but the Bible is clear that they actually didn't. Take a look for yourself:

Luke 2:10: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host **praising God, and saying,**

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The angels *said* "Glory to God in the highest". They did *not* sing it. "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" is a great song, but it's not Biblically accurate.

The Bible also tells us that **angels have a sense of curiosity:**

1 Peter 1:12: "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.**"

The angels are quite interested in our salvation! That subject grabs their attention. This makes sense if you think about it, because salvation was only given to mankind. When the devil fell and brought down many angels with him, God did *not* launch a plan of salvation for angels. It is impossible for fallen angels to be saved because Christ became a man died for the sins of *men*. He did not become an angel and die for the sins of angels. Since the angels do not have a redeemer, all of the angels who have sinned are lost forever with no hope of salvation. (I am not saying that demons *want* to be saved; what I am saying is that salvation is impossible for them.)

This means that salvation is an experience that no angel will ever have. The gospel is only for mankind, and the angels are curious about it.

The angels are also **interested in the apostles:**

1 Corinthians 4:9: "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, **and to angels**, and to men."

Paul points out that the apostles are a spectacle to the world, to men, *and to angels*. Since the angels are interested in

the gospel, it only makes sense that they are interested in the ministers that God appointed to preach the gospel. Even though God used the apostles in mighty ways, the apostles were despised, persecuted, abused, and (in many cases) executed. These church leaders (who, incidentally, were appointed by Jesus Christ Himself) were set forth as being the least, appointed unto death.

Before Jesus was crucified He warned His disciples about this. He told them that "he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11), and He warned them that the highest positions of authority in the kingdom were purchased through immense pain and suffering (Matthew 20:22). Serving God in an ungodly world was not going to be easy. The apostles were made a spectacle to everyone – including angels.

The Bible also tells us that one day **we will judge angels**:

1 Corinthians 6:3: "Know ye not that **we shall judge angels**? how much more things that pertain to this life?"

Some people have tried to argue that this verse is talking about human messengers, not angelic beings. However, the whole point Paul is making is that since we will one day judge *angels* then surely we can judge matters between fellow Christians!

I believe Paul is saying that one day we will be given authority over the angels. Christ said in Revelation 3:21 that "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne". Christ certainly has authority over the angels; if He is going to share that authority with us then that would confirm the idea that one day we will rule over them.

Another odd fact is that apparently there is **angelic food**. When the psalmist talked about Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan he said this:

Psalm 78:24: "And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full."

Do the angels really eat food, or is the psalmist just being poetic? It's hard to say based on just that one passage, but there is also the curious experience of Elijah:

I Kings 19:5: "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then **an angel touched him**, and said unto him, **Arise and eat.**

6 And he looked, and, behold, **there was a cake baked on the coals**, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and **went in the strength of that meat forty days** and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

While Elijah was sleeping, an angel cooked him a meal that was so potent that it not only revived him, but it gave him enough energy to travel for 40 days and nights! That angelic food was incredibly powerful. (I realize that "the angel of the Lord" may be a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, but the point is still the same.)

We're not done yet though. The apostle Paul tells us that the Mosaic Law was **ordained by angels**:

Galatians 3:19: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and **it was ordained by angels** in the hand of a mediator."

This seems rather astonishing, but it's not the only place we find this idea in the Bible. Paul is echoing what Stephen told the Pharisees right before he was killed:

Acts 7:52: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

In other words, the angels were actually involved in giving the Law to mankind! They played a role that is rarely talked about.

There is one more point that I'd like to bring up, and I have saved the strangest one for last. Paul says that **women should keep their heads covered in church** because of the angels:

1 Corinthians 11:10: "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head **because of the angels.**"

I don't think that Paul is talking about messengers between churches or anything like that; I think he really does mean angels. There is more going on here than it seems.

As I have discussed elsewhere, in the days before the Flood there was a time when some angels became enraptured

with the beauty of human women and had children with them (Genesis 6:1-2). This, however, was an awful sin, and God imprisoned the angels who did this (Jude 1:6; II Peter 2:4). Angels are not permitted to marry women – but as odd as it may seem, some angels actually find women tempting. I think that Paul is saying that when women wear hats (or some other symbol of authority) they remind the angels that they are under authority and are not available.

I know this seems strange, but we often forget that angels can be tempted by sin. The fact that one third of all angels chose to join Satan's rebellion (Rev. 12:4) is a sober reminder that even angels can fall into sin – and once they fall there is no going back. We can obtain forgiveness through Christ, but angels cannot.

Resource 1: Chapter Summary

Daniel

Daniel 1

- NEBUCHADNEZZAR CONQUERS JERUSALEM AND CARRIES ITS PEOPLE AWAY CAPTIVE
- THE BEST CHILDREN ARE MADE EUNUCHS AND FED FOR 3 YEARS BY THE KING; THIS INCLUDES DANIEL (BELTESHAZZAR), HANANIAH (SHADRACH), MISHAEL (MESHACH), AND AZARIAH (ABEDNEGO)
- THESE MEN WILL NOT DEFILE THEMSELVES WITH THE KING'S MEAT, SO THEY ASK IF THEY CAN EAT VEGETABLES INSTEAD; MELZAR RELUCTANTLY AGREES, BUT WHEN HE SEES THAT THEIR COUNTENANCE IS BETTER THAN THE OTHERS HE TAKES AWAY THEIR MEAT
- THESE FOUR MEN ARE TESTED AND FOUND TO BE THE BEST, SO THEY STAND BEFORE THE KING
- DANIEL CONTINUES UNTIL THE FIRST YEAR OF KING CYRUS

Daniel 2

- NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAS A DREAM THAT TROUBLES HIM, AND HE DEMANDS THAT THE CHALDEANS TELL HIM WHAT HE DREAMED
- WHEN THE CHALDEANS PROTEST, THE KING SAYS THAT IS THE ONLY WAY HE CAN BE SURE THAT THEIR INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, AND IF THEY FAIL THEY WILL ALL BE KILLED
- DANIEL TELLS THE KING HIS DREAM AND EXPLAINS THAT THE IMAGE HE SAW SYMBOLIZED KINGDOMS THAT WOULD GOVERN THE WORLD; IN THE END GOD WOULD

DESTROY THOSE KINGDOMS AND SET UP AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM

- DANIEL IS MADE RULER OVER THE PROVINCE OF BABYLON

Daniel 3

- NEBUCHADNEZZAR SETS UP A GOLDEN IMAGE AND COMMANDS EVERYONE TO WORSHIP IT; WHEN SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO REFUSE HE HAS THEM CAST INTO THE FIERY FURNACE
- HE IS ASTONISHED WHEN THEY ARE UNHARMED, AND SEES THE SON OF GOD IN THEIR MIDST; HE ASKS THEM TO COME OUT OF THE FIRE AND THEN PRONOUNCES A CURSE UPON ANYONE WHO SAYS ANYTHING AGAINST THEIR GOD
- THE THREE MEN ARE PROMOTED

Daniel 4

- A LETTER FROM NEBUCHADNEZZAR
- THE KING HAS A VISION OF A TREE THAT IS CUT DOWN; DANIEL SAYS THE TREE REPRESENTS HIM
- WHEN THE KING LATER BOASTS OF HIS GREATNESS HE IS IMMEDIATELY GIVEN THE HEART OF AN ANIMAL, IS DRIVEN FROM MEN, AND EATS GRASS FOR SEVEN YEARS
- AT THE END HIS UNDERSTANDING RETURNS AND HE BLESSES GOD AND PRAISES HIM

Daniel 5

- BELSHAZZAR MAKES A GREAT FEAST; HE TAKES THE TEMPLE VESSELS OUT OF THE TREASURY AND USES THEM TO PRAISE IDOLS
- A MAN'S HAND APPEARS AND WRITES ON THE PLASTER WALL: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

- THE KING PANICS AND CALLS FOR SOMEONE TO INTERPRET IT
- DANIEL IS BROUGHT; HE REBUKES THE KING FOR HIS WICKED WAYS
- DANIEL INTERPRETS THE WORDS: GOD HAD WEIGHED BELSHAZZAR AND FOUND HIM WANTING, SO HE IS GIVING HIS KINGDOM TO THE PERSIANS
- THAT NIGHT BELSHAZZAR IS SLAIN AND DARIUS THE MEDIAN TAKES THE KINGDOM

Daniel 6

- DARIUS SETS THREE PRESIDENTS OVER THE KINGDOM AND PUTS DANIEL IN CHARGE
- THE OTHER PRESIDENTS WANT TO GET RID OF DANIEL; WHEN THEY FIND NO FAULT IN HIM THEY PERSUADE DARIUS TO MAKE IT ILLEGAL TO PRAY TO ANYONE OTHER THAN THE KING
- WHEN DANIEL BREAKS THE LAW, DARIUS IS FORCED TO THROW HIM INTO THE LION'S DEN
- WHEN DANIEL IS DISCOVERED UNHARMED THE NEXT DAY, DANIEL IS TAKEN OUT AND THE MEN WHO ACCUSED HIM ARE THROWN IN (ALONG WITH THEIR FAMILIES)
- DARIUS ISSUES A DECREE THAT EVERYONE SHOULD FEAR BEFORE THE GOD OF DANIEL
- DANIEL PROSPERS IN THE REIGN OF DARIUS AND CYRUS

Daniel 7

- IN BELSHAZZAR'S 1ST YEAR DANIEL DREAMS OF FOUR GREAT BEASTS; THEN THE THRONES WERE CAST DOWN AND THE ANCIENT OF DAYS CAME, AND HE DESTROYED THE BEAST AND ESTABLISHED AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM
- THE DREAM IS INTERPRETED: THE FOUR BEASTS ARE

KINGDOMS

- THE LAST BEAST OVERCOMES THE SAINTS UNTIL THE ANCIENT OF DAYS DEFEATS HIM

Daniel 8

- IN BELSHAZZAR'S 3RD YEAR DANIEL SEES A RAM AND A GOAT
- GABRIEL EXPLAINS THE VISION: THE RAM IS THE KINGS OF MEDIA AND PERSIA, AND THE GOAT IS GRECIA
- DANIEL IS ASTONISHED AT THE VISION, BUT NONE UNDERSTOOD IT

Daniel 9

- IN DARIUS' 1ST YEAR DANIEL REALIZES THAT THE JEWS' CAPTIVITY WAS ONLY TO LAST 70 YEARS, SO HE PRAYS ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE
- GABRIEL COMES AND TELLS DANIEL ABOUT THE 70 WEEKS, THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH, AND THE LAST WEEK

Daniel 10

- IN CYRUS' 3RD YEAR DANIEL MOURNED FOR THREE WEEKS
- AN ANGEL TELLS DANIEL HE WAS SENT AS SOON AS DANIEL STARTED PRAYING, BUT HE WAS RESISTED FOR 21 DAYS
- THE ANGEL STRENGTHENS DANIEL SO HE CAN UNDERSTAND

Daniel 11

- THE ANGEL DISCUSSES FUTURE EVENTS – ABOUT KINGDOMS, AND THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH

Daniel 12

- THERE WILL BE THE WORST TIME IN ALL OF HISTORY; THE HOLY PEOPLE WILL BE DELIVERED, AND THERE WILL BE A RESURRECTION
- SEAL THE BOOK UNTO THE END
- THE WICKED WILL NOT UNDERSTAND, BUT THE WISE WILL
- GO YOUR WAY; YOU WILL REST, AND STAND IN YOUR LOT AT THE END OF YOUR DAYS

Resource 2: Timeline

605 BC	Nebuchadnezzar becomes ruler of Babylon	Known historical date.
605 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: God begins raising up the Babylonians to punish Judah for their sins [Habakkuk 1:6-11]	
605 BC	In the 3rd year of the reign of Jehoiakim he rebels against Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar goes to Jerusalem, loots the temple, and carries Daniel away captive [Daniel 1:1-6; 2 Kings 24:1]	The kingdom is 495 years old [Judah]
604 BC	In the 4th year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah prophesies that Nebuchadnezzar will conquer Judah [Jeremiah 25:1]	
604 BC	In the 4th year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah has Baruch write his prophecies down in a scroll [Jeremiah 36:1-8]	
604 BC	In the 4th year of the reign of Jehoiakim, God promises Baruch that He would save his life wherever he goes [Jeremiah 45:1-5]	
604 BC	In the 4th year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah prophesies against Egypt [Jeremiah 46:1-2]	
604 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Nebuchadnezzar exiled the kings of the Philistines to Babylon and absorbed their territory, thus bringing them to an end [Isaiah 14:31; Jeremiah 47; Zephaniah 2:4-7]	Known historical date.

603 BC	In the 5th year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the king burns Jeremiah's words; God curses him and his descendants forever [Jeremiah 36:9-31]	
602 BC	in the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign he has his dream of the golden statue, which Daniel interprets [Daniel 2:1]	This seems to be when Daniel's ministry began. He had been in captivity for 3 years.
597 BC	The reign of Jehoiakim (Eliakim) over Judah ends after 11 years when Nebuchadnezzar imprisons him [2 Chronicles 36:5]	The known historical date of the first Babylonian captivity is 597 BC. This is a specific point in history that can be used to calculate other dates.
597 BC	Nebuchadnezzar carries the temple vessels to Babylon [2 Chronicles 36:7]	
597 BC	Jehoiachin (son of Jehoiakim, 18th generation from David) becomes king over Judah when he is 8 years old [2 Chronicles 36:9]	2 Kings 24:8 says that he was 18 years old. One theory is that he co-reigned with this father for 10 years, and was actually 18 in 597 BC (and not 8).
597 BC	The reign of Jehoiachin ends after 3 months when Nebuchadnezzar comes against Jerusalem and besieges it; Nebuchadnezzar loots all the treasures in the temple and the palace; he carries away all the princes and the men of valor, and only leaves behind the poorest of the poor; Jehoiachin and his family are carried away captive to Babylon [2 Chronicles 36:7-9; 2 Kings 24:14-15]	2 Kings 24:12 says that this happened in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign
597 BC	Ezekiel is captured and taken into	Ezekiel was 26 years old

	captivity [Ezekiel 40:1]	when this happened.
597 BC	Nebuchadnezzar replaces Jehoiachin with his brother Mattaniah, who is renamed to Zedekiah [2 Chronicles 36:10; 2 Kings 24:17]	The kingdom is 502 years old [Judah]
597 BC	Zedekiah (18th generation from David) becomes king of Judah when he is 21 years old [2 Chronicles 36:11]	
597 BC	Judah is now under Babylonian rule	
593 BC	In the 4th year of Zedekiah's reign, the false prophet Hananiah prophesies against Nebuchadnezzar [Jeremiah 28:1-4]	
593 BC	God kills the false prophet Hananiah the same year that he prophesied [Jeremiah 28:16-17]	
593 BC	In the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, Ezekiel has his vision of angelic creatures and wheels [Ezekiel 1:1-2]	This seems to be when Ezekiel's ministry began.
592 BC	In the 6th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, Ezekiel is given his vision of Judah's abominations [Ezekiel 8:1]	
591 BC	In the 7th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, the elders came to inquire of Ezekiel; God refuses to hear them [Ezekiel 20:1-3]	
589 BC	In the 9th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God gives Ezekiel the vision of the pot [Ezekiel 24:1-3]	
588 BC	In the 10th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God gives Ezekiel a	

	prophecy against Egypt [Ezekiel 29:1-2]	
588 BC	In the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign, when Zedekiah breaks his oath to serve Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar comes against Jerusalem and besieges the city [2 Kings 25:1, 2 Chronicles 36:13]	
587 BC	In the 11th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God gives Ezekiel a prophecy against Tyrus [Ezekiel 26:1-2]	
587 BC	In the 11th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God tells Ezekiel that He has broken Pharaoh [Ezekiel 30:20-26]	
587 BC	In the 11th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God gives Ezekiel a prophecy against Egypt [Ezekiel 31:1-2]	
587 BC	In the 10th year of Zedekiah's reign, God commands Jeremiah to buy land from his uncle [Jeremiah 32:1-7]	
586 BC	In the 12th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God gives Ezekiel a prophecy against Egypt [Ezekiel 32:1-2]	
586 BC	The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah until the end of Zedekiah's reign and the fall of Jerusalem [Jeremiah 1:3]	
586 BC	The reign of Zedekiah ends after 11 years, when all food is gone in Jerusalem and the city falls to the Babylonians; the king and the men	Known historical date of the second Babylonian captivity: 586 BC. The kingdom ends after 513 years [Judah].

	of war try to escape by night but are captured [2 Chronicles 36:11; 2 Kings 25:3-5]	Israel was removed from the promised land 869 years after crossing the Jordan river in the days of Joshua.
586 BC	Nebuchadnezzar kills all of Zedekiah's children in front of him and then put out his eyes; he also destroys the temple and the wall around Jerusalem (in the 4th and 5th month); both the temple and the palaces are burned; Zedekiah is carried away in chains to Babylon; only a few people are left in the land to be vinedressers [2 Chronicles 36:19; 2 Kings 25:3-12]	Took place in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar. The first temple lasted for 423 years before it was destroyed.
586 BC	Nebuchadnezzar leaves Gedaliah in charge; in the 7th month Ishmael assassinates him [2 Kings 25:23-25]	
586 BC	The few Jews who are left in Judah ask Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord for them, to tell them what to do in response to Gedaliah's death; Jeremiah tells them God wants them to stay in Judah and not go to Egypt, for if they go to Egypt they will die by the sword and disease; the people claim that Jeremiah is lying to them, and the right thing to do is to engage in more pagan worship and go to Egypt (which is what they do) [Jeremiah 42, 43; 2 Kings 25:26]	
586 BC	In the 12th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, Ezekiel is told that Jerusalem has fallen (in the 10th month) [Ezekiel 33:21]	Ezekiel was 37 years old when this happened.
586 BC	In the 12th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God gives Ezekiel a	

	prophecy against Egypt (in the 12th month) [Ezekiel 32:1-2]	
582 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Moab is conquered by the Babylonians [Jeremiah 48:1-4, Amos 2:1-3; Zephaniah 2:8-11]	Known historical date.
582 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: The Ammonites are conquered by the Babylonians [Jeremiah 49:2; Ezekiel 25:1-5; Amos 1:13-15; Zephaniah 2:8-11]	Known historical date.
573 BC	In the 25th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God gives Ezekiel the vision of a temple [Ezekiel 40:1]	
573 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Nebuchadnezzar conquers the inland city of Tyre, but the island city survives [Isaiah 23; Ezekiel 26; Amos 1:9-10]	Known historical date.
571 BC	In the 27th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, God told Ezekiel He was giving Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as a reward for his hard work attacking Tyre [Ezekiel 29:18-21]	
568 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Nebuchadnezzar attacks Egypt [Ezekiel 29:19]	Known historical date.
562 BC	The reign of Nebuchadnezzar ends when he dies	Known historical date.
561 BC	In the 37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, Evilmerodach king of Babylon releases Jehoiachin from prison, sets him above the other kings, and gives him an allowance [2 Kings 25:27-30]	
553 BC	in the 1st year of Belshazzar's reign,	Known historical date.

	Daniel is given the vision of the four great beasts (Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greeks, and Rome) [Daniel 7:1-3]	Daniel had been in Babylon for 53 years.
551 BC	In the 3rd year of Belshazzar's reign, Daniel is given the vision of the ram (Medes and Persians) and the goat (Greeks) [Daniel 8:1-6, 20]	Daniel had been in Babylon for 55 years.
550 BC	The Edomites are driven out of their historic territory and move to cities they had taken from Zedekiah; the Edomites occupy Petra; the Edomites are now known as the Idumeans [Malachi 1:3; Jeremiah 49:7-17]	This date is estimated by scholars.
547 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, the bear takes the first rib (Medes conquer Lydia) [Daniel 7:5]	This date is estimated by scholars. This was 6 years after Daniel received the prophecy.
547 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the ram with two horns (Medes and Persians), the ram is now pushing to the west, north, and south [Daniel 8:4]	
539 BC	Belshazzar sees the writing on the wall ("Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin"); Daniel interprets the meaning of the writing; that night Belshazzar is killed by the invading Medes and Persians [Daniel 5:30-31]	Known historical date. Daniel had been in Babylon for 67 years. Note that the writing are actually units of money that, when combined, add up to 126 shekels or 2520 gerahs (Ezekiel 45:12). The number 2520 will be important later.
539 BC	Darius the Median takes control of Babylon when he is 62 years old [Daniel 5:31]	
539 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: the "head of	This took place 64 years

	gold" in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Babylon) ends; the "arms of silver" (Medes and Persians) period begins [Daniel 2:38-39]	after Daniel interpreted this dream for Nebuchadnezzar.
539 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, the reign of the lion (Babylon) comes to an end [Daniel 7:4]	This happened 14 years after Daniel received the four great beasts prophecy.
539 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, the bear takes the second rib (Medes conquer Babylon) [Daniel 7:5]	
539 BC	Judah is now under Persian rule	Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem 48 years prior to this. Judah lost its independence 70 years before this when the king of Egypt conquered Jerusalem.
539 BC	In the 1st year of Darius, Daniel prays for Israel because he understood the prophecies of Jeremiah about the 70 years that Israel was to spend in exile [Daniel 9:1-27]	At this point 70 years had passed since the king of Egypt conquered Jerusalem and made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim king, which brought Judah's independent existence to an end. Daniel was carried away to Babylon 3 years after that event.
539 BC	God sends Daniel an angel who gives him the prophecy of the 70 weeks [Daniel 9:1-27]	
538 BC	In the 2nd year of Darius, Zechariah is given the vision of the man on the red horse; he also prophesies against Damascus, Tyrus, Zidon, and the Philistines [Zechariah 1:7-8; 9:1-7]	This is when the prophet Zechariah's ministry began.

538 BC	An angel confirms that the Lord has had indignation upon Judah for 70 years [Zechariah 1:12]	Confirmation that the 70 years was over at this point. This means it started when the king of Egypt conquered Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:3-4), not when Nebuchadnezzar conquered it again 3 years later.
538 BC	In the 1st year of Cyrus he issues a command to rebuild the temple; he encourages Jews to return to Jerusalem, and gave them the temple vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken [Ezra 1:1-8; 6:3]	Known historical date of the Cyrus edict: 538 BC. This was 70 years after the 608 BC captivity, and 1 year after Daniel prayed for God to bring Israel's captivity to an end.
538 BC	In response to the edit from Cyrus, 42,360 Jews travel to Jerusalem (along with 7,337 servants) [Ezra 2:64]	
538 BC	In the 7th month after Cyrus' edict, the Jews gather at Jerusalem; the altar is rebuilt; the people begin offering the daily sacrifices; the feast of tabernacles is kept [Ezra 3:1-6]	
536 BC	In the 4th year of Darius, Zechariah is given a message that rebukes the Jews for false fasting [Zechariah 7:1-2]	
536 BC	In the 3rd year of Cyrus, Daniel is given a vision of what will happen in the latter days [Daniel 10, 11, 12]	Daniel had been in Babylon for 70 years.
536 BC	An angel tells Daniel that there will be 4 more Persian kings, and the fourth will "stir up all" against the Greeks [Daniel 11:2]	
536 BC	In the 2nd year after the Jews	Known historical date.

	returned to Jerusalem, the foundation of the second temple is laid; when the elderly people saw it they wept, because they remembered the previous temple and it was clear the new temple would be much less glorious [Ezra 3:8-13]	
536 BC	The enemies of the Jews try to stop them from rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple [Ezra 4:5]	The command from Cyrus to rebuild the temple had been given just 2 years earlier.
534 BC	The reconstruction of the temple is stopped [Ezra 4:5]	
530 BC	The opposition to the rebuilding efforts continues for the whole reign of Cyrus [Ezra 4:5]	Known date of the ending of Cyrus' reign
525 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, the bear takes the third rib (Medes conquer Egypt) [Daniel 7:5, Ezekiel 30:6-19]	Known historical date. This happened 28 years after Daniel was given the four great beasts prophecy.
525 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Cambyses II destroys Egypt's idols [Ezekiel 30:13]	Known historical date.
520 BC	In the 2nd year of Darius, Haggai commands the people to rebuild the temple [Haggai 1:1]	Known historical date. This is when the prophet Haggai's ministry began.
520 BC	The Jews resume their efforts to rebuild the temple [Haggai 1:15]	This was 18 years after the edict from Cyrus to rebuild the temple, and 14 years after the reconstruction effort had been halted.
518 BC	Darius issues a command to rebuild the temple [Ezra 6:1-2]	Known historical date of the Darius edict
516 BC	In the 6th year of Darius, the construction of the second temple	Known historical date. This was 22 years after Cyrus

	is completed [Ezra 6:15]	issued an edict to rebuild the temple.
485 BC	Ahasuerus ("Xerxes I", son of Darius) becomes king of Persia	Known historical date.
485 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Ahasuerus is the 1st of the 4 Persian kings in Daniel's vision [Daniel 11:2]	This happened 51 years after Daniel was given the prophecy.
485 BC	Under the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), opposition to the reconstruction of Jerusalem continues [Ezra 4:5]	The Jews had been released from captivity 53 years prior to this.
485 BC	At the beginning of the reign of Ahasuerus the opposition writes a letter asking the king to stop the Jews from rebuilding Jerusalem [Ezra 4:6]	
483 BC	In the 3rd year of Ahasuerus, he holds a banquet in Sushan the palace for 180 days [Esther 1:3]	
483 BC	When Vashti refuses her husband's command to make an appearance at the banquet, she loses her position as queen [Esther 1:19]	
479 BC	In the 7th year of Ahasuerus, Esther is brought before the king [Esther 2:16]	The Jews had been released from captivity 59 years prior to this.
479 BC	Ahasuerus loves Esther and makes her queen in place of Vashti [Esther 2:17]	
474 BC	In the 12th year of Ahasuerus, Haman cast lots to destroy the Jews; Esther pleaded with the king to spare her life, and the life of her people; the king put Haman to death and granted the Jews the ability to defend themselves; when	Esther had been queen for 5 years at this point.

	the 12th month came the Jews triumphed over their enemies [Esther 3:7; 7:3-10; 8:11; 9:5]	
474 BC	The Jews establish the feast of Pur (Purim) in memorial of their deliverance from Haman [Esther 9:26]	
465 BC	Opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem continues until the end of the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) [Ezra 4:5]	Known date of the ending of his reign
465 BC	Artaxerxes I (son of Ahasuerus) becomes king of Persia	Known date of the beginning of his reign
464 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Artaxerxes I is the 2nd of the 4 Persian kings in Daniel's vision [Daniel 11:2]	This happened 72 years after Daniel was given the prophecy.
464 BC	Opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem continues under the reign of Artaxerxes I [Ezra 4:5]	The Jews had been released from captivity 74 years prior to this.
464 BC	In the days of Artaxerxes I, the opposition wrote a letter asking the king to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem [Ezra 4:7]	The exact date is unknown.
458 BC	Artaxerxes I issues his command to beautify the temple in Jerusalem [Ezra 7:11-28]	Known historical date of the Artaxerxes edict. This edict was made 80 years after the Jews were released from captivity.
458 BC	In the 7th year of Artaxerxes, Ezra goes to Jerusalem [Ezra 7:7-8]	
458 BC	All the men of Judah and Benjamin gather at Jerusalem to address the problem of foreign wives [Ezra 10:9]	
457 BC	Ezra's 3-month investigation into Jews who took foreign wives ends	

	[Ezra 10:17]	
444 BC	In the 20th year of Artaxerxes, Hanani tells Nehemiah about the poor state of Jerusalem [Nehemiah 1:1]	This happened 14 years after the edict from Artaxerxes I to rebuild Jerusalem. The Jews had been released from captivity 94 years prior to this.
444 BC	Artaxerxes I issues his second command (to Nehemiah) to rebuild Jerusalem [Nehemiah 2:5-8]	Known historical date of the second Artaxerxes edict
444 BC	In the 20th year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah becomes governor of Judah [Nehemiah 5:14]	
444 BC	Nehemiah finishes building the wall around Jerusalem in 52 days [Nehemiah 6:15]	Let that fact sink in. 94 years after the Jews were freed from captivity, and 14 years after the first edict from Artaxerxes I, the walls were rebuilt in 52 days.
444 BC	Start of Daniel's 69 weeks of years	Since the 69 weeks of years ends with the crucifixion of the Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ), this is the only date the countdown could have begun. This means it did not start when the Jews were initially released from captivity.
432 BC	In the 32nd year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah's term as Judah's governor ends [Nehemiah 5:14]	Nehemiah served as governor for 12 years.
432 BC	In the 32nd year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah returns to Babylon [Nehemiah 13:6]	
432 BC	Malachi foretells the destruction of the Edomites [Malachi 1:1-5]	This date is estimated by scholars.

424 BC	Opposition to the reconstruction of Jerusalem continues until the end of the reign of Artaxerxes I [Ezra 4:5]	Known date of the ending of his reign. The Jews had been released from captivity 114 years prior to this. The walls around Jerusalem had been rebuilt 20 years earlier.
423 BC	Darius II (son of Artaxerxes I) becomes king of Persia	Known date of the start of his reign.
423 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Darius II is the 3rd of the 4 Persian kings in Daniel's vision [Daniel 11:2]	This happened 113 years after Daniel was given the prophecy.
404 BC	The reign of Darius II ends when he dies	Known historical date.
404 BC	Artaxerxes II (son of Darius II) becomes king of Persia	Known historical date.
404 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Artaxerxes II is the 4th of the 4 Persian kings in Daniel's vision, and is the wealthy king who stirred up all against the Greeks [Daniel 11:2]	This happened 132 years after Daniel was given the prophecy.
358 BC	The reign of Artaxerxes II ends when he dies	Known historical date.
358 BC	Artaxerxes III (son of Artaxerxes II) becomes king of Persia	Known historical date.
345 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Artaxerxes III conquers Sidon [Ezekiel 28:21-23]	Known historical date.
338 BC	The reign of Artaxerxes III ends when he is killed	Known historical date.
336 BC	Darius III becomes king of Persia	Known historical date.
333 BC	Alexander the Great defeats Darius III	Known historical date.
333 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Alexander the Great defeats Damascus [Zechariah 9:1-4]	Known historical date.

332 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Alexander the Great defeats Tyre [Isaiah 23; Ezekiel 26]	Known historical date.
332 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Alexander the Great conquers Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod [Zechariah 9:5-8]	Known historical date.
330 BC	Alexander the Great finishes his conquest of Persian empire	Known date of the assassination of Darius III
330 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: the "arms of silver" in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Medes and Persians) ends; the "thighs of brass" (Greeks) period begins [Daniel 2:39]	This happened 273 years after Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
330 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, dominion is given to the leopard (Greeks) [Daniel 7:6]	This happened 223 years after Daniel was given the prophecy about the four great beasts.
330 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the ram (Medes) and the goat (Greeks), the goat casts the ram to the ground and stamps on it [Daniel 8:7, 21]	This happened 221 years after Daniel was given the vision of the ram and the goat.
330 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, the mighty king has now stood up and is ruling with "great dominion" [Daniel 11:3]	This happened 206 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
330 BC	Judah is now under Greek rule	Judah lost its independence 279 years prior to this, when the king of Egypt conquered Jerusalem.
323 BC	When Alexander the Great dies, his four generals (Casander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy) divide up his empire and begin	Known historical date.

	fighting among themselves	
323 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, the four heads of the leopard appear (Alexander's 4 generals dividing up his territory) [Daniel 7:6]	This happened 230 years after Daniel was given the prophecy about the four great beasts.
323 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the ram (Medes) and the goat (Greeks), the great horn was broken (Alexander died) and the "four notable ones" (Alexander's four generals) arose to power [Daniel 8:8, 22]	This happened 228 years after Daniel was given the vision of the ram and the goat.
323 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, Alexander's kingdom is broken and "divided toward the four winds of heaven" [Daniel 11:4]	This happened 213 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
320 BC	Ptolemy (former general of Alexander the Great) conquers Jerusalem	Known historical date.
320 BC	Judah is now under Ptolmey's rule	Judah lost its independence 289 years prior to this, when the king of Egypt conquered Jerusalem.
320 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, the "king of the south" (Ptolemy) now has dominion over Judah [Daniel 11:5]	This happened 216 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
301 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Seleucus ("king of the north"), former general of Alexander, becomes strong and takes dominion over Syria; he founds the Seleucid empire [Daniel 11:5]	Known historical date. This happened 235 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.

282 BC	The reign of Ptolemy ends when he dies	Known historical date.
284 BC	Ptolemy II (son of Ptolemy) begins his reign over the Ptolemaic Kingdom	Known historical date.
252 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, the daughter of the "king of the south", Berenice (daughter of Ptolemy II) marries the Seleucid ruler Antiochus II (the "king of the north") [Daniel 11:6]	Known historical date. This happened 284 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
246 BC	The reign of Ptolemy II ends when he dies	Known historical date.
246 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, the daughter of the "king of the south" (Berenice) "shall not retain the power of her authority": when Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II put away Berenice and took back his former wife Laodice [Daniel 11:6]	Known historical date. This happened 290 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
246 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "neither he nor his authority shall stand": Laodice poisoned her husband Antiochus II [Daniel 11:6]	Known historical date.
246 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "she shall be given up, and they that brought her": after Laodice poisoned her husband Antiochus II, she had Berenice, her infant son, and her attendants killed [Daniel 11:6]	Known historical date.
246 BC	Ptolemy III (son of Ptolemy II) begins his reign over the Ptolemaic	Known historical date.

	Kingdom	
241 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "out of a branch of her roots": Ptolemy III ("the king of the south") was the brother of Berenice; he avenged his sister by invading Syria and humbling Seleucus II ("the king of the north" and the son of Antiochus II) [Daniel 11:7]	Known historical date. This happened 295 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
225 BC	Seleucus II ("the king of the north") dies when he falls off his horse	Known historical date.
222 BC	The reign of Ptolemy III ("the king of the south") ends when he dies	Known historical date.
222 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "he shall continue more years than the king of the north": Ptolemy III ("the king of the south") lived longer than Seleucus II ("the king of the north") [Daniel 11:8]	This happened 314 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
221 BC	Ptolemy IV (son of Ptolemy III) begins his reign over the Ptolemaic Kingdom	Known historical date.
219 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "his sons shall be stirred up" and "one shall certainly come" and "overflow": Antiochus III (a son of Seleucus II, "the king of the north") took control of Judah from the Ptolemaic Kingdom [Daniel 11:10]	This happened 317 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
217 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "but he shall not be strengthened by it": Ptolemy IV ("the king of the south") defeated Antiochus III ("the king of	Known historical date. This happened 319 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.

	the north") at the battle of Raphia and took back control over Judah [Daniel 11:11-12]	
204 BC	The reign of Ptolemy IV ends when he dies	Known historical date.
204 BC	Ptolemy V (son of Ptolemy IV) begins his reign over the Ptolemaic Kingdom	Known historical date.
200 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "the king of the north shall return": Antiochus III ("the king of the north") defeats Ptolemy V ("the king of the south") [Daniel 11:13]	Known historical date. This happened 336 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
200 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "there shall many stand up against the king of the south": the Jews helped Antiochus III defeat Ptolemy V ("the king of the south") [Daniel 11:14]	
198 BC	Judah becomes part of the Seleucid empire under Antiochus III and IV	Known historical date. Judah lost its independence 411 years prior to this when the king of Egypt conquered Jerusalem.
196 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "he shall give him the daughter": Antiochus III gave his daughter Cleopatra (not the famous one) to Ptolemy V [Daniel 11:17]	Known historical date. This happened 340 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
191 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "he shall stumble and fall, and not be found": the Romans defeated Antiochus III at Thermopylae [Daniel 11:19]	Known historical date. This happened 345 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.

187 BC	The reign of Antiochus III ends when he dies	Known historical date.
187 BC	Seleucus IV (son of Antiochus III) begins his reign over the Seleucid empire	Known historical date.
187 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "a raiser of taxes": Seleucus IV tries to tax the land of Judah and pillage the temple [Daniel 11:20]	Known historical date. This happened 349 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
175 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "he shall be destroyed": the reign of Seleucus IV dies when he is assassinated [Daniel 11:20]	Known historical date. This happened 361 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
175 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "a vile person" shall "obtain the kingdom by flatteries": Antiochus IV ("the king of the north") takes power through flattery [Daniel 11:21]	Known historical date.
169 BC	The temple in Jerusalem is plundered	Known historical date.
168 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "but he shall not stand": the Roman navy ("ships of Chittim") defeats Antiochus IV and forces him to surrender, putting him under Roman rule [Daniel 11:25, 30]	Known historical date. This happened 368 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.
167 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in the prophecy found in Daniel 11, "shall take away the daily sacrifice" Antiochus IV begins persecuting the Jews; he dedicates the Jewish temple to Zeus [Daniel 11:31]	Known historical date. This happened 369 years after Daniel was given a prophecy about the latter days.

167 BC	The Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid empire begins when a Jewish priest named Mattathias from the Hasmonean family refuses to worship Greek gods at a Modein altar	Known historical date.
166 BC	When Mattathias dies, his son Judas Maccabeus leads the revolt	Known historical date.
165 BC	The first Hanukkah is celebrated when the temple is cleansed	Known historical date. This was 351 years after the 2nd temple was completed.
164 BC	Antiochus IV dies of an illness	Known historical date.
164 BC	Judas Maccabeus rededicates the temple	Known historical date.
163 BC	The Edomites are still living in what is now called Idumea (former territory of Judah) [1 Maccabees 5:63-65]	Known historical date.
163 BC	Lysias besieges Jerusalem with a large army; when Judas Maccabeus agrees to remain loyal to the Seleucids, he makes peace with them and departs	Known historical date.
163 BC	A civil war breaks out between Hellenizing and Hebraic Jews	Known historical date.
160 BC	When Judas Maccabeus is killed in battle by the Hellenizing Jews, his brother Jonathan becomes the leader of the Jews	Known historical date.
157 BC	Judah becomes independent	Known historical date. This is the first time Judah had been independent since its conquest by the king of Egypt 452 years prior to this.
146 BC	Rome defeats the Greeks in the	Known historical date.

	Battle of Corinth and puts an end to the Greek empire	
146 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: the "thighs of brass" in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Greeks) ends; the "legs of iron" period begins [Daniel 2:40]	This happened 457 years after Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
146 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, the fourth beast with "great iron teeth" achieves dominion [Daniel 7:7]	This happened 407 years after Daniel was given the vision of the 4 great beasts.
143 BC	Jonathan Maccabeus is executed by the Seleucids	Known historical date.
143 BC	Simon Maccabeus becomes the leader of the Jews	Known historical date.
142 BC	Simon Maccabeus negotiates independence for the Jews and the Hasmonean period of Judea begins	Known historical date.
135 BC	Simon Maccabeus is murdered by his son-in-law	Known historical date.
135 BC	Simon's son John Hyrcanus becomes ruler of the Hasmonean realm, but only by making it a puppet state of the Seleucid kingdom	Known historical date.
135 BC	John Hyrcanus conquers the Edomites and forces them to become circumcised [Antiquities of the Jews 13.9:1]	Known historical date.
139 BC	The Jews are expelled from Rome	Known historical date.
128 BC	When Antiochus VII dies, the Hasmonean realm becomes independent again	Known historical date.
104 BC	Aristobulus (son of John Hyrcanus) starts calling himself the king of Judea	Known historical date. The last true king of Judah was Jehoahaz, who reigned for

		three months 505 years before this.
103 BC	The reign of Aristobulus ends	Known historical date.
103 BC	Alexander Janneus becomes ruler over Judea	Known historical date.
103 BC	The Jews gain control over Idumea [Antiquities of the Jews 13.15:4]	Known historical date.
100 BC	Julius Caesar is born	Known historical date.
94 BC	A civil war breaks out between the Pharisees and Sadducees. When the Pharisees win, they let Alexander take the throne again. Alexander then kills the Pharisees and their families	Known historical date.
93 BC	Anna the prophetess is married [Luke 2:36-37]	She will live long enough to see Jesus in the temple.
86 BC	Anna the prophetess becomes a widow when her husband dies [Luke 2:36-37]	
76 BC	The reign of Alexander Janneus over Judea ends when he dies	Known historical date.
76 BC	Salome Alexandra, the wife of Alexander, rules over Judea as queen	Known historical date. The last queen of Judah was Athaliah, who became queen 810 years before Salome.
67 BC	The reign of Salome Alexandra over Judea ends when she dies; her sons Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II fight over the throne	Known historical date.
67 BC	Aristobulus II gets Hyrcanus II to concede the throne and begins ruling over Judea	Known historical date.
67 BC	A civil war breaks out in Judah	Known historical date.

	between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II; Rome favors Hyrcanus II	
63 BC	Pompey captures Jerusalem and annexes Judea; he makes Hyrcanus II the high priest and puts Antipater (father of Herod the Great) in charge of the province	Known historical date. This is 94 years after Judah became independent during the time of the Maccabees.
63 BC	Judea is no longer independent and is now ruled by Rome	
57 BC	Antigonus (son of Aristobulus II) escapes Rome and returns to Judea	Known historical date.
48 BC	Pompey is assassinated in Egypt	Known historical date.
47 BC	Antipater becomes procurator of Judea	Known historical date.
40 BC	The Parthian empire declares Antigonus to be king of Judea; Herod goes to Rome and is appointed the king of Judea by the Roman senate	Known historical date. This was 23 years after Pompey captured Jerusalem.
37 BC	Herod recaptures Jerusalem with Rome's help and executes Antigonus. The Hasmonean period ends.	Known historical date.
37 BC	Herod becomes governor of Galilee	Known historical date.
20 BC	Herod the Great begins rebuilding the Jewish temple	Known historical date. This took place 496 years after the 2nd temple was completed.
3 BC	Zechariah is told that he and Elizabeth will have a son named John [Luke 1:13]	
3 BC	6 months later, Mary is told that she will have a son named Jesus [Luke 1:30-31]	

3 BC	When Joseph finds out that Mary is pregnant he decides to divorce her [Matthew 1:18-19]	
3 BC	An angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream and tells him that her child is of the Holy Ghost [Matthew 1:20]	
2 BC	John the Baptist is born [Luke 1:57]	
2 BC	Joseph takes Mary to Bethlehem [Luke 2:3-4]	
2 BC	Jesus is born in Bethlehem [Luke 2:6-7]	Estimated based on Luke 3:23, which says Jesus was "about 30" when He started His ministry, and based on the fact that Jesus seems to have celebrated 3 Passovers during that ministry, which would give Him a 3 year ministry before His crucifixion.

Resource 3: The Teachings Of The Bible

Daniel 1

- Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (v1)
- Jehoiakim was the king of Judah (v1)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar victory over Jehoiakim (v2)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar was victorious was because God gave him the victory (v2)
- It was God's will for Nebuchadnezzar to defeat Jehoiakim (v2)
- God is the one who decides the outcome of battles (v2)
- God gave Jehoiakim to Nebuchadnezzar (v2)
- God gave some of the temple vessels to Nebuchadnezzar (v2)
- There were some temple vessels that God did not give to Nebuchadnezzar (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar's invasion during the third year of Jehoiakim did not destroy the temple; the temple remained standing and some of the vessels remained as well (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels that he looted from the

temple and transported them to the land of Shinar (v2)

- When Nebuchadnezzar carried the temple vessels to the land of Shinar, he put them in the treasure house of a pagan temple (v2)
- There was a pagan temple in the land of Shinar that had the idol that Nebuchadnezzar worshiped (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater (v2)
- God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take the temple vessels and put them in the treasure house of a pagan temple (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar worshiped a pagan idol in a pagan temple (v2)
- There are times when God gives the victory to wicked and pagan people (v2)
- There are times when God allows wicked people to take holy things and put them in unholy places (v2)
- Ashpenaz was the master of Nebuchadnezzar's eunuchs (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar had eunuchs who served him (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar told Ashpenaz to take Jews to serve him (presumably as eunuchs) (v3)
- Ashpenaz was told to select individuals from the people of Israel (v3)
- Ashpenaz was told to select individuals who were the descendants of Jehoiakim (v3)
- Ashpenaz was told to select individuals from the princes of Israel (v3)

- Nebuchadnezzar wanted Jehoiakim's descendants turned into eunuchs and made his servants (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted the princes of Israel turned into eunuchs and made his servants (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted his servants to be handsome people who had no physical flaws (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted his servants to be wise (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted his servants to be cunning (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted his servants to be filled with knowledge (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted his servants to have a good understanding of science (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted servants who had the ability to serve in the palace (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted servants who could learn the language of the Chaldeans (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted servants who could learn the knowledge of the Chaldeans (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar planned on educating the people who were taken out of Israel to serve him (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to have wise and very skilled servants; he wanted the best people to serve him (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to take the very best people from Israel and turn them into his servants (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar gave these Jewish trainees a daily provision of food (v5)

- Nebuchadnezzar gave these Jewish trainees a daily provision of wine (v5)
- The Jewish trainees were put into a three year training plan (v5)
- Once the three years were over, the Jewish trainees would begin serving the king (v5)
- Daniel was a eunuch (v6)
- Hananiah was a eunuch (v6)
- Mishael was a eunuch (v6)
- Azariah was a eunuch (v6)
- Daniel was from the tribe of Judah (v6)
- Hananiah was from the tribe of Judah (v6)
- Mishael was from the tribe of Judah (v6)
- Azariah was from the tribe of Judah (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel out of Judah in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar took Hananiah out of Judah in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar took Mishael out of Judah in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar took Azariah out of Judah in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim (v6)
- Daniel met the qualifications to be one of Nebuchadnezzar's servants; this means he was handsome, had no physical flaws, was wise, was cunning, was filled with knowledge, and understood science; he was also the

sort of person who could serve in the palace (v6)

- Hananiah met the qualifications to be one of Nebuchanezzar's servants; this means he was handsome, had no physical flaws, was wise, was cunning, was filled with knowledge, and understood science; he was also the sort of person who could serve in the palace (v6)
- Mishael met the qualifications to be one of Nebuchanezzar's servants; this means he was handsome, had no physical flaws, was wise, was cunning, was filled with knowledge, and understood science; he was also the sort of person who could serve in the palace (v6)
- Azariah met the qualifications to be one of Nebuchanezzar's servants; this means he was handsome, had no physical flaws, was wise, was cunning, was filled with knowledge, and understood science; he was also the sort of person who could serve in the palace (v6)
- Ashpenaz changed Daniel's name to Belteshazzar (v7)
- Ashpenaz changed Hananiah's name to Shadrach (v7)
- Ashpenaz changed Mishael's name to Meshach (v7)
- Ashpenaz changed Azariah's name to Abednego (v7)
- It seemed that it was a common practice for eunuchs to be given a new name once they entered Nebuchadnezzar's service (v7)
- There was something wrong with the food and wine that was provided by the king; it seems that those who ate of it were defiled by it (v8)
- Daniel decided that he would not defile himself by eating the food of the king (v8)

- Daniel decided that he would not defile himself by drinking the wine of the king (v8)
- It seems that Daniel was willing to serve Nebuchadnezzar, and did not see anything wrong with that; however, he would not eat the king's provisions; serving Nebuchadnezzar was not sinful, but eating his food was (v8)
- When Daniel decided that it would be wrong for him to eat the food that the king was providing, he tried to resolve the situation by going to Ashpenaz and asking that he might be given something else to eat (v8)
- Daniel tried to resolve his moral problem peacefully and respectfully by going through the proper channels and asking that an allowance might be made for him (v8)
- Even though Daniel was willing to serve Nebuchadnezzar, and did not see anything wrong with that, he was not willing to do anything that defiled himself, even if the king ordered him to do so; Daniel was willing to serve a wicked king in a wicked nation, and saw nothing wrong with that, but he refused to do anything wicked himself (v8)
- Daniel had favor in the eyes of Ashpenaz (v9)
- The reason Ashpenaz had favor for Daniel was because God made it so (v9)
- God has the ability to cause one person to like someone else, and give them great favor (v9)
- God was watching over Daniel; He put him under the authority of someone who cared about him (v9)
- It seems that by the time the food situation came up, Ashpenaz already favored Daniel (v9)

- Ashpenaz told Daniel that he was afraid to grant his request, because if he did and Daniel's health declined, the king would hold him responsible (v10)
- Ashpenaz explained to Daniel why he did not want to grant his request; he was afraid for his safety (v10)
- It seems that Nebuchadnezzar held Ashpenaz personally responsible for the health of the Jewish trainees; if something happened to them, Ashpenaz would be put to death (v10)
- Nebuchadnezzar required Ashpenaz to take very good care of the Jewish trainees (v10)
- Nebuchadnezzar was the one who decided the diet of the trainees (v10)
- Ashpenaz believed that if he granted Daniel's request, their health would suffer (v10)
- God was watching over Daniel; He put him under the authority of someone who would take good care of him (v10)
- Ashpenaz was afraid of Nebuchadnezzar (v10)
- If Nebuchadnezzar's servants displeased him, they risked being executed (v10)
- Ashpenaz put Melzar in charge of Daniel (v11)
- Ashpenaz put Melzar in charge of Hananiah (v11)
- Ashpenaz put Melzar in charge of Mishael (v11)
- Ashpenaz put Melzar in charge of Azariah (v11)
- Even though Ashpenaz changed their names, the text continues to use their original Hebrew names instead of

their Babylonian names (v11)

- It seems that Ashpenaz did not manage Daniel directly; instead they were under Melzar, who reported to Ashpenaz (v11)
- Daniel first tried talking to Ashpenaz, who was the head of all the eunuchs (v11)
- When Ashpenaz denied Daniel's request, he then went to Melzar instead (who reported to Ashpenaz) (v11)
- Daniel asked Melzar to give them different food and drink for ten days, as a test (v12)
- Daniel was very humble when he approached Melzar; instead of making demands, he called himself Melzar's servant (v12)
- Since Ashpenaz was concerned about the health impacts of a change of diet, Daniel tried to address that concern by asking for a trial run to prove that this change would not harm him (v12)
- Daniel asked for a diet of pulse (wheat, barley, flour, beans, lentils, and parched corn) (v12)
- Daniel asked for a diet of water instead of wine (v12)
- Daniel tried to address the concerns of Ashpenaz and find a solution that worked for everyone (v12)
- Daniel asked Melzar to change their diet for 10 days, and then compare them to the rest of the trainees to see if the change in diet was having a negative effect on them (v13)
- Daniel was convinced that a change in diet would not harm him (v13)

- Daniel asked Melzar to base his decision on the results of the 10-day test (v13)
- Daniel did not simply refuse to eat the food and tell the Babylonians to drop dead; instead he was very humble, he talked with them, he addressed their concerns, and he worked within the system to achieve his goal (v13)
- Daniel was extremely careful about sin; he went through a lot of trouble in order to avoid a diet that he believed would defile himself (v13)
- Melzar agreed to give Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah a different diet for 10 days (v14)
- After 10 days, Daniel had a better countenance than the rest of the trainees; the diet was actually beneficial (v15)
- It seems that the only Jews who objected to eating the king's food were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; no one else joined them, even after the 10-day trial (v15)
- Ashpenaz wanted to see the countenance of the eunuchs become more fair (v15)
- Ashpenaz wanted to see the countenance of the eunuchs become more fat (v15)
- It seems that Ashpenaz wanted the eunuchs to gain a certain amount of weight (v15)
- It seems that it was more healthy to not eat the king's meat; those who didn't eat it were better off than those who did (v15)
- Melzar was the one who gave approval to change Daniel's diet (v16)
- Melzar approved the diet change that Daniel requested

(v16)

- Going forward, Daniel did not eat the king's provisions; instead he ate pulse and drank water (v16)
- Going forward, Hananiah did not eat the king's provisions; instead he ate pulse and drank water (v16)
- Going forward, Mishael did not eat the king's provisions; instead he ate pulse and drank water (v16)
- Going forward, Azariah did not eat the king's provisions; instead he ate pulse and drank water (v16)
- Since Daniel's health actually improved when he began eating pulse, Melzar approved the change in diet (v16)
- God gave knowledge, skill, and wisdom to just four of the Jewish eunuchs (v17)
- The Bible calls these four individuals children (v17)
- God gave knowledge, skill, and wisdom to Daniel (v17)
- God gave knowledge, skill, and wisdom to Hananiah (v17)
- God gave knowledge, skill, and wisdom to Mishael (v17)
- God gave knowledge, skill, and wisdom to Azariah (v17)
- God has the ability to give people knowledge (v17)
- God has the ability to give people skill (v17)
- God has the ability to give people wisdom (v17)
- There are times when God blesses people with knowledge (v17)
- There are times when God blesses people with skill (v17)
- There are times when God blesses people with wisdom

(v17)

- The Jewish eunuchs that God blessed with knowledge, skill, and wisdom were the ones who refused to defile themselves but instead sought to walk in God's ways and do what was right (v17)
- God gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams (v17)
- The ability to understand visions and dreams comes from God (v17)
- After three years, Ashpenaz brought the eunuch trainees before Nebuchadnezzar (v18)
- Nebuchadnezzar personally worked with each eunuch, to test them and evaluate their quality (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar found that the best of the trainees were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (v19)
- The four trainees who were found to be the best were the four that God blessed with knowledge, skill, and wisdom; God gave them the skills that they needed in order to be the best, to serve the king, and to rise to a position of power within Babylon (v19)
- It seems that it was not a sin for these four Jews to serve Nebuchadnezzar; instead God put them in those positions (v19)
- Even though Nebuchadnezzar was wicked, it was not a sin for Daniel to serve him (v19)
- Even though Babylon was wicked, it was not a sin for Daniel to be one of its rulers (v19)
- Since Daniel excelled, he stood before Nebuchadnezzar

and served him (v19)

- Since Hananiah excelled, he stood before Nebuchadnezzar and served him (v19)
- Since Mishael excelled, he stood before Nebuchadnezzar and served him (v19)
- Since Azariah excelled, he stood before Nebuchadnezzar and served him (v19)
- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were wiser than all the magicians and astrologers in Babylon (v20)
- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had more understanding than all the magicians and astrologers in Babylon (v20)
- There were magicians in Babylon (v20)
- There were astrologers in Babylon (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar found that it was better to inquire of Daniel than of any of the magicians or astrologers in Babylon (v20)
- The Bible says that Daniel was ten times better than the magicians and astrologers of Babylon (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar had tremendous respect for the wisdom and understanding of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (v20)
- Daniel continued to have a position of leadership in the Babylonian government until the first year of king Cyrus (v21)
- [Last updated 5/31/2023]

Daniel 2

- The events in this chapter (Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the golden statue) happened in the second year of his reign; however, the training period for Daniel was three years, so it would seem that this happened during the eunuch training period (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream that troubled him (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream that caused him to lose sleep (v1)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar (a wicked and pagan king) a prophetic dream (v1)
- There are times when God gives prophetic visions to pagans (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not understand the dream that God gave to him (v1)
- The prophetic vision troubled Nebuchadnezzar's spirit (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded his magicians to come and interpret his dream (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded his astrologers to come and interpret his dream (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded his sorcerers to come and interpret his dream (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded the Chaldeans to come and interpret his dream (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar's magicians came and stood before him (v2)

- Nebuchadnezzar's astrologers came and stood before him (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar's sorcerers came and stood before him (v2)
- The Chaldeans came and stood before Nebuchadnezzar (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar told his magicians and astrologers and sorcerers that he had dreamed a dream (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar told his magicians and astrologers and sorcerers that the dream that he dreamed troubled his spirit (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar told his magicians and astrologers and sorcerers that he wanted to know the interpretation of his dream (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar expected his magicians and astrologers and sorcerers to be able to interpret dreams (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not tell his magicians and astrologers and sorcerers what he had dreamed (v3)
- The Chaldeans spoke to the king in the Syriack language (v4)
- When Nebuchadnezzar commanded the group to interpret his dream, the Chaldeans were the first to speak up (v4)
- The Chaldeans told the king that if he told them what he had dreamed, they would interpret it for him (v4)
- The Chaldeans did not know what the king had dreamed (v4)

- Nebuchadnezzar refused to reveal what he had dreamed (v5)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that if the people did not tell him what he had dreamed, and interpret it for him, then they would be put to death and their houses would be destroyed (v5)
- It seems that the penalty for displeasing Nebuchadnezzar by failing at your job was death (v5)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that if the people told him what he had dreamed, and provided he interpretation, then he would give them gifts (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that if the people told him what he had dreamed, and provided he interpretation, then he would give them rewards (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that if the people told him what he had dreamed, and provided he interpretation, then he would give them great honor (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar provided great rewards for the people who did well at their jobs and pleased him (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar demanded that the people tell him what he had dreamed, and provide the interpretation (v6)
- The people once again asked the king to tell them what he had dreamed (v7)
- The people said that if the king told them what he had dreamed, they would provide the interpretation (v7)
- The people did not believe they had the ability to tell the king what he had dreamed (v7)
- The people did not even try to find a way to discover

what the king had dreamed; instead they kept asking the king to reveal his dream (v7)

- Nebuchadnezzar told the people that he believed they were stalling (v8)
- Nebuchadnezzar told the people that if they could not tell him what he had dreamed, then that meant they had no ability to interpret dreams at all; instead they were just a bunch of liars who were going to lie to the king (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that if a person could tell him what he had dreamed, then that person could be trusted to provide the correct interpretation (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar told the people that if they could not tell him what he had dreamed, then they would be put to death (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know the true interpretation of his dream (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted the truth; he did not want to be deceived (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not trust his own advisors (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted his advisors to prove that they were not liars (v9)
- The Chaldeans told the king that there was no one in the world who could tell him what he had dreamed (v10)
- The Chaldeans believed that what the king was asking for was impossible (v10)
- The Chaldeans believed that no one had the ability to tell the king what he had dreamed (v10)

- The Chaldeans told Nebuchadnezzar that the thing he had asked for was impossible (v10)
- The Chaldeans told the king that no ruler ever asked people to reveal what they had dreamed, because such a thing could not be done (v10)
- The Chaldeans told Nebuchadnezzar that he was being unreasonable (v10)
- The Chaldeans told the king that he was demanding something very rare (v11)
- The Chaldeans told the king that the only one who could reveal what he had dreamed were the gods (v11)
- The Chaldeans told the king that the gods were out of reach, because they did not have physical bodies or live on the earth (v11)
- It seems that the Chaldeans did not believe that their gods could tell them what the king had dreamed (v11)
- Nebuchadnezzar became very angry when the Chaldeans told him that no one could tell him what he had dreamed, and that he had asked for something impossible (v12)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be put to death (v12)
- There were times when Nebuchadnezzar commanded that his own wise men be put to death (v12)
- Failing to please Nebuchadnezzar carried with it a sentence of death (v12)
- Nebuchadnezzar was not an understanding or reasonable individual (v12)

- Nebuchadnezzar did not trust his advisors (v12)
- Nebuchadnezzar was quick to anger (v12)
- Nebuchadnezzar had the power to put people to death (v12)
- The decree went out to find all of the wise men in Babylon and kill them (v13)
- When the decree went out to find and kill the wise men, that decree included Daniel and his fellow Jews (v13)
- It seems that Daniel and his fellow Jews had not been brought to the king earlier, when he demanded that the magicians tell him what he had dreamed (v13)
- The person who was rounding up wise men to kill them was the captain of the king's guard (v14)
- The captain of the king's guard was Arioch (v14)
- Daniel spoke to Arioch with counsel (v14)
- Daniel spoke to Arioch with wisdom (v14)
- Daniel did not simply accept his fate and die; instead he sought to speak with Arioch, to see what he could do about his situation (v14)
- Daniel did not lash out at Arioch, or rebuke him; instead he spoke with wisdom and care (v14)
- Daniel asked Arioch why the king was putting his wise men to death (v15)
- Arioch explained the situation to Daniel (v15)
- It seems that Daniel had not heard about this situation before Arioch explained it to him (v15)

- It seems that Daniel was not yet standing before the king when this happened; (given the timeline, he appears to have still been in training) (v15)
- Once Daniel understood the situation, he visited someone to ask for time; however, based on verse 25 it seems that the person who he talked with was not the king himself (v16)
- Daniel asked for some time, and said that if he was given time then he would interpret the dream for the king (v16)
- Daniel believed that he could interpret the dream for Nebuchadnezzar (v16)
- It seems that Daniel was given the time that he had requested (v17)
- Daniel and his friends were not immediately put to death; instead they were given time (v17)
- After Daniel obtained the time that he needed he returned to his house (v17)
- It seems that Daniel had his own house (v17)
- Daniel's three friends were at his house when he returned from speaking to the king (v17)
- It seems that Daniel's three friends did not know about Nebuchadnezzar's dream either (v17)
- The Bible continues to refer to Daniel and his friends using their Jewish names (v17)
- The Bible refers to Daniel's three friends as his companions (v17)
- It seems that Daniel and his three friends were set apart

from all the other Jews; they were the only ones who claimed to be able to interpret the dream (v17)

- It seems that Daniel only had three companions; there is no mention of other Jews that he had a relationship with (v17)
- Daniel understood that only God could reveal the dream to him (v18)
- Daniel sought the mercies of God (v18)
- Daniel sought the understanding of this secret from God (v18)
- Daniel only sought that he and his companions would not be put to death along with everyone else (v18)
- Daniel was seeking to save his own life; he had no expectation of trying to save all the other wise men of Babylon (v18)
- Daniel expected Nebuchadnezzar to put to death all the wise men who could not interpret the dream, and thought the king would only save those who could interpret the dream (v18)
- Daniel sought mercy from God, because he knew that if God did not reveal this secret to him then he would be put to death (v18)
- Daniel's life was at stake in this matter (v18)
- Daniel knew that if he failed then he and his friends would be put to death along with everyone else (v18)
- God revealed the secret to Daniel (v19)
- God used a night vision to reveal the secret to Daniel

(v19)

- The secret was revealed to Daniel at night (v19)
- When God revealed the secret to Daniel, he responded by blessing the Lord (v19)
- God is the God of heaven (v19)
- Throughout the Bible there is a recurring theme of people blessing the Lord (v19)
- Daniel prayed that the name of God would be blessed forever and ever (v20)
- Daniel sought to glorify the name of God (v20)
- Wisdom belongs to God (v20)
- Might (power) belongs to God (v20)
- When Daniel understood Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he praised the wisdom and power of God (v20)
- When Daniel understood Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he glorified the name of God (v20)
- God is the one who changes the times (v21)
- God is the one who changes the seasons (v21)
- God is the one who removes kings (v21)
- God is the one who sets up kings (v21)
- God is the one who gives wisdom to the wise (v21)
- God is the one who gives knowledge to those who have understanding (v21)
- If we seek wisdom we must seek it from God (v21)

- If we seek knowledge then we must seek it from God (v21)
- The people who are in power in this world are there because God put them there (v21)
- God is in control of the course of history, and will change it when He sees fit (v21)
- God is the one who reveals deep things (v22)
- God is the one who reveals secret things (v22)
- There are some things that are deep (v22)
- There are some things that are secret (v22)
- The only way we can know the deep and secret things is if God chooses to reveal them to us (v22)
- God knows what is in the darkness (v22)
- The darkness cannot hide anything from God (v22)
- Light dwells within God (v22)
- Daniel thanked God (v23)
- Daniel praised God (v23)
- Daniel called God the God of his fathers (v23)
- God gave Daniel wisdom (v23)
- God gave Daniel might (power) (v23)
- God told Daniel what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed; He revealed the dream and its interpretation (v23)
- Daniel returned to Arioch and told him that he could interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream (v24)

- The Bible repeats that Arioch was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to kill all the wise men of Babylon (v24)
- Daniel told Arioch to not put to death the wise men of Babylon (v24)
- Daniel did more than ask that his own life be spared; he also asked that all the other wise men of Babylon be spared as well (v24)
- Daniel told Arioch to bring him before the king; (this implies that he had not been before the king previously) (v24)
- Arioch brought Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar (v25)
- When Arioch brought Daniel to the king, he did so with great haste (v25)
- Arioch told Nebuchadnezzar that he had found someone who could interpret his dream (v25)
- Arioch took credit for finding Daniel, even though Daniel was the one who found him; Arioch had nothing to do with it (v25)
- It seems that Arioch wanted some type of credit for Daniel's interpretation of the dream (v25)
- Daniel was one of the captives of Judah (v25)
- It seems that Arioch had complete confidence that Daniel could provide the interpretation (v25)
- It seems that Nebuchadnezzar did not know who Daniel was; Arioch had to introduce him, so this may have been the first time that Daniel spoke directly with the king (v25)

- Daniel's Babylonian name was Belteshazzar (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel if he could tell the king what he had dreamed (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel if he could tell the king the interpretation of the dream (v26)
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the wise men could not reveal this secret (v27)
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the astrologers could not reveal this secret (v27)
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the magicians could not reveal this secret (v27)
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the soothsayers could not reveal this secret (v27)
- Daniel did not take credit for providing the interpretation of the dream (v28)
- Daniel told the king that there was a God in heaven, and He was the one who gave Nebuchadnezzar this dream (v28)
- Daniel made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that his dream came from God (v28)
- Daniel made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that his dream revealed secrets (v28)
- Daniel made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that his dream was a prophecy, and was about events that would take place in the latter days (v28)
- It seems that Nebuchadnezzar received the vision when he was on his bed (v28)

- There are times when God gives people visions when they are on their bed (v28)
- God gave a wicked and pagan king a vision of the end times (v28)
- It seems that Nebuchadnezzar had been wondering about what would happen in the future (v29)
- When Nebuchadnezzar wondered about future events, God gave him the vision of the future (v29)
- Daniel did more than tell the king what he had dreamed; he also told the king where he was when he saw the vision, and what he was doing before he was given the vision (v29)
- The future is a secret (v29)
- God revealed the secrets of the future to Nebuchadnezzar; however, He did it in a way that the king was unable to understand, for the king saw the vision but did not understand what it meant (v29)
- In order to understand prophecy we need God to provide its interpretation; otherwise we will not understand it (v29)
- God reveals secrets (v29)
- God reveals the future (v29)
- Daniel said that what God showed Nebuchadnezzar would come to pass; it was not a possible future, but the future that would actually happen (v29)
- God is the one who controls the future; He decides what comes to pass (v29)

- Throughout this Daniel kept Nebuchadnezzar's focus on God; Daniel emphasized the greatness and power of God, and did not seek to magnify himself (v29)
- Nebuchadnezzar had a desire to know the future (v29)
- Since Nebuchadnezzar had a desire to know the future, God revealed it to him in a vision (v29)
- It is not wrong to desire to know the future (v29)
- It seems that desiring to know the future is a prayer that God will grant (v29)
- God revealed the future to Nebuchadnezzar even though he was wicked and a pagan (v29)
- Daniel told the king that he was not anyone special (v30)
- Daniel told the king that he was not wiser than anyone else (v30)
- Daniel told the king that the reason he was given this interpretation was so that his life, and the life of his companions, would be spared; in other words, God gave Daniel this interpretation as an act of mercy to save his life (v30)
- The reason God gave Nebuchadnezzar this interpretation was so that the king might know the thoughts of his heart (which was the question of what the future held) (v30)
- God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know what would happen in the future (v30)
- Daniel was very humble when he provided the interpretation, and gave all the credit to God (v30)
- Nebuchadnezzar saw a large statue (v31)

- The statue was very bright (v31)
- The statue was standing (v31)
- The form of the statue was terrifying; (this may be part of the reason why the vision troubled Nebuchadnezzar) (v31)
- The statue had a head of fine gold (v32)
- The statue had a chest and arms of silver (v32)
- The statue had a belly and thighs of brass (v32)
- The statue had legs of iron (v33)
- The statue had feet that were a mixture of iron and clay (v33)
- The statue stood until it was destroyed (v34)
- Nebuchadnezzar saw a stone that was cut without hands (v34)
- The stone struck the statue in its feet (v34)
- When the stone struck the statue in its feet, it broke to pieces (v34)
- The part of the statue that was struck was the feet (v34)
- Daniel repeated that the feet were made out of a mixture of iron and clay (v34)
- When the feet of the statue were struck, the iron broke to pieces (v35)
- When the feet of the statue were struck, the clay broke to pieces (v35)
- When the feet of the statue were struck, the brass broke

to pieces (v35)

- When the feet of the statue were struck, the silver broke to pieces (v35)
- When the feet of the statue were struck, the gold broke to pieces (v35)
- When the feet of the statue were struck, the entire statue broke to pieces all together, at once (v35)
- When the feet of the statue were struck, the pieces of the statue were turned into chaff and were carried away by the wind (v35)
- When the feet of the statue were struck, the pieces of the statue were taken away and were gone, never to return or be found again (v35)
- The stone that destroyed the statue became a great mountain (v35)
- The stone that destroyed the statue filled the whole earth (v35)
- Daniel told the king what he had dreamed (v36)
- After Daniel told the king what he had dreamed, he provided the interpretation of the dream (v36)
- Nebuchadnezzar was a king of kings (v37)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar was a king of kings was because God put him into that position (v37)
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his position of power, and everything that he had, came from God (v37)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom (v37)

- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his power (v37)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his strength (v37)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his glory (v37)
- God made Nebuchadnezzar the ruler of the whole world (v38)
- God gave all the people of the world into Nebuchadnezzar hand (v38)
- God gave all the beasts of the field into Nebuchadnezzar hand (v38)
- God gave all the birds of the air into Nebuchadnezzar hand (v38)
- Nebuchadnezzar ruled over people, livestock, and birds (v38)
- Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold (v38)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar authority over people (v38)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar authority over livestock (v38)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar authority over birds (v38)
- There are times when God gives people authority over animals (v38)
- There are times when God gives people authority over other people (v38)
- The world kingdom that arose after Nebuchadnezzar would be inferior to his kingdom (v39)
- The world kingdom that arose after that one would be even more inferior (v39)

- The fourth world kingdom would be as strong as iron (v40)
- Iron breaks all things in pieces (v40)
- Iron subdues all things (v40)
- The fourth world kingdom would break in pieces everything that came before it (v40)
- The fourth world kingdom would bruise (cause injuries to others) (v40)
- It seems that the fourth world kingdom would be less glorious than the ones who came before it, but would be much stronger (v40)
- The final kingdom would be partly clay and partly iron (v41)
- The final kingdom would be divided (v41)
- Although the final kingdom was one of clay, it would have the strength of iron (v41)
- Daniel kept emphasizing that the final kingdom would be a mixture of iron and clay (v42)
- The final kingdom would be partly strong and partly broken (v42)
- The final kingdom would not be as strong as the kingdom that came before it (the kingdom of pure iron) (v42)
- It seems that the final world kingdom will have a certain measure of weakness in it; it will be less than all that came before it (v42)
- It seems that each world kingdom is inferior to what came before it (v42)

- Daniel said that "they" will mingle themselves with the seed of men; in other words, something that is not of mankind will come into mankind and create offspring that is a mixture of something human and something that is not human (v43)
- In the mixture, it seems that the humans are the clay and the non-humans are the iron; the result is a mixture of iron and clay - something that is partly strong and partly broken (v43)
- Daniel speaks of a time when some sort of nephilim will return (a crossbreed of human and demon) (v43)
- It seems that the final world kingdom will contain nephilim (v43)
- It seems that the iron portion of the final kingdom will not cleave to the clay portion; there will be division in it (v43)
- During the existence of all of these world kingdoms, God is going to set up another kingdom (v44)
- The kingdom that God is establishing is different and distinct from all of these other world kingdoms (v44)
- The kingdom that God is establishing does not come from any of the previous world kingdoms; instead it comes from outside it (v44)
- The kingdom that God is establishing will one day destroy all of these other world kingdoms (v44)
- The kingdom that God is establishing is going to replace all of these other world kingdoms (v44)
- The kingdom that God is establishing will never be

destroyed (v44)

- The kingdom that God is establishing will never be given to anyone else (v44)
- The kingdom that God is establishing will stand forever; it is an eternal kingdom (v44)
- One day all of the kingdoms of this world will be destroyed (v44)
- One day all of the kingdoms of this world will be replaced (v44)
- The stone that destroyed all the kingdoms of the world was cut out of a mountain (v45)
- The stone that destroyed all the kingdoms of the world was cut out without the use of hands (v45)
- The stone broke the iron into pieces (v45)
- The stone broke the brass into pieces (v45)
- The stone broke the clay into pieces (v45)
- The stone broke the silver into pieces (v45)
- The stone broke the gold into pieces (v45)
- God is great (v45)
- God told Nebuchadnezzar what would happen in the future (v45)
- The vision that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar was certain; it would surely come to pass (v45)
- The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was certain; it was entirely correct (v45)

- When Nebuchadnezzar heard all of these things he fell upon his face (v46)
- When Nebuchadnezzar heard all of these things he bowed down before Daniel (v46)
- Nebuchadnezzar was extremely impressed that Daniel had been able to tell him the dream and provide the interpretation (v46)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that people offer oblation (a religious offering) to Daniel (v46)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that people offer incense to Daniel (v46)
- Although Nebuchadnezzar commanded that offerings and incense be offered to Daniel, it seems that his intent was to worship God, since that is who he gave the credit to (v46, 47)
- After Nebuchadnezzar was given the interpretation, it convinced him that Daniel's God was a God of gods (v47)
- After Nebuchadnezzar was given the interpretation, it convinced him that Daniel's God was a Lord of kings (v47)
- After Nebuchadnezzar was given the interpretation, it convinced him that Daniel's God was a revealer of secrets (v47)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that the only way Daniel could have revealed this secret was if God gave it to him; Nebuchadnezzar therefore gave all of the credit to God, and not to Daniel (v47)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that God was greater than him (v47)

- Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel a great man (v48)
- Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel many great gifts (v48)
- Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon (v48)
- Nebuchadnezzar put Daniel in charge of all of the wise men (v48)
- It seems that Nebuchadnezzar did not put the wise men to death after all (v48)
- When the Jews were in captivity, God arranged for a wise and godly Jew to be in charge of the province of Babylon, and a trusted advisor of the king (v48)
- God watched over the Jews while they were in captivity in Babylon (v48)
- Daniel asked Nebuchadnezzar to promote his three companions as well (v49)
- Nebuchadnezzar put Daniel's three companions in charge of the affairs of the province of Babylon (v49)
- Daniel sat in the gate of the king; it seems that he was a close advisor of the king (v49)
- Nebuchadnezzar gave authority to Daniel's three companions, but Daniel was greater (v49)
- When the Bible speaks of how Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel's three friends, it uses their Babylonian names (v49)

[Last updated 6/1/2023]

Daniel 3

- Nebuchadnezzar built an idol out of gold (v1)
- The idol was 60 cubits tall (90 feet) (v1)
- The idol was 6 cubits wide (9 feet) (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar built the idol in the plain of Dura (v1)
- Dura was a province of Babylon (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the princes to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the governors to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the captains to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the judges to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the treasurers to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the counselors to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the sheriffs to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered the rulers to Dura (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered all of the leaders of Babylon - all of the important people in his government - to Dura in order to force them to worship the golden idol that he had created (v2)
- Babylon had princes (v2)
- Babylon had governors (v2)
- Babylon had captains (v2)
- Babylon had judges (v2)
- Babylon had treasurers (v2)

- Babylon had counselors (v2)
- Babylon had sheriffs (v2)
- Babylon had rulers (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to force everyone in his government to worship his idol (v2)
- When Nebuchadnezzar gathered his government to Dura, he was dedicating the idol that he had made (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not believe in religious freedom; he believed that he had the power to force people to worship whatever he wanted them to worship (v2)
- The princes went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- The governors went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- The captains went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- The judges went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- The treasurers went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- The counselors went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- The sheriffs went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- The rulers went to Dura and stood before the idol (v3)
- It seems that it was not a sin to go to Dura and stand in front of the idol; the sin was to bow down to it and worship it (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar gathered all of his leading government officials to the same place, the plain of Dura; in the

ancient world it must have taken a great effort to cause so many people to travel across the world, and it must have taken a lot of time; it also meant that while they were in Dura, there was no one to watch over his empire and take care of it, since everyone was in Dura (v3)

- A herald commanded the people to worship the idol (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not personally command the people to worship the idol; instead he had a herald do it (v4)
- The people who gathered were from different nations (v4)
- The people who were gathered spoke different languages (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded people from all languages to worship the idol that he had created (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded people from all nations to worship the idol that he had created (v4)
- The idol's dedication was accompanied by music (v5)
- The music included a cornet (v5)
- The music included a flute (v5)
- The music included a harp (v5)
- The music included a sackbut (v5)
- The music included a psaltery (v5)
- The music included a dulcimer (v5)
- The herald commanded the people to fall down and worship the idol as soon as they heard the music play (v5)
- Anyone who did not worship the idol would be executed

(v6)

- Those who did not worship the idol would be executed by being burned alive in the fiery furnace (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded people from all nations to worship his idol, and said that he would execute them if they refused (v6)
- When the music played, the people from all nations fell down and worshiped Nebuchadnezzar's idol (v7)
- The people from all nations did not refuse to obey Nebuchadnezzar (v7)
- The people who accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to Nebuchadnezzar were Chaldeans; (Nebuchadnezzar would have put the Chaldeans in his government to death for failing to interpret his dream, except Daniel intervened and saved them) (v8)
- The Chaldeans wanted the Jews to be executed for failing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's idol (v8)
- The Chaldeans went to Nebuchadnezzar personally in order to try to get the Jews killed for not worshipping the golden idol (v9)
- The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the fact that people were to worship the idol when the music played (v10)
- Nebuchadnezzar decreed that the people were to worship his golden idol when the music played (v10)
- Nebuchadnezzar decreed that whoever did not worship his golden idol should be cast into the fiery furnace and burned to death (v11)
- Shadrach refused to worship the idol (v12)

- Meshach refused to worship the idol (v12)
- Abednego refused to worship the idol (v12)
- It seems that the only Jews who refused to worship the idol were Daniel's three companions; everyone else went along with it (v12)
- It seems that Daniel was not present when these things happened; he isn't mentioned in the chapter at all, and apparently did not face this temptation (v12)
- At the time this happened, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in charge of the province of Babylon (v12)
- The Chaldeans claimed that when the three Jews refused to worship the idol, it was a personal insult to Nebuchadnezzar (v12)
- The Chaldeans did not believe in religious freedom (v12)
- The Chaldeans believed that whoever failed to worship the idol should be put to death (v12)
- When Nebuchadnezzar heard that the three Jews refused to worship his idol, he became very angry; he was full of rage and fury (v13)
- It apparently never occurred to Nebuchadnezzar that the three Jews would refuse to worship his idol (v13)
- Nebuchadnezzar was quick to anger (v13)
- Nebuchadnezzar was not understanding, or tolerant, or kind (v13)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not believe in religious freedom (v13)

- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the three Jews be brought before him (v13)
- The three Jews were brought before Nebuchadnezzar (v13)
- Nebuchadnezzar asked the three Jews if it was true that they had refused to worship the golden idol that he had created (v14)
- Nebuchadnezzar expected everyone to worship whatever he told them to worship (v14)
- Nebuchadnezzar asked the three Jews if it was true that they did not worship the same gods that he did (v14)
- Nebuchadnezzar told the three Jews that if they would fall down before his idol and worship it, their lives would be spared (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar told the three Jews that if they did not fall down before his idol and worship it, they would be cast into the fiery furnace (v15)
- If the three Jews did not worship the idol, they would immediately be arrested and thrown into the furnace that very hour (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that he was stronger than God (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that the God of the Jews was unable to rescue people from his power (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that the three Jews had to do what he said, because he was stronger than their God (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar turned this into a contest between him

and the God of the Jews (v15)

- Nebuchadnezzar believed that if he was able to kill the three Jews, that meant he was stronger than the God of Israel (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar was immensely proud (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that literally no one was stronger than him; he believed that he had more power even than God Himself (v15)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that since he was more powerful than God, he could do whatever he wanted and no one could stop him (v15)
- The three Jews told Nebuchadnezzar that this was not a difficult decision (v16)
- The three Jews were not afraid of Nebuchadnezzar, even though the king was full of rage and fury (v16)
- The three Jews told Nebuchadnezzar that their God had the power to deliver them from the fiery furnace (v17)
- The three Jews told Nebuchadnezzar that he was not stronger than their God (v17)
- The three Jews did not know if God would save them or not; all they knew was that God had the power to do so, if He chose (v17)
- The three Jews told Nebuchadnezzar that they did not serve his gods; instead they served the God of Israel (v17)
- The three Jews thought it was possible that God would not save them, and they would be burned alive in the fiery furnace (v18)

- The three Jews refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's gods (v18)
- The three Jews refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (v18)
- The three Jews were willing to serve Nebuchadnezzar, but they were not willing to carry out a sinful order; they would serve a sinful and wicked man, but they would not do anything sinful themselves (v18)
- When Nebuchadnezzar commanded the three Jews to do something sinful, they refused (v18)
- The three Jews told Nebuchadnezzar very clearly and politely that they would not join him in idolatry (v18)
- The three Jews did not condemn the king for being an idolater; instead they told him that they would not join him in his idolatry (v18)
- When the three Jews refused to worship the idol, Nebuchadnezzar became full of rage (v19)
- When the three Jews refused to worship the idol, Nebuchadnezzar's opinion of them changed and he became their enemy (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the fiery furnace be heated until it was seven times hotter than it had been previously (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar was determined to make an example of the three Jews who refused to worship his idol (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate anyone who refused to bow down and worship his idol (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded the mightiest men in his

army to bind the three Jews (v20)

- Nebuchadnezzar commanded the mightiest men in his army to cast the three Jews into the fiery furnace (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded the mightiest men in his army to help him execute people who refused to worship the idol (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar sentenced the three Jews to death for refusing to worship the golden idol (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the three Jews be burned alive for refusing to worship the golden idol (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar used soldiers to bind the Jews and cast them into the fire (v20)
- The three Jews were wearing coats (v21)
- The three Jews were wearing hosen (v21)
- The three Jews were wearing hats (v21)
- The three Jews were wearing garments (v21)
- The three Jews were tied up while they were still wearing all of their fancy clothing (v21)
- The three Jews were cast into the fiery furnace (v21)
- The mightiest men in Nebuchadnezzar's army died while casting the three Jews into the fiery furnace (v22)
- The soldiers who agreed to carry out Nebuchadnezzar's command to cast the Jews into the fire were themselves killed by that very same fire (v22)
- Nebuchadnezzar ended up getting his own soldiers killed when he tried to execute the Jews for refusing to worship

the idol (v22)

- The only people who died in the furnace were the soldiers who picked up the Jews and cast them into the fire (v22)
- Nebuchadnezzar's command was urgent; he would accept no delay, and wanted the Jews to be killed instantly (v22)
- The furnace was extremely hot (v22)
- The furnace was extremely dangerous (v22)
- The fierceness of the furnace can be seen by the fact that the soldiers who threw the three Jews into the fire were killed (v22)
- The three Jews were cast into the furnace (v23)
- The three Jews were bound when they were cast into the furnace (v23)
- The Bible keeps repeating the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over and over again (v23)
- The name of Daniel does not come up in this chapter at all (v23)
- Nebuchadnezzar was not alone when he commanded the three Jews to be cast into the furnace (v24)
- When Nebuchadnezzar sentenced the three Jews to death, there were counselors with him (v24)
- None of Nebuchadnezzar's counselors asked the king to spare the three Jews, or suggested that killing them was a good idea; none of them spoke up on behalf of the Jews (v24)
- Nebuchadnezzar saw something that astonished him

(v24)

- What Nebuchadnezzar saw astonished him so much that he stood up in haste (v24)
- Nebuchadnezzar asked his counselors if they had cast three men into the fire (v24)
- The counselors agreed that they had cast three men into the fire (v24)
- Nebuchadnezzar indicated that his counselors were also responsible for casting the three Jews into the fire; he said that "we" had cast them, indicating it was the decision of both himself and his counselors (v24)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that he saw four men in the fire, not three (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that the four men in the fire were loose; none of them were bound (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that the four men were walking in the fire (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that the four men were not injured by the flames that had killed his soldiers (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that the fourth man looked like the Son of God (v25)
- When the three Jews were cast into the fire, the preincarnate Jesus came into the fire as well and joined them; however, the text does not tell us what He told the Jews (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar recognized that there was something altogether different about the fourth man; he recognized that the fourth man was divine (v25)

- It seems that Nebuchadnezzar could see into the fire from where he was standing (v25)
- God chose to save the three Jews (v25)
- God chose to visit the three Jews while they were in the fire (v25)
- The three Jews saw the preincarnate Christ; this was an extremely rare privilege that very few people were given (v25)
- Because the three Jews refused to worship the idol, they had a powerful testimony (v25)
- Because the three Jews refused to worship the idol, they got to meet the preincarnate Christ (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar approached the mouth of the furnace (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar called out to the three Jews (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar called the three Jews the servants of the most high God (v26)
- This miracle had a huge impression on Nebuchadnezzar (v26)
- Because the three Jews refused to worship the idol, they magnified the Lord (v26)
- Because the three Jews refused to worship the idol, Nebuchadnezzar's opinion of their God changed (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar told the three Jews to come out of the furnace (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not call out to the fourth person who was in the fire (v26)

- The three Jews walked out of the fire (v26)
- Because of this miracle, Nebuchadnezzar recognized the God of Israel as the most high God (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar tried to put the Jews to death, but God did not allow it (v26)
- God proved to Nebuchadnezzar that He was more powerful than the king (v26)
- God used this miracle to humble Nebuchadnezzar (v26)
- The princes were gathered to see the three Jews (v27)
- The governors were gathered to see the three Jews (v27)
- The captains were gathered to see the three Jews (v27)
- The counselors were gathered to see the three Jews (v27)
- Everyone saw that the fire had not harmed the three Jews at all (v27)
- Everyone saw that the fire had not harmed the hair of the three Jews (v27)
- Everyone saw that the fire had not damaged the garments that the three Jews were wearing (v27)
- Everyone saw that the three Jews had no smell of fire or smoke on them at all (v27)
- God has the power to rescue people in astonishing ways (v27)
- Everyone was a witness to this miracle; they all saw it with their own eyes (v27)
- Because the three Jews refused to worship the idol, they gave a powerful testimony to the entire leadership of the

Babylonian empire; everyone saw the power of the God of Israel (v27)

- When Nebuchadnezzar saw this miracle he blessed the God of Israel (v28)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that this miracle was done by the power of God (v28)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that this miracle had been done by the God that the three Jews worshiped (v28)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that the three Jews had been delivered by an angel (v28)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that God had saved the lives of the three Jews that he tried to kill (v28)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that these three Jews had trusted in God, and because of that God saved them (v28)
- Nebuchadnezzar recognized that these three Jews had given their bodies to God (v28)
- It seems that Nebuchadnezzar was no longer angry that these three Jews would only worship their own God (v28)
- Nebuchadnezzar recognized that no one else could perform the miracle that he had witnessed that day; only the God of Israel could save people like that (v29)
- Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the God that the three Jews served was more powerful than anyone else (v29)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that anyone who said something bad about the God of Israel should be put to death (v29)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that anyone who said

something bad about the God of Israel would have their house destroyed (v29)

- After Nebuchadnezzar saw the power of the God of Israel, he did not want anyone in his empire to say anything bad about that God; this is because he understood that the God of Israel had more power than anyone else (v29)
- When Nebuchadnezzar saw this miracle, his opinion of the God of Israel changed (v29)
- As a result of this miracle, Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach (v30)
- As a result of this miracle, Nebuchadnezzar promoted Meshach (v30)
- As a result of this miracle, Nebuchadnezzar promoted Abednego (v30)
- The three Jews were rewarded for their refusal to worship the idol; instead of being killed, they were rescued in an amazing way and were then promoted (v30)
- During the Babylonian captivity, the province of Babylon was ruled over by three extremely faithful and righteous Jews (v30)
- The people who reigned over the Jews during their time in captivity in Babylon were actually more righteous than most of the kings who reigned over them when they were still in Judah (v30)

[Last updated 6/2/2023]

Daniel 4

- This portion of the book of Daniel was written by Nebuchadnezzar (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar wrote this when he was the king of Babylon (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar wrote this letter to all people (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar wrote this letter to all nations (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar wrote this letter to all languages (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar, who conquered many nations, began his letter by wishing peace upon the entire world (v1)
- Nebuchadnezzar wrote this letter because he wanted to share his testimony with all nations; he wanted the entire world to know how God had humbled him (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted the entire world to know the greatness of the God of Israel (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that God had shown him signs (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that God had shown him wonders (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed what God had done to him to the entire world (v2)
- The signs of God are great (v3)
- The wonders of God are mighty (v3)
- God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (v3)
- God's dominion endures to all generations (v3)
- Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge that God's kingdom was

greater than his kingdom (v3)

- After God greatly humbled Nebuchadnezzar, the king praised God and glorified Him, and then told the whole world what God had done (v3)
- The account begins when Nebuchadnezzar was resting in his house (v4)
- When this began, Nebuchadnezzar was flourishing; he was in his palace, and everything was going very well (v4)
- It is possible for the wicked to be flourishing and have great power, right before their judgment comes and destroys them (v4)
- It is not always possible for the wicked to see their judgment approaching; sometimes it comes suddenly and without warning (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar had a palace (v4)
- Nebuchadnezzar lived in a palace (v4)
- When Nebuchadnezzar was resting in his palace, God gave him a vision that filled him with fear (v5)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar a vision when he was resting on his bed (v5)
- Sometimes the visions that God gives people fill them with fear (v5)
- God warned Nebuchadnezzar in advance that his day of judgment was coming (v5)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king, two visions of the future (v5)
- Nebuchadnezzar had a bed (v5)

- Nebuchadnezzar summoned all the wise men of Babylon (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded the wise men of Babylon to interpret his dream (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not summon Daniel and asked him for the interpretation; instead he asked literally everyone else first (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar expected his wise men to have the ability to interpret dreams (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar had multiple wise men (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not understand his vision (v6)
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to understand his vision (v6)
- Sometimes God gives people a vision, but He does not give them the interpretation of the vision (v6)
- The magicians came to Nebuchadnezzar, but they could not interpret the dream (v7)
- The astrologers came to Nebuchadnezzar, but they could not interpret the dream (v7)
- The Chaldeans came to Nebuchadnezzar, but they could not interpret the dream (v7)
- The soothsayers came to Nebuchadnezzar, but they could not interpret the dream (v7)
- This time Nebuchadnezzar told them what he had dreamed; he did not demand that they tell him what he had dreamed (v7)
- Even though Nebuchadnezzar told them what he had dreamed, none of them could interpret it for him (v7)

- The lost and pagan world does not have the ability to interpret the visions that God gives (v7)
- If God does not provide us with the interpretation of the visions that He gives, there is no way for us to understand them (v7)
- Daniel was the last wise man to come before Nebuchadnezzar (v8)
- Daniel's Babylonian name was Belteshazzar (v8)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that he had changed Daniel's name (v8)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that Daniel's Babylonian name was based on the pagan god that the king worshiped (v8)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that Daniel possessed the spirit of the holy gods (v8)
- It seems that Daniel was filled with the Holy Spirit (v8)
- Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel what he had dreamed (v8)
- Daniel was the master of the magicians; it seems that he was the head of the wise men (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar knew that Daniel was filled with the Holy Spirit (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that Daniel knew all secrets (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded Daniel to provide him the interpretation of his dream (v9)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that Daniel would not have any problem interpreting the king's dream (v9)

- Nebuchadnezzar had tremendous confidence in Daniel (v9)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar this vision while he was on his bed (v10)
- Nebuchadnezzar saw a tree (v10)
- The tree grew (v11)
- The tree was strong (v11)
- The tree was so tall that its height reached up to heaven (v11)
- The tree was so tall that the whole world could see it (v11)
- The tree had leaves (v12)
- The leaves were beautiful (v12)
- The tree bore fruit (v12)
- The tree bore a lot of fruit (v12)
- The tree bore enough fruit for everyone (v12)
- The tree had a shadow (v12)
- The beasts of the field found rest in its shadow (v12)
- The birds lived in the tree's branches (v12)
- The whole world was fed from this tree (v12)
- The Bible keeps emphasizing the fact that Nebuchadnezzar saw this vision while he was on his bed (v13)
- In the vision, Nebuchadnezzar saw a watcher (v13)

- The watcher came down from Heaven (v13)
- Nebuchadnezzar called the watcher a holy one (v13)
- It seems that there are watchers in Heaven, who watch the events that take place in the world (v13)
- The watcher commanded that the tree be cut down (v14)
- The watcher commanded that the branches be cut off (v14)
- The watcher commanded that the leaves be removed from the tree (v14)
- The watcher commanded that the fruit be scattered (v14)
- The watcher commanded the animals to leave the tree (v14)
- The watcher commanded the birds to leave the tree (v14)
- The watcher commanded that the tree be destroyed (v14)
- Although the tree was to be cut down, its stump was to remain (v15)
- The stump of the tree was to be surrounded by a band of iron and brass (v15)
- The stump was to be left in the grass of the field (v15)
- The stump was to be made wet by the dew of heaven (v15)
- The stump was to be given a portion with the wild animals (v15)
- The tree originally had the heart of a man (v16)
- The tree's heart was changed; the heart of a man was

taken away, and the heart of a beast was given to it (v16)

- There is a difference between the heart of a man and the heart of a beast (v16)
- The tree was to have the heart of a beast for seven periods of time (v16)
- The reason this would be done is because the watchers decreed it (v17)
- The watchers are called the holy ones (v17)
- The watchers have tremendous power (v17)
- The watchers have the power to change the very nature of people (v17)
- The watchers have power over the kings of the world (v17)
- The reason the watchers did this was so that the whole world would know that God was the one who was in control, and that God reigned over the world (v17)
- The watchers wanted the world to know that God gave power to whoever He chose (v17)
- The watchers wanted the world to know that God was the one who reigned over the kingdoms of the world (v17)
- There are times when God puts the worst people into power (v17)
- The reason the kings and rulers of this world are in power is because God put them there (v17)
- God decides the fate of nations (v17)
- There are times when God removes people from power

(v17)

- Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel his dream and then commanded him to provide the interpretation (v18)
- None of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men could interpret the dream (v18)
- Nebuchadnezzar was completely convinced that Daniel could interpret the dream (v18)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar believed that Daniel could interpret the dream was because he knew that Daniel had the Holy Spirit within him; the king believed that the Holy Spirit would provide the interpretation of the dream (v18)
- Nebuchadnezzar believed that the interpretation of dreams came from God (v18)
- When Daniel heard the dream he was astonished (v19)
- Daniel remained astonished for an entire hour (v19)
- When Daniel heard the dream, his thoughts troubled him (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel to not let the dream trouble him (v19)
- Daniel was upset about the dream (v19)
- It seems that Daniel did not want to see any harm come to Nebuchadnezzar (v19)
- Daniel immediately understood the dream (v19)
- Daniel immediately understood that this dream was very bad for Nebuchadnezzar (v19)
- Daniel told the king that he wished the dream was

intended for the king's enemies, instead of for him (v19)

- It seems that Daniel was loyal to Nebuchadnezzar (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar saw a tree (v20)
- The tree grew (v20)
- The tree was strong (v20)
- The tree reached up to heaven (v20)
- The tree could be seen by the entire world (v20)
- The tree had leaves (v21)
- The leaves were beautiful (v21)
- The tree bore fruit (v21)
- The tree bore much fruit (v21)
- The tree bore fruit for everyone (v21)
- The animals lived in the shadow of the tree (v21)
- The birds lived in the branches of the tree (v21)
- The tree was Nebuchadnezzar (v22)
- Nebuchadnezzar had grown (v22)
- Nebuchadnezzar had become strong (v22)
- Nebuchadnezzar's greatness reached up to heaven (v22)
- Nebuchadnezzar's dominion reached to the end of the earth (v22)
- A watcher came down from Heaven (v23)
- The watcher was holy (v23)

- The watcher commanded that the tree be cut down (v23)
- The watcher commanded that the tree be destroyed (v23)
- The watcher commanded that the stump remain (v23)
- The watcher commanded that the stump be imprisoned in a band of iron and brass (v23)
- The watcher commanded that the stump be left in the grass of the field (v23)
- The stump would be made wet by the dew of heaven (v23)
- The stump would have to live with wild animals (v23)
- The stump would remain in that condition for seven periods of time (v23)
- Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar his lord (v24)
- Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar the king (v24)
- The vision that Nebuchadnezzar saw was a decree of the most High; it was a decree from God (v24)
- The target of this decree was Nebuchadnezzar (v24)
- Nebuchadnezzar would be driven from human society (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar would live among animals (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar would eat grass like an ox (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar would be made wet with the dew of heaven (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar would remain in that animal-like state for seven periods of time (v25)

- Nebuchadnezzar would remain like that until he knew that God was the one who reigned over the kingdoms of the world (v25)
- Nebuchadnezzar would remain like that until he knew that God gave power to whoever He chose (v25)
- God reigns over the kingdoms of the world (v25)
- God is the one who puts people into power (v25)
- The people that God puts into power are the ones that He chooses; it is His decision (v25)
- The people who are in positions of power today are there because God put them there (v25)
- Daniel was honest about what the vision meant; he did not try to hide it or sugarcoat it (v25)
- Daniel was willing to give the king very bad news (v25)
- Even though the interpretation of the dream was very wild, and seemed extremely unlikely and even ridiculous, Daniel was honest about what it meant, and what was going to happen; he did not hide anything, or try to change it, or try to make it seem more reasonable (v25)
- There are times when God does things that seem completely ridiculous and impossible before they happen (v25)
- The prophecies of God are always fulfilled literally, no matter how unlikely that may seem (v25)
- God has the power to turn people into animals (v25)
- God hates pride (v25)
- God wants the entire world to know that He is sovereign,

and He is the one who reigns (v25)

- Even though all these things would happen to Nebuchadnezzar, his kingdom would still be safe; he would not lose his kingdom (v26)
- Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be returned to him after he was humbled and understood that God was the one who ruled over the world, and he was only king because God put him there (v26)
- God was going to humble Nebuchadnezzar but He was not going to take away his kingdom (v26)
- The purpose of this was to teach Nebuchadnezzar that God was in control, and God ruled over the world (v26)
- Daniel immediately told the king that he should repent and seek righteousness (v27)
- Daniel said that if the king repented, it was possible that this judgment might be delayed for a time (v27)
- Daniel preached the truth to the king, but he also told the king what to do in order to avoid this judgment; he preached repentance (v27)
- Nebuchadnezzar was sinning (v27)
- Daniel told the king to stop sinning and do what was right (v27)
- Daniel told the king to show mercy to the poor (v27)
- We should stop sinning (v27)
- We should do what is right, and pursue righteousness (v27)
- We should show mercy to the poor (v27)

- God wants kings to show mercy to the poor (v27)
- God wants kings to stop sinning (v27)
- God wants kings to pursue righteousness (v27)
- The vision was fulfilled literally; everything came to pass exactly as Daniel said it would (v28)
- Even though what Daniel said seemed very unlikely, and nothing like that had ever happened before, it still came to pass exactly as he said (v28)
- The vision was fulfilled a year after Nebuchadnezzar was given it (v29)
- Nebuchadnezzar was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon (v29)
- Nebuchadnezzar was immensely proud (v30)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that he was the one who built Babylon (v30)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that he had built Babylon for himself (v30)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that Babylon had been built by the might of his power (v30)
- Nebuchadnezzar said that Babylon had been built for his honor and majesty (v30)
- Nebuchadnezzar took all the credit for Babylon; he said that he had built it with his might, and for his glory (v30)
- Nebuchadnezzar publicly boasted; instead of giving honor to God, he took all of it for himself (v30)
- God hates pride (v31)

- God hates boasting (v31)
- While Nebuchadnezzar was still speaking, a voice spoke from heaven (v31)
- The voice was addressed to Nebuchadnezzar (although it is possible that everyone could hear it) (v31)
- The voice said that the kingdom had been taken away from Nebuchadnezzar that very moment (v31)
- God can take power away from people at any moment (v31)
- Those who are evil may think that they are invincible; the truth is God could remove them from power at any moment, and without any warning (v31)
- God proved that He was vastly more powerful than Nebuchadnezzar (v31)
- When God took power away from Nebuchadnezzar, there was nothing the king could do; he lost everything in a single moment (v31)
- It is not wise to boast about how great we are (v31)
- Nebuchadnezzar was going to be driven away from human society (v32)
- Nebuchadnezzar was going to have to live with the animals of the field (v32)
- Nebuchadnezzar was going to eat grass like oxen (v32)
- Nebuchadnezzar would remain in that state for seven years (v32)
- Nebuchadnezzar would remain like an animal until he knew that God ruled over the kingdoms of men (v32)

- Nebuchadnezzar would remain like an animal until he knew that God gave power to whoever He chose (v32)
- The words of the watcher were fulfilled that very hour (v33)
- Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society (v33)
- Nebuchadnezzar ate grass like an ox (v33)
- Nebuchadnezzar was made wet by the dew of heaven (v33)
- Nebuchadnezzar's hair grew out until it was like the feathers of an eagle (v33)
- Nebuchadnezzar's nails grew out until they were like the claws of a bird (v33)
- Nebuchadnezzar transformed into an animal (v33)
- God can transform people into animals (v33)
- God can take reason away from people (v33)
- Nebuchadnezzar told the whole world what happened to him; he told all nations how God had humbled him by turning him into an animal (v33)
- At any point in time God can utterly remove the wicked from power; He can change things in a single moment (v33)
- At the end of the appointed time, God gave understanding back to Nebuchadnezzar (v34)
- The vision was fulfilled exactly as God said it would be; God did exactly what He said He would do (v34)
- The vision was fulfilled literally (v34)

- When Nebuchadnezzar's understanding returned to him, he lifted up his eyes to heaven (v34)
- When Nebuchadnezzar's understanding returned to him, he blessed God (v34)
- When Nebuchadnezzar's understanding returned to him, he praised God (v34)
- When Nebuchadnezzar's understanding returned to him, he honored God (v34)
- God lives forever (v34)
- God's dominion is an everlasting dominion (v34)
- God's kingdom endures from one generation to the next (v34)
- Nebuchadnezzar responded to being humbled by blessing God, praising God, and honoring God; this experience transformed Nebuchadnezzar from a king who was proud to a king who was humble (v34)
- Compared to God, all the inhabitants of the world are nothing at all (v35)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that he was nothing compared to God (v35)
- God acts in accordance with His will (v35)
- God governs heaven (v35)
- God governs the army of heaven (v35)
- God governs the earth (v35)
- God rules in heaven (v35)
- God rules in earth (v35)

- God has power over the army of heaven (v35)
- God has power over the inhabitants of the earth (v35)
- No one can stop God, or oppose God, or achieve a victory over God (v35)
- God is not accountable to anyone in this world (v35)
- God has all of the power (v35)
- Nebuchadnezzar understood that God was the one who was truly in charge; God was the one who reigns over all things (v35)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his reason back (v36)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his glory back (v36)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his honor back (v36)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his brightness back (v36)
- Nebuchadnezzar's counselors sought him (v36)
- Nebuchadnezzar's lords sought him (v36)
- Nebuchadnezzar was once more established in his kingdom (v36)
- God gave excellent majesty to Nebuchadnezzar (v36)
- God told Nebuchadnezzar that after the time was passed He would return Nebuchadnezzar to the throne, and He did (v36)
- Nebuchadnezzar praised God (v37)
- God is the King of heaven (v37)
- Nebuchadnezzar praised God as the King (v37)

- Nebuchadnezzar gave honor and glory to God (v37)
- All of God's works are truth (v37)
- All of God's ways are just (v37)
- God is able to humble those who walk in pride (v37)
- God is able to humble anyone (v37)

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Daniel 5

- When this story took place, Nebuchadnezzar was no longer king (v1)
- When this story took place, Belshazzar was king (v1)
- Belshazzar made a great feast (v1)
- Belshazzar had a thousand lords (v1)
- Belshazzar invited a thousand lords to his feast (v1)
- Belshazzar drank wine at the feast (v1)
- It seems that Belshazzar threw this feast during a war, when the enemy was right outside the city gates; instead of protecting the city he threw an enormous party and got drunk (v1)
- After Belshazzar had drunk wine, he commanded that the holy vessels from Solomon's temple be brought out so that he and his guests could use them to drink wine (v2)
- Nebuchadnezzar had taken the holy vessels from Solomon's temple and placed them in a temple, where

they had been kept safe for many years (v2)

- Belshazzar decided to use the holy vessels of God for an unholy and depraved purpose (v2)
- Belshazzar took the holy gold vessels out of the temple treasury (v2)
- Belshazzar took the holy silver vessels out of the temple treasury (v2)
- Belshazzar attended the great feast (v2)
- The princes of Babylon attended the great feast (v2)
- Belshazzar's wives attended the great feast (v2)
- Belshazzar had more than one wife (v2)
- Belshazzar's concubines attended the great feast (v2)
- Belshazzar had concubines (v2)
- Belshazzar had more than one concubine (v2)
- In spite of everything that happened to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar had no fear of God at all (v2)
- It seems that Belshazzar wanted to use God's vessels as a deliberate insult to God - as a way of saying that he was stronger than God, and there was nothing God could do to stop him; Belshazzar made a deliberate choice to do this, as the vessels were not close at hand and they had been left alone in a treasury for decades (v2)
- Belshazzar made a deliberate and calculated choice to profane the holy things of God; this was most likely intended as an insult (v2)
- The holy vessels of God were taken out of the temple

treasury and brought to the feast (v3)

- The golden vessels had previously been used in the temple of God in Jerusalem (v3)
- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to drink wine (v3)
- Belshazzar's princes used the holy vessels of God to drink wine (v3)
- Belshazzar's wives used the holy vessels of God to drink wine (v3)
- Belshazzar's concubines used the holy vessels of God to drink wine (v3)
- It seems that no one who was at the party objected to using the holy vessels of God to drink wine (v3)
- It seems that no one who was at the party had any fear of God at all; in spite of Nebuchadnezzar's testimony, and all the clear and well-documented miracles that God had done, these people had no fear of God at all (v3)
- Belshazzar drank wine (v4)
- The princes drank wine (v4)
- The wives drank wine (v4)
- The concubines drank wine (v4)
- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to worship idols (v4)
- The princes used the holy vessels of God to worship idols (v4)
- The wives used the holy vessels of God to worship idols (v4)

- The concubines used the holy vessels of God to worship idols (v4)
- The party praised idols of gold (v4)
- The party praised idols of silver (v4)
- The party praised idols of iron (v4)
- The party praised idols of wood (v4)
- The party praised idols of stone (v4)
- The people at the party were idolaters (v4)
- The people at the party had no fear of God (v4)
- When the party guests used the holy vessels of God to worship idols, a man's hand appeared and wrote something on the wall of the king's palace (v5)
- The king saw part of the hand that wrote on the wall (v5)
- It seems that only the hand could be seen (v5)
- The writing on the wall was near the candlestick (v5)
- The king himself saw this happen (v5)
- The writing was done by the fingers on the man's hand (v5)
- When Belshazzar saw the hand write on the wall, he became terrified (v6)
- It seems that when Belshazzar saw the hand write on the wall, he had a bowel movement (v6)
- When Belshazzar saw the hand write on the wall, his knees smote one another in fear (v6)
- Belshazzar commanded that the astrologers be brought

to him (v7)

- Belshazzar commanded that the Chaldeans be brought to him (v7)
- Belshazzar commanded that the soothsayers be brought to him (v7)
- Belshazzar commanded the wise men of Babylon to interpret the writing for him (v7)
- Belshazzar said that whoever interpreted the writing would be clothed with scarlet (v7)
- Belshazzar said that whoever interpreted the writing would be given a chain of gold (v7)
- Belshazzar said that whoever interpreted the writing would be the third highest ruler in the kingdom (v7)
- It seems that Belshazzar was only the second highest ruler in the kingdom; there was someone greater than him, who apparently was not at Babylon when this happened (v7)
- Belshazzar did not understand the writing on the wall (v7)
- Belshazzar wanted someone to interpret the writing on the wall so that he could understand it (v7)
- Belshazzar had to have someone else interpret the writing on the wall for him (v7)
- It seems that in ancient times, people were honored by being clothed in scarlet (v7)
- It seems that in ancient times, people were honored by being given a chain of gold (v7)
- None of the wise men could read the writing that was on

the wall (v8)

- None of the wise men could interpret what was written on the wall (v8)
- It seems that the words on the wall were written in a language that was not known to the wise men of Babylon (v8)
- When none of the wise men could interpret the writing, Belshazzar became greatly troubled (v9)
- When none of the wise men could interpret the writing, the lords of the feast were astonished (v9)
- It seems that everyone who was at the feast could see the writing that had been written at the wall (v9)
- When none of the wise men could interpret the writing, the queen came to the feast (v10)
- It seems that the queen had not previously been at the feast; (this meant the queen would not have been among those who used the holy vessels of God to worship idols) (v10)
- The feast had been held in the banquet house (v10)
- The queen told the king to not be afraid (v10)
- Daniel was still alive when this happened (v11)
- Daniel was no longer the master of the wise men when this happened (v11)
- Daniel was not part of Belshazzar's government (v11)
- Daniel was in Babylon when this happened (v11)
- The queen knew about Daniel (v11)

- The queen knew that the Holy Spirit was within Daniel (v11)
- The queen knew that Daniel was extremely wise (v11)
- The queen knew that Daniel had tremendous wisdom (v11)
- It seems that when Belshazzar called for the wise men of Babylon, he had not called for Daniel (v11)
- Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel the master of all the wise men of Babylon (v11)
- It seems that when no one could interpret the writing on the wall, no one who was at the party thought to call Daniel, even though he was available (v11)
- Daniel had an excellent spirit (v12)
- Daniel had great knowledge (v12)
- Daniel had great understanding (v12)
- Daniel knew how to interpret dreams (v12)
- Daniel knew how to explain sentences that were difficult to understand (v12)
- Daniel could dissolve doubts (v12)
- The queen called Daniel by his Hebrew name, not his Babylonian name (v12)
- Daniel was given the name Belteshazzar by Nebuchadnezzar (v12)
- The queen told Belshazzar that he should call for Daniel, because he would be able to interpret the writing on the wall (v12)

- The queen had no doubt that Daniel could interpret the writing on the wall (v12)
- Belshazzar listened to the queen and commanded that Daniel be brought to the feast (v13)
- Daniel was brought before Belshazzar (v13)
- Daniel had not been at the feast previously (v13)
- Daniel was not one of the wise men who was called to interpret the writing (v13)
- It seems that Belshazzar had no respect for Daniel at all (v13)
- The queen didn't mention Daniel's heritage, or the fact that he was one of the captives; instead she talked about his wisdom and his spirit (v13)
- Belshazzar completely ignored the fact that Daniel was the master of the wise men during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and referred to Daniel as one of the captives of Judah; Belshazzar refused to see Daniel as an honorable man with great wisdom, and instead looked at him as nothing more than a worthless slave (v13)
- Belshazzar went out of his way to emphasize the fact that Daniel had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and completely ignored the enormous honors that Nebuchadnezzar put upon Daniel; Belshazzar was deliberately insulting him (v13)
- Belshazzar was a vindictive and petty man (v13)
- Belshazzar was an enormous fool (v13)
- Belshazzar refused to give respect where it was due (v13)

- Belshazzar said he had heard that the spirit of the gods was within him (v14)
- Belshazzar said he had heard that Daniel had light (v14)
- Belshazzar said he had heard that Daniel had understanding (v14)
- Belshazzar said he had heard that Daniel had excellent wisdom (v14)
- In spite of all the things Belshazzar had heard of Daniel, the king still refused to treat Daniel with any respect at all (v14)
- The wise men of Babylon had been brought before Belshazzar in order to interpret the writing on the wall (v15)
- The astrologers of Babylon had been brought before Belshazzar in order to interpret the writing on the wall (v15)
- The wise men of Babylon could not interpret the writing (v15)
- The astrologers of Babylon could not interpret the writing (v15)
- Belshazzar said he had heard that Daniel could make interpretations (v16)
- Belshazzar said he had heard that Daniel could dissolve doubts (v16)
- Belshazzar said that if Daniel could interpret the writing, he would be clothed with scarlet (v16)
- Belshazzar said that if Daniel could interpret the writing,

he would be given a chain of gold (v16)

- Belshazzar said that if Daniel could interpret the writing, he would be made the third ruler in the kingdom (v16)
- Daniel rejected the rewards that the king had offered; he did not want any of the rewards, or a position in Belshazzar's government (v17)
- Daniel did not reject Nebuchadnezzar's rewards, but he did reject what Belshazzar offered; Daniel did not want anything from him (v17)
- Although Daniel did not want the king's rewards, he was willing to interpret the writing for him (v17)
- Daniel told the king to give the gifts to himself (v17)
- Daniel told the king to give the rewards to someone else (v17)
- It seems that Daniel instantly knew the interpretation of the writing on the wall as soon as he saw it (v17)
- Daniel called God the most high God (v18)
- Nebuchadnezzar was one of Belshazzar's ancestors (v18)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom (v18)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar majesty (v18)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar glory (v18)
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar honor (v18)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar had a kingdom was because God gave it to him (v18)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar had majesty was because God gave it to him (v18)

- The reason Nebuchadnezzar had glory was because God gave it to him (v18)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar had honor was because God gave it to him (v18)
- Daniel told Belshazzar that the reason Nebuchadnezzar was great was because God made him great; Nebuchadnezzar's success came from God (v18)
- Daniel took this opportunity and used it to glorify God (v18)
- God gave all people into Nebuchadnezzar's hands (v19)
- God gave all nations into Nebuchadnezzar's hands (v19)
- God gave all languages into Nebuchadnezzar's hands (v19)
- All people trembled before Nebuchadnezzar (v19)
- All nations trembled before Nebuchadnezzar (v19)
- All languages trembled before Nebuchadnezzar (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar killed those he decided to kill (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar saved those he decided to save (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar gave power to those he chose (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar took power from those he chose (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar had power over life and death (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar had power over the whole world (v19)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar had such power was because God gave it to him (v19)
- Nebuchadnezzar's heart was lifted up in pride (v20)

- Nebuchadnezzar's mind was hardened in pride (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar was deposed from his throne (v20)
- Nebuchadnezzar's glory was taken from him (v20)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar was deposed was because he was proud (v20)
- The reason Nebuchadnezzar's glory was taken from him was because he was proud (v20)
- Daniel testified that the things Nebuchadnezzar wrote in his letter (about him being turned into an animal) were true and really happened (v21)
- Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from human society (v21)
- Nebuchadnezzar was given the heart of a beast; his reason was taken from him and he was turned into an animal (v21)
- Nebuchadnezzar lived with wild animals (v21)
- Nebuchadnezzar was fed grass like an ox (v21)
- Nebuchadnezzar was made wet by the dew of heaven (v21)
- Nebuchadnezzar remained an animal for a time to teach him that God was sovereign, not him (v21)
- The most high God rules over the kingdoms of men (v21)
- God is the one who puts the rulers of this world into power (v21)
- God sets whoever He chooses into power (v21)
- Belshazzar was the descendant of Nebuchadnezzar (v22)

- Belshazzar knew what the most high God had done to Nebuchadnezzar (v22)
- Even though Belshazzar knew what had happened, he refused to humble himself (v22)
- Belshazzar was proud (v22)
- Knowing what God had done did not make any difference to Belshazzar; he refused to humble himself in spite of the irrefutable evidence that God was sovereign over all things (v22)
- Belshazzar had no excuse for his pride; he could not claim ignorance (v22)
- Belshazzar knew of the power of the most high God, and yet he chose to attack God anyway (v23)
- Belshazzar made a deliberate choice to attack God; he chose to use the holy vessels of God to worship idols deliberately, as an attack upon the most high God (v23)
- Belshazzar decided to magnify himself above God (v23)
- Belshazzar decided to use the holy vessels of God to prove that he was greater than the God of heaven (v23)
- Belshazzar drank from the holy vessels of God (v23)
- Belshazzar's lords drank from the holy vessels of God (v23)
- Belshazzar's wives drank from the holy vessels of God (v23)
- Belshazzar's concubines drank from the holy vessels of God (v23)
- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to praise idols of

silver (v23)

- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to praise idols of gold (v23)
- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to praise idols of brass (v23)
- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to praise idols of iron (v23)
- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to praise idols of wood (v23)
- Belshazzar used the holy vessels of God to praise idols of stone (v23)
- Idols cannot see (v23)
- Idols cannot hear (v23)
- Idols cannot know anything (v23)
- Belshazzar refused to glorify God (v23)
- The only reason Belshazzar was breathing was because God gave him breath (v23)
- The only reason Belshazzar was alive was because God gave him life (v23)
- Belshazzar knew about the power and might of God, but he made a deliberate choice to profane God and worship idols (v23)
- The idols that Belshazzar worshiped were utterly worthless (v23)
- The God that Belshazzar attacked had infinite power and might (v23)

- Daniel explained to Belshazzar that the reason the hand appeared and wrote on the wall was because the king was proud, and decided to use the holy vessels of God to worship idols; the most high God was responding to the evil thing that the king had done (v24)
- The hand that wrote on the wall was sent from God (v24)
- Four words were written on the wall: mene, mene, tekel, and upharsin (v25)
- It seems that the writing on the wall was Hebrew (v25)
- It seems that none of the wise men of Babylon knew Hebrew (v25)
- It seems that there were no Jews among Belshazzar's government (v25)
- Even though there were just four words, Daniel knew the full message that each word meant (v26)
- Each word was more than just a word; it contained an entire message (v26)
- The word "mene" meant that God had numbered Belshazzar's kingdom and brought it to an end (v26)
- Belshazzar's attack on God brought an end to his kingdom (v26)
- God has the power to bring kingdoms to an end (v26)
- There are times when God punishes the wickedness of kings by destroying their kingdoms (v26)
- Belshazzar was not stronger than God (v26)
- At this feast Belshazzar sought to glorify idols, but in the end the most high God was the one who was glorified

(v26)

- The word "tekel" meant that Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances and found wanting (v27)
- God had weighed Belshazzar; He had brought him into judgment and judged him (v27)
- Belshazzar was found wanting (v27)
- God has the power to judge kings (v27)
- There are times when God judges kings (v27)
- Kings and rulers are not immune to God's judgment (v27)
- God weighs the actions of rulers - even pagan rulers (v27)
- God is sovereign over the kings and rulers of this world (v27)
- The word "peres" meant that Belshazzar's kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians (v28)
- Since Belshazzar was found wanting, God brought his kingdom to an end and gave it to Belshazzar's enemies (v28)
- There are times when God punishes a nation by giving them into the hands of their enemies (v28)
- God has the power to take away a kingdom and give it to someone else (v28)
- The reason the Medes and Persians gained power over Babylon was because God gave it to them (v28)
- The reason God gave the Medes and Persians power over Babylon was because God weighed Belshazzar and found him to be wanting (v28)

- Even though Daniel rejected the king's gifts, the king clothed Daniel with scarlet anyway (v29)
- Even though Daniel rejected the king's gifts, the king gave Daniel a chain of gold anyway (v29)
- Even though Daniel rejected the king's gifts, the king proclaimed Daniel to be the third ruler of the kingdom anyway (v29)
- When Belshazzar heard these things he did not repent (v29)
- Belshazzar did not take anything that Daniel said seriously (v29)
- Daniel told Belshazzar that God had given his kingdom to the Medes and Persians; even though the Medes were at the city gate and were attacking the city, Belshazzar did not take this seriously (v29)
- Daniel told Belshazzar what was going to happen before it happened; the king had a chance to repent, and yet he did not do so (v29)
- Even though Belshazzar saw the hand write on the wall, he still refused to repent (v29)
- Even though Belshazzar knew what the most high God had done to Nebuchadnezzar, he still refused to repent (v29)
- Even though Belshazzar was told the interpretation of the writing on the wall, he still refused to repent (v29)
- Belshazzar saw the miracle with his own eyes - something that had never been seen before - and yet he still refused to repent (v29)

- The message that had been written on the wall came to pass that very night (v30)
- The message that had been written on the wall was fulfilled literally (v30)
- That night Belshazzar was killed (v30)
- Belshazzar was slain by the Medes (v30, v31)
- Belshazzar had been the king of the Chaldeans (v30)
- Belshazzar was killed right after he decided to use the holy vessels of God to worship idols, as an insult to God Himself (v30)
- The Medes conquered the kingdom of Babylon (v31)
- Darius conquered the kingdom of Babylon (v31)
- When Darius conquered Babylon he was 62 years old (v31)
- God did exactly what He said He would do (v31)

[Last updated 6/6/2023]

Daniel 6

- When Darius became ruler of the kingdom (after taking it from Belshazzar), he set 120 princes over the whole kingdom (v1)
- Darius had 120 princes who reported to him (v1)
- Darius ruled over the whole kingdom of what had once been Babylon (v1)

- Darius put three presidents over the 120 princes who ruled over the empire (v2)
- The three presidents reported to Darius (v2)
- Daniel was the head of the three presidents (v2)
- The princes gave an account of the three presidents, who gave an account to Darius (v2)
- Daniel was over Babylon both during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and during the reign of Darius (v2)
- When the Medes conquered Babylon, they put Daniel in charge - just as Nebuchadnezzar had done when he was king (v2)
- Daniel was preferred above the presidents (v3)
- Daniel was preferred above the princes (v3)
- Daniel had an excellent spirit within him (v3)
- The reason Daniel was preferred was because he had an excellent spirit within him (v3)
- Darius was considering elevating Daniel to an even greater role (v3)
- The presidents were jealous of Daniel (v4)
- The princes were jealous of Daniel (v4)
- The presidents tried to find some fault in Daniel (v4)
- The princes tried to find some fault in Daniel (v4)
- The presidents could not find any fault in Daniel (v4)
- The princes could not find any fault in Daniel (v4)
- Daniel was faithful (v4)

- There was no error in Daniel's life (v4)
- Both the presidents and the princes conspired against Daniel (v4)
- The leadership of the empire conspired against Daniel (v4)
- The people that Daniel worked with hated him and wanted him dead, even though he was without fault (v4)
- The fact that Daniel was without fault did not change the opinion of his coworkers, or make them reconsider their plan; they did not care that he was wholly innocent (v4)
- The people who reported to Daniel decided to move ahead with getting rid of him even though he was without fault (v4)
- The presidents and princes had no integrity; they were determined to kill an innocent man (v4)
- The presidents and princes realized that it was impossible to convict Daniel because he had not done anything wrong, and he was not going to do anything wrong (v5)
- The presidents and princes knew that Daniel was faithful to his God, and would never stop worshiping or serving him (v5)
- The presidents and princes knew that Daniel worshiped God; Daniel did not hide this (v5)
- The presidents and princes decided that the only way to get rid of Daniel was to outlaw his religion; they knew that if they did that, Daniel would continue to worship God and then they could kill him (v5)
- The presidents and princes had no fear of God (v5)

- The presidents and princes decided to use Daniel's worship of God against him (v5)
- All of the presidents (except Daniel) and princes assembled together to the king; this would have been 122 people (120 princes plus 2 presidents) (v6)
- This was a conspiracy by everyone who reported to Daniel - all of the princes, and the other two presidents (v6)
- The king apparently did not notice that Daniel was not a part of this group (v6)
- The presidents and princes decided to trick the king; apparently they thought that if they tricked the king into killing someone that the king loved and depended on, that was going to work out well for them and the king wasn't going to be angry with them (v6)
- The presidents and princes went to Darius in person in order to trick the king into signing a law that would get Daniel killed (v6)
- The presidents and princes lied; they said that all the presidents agreed on this law, but that was not the case - Daniel had not agreed to it (v7)
- The presidents and princes claimed that the governors, counselors, and captains also agreed with this law, but there is no evidence that this is true (v7)
- The presidents and princes wanted a royal statue that forced everyone in the empire to worship Darius as a god, and outlawed all other religion (v7)
- The presidents and princes wanted this to last for 30 days (v7)

- The presidents and princes wanted this royal statue to be punishable by death (v7)
- The presidents and princes wanted the worship of God to be outlawed, and punished by death; they wanted anyone who worshiped God to be killed (v7)
- The presidents and princes wanted this to be a firm decree that could not be overturned (v7)
- The presidents and princes wanted Darius to claim that he was above God Himself, and only he should be worshiped (v7)
- The presidents and princes wanted anyone who worshiped God to be cast into the den of lions (v7)
- It seems that in the empire of Darius, criminals were executed by being cast to the lions (v7)
- The presidents and princes asked the king to sign this law into writing, so that it could not be changed (v8)
- It seems that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed once it was passed (v8)
- Darius did not carefully consider this request (v9)
- Darius did not pay attention to the fact that Daniel was not there (v9)
- Darius believed that he was above God Himself (v9)
- Darius did not have a problem with outlawing all religion in his empire (v9)
- Darius did not have a problem with forcing everyone in his empire to worship him alone as god (v9)
- Darius thought it was very appropriate to put to death

anyone who would not worship him alone (v9)

- Darius was immensely proud and arrogant (v9)
- Darius was a tyrant (v9)
- Darius decided to elevate himself above God (v9)
- Darius decided to outlaw the worship of the most high God (v9)
- Daniel knew that the law had been signed (v10)
- After the law was signed, Daniel did not change his habits; before the law was signed he publicly prayed three times a day, and after the law was signed he continued to do that (v10)
- Daniel knew that he would be cast into the den of lions if he continued to worship God, but he did so anyway; he was willing to worship God even if it cost him his life (v10)
- Daniel prayed three times a day (v10)
- When Daniel prayed he faced Jerusalem (where the temple once stood) (v10)
- When Daniel prayed he kneeled on his knees (v10)
- When Daniel prayed he gave thanks to God (v10)
- Daniel gave thanks to God before the law was signed, and he continued to give thanks to God after the law was signed (v10)
- The presidents and princes assembled together and saw that Daniel was praying to God, just as he had before (v11)
- The presidents and princes were determined to put

Daniel to death for worshipping God (v11)

- The presidents and princes were the enemy of God (v11)
- After the presidents and princes has witnessed Daniel worshipping God, they went to Darius (v12)
- The presidents and princes were the ones who enforced the king's decree (v12)
- The presidents and princes were the ones who turned Daniel in to Darius (v12)
- The presidents and princes forced Darius to admit that he had signed a law forcing everyone in the kingdom to worship him alone (v12)
- Darius told them that he had signed a law outlawing all religion and forcing everyone to worship him, and that law could not be changed (v12)
- The presidents and princes told the king that Daniel was not obeying the law (v13)
- The presidents and princes dismissively referred to Daniel as a captive Jew; they completely ignored his status in the kingdom (v13)
- The presidents and princes despised Daniel (v13)
- The presidents and princes hated Daniel (v13)
- The presidents and princes refused to give Daniel the respect he was due (v13)
- The presidents and princes told the king that Daniel continued to pray to God three times a day (v13)
- The men who worked for Darius proved that they could not be trusted, and they would not hesitate to kill people

that the king loved (v13)

- When Darius realized he had been tricked into killing Daniel, he was very displeased with himself (v14)
- Darius was not happy about killing Daniel (v14)
- Darius did not want Daniel to be killed (v14)
- Darius tried to save Daniel's life (v14)
- Darius spent the rest of the day trying to save Daniel, but he did not succeed (v14)
- The presidents and princes insisted that the king obey the law he had signed and cast Daniel into the den of lions (v15)
- The presidents and princes reminded the king that no decree from the king could possibly be changed (v15)
- The presidents and princes were determined to have Daniel killed (v15)
- Darius was unable to save Daniel (v16)
- Darius commanded that Daniel be arrested (v16)
- Darius commanded that Daniel be cast into the den of lions (v16)
- Darius wanted Daniel's God to save him (v16)
- Darius knew that Daniel continually served God (v16)
- It seems that Darius was hoping that Daniel's God could save him from the lions (v16)
- It seems that Darius saw this as a contest, to see if Daniel's God was powerful enough to save him from the lions (v16)

- Darius believed that only Daniel's God could save him from the lions (v16)
- After Daniel was cast into the lions den, a stone was put over the opening of the den (v17)
- Darius sealed the stone with his signet, to keep anyone from moving the stone (v17)
- Darius also sealed the stone with the signet of the presidents and princes who tricked him into passing the law (v17)
- The sentence against Daniel was carried out (v17)
- Darius went to his palace (v18)
- Darius had a palace (v18)
- Darius spent the night fasting (v18)
- Normally people played musical instruments to Darius at night, but on this night that did not happen (v18)
- Darius was unable to sleep (v18)
- Darius was worried about Daniel (v18)
- Darius was not convinced that Daniel's God would be able to save him (v18)
- Darius wanted Daniel to be saved (v18)
- Darius got up very early in the morning (v19)
- Darius made haste to go to the den of lions (v19)
- When Darius reached the den he cried out to Daniel (v20)
- Darius cried out with a "lamentable voice"; there was much sorrow and grief in his voice (v20)

- Darius called Daniel the servant of the living God (v20)
- God was called the living God in the Old Testament (v20)
- Darius knew that Daniel continually served God (v20)
- Darius asked Daniel if God had been able to save him from the lions (v20)
- Darius wasn't sure if Daniel's God was powerful enough to save him from the lions (v20)
- If Daniel had been eaten by the lions, Darius would have interpreted that to mean that Daniel's God lacked power and could not save (v20)
- Daniel replied to the king (v21)
- Daniel was still alive (v21)
- Daniel had not been eaten by the lions (v21)
- Daniel had survived the night in the den of lions (v21)
- God saved Daniel from being eaten by lions (v22)
- The way God saved Daniel was by sending an angel to close the mouth of the lions, so that they could not hurt Daniel (v22)
- Angels have the ability to stop lions from eating people (v22)
- There are times when God sends angels to save people from being killed (v22)
- The lions did not hurt Daniel (v22)
- The reason God saved Daniel was because Daniel was innocent in his sight; since Daniel had done nothing wrong, God did not allow him to be killed (v22)

- Daniel had also not done anything wrong to the king (v22)
- It was good for Daniel to reject the unjust law of the king, which forbade the worship of God (v22)
- It was good for Daniel to continue to worship God even after the worship of God had been outlawed (v22)
- Even though Daniel broke the law, he was innocent in the sight of God (v22)
- There are times when it is right and just in the sight of God to break the law (v22)
- Darius was very glad that Daniel's life had been saved (v23)
- Darius commanded that Daniel be rescued from the lion's den (v23)
- Daniel was taken up out of the den (v23)
- Daniel had not been injured in any way (v23)
- The reason God saved Daniel was because Daniel believed in God; Daniel was saved by faith (v23)
- Darius commanded that the presidents be cast into the den of lions (v24)
- Darius commanded that the princes be cast into the den of lions (v24)
- Darius commanded that the families of the presidents and princes (their children and wives) be cast into the den of lions (v24)
- The lions killed all of them (v24)
- The lions broke all of their bones into pieces before they

reached the bottom of the den (v24)

- The lions were savage killers (v24)
- Darius punished the presidents (v24)
- Darius punished the princes (v24)
- Darius punished the families of the presidents and princes (their children and wives) (v24)
- Darius put children to death (v24)
- Darius cast children to lions so that lions could tear them apart and devour them (v24)
- Darius put innocent people to death; the children and wives had nothing to do with this scheme, but Darius killed them anyway (v24)
- Darius was not a righteous king (v24)
- Darius wrote a letter to all people (v25)
- Darius wrote a letter to all nations (v25)
- Darius wrote a letter to all languages (v25)
- In the letter, Darius wished peace upon the world (v25)
- Darius decreed that everyone in his kingdom should tremble before God (v26)
- Darius decreed that everyone in his kingdom should fear God (v26)
- Darius called God the God of Daniel (v26)
- Darius said that God is the living God (v26)
- Darius said that God is steadfast forever (v26)

- Darius said that God's kingdom would never be destroyed (v26)
- Darius said that God's dominion would never end (v26)
- Darius magnified God (v26)
- Darius testified to the whole world about the greatness of God (v26)
- Because Daniel was faithful, even unto death, God was magnified in the whole world (v26)
- Darius said that God delivers people (v27)
- Darius said that God rescues people (v27)
- Darius said that God works signs in heaven and earth (v27)
- Darius said that God works wonders in heaven and earth (v27)
- Darius said that God delivered Daniel from the power of the lions (v27)
- The testimony of how God saved Daniel from the lions was spread across the entire world; that only happened because Daniel was faithful (v27)
- Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius (v28)
- Daniel prospered during the reign of Cyrus the Persian (v28)
- Because Daniel was faithful to God, and refused to obey the king but continued to worship God even in the face of death, God blessed Daniel and he prospered (v28)
- Throughout the Babylonian captivity, the person who

reigned over the Babylonian empire under the king was Daniel - an immensely faithful Jew, who was more faithful than nearly all the kings who ever reigned over Judah or Israel; even though the Jews were in captivity, the person who was in charge of Babylon was a Jew who loved the Lord and who was faithful and godly, and who had no fault; this means God put the Jews in the care of someone who would watch over them and take care of them; God showed the Jews tremendous mercy when they were in captivity in Babylon by providing Daniel to take care of them (v28)

[Last updated 6/7/2023]

Daniel 7

- God gave Daniel a vision in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar (v1)
- Belshazzar was the king of Babylon (v1)
- Daniel had this vision while he was on his bed (v1)
- After Daniel had this vision he wrote it down (v1)
- There were times when God gave visions to Daniel (v1)
- Daniel calls this vision a dream (v1)
- This is a firsthand account of the vision, and was written down by the person who had the vision (v1)
- The Bible claims that Daniel is the one who wrote this down; it claims that this is his personal account of the vision (v1)

- The words in this chapter were said by Daniel; he is the one who gave this account (v2)
- The Bible is very clear that Daniel is the one who wrote the account of the vision that God gave him; this was not written by someone else at a later date (v2)
- Daniel was given this vision at night (v2)
- Daniel saw four winds (v2)
- Daniel saw a great sea (v2)
- Daniel saw four winds of heaven battle one another on the great sea (v2)
- Daniel saw four great beasts (v3)
- The four great beasts came up from the sea (v3)
- The four great beasts were different from one another (v3)
- The first beast looked like a lion (v4)
- The first beast had the wings of an eagle (v4)
- After a while the first beast lost its wings; something took them away (v4)
- After the first beast lost its wings, it was lifted up from the earth (v4)
- After the first beast was lifted up, it was made to stand upon its feet (as people stand) (v4)
- After the first beast was made to stand up, a man's heart was given to it; (it seems that previously, when it had wings, it did not have a man's heart) (v4)
- The second beast looked like a bear (v5)

- The second beast raised itself up on one side (v5)
- The second beast had a mouth (v5)
- The second beast had teeth (v5)
- The second beast had three ribs in its mouth, between its teeth (v5)
- The second beast was commanded to arise and devour much flesh (v5)
- The third beast looked like a leopard (v6)
- The third beast had four wings on its back, like a bird (v6)
- The third beast had four heads (v6)
- Dominion was given to the third beast (v6)
- The fourth beast was dreadful (v7)
- The fourth beast was terrible (v7)
- The fourth beast was exceedingly strong (v7)
- The fourth beast had iron teeth (v7)
- The fourth beast had large teeth (v7)
- The fourth beast devoured things (v7)
- The fourth beast broke things into pieces (v7)
- The fourth beast stamped the residue of what was left with its feet (v7)
- The fourth beast was different from the beasts that came before it (v7)
- The fourth beast had ten horns (v7)

- Daniel focused on the ten horns (v8)
- A little horn arose from among the ten horns of the fourth beast (v8)
- When the little horn arose, three of the first horns were plucked up by their roots (v8)
- The little horn had eyes like a man (v8)
- The little horn had a mouth (v8)
- The mouth of the little horn spoke great things (v8)
- Daniel watched until the thrones were cast down (v9)
- After the thrones were cast down, the Ancient of days took His seat on His throne (v9)
- The Ancient of days wore a garment (v9)
- The garment of the Ancient of days was white as snow (v9)
- The Ancient of days had hair (v9)
- The hair of the Ancient of days was white like pure wool (v9)
- The throne of the Ancient of days was like a fiery flame (v9)
- The throne of the Ancient of days had wheels (v9)
- The wheels of the throne were like burning fire (v9)
- A fiery stream issued from the Ancient of days (v10)
- Millions ministered to the Ancient of days (v10)
- A hundred million stood before the Ancient of days (v10)

- The judgment was set (v10)
- The books were opened (v10)
- At the judgment, books will be opened (v10)
- The judgment will take place at the throne of the Ancient of days (v10)
- The little horn spoke great words (v11)
- The fourth beast was slain (v11)
- The body of the fourth beast was destroyed (v11)
- The body of the fourth beast was cast into the burning flame (v11)
- The rest of the beasts had their dominion taken away (v12)
- The lives of the rest of the beasts was prolonged for a season (v12)
- Daniel saw the Son of man (v13)
- The Son of man came with the clouds of heaven (v13)
- The Son of man came to the Ancient of days (v13)
- It seems that the Son of man and the Ancient of days are not the same (v13)
- The Son of man was given dominion (v14)
- The Son of man was given glory (v14)
- The Son of man was given a kingdom (v14)
- The Ancient of days decreed that all people should serve the Son of man (v14)

- The Ancient of days decreed that all nations should serve the Son of man (v14)
- The Ancient of days decreed that all languages should serve the Son of man (v14)
- The dominion of the Son of man is an everlasting dominion (v14)
- The dominion of the Son of man will not pass away (v14)
- The kingdom of the Son of man will not be destroyed (v14)
- God will never lose (v14)
- God will never be defeated (v14)
- God will never cease from existing (v14)
- God's kingdom is the last kingdom that will exist; it will never end, and it will never be replaced by something else (v14)
- In the future everyone will serve God; there will be no one who does not serve Him (v14)
- The destiny of mankind is to serve God; that is what we will be doing in the endless ages to come (v14)
- This vision grieved Daniel (v15)
- This vision grieved Daniel's spirit (v15)
- This vision had a negative impact on Daniel's body (v15)
- This vision troubled Daniel (v15)
- It seems that prophetic visions can bring grief (v15)
- It seems that prophetic visions can trouble people (v15)

- Daniel did not understand the vision (v16)
- In order for Daniel to understand the vision, someone had to interpret it for him (v16)
- It seems that when Daniel was given this vision, there were angels nearby (v16)
- Daniel asked one of the angels who were nearby what the vision meant (v16)
- It seems that angels understand the interpretation of visions (v16)
- The angel told Daniel the interpretation of the vision (v16)
- In order for us to understand prophecy, we must be given the interpretation (v16)
- There were four great beasts (v17)
- The four great beasts represented four kings that would arise (v17)
- God depicted kings as ferocious and dangerous animals (v17)
- In the end the saints of the most High would take the kingdom (v18)
- In the end the saints of the most High would possess the kingdom forever (v18)
- The angel emphasized that the saints would possess the kingdom forever and ever; there would be no end to it, and it would be for all of eternity (v18)
- The saints do not yet possess the kingdom, but in the end we will possess it (v18)

- The saints will possess the kingdom after the four beasts have come and gone (v18)
- All four beasts must arise and be defeated before the saints can possess the kingdom (v18)
- Those who are not the saints of the most High will not possess the kingdom; the kingdom is only for His saints (v18)
- If you want to be part of the kingdom of God you must become one of His saints (v18)
- Daniel did not understand the fourth beast (v19)
- The fourth beast was different from the others (v19)
- The fourth beast was exceedingly dreadful (v19)
- The fourth beast had iron teeth (v19)
- The fourth beast had nails of brass (v19)
- The fourth beast devoured (v19)
- The fourth beast broke things into pieces (v19)
- The fourth beast stamped into ground the residue that was left (v19)
- This chapter emphasizes the fourth beast (v19)
- Daniel had to ask for the interpretation; the angels did not volunteer an explanation (v19)
- The fourth beast had ten horns (v20)
- A little horn arose from among the ten horns (v20)
- Three horns fell before the little horn (v20)
- The little horn had eyes (v20)

- The little horn had a mouth (v20)
- The mouth of the little horn spoke great things (v20)
- The little horn had a stout look; there was something about its look that was different from the other horns (v20)
- This chapter emphasizes the little horn (v20)
- The little horn made war with the saints (v21)
- There were saints in the world when the little horn rose to power (v21)
- The little horn prevailed against the saints (v21)
- The saints could not overcome the little horn (v21)
- The little horn defeated the saints (v21)
- The little horn prevailed until the Ancient of days came (v22)
- When the Ancient of days came, judgment was given to the saints of the most High (v22)
- When the Ancient of days came, the saints then possessed the kingdom (v22)
- The saints could not possess the kingdom until the Ancient of days came (v22)
- The little horn did not prevail forever (v22)
- Only the Ancient of days could defeat the little horn (v22)
- The kingdom of the little horn did not last forever (v22)
- Ultimately the kingdom of the little horn was destroyed (v22)

- Ultimately the saints possessed the kingdom (v22)
- One day the saints will possess the kingdom (v22)
- The fourth beast is the fourth kingdom (v23)
- There would only be four kingdoms, before the kingdom of the Ancient of days arose and had dominion over all the world (v23)
- The fourth kingdom would be different from everything that came before it (v23)
- The fourth kingdom would devour the whole world (v23)
- The fourth kingdom would tread down the whole world (v23)
- The fourth kingdom would break the whole world into pieces (v23)
- The ten horns are ten kings that will arise out of the fourth kingdom (v24)
- After the ten kings took power, another king would arise after them (v24)
- This other king would be different from the first ten kings (v24)
- This other king would subdue three kings (v24)
- It seems that this other king will only subdue three kings; there will be seven other kings that he will not subdue (v24)
- It seems that the power of this other king is limited (v24)
- This other king would speak against the most High (v25)
- This other king would be the enemy of God (v25)

- This other king would persecute the saints (v25)
- This other king would wear out the saints (v25)
- This other king would try to change times and laws (v25)
- This other king would have power for three and a half "times" (or periods of time) (v25)
- The saints would be given over to the power of this other king for three and a half periods of time (v25)
- The saints would not always be given over to the power of this other king; his victory over them would only last for a set amount of time, and then it would come to an end (v25)
- In the end, this other king would be judged (v26)
- In the end, dominion would be taken away from this other king (v26)
- In the end, this other king would be destroyed (v26)
- It seems that this other king will only have dominion for three and a half periods of time (v26)
- The kingdom will be given to the saints of the most High (v27)
- Dominion will be given to the saints of the most High (v27)
- The kingdom of the most High will be great (v27)
- Everything under heaven will be part of the kingdom of the most High (v27)
- The whole kingdom will be given to the saints of the most High (v27)

- The saints do not currently have the kingdom (v27)
- The saints will not have the kingdom until the other king (the little horn) is defeated (v27)
- The kingdom of the most High will replace the four world kingdoms that came before it, and will reign over all the world; it does not exist alongside them (v27)
- The kingdom belongs to the most High (v27)
- The kingdom of the most High is an everlasting kingdom (v27)
- In the future, all dominions will serve the most High (v27)
- In the future, everyone will obey the most High (v27)
- The future will be characterized by obedience to the most High, not rebellion (v27)
- This is the vision that Daniel saw (v28)
- This vision troubled Daniel (v28)
- This vision changed Daniel's countenance (v28)
- Daniel kept this whole matter in his heart (v28)

[Last updated 6/8/2023]

Daniel 8

- Daniel was given this vision in the third year of Belshazzar's reign (v1)
- Belshazzar was king (v1)

- Belshazzar reigned for at least three years (v1)
- This chapter was written by Daniel; it is a first-hand account of his vision (v1)
- This vision was given to him after the vision in the previous chapter (v1)
- Daniel was given this vision when he was at Sushan (the capital of Elam) (v2)
- Daniel was in the palace at Sushan (v2)
- Sushan was in the province of Elam (which is in modern-day Iran) (v2)
- Daniel was by the river of Ulai (v2)
- Daniel was very specific about where he was when he was given this vision (v2)
- There were times when Daniel traveled outside of Babylon to other places (v2)
- It seems that this vision was not given at night, when Daniel was on his bed (v2)
- Daniel saw a ram (v3)
- The ram had two horns (v3)
- The ram was by the river (v3)
- The two horns were high (v3)
- One of the ram's horns was higher than the other (v3)
- The horn that was higher came up after the horn that was shorter (v3)
- The ram pushed toward the west (v4)

- The ram pushed toward the north (v4)
- The ram pushed toward the south (v4)
- No beast could stand in front of the ram; the ram dominated everywhere he went (v4)
- No one could provide deliverance from the ram; the ram could not be beaten (v4)
- The ram did whatever he wanted (v4)
- The ram became great (v4)
- Daniel pondered what the ram meant (v5)
- As Daniel pondered, a male goat appeared (v5)
- The goat appeared from the west (v5)
- The goat did not touch the ground (v5)
- The goat had eyes (v5)
- The goat had a horn between its eyes (v5)
- The goat's horn was notable (v5)
- The goat approached the ram (v6)
- The ram had two horns (v6)
- Daniel had seen the ram standing by the river (v6)
- The goat ran into the ram (v6)
- The goat ran into the ram with great fury (v6)
- The goat ran into the ram with great power (v6)
- The goat was very angry with the ram (v7)
- The goat hit the ram (v7)

- The goat broke the ram's horns (v7)
- The ram could not defeat the goat (v7)
- The goat cast the ram to the ground (v7)
- The goat stamped on the ram (v7)
- No one could provide deliverance from the goat (v7)
- The goat became very great (v8)
- When the goat was strong, its great horn was broken (v8)
- Four notable ones arose (v8)
- The four notable ones traveled in the direction of the four winds of heaven (v8)
- Out of one of the four notable ones came a little horn (v9)
- The little horn grew exceedingly great (v9)
- The little horn gained power toward the south (v9)
- The little horn gained power toward the east (v9)
- The little horn gained power toward the pleasant land (Israel) (v9)
- The little horn became great (v10)
- The little horn became as great as the host of heaven (v10)
- The little horn cast down some of the host of heaven to the ground (v10)
- The little horn cast some of the stars down to the ground (v10)
- The little horn stamped on some of the host of heaven

(v10)

- The little horn magnified himself to the prince of the host (the archangel) (v11)
- The little horn took the daily sacrifice away (v11)
- During the reign of the little horn, the Jews were making a daily sacrifice (v11)
- The little horn cast down the place of the sanctuary (v11)
- During the reign of the little horn, there was a temple in Israel (v11)
- The little horn had an army (v12)
- The little horn had an army that attacked the daily sacrifice (v12)
- The reason the daily sacrifice was stopped was because of a transgression (v12)
- The little horn's army cast down truth to the ground (v12)
- The little horn's army prospered (v12)
- The little horn hated the daily sacrifice (v12)
- The little horn hated the truth (v12)
- Daniel heard a saint speak to another saint (v13)
- It seems that the people that Daniel heard speaking were saints, not angels (v13)
- One saint asked a question to another saint (v13)
- It seems that some saints know things that other saints do not; all of the saints do not have equal knowledge (v13)

- The saint wanted to know how long the transgression of desolation would last (v13)
- The saint wanted to know how long the sanctuary and the host would be trodden under foot (v13)
- It seems that some saints know more about prophecy than others (v13)
- It seems that these saints were not normal human beings, but were some type of heavenly beings (v13)
- The sanctuary would be trodden under foot (v13)
- The host would be trodden under foot (v13)
- The sanctuary would be trodden under foot for 2300 days (v14)
- After 2300 days the sanctuary would be cleansed (v14)
- It seems that the sanctuary will not be destroyed; instead it will be cleansed (v14)
- Daniel saw this vision (v15)
- Daniel is emphasizing the fact that he saw this vision and he wrote this chapter; he is giving a firsthand account (v15)
- Daniel did not understand the vision (v15)
- Daniel wanted to understand the vision (v15)
- Daniel looked for someone who could explain the vision to him (v15)
- When Daniel looked for someone to interpret the vision, a being stood before him (v15)
- The being had the appearance of a man (v15)

- It seems that the being was not actually a human being (v15)
- Daniel heard a man's voice (v16)
- The man's voice came from the banks of the Ulai river (v16)
- The man's voice called out to a being named Gabriel (v16)
- The man commanded Gabriel to make Daniel understand the vision (v16)
- The man knew that Daniel did not understand the vision (v16)
- The man wanted Daniel to understand the vision (v16)
- The man provided someone for Daniel who could interpret the vision (v16)
- Gabriel understood the vision (v16)
- It seems that angels have an understanding of prophecy (v16)
- It seems that angels can interpret visions (v16)
- Gabriel went over to Daniel (v17)
- When Gabriel came over to him, Daniel became afraid (v17)
- When Gabriel came over to him, Daniel fell on his face (v17)
- Gabriel was terrifying (v17)
- Gabriel told Daniel to understand (v17)
- Gabriel called Daniel a son of man (v17)

- This vision was regarding the end times (v17)
- When Gabriel spoke to him, Daniel was in a deep sleep (v18)
- Daniel was sleeping with his face toward the ground (v18)
- Gabriel touched Daniel (v18)
- Gabriel set Daniel upright (v18)
- This vision was regarding the last end of the indignation (v19)
- The end would be at the time appointed (v19)
- There was a time appointed for these things to happen (v19)
- Gabriel told Daniel that he would explain these things to him (v19)
- The ram with two horns were the kings of Media and Persia (v20)
- God used horns to represent kings (v20)
- The goat was the king of Greece (v21)
- The great horn of the goat was the first king of Greece (v21)
- Four kingdoms would arise out of the nation of Greece (v22)
- The four kingdoms would not have the same power as the first king of Greece (v22)
- The four kingdoms would not come from the power of the first king of Greece (v22)

- In the latter time of their kingdom, another king would arise (v23)
- This king would arise when the transgressors had reached their full extent (v23)
- The king would have a fierce countenance (v23)
- The king would be able to understand dark sentences (v23)
- The king would be mighty (v24)
- The king's might would not come from himself; he would not gain might by his own power (v24)
- The king will destroy many things (v24)
- The king will prosper (v24)
- The king will destroy the holy people (v24)
- When the king arises, the Jews would be mighty; however, the king would still triumph over them and destroy them (v24)
- The king would prosper through his policies (v25)
- The king would magnify himself in his heart (v25)
- The king would use peace to destroy many (v25)
- The king would wage war against the Prince of princes (v25)
- When the king fought against the Prince of princes, he would lose (v25)
- The Prince of princes would defeat the king (v25)
- The king would be broken without hand (v25)

- The king would be defeated (v25)
- The vision is true (v26)
- Gabriel told Daniel to shut up the vision (v26)
- The vision was for many days; it was for the distant future (v26)
- The reason Gabriel told Daniel to shut up the vision was because it was for the distant future; it would be fulfilled in the end times (v26)
- After Daniel was given this vision he fainted (v27)
- After Daniel was given this vision he was sick for a while (v27)
- It seems that prophetic visions can negatively impact a person's health, and make them sick (v27)
- It seems that it can be difficult and physically demanding to receive a prophetic vision (v27)
- After Daniel recovered he rose up and did the king's business (v27)
- It seems that Daniel did serve in the government of Belshazzar, as he was there in the province of Elam to perform the king's business (v27)
- Since Daniel worked in Belshazzar's government, it's very unlikely that Belshazzar didn't know who Daniel was (v27)
- Daniel was astonished at the vision (v27)
- No one understood the vision (v27)
- It seems that Daniel shared this vision with others, but no one understood it (v27)

- Daniel did not understand this vision
- Even though Daniel was given this vision, he did not understand it (v27)
- Even though God provided Daniel with the interpretation of this vision, he still did not understand it (v27)
- There were times when the prophets of the Old Testament did not understand the prophecies that they were given (v27)

[Last updated 6/9/2023]

Daniel 9

- This chapter takes place in the first year of the reign of Darius (v1)
- Darius was the son of Ahasuerus (v1)
- Darius was a Mede (v1)
- Darius was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans (v1)
- Daniel was still alive in the first year of the reign of Darius (v1)
- This chapter repeats the fact that this vision was given in the first year of Darius; it draws attention to that fact (v2)
- This chapter was written by Daniel; he is giving a firsthand account of what he did and what he saw (v2)
- Daniel realized that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years (v2)

- Daniel came to that realization by studying books (plural) (v2)
- Jeremiah was the one who prophesied that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years (v2)
- Daniel knew about the prophecies of Jeremiah (v2)
- Daniel studied the prophecies of Jeremiah (v2)
- Daniel studied prophecy (v2)
- Daniel believed the prophecies of Jeremiah (v2)
- Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years (v2)
- Daniel paid attention to prophecy (v2)
- Daniel paid attention to the numbers in prophecy, and prophetic years (v2)
- Daniel sought the Lord (v3)
- Daniel prayed (v3)
- Daniel fasted (v3)
- Daniel wore sackcloth and ashes (v3)
- Daniel earnestly sought the Lord (v3)
- The Lord was Daniel's God (v4)
- Daniel confessed to the Lord (v4)
- God is great (v4)
- God is dreadful (v4)
- God keeps His covenant with those who love Him (v4)
- God shows mercy to those who love Him (v4)

- God keeps His covenant with those who keep His commandments (v4)
- God shows mercy to those who keep His commandments (v4)
- Daniel approached God from a position of great humility (v4)
- Daniel glorified God (v4)
- Daniel interceded with God on behalf of his nation (v5)
- The Jews had sinned (v5)
- The Jews had committed iniquity (v5)
- The Jews had done wickedly (v5)
- The Jews had rebelled against God (v5)
- The Jews had departed from God's precepts (v5)
- The Jews had departed from God's judgments (v5)
- The Jews had not listened to the prophets (v6)
- The prophets were the servants of God (v6)
- People did not listen to the prophets; they were ignored (v6)
- The prophets spoke in the name of God (v6)
- The prophets spoke to kings (v6)
- The prophets spoke to princes (v6)
- The prophets spoke to fathers (v6)
- The prophets spoke to all the people of the land (v6)

- The kings did not listen to the prophets (v6)
- The princes did not listen to the prophets (v6)
- The fathers did not listen to the prophets (v6)
- The people of the land did not listen to the prophets (v6)
- God is righteous (v7)
- The Jews were full of confusion (v7)
- God had driven the Jews out of the promised land and to many foreign countries (v7)
- The reason God drove the Jews out of the promised land was because they sinned against Him (v7)
- The Jews had sinned against God (v7)
- God was the one who drove the Jews out of Israel (v7)
- God was the one who scattered the Jews among the nations (v7)
- God scattered the men of Judah (v7)
- God scattered the inhabitants of Jerusalem (v7)
- God scattered all of Israel (v7)
- The kings of the Jews were full of confusion because they had sinned against God
- The princes of the Jews were full of confusion because they had sinned against God
- The fathers of the Jews were full of confusion because they had sinned against God
- God is a merciful God (v9)

- God is a forgiving God (v9)
- God is forgiving toward the Jews, even though they rebelled against Him (v9)
- The Jews had not obeyed the voice of God (v10)
- The Jews had not walked in God's ways (v10)
- God used the prophets to speak His law to the people (v10)
- God requires people to obey His voice (v10)
- God requires people to walk in His ways (v10)
- All of Israel transgressed the law of God (v11)
- All of Israel departed from the law of God (v11)
- All of Israel did not obey the voice of God (v11)
- Since Israel disobeyed God, the curse of the Law was poured out upon them (v11)
- The law of God contained a curse to those who disobeyed it (v11)
- Daniel calls the law the law of Moses (v11)
- Moses was the servant of God (v11)
- Moses was a real person who actually existed (v11)
- Daniel emphasized the fact that Israel had sinned against God, and that was why they were cursed (v11)
- God confirmed His words by making Jerusalem desolate (v12)
- The words of God are confirmed by the wrath of God (v12)

- Before God destroyed Jerusalem He spoke against it (v12)
- God spoke against the Jews (v12)
- God spoke against the judges of Israel (v12)
- Daniel said that what God did to Jerusalem was worse than what had been done to any other city (v12)
- The curses of the law had come upon the Jews (v13)
- Although the curses of the law had come upon the Jews, the Jews did not cry out to God (v13)
- Although the curses of the law had come upon the Jews, the Jews did not turn from their sins (v13)
- Although the curses of the law had come upon the Jews, the Jews did not seek to understand God's truth (v13)
- The terrible things that God did to Jerusalem did not cause the Jews to repent or obey Him; instead the Jews continued on in their sins (v13)
- God wants people to respond to His judgments by prayer (v13)
- God wants people to respond to His judgments by repentance (v13)
- God wants people to respond to His judgments by seeking the truth (v13)
- Since the Jews did not obey God and did not repent, God brought terrible destruction upon them (v14)
- God was the one who made Jerusalem desolate (v14)
- God is righteous in all of His works (v14)
- The Jews did not obey the voice of God (v14)

- God was the one who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt (v15)
- The Israelites were once slaves in Egypt (v15)
- God brought the Israelites out of Egypt with a mighty hand (v15)
- The name of God had been greatly magnified; God was known among the nations (v15)
- The Jews had sinned (v15)
- The Jews had been wicked (v15)
- Daniel prayed that God would turn His anger away from Jerusalem (v16)
- Daniel prayed that God would turn His fury away from Jerusalem (v16)
- Daniel cared about Jerusalem (v16)
- Jerusalem was the holy mountain of God (v16)
- Jerusalem had become a reproach to the nations; it was not held in high esteem, but was despised (v16)
- The Jews had become a reproach to the nations; they were not held in high esteem, but were despised (v16)
- God was the one who made the nations despise the Jews (v16)
- God was the one who made the nations despise Jerusalem (v16)
- The reason God cursed the Jews was because of their sins (v16)
- Daniel cared about the Jews (v16)

- Daniel said that the Jews were God's people (v16)
- Daniel called himself the servant of God (v17)
- Daniel prayed with great humility (v17)
- Daniel wanted God to raise back up the temple, which had been made desolate (v17)
- Daniel humbly asked God to hear His prayer (v17)
- Daniel asked God to listen to his prayer (v18)
- Daniel asked God to look upon the desolation of the Jews (v18)
- Daniel asked God to look upon the desolation of Jerusalem (v18)
- Daniel said that he was not praying because the Jews had been righteous; instead he was seeking the mercy of God (v18)
- Daniel was relying on the mercy of God, not the righteousness of the Jews (v18)
- When we pray, we must seek the mercy of God; we must not rely on our own righteousness (v18)
- Daniel prayed for mercy even though the Jews were still wicked, and had not repented; he sought mercy for a wicked and unrepentant nation (v18)
- Daniel asked God to hear his prayer (v19)
- Daniel asked God to forgive the Jews and have mercy on the nation (v19)
- Daniel asked God to not delay His mercy (v19)
- Daniel asked God to do all these things for His sake; since

the Jews were called the people of God, and Jerusalem was called the city of God, Daniel prayed that God would have mercy on them (v19)

- The Jews were called the people of God (v19)
- Jerusalem was called the city of God (v19)
- Daniel did not claim to be without sin (v20)
- Daniel confessed his sin to God (v20)
- Daniel confessed the sin of the people of Israel to God (v20)
- Daniel referred to Jerusalem as the holy mountain of God (v20)
- Daniel was praying that God would show mercy to Jerusalem (v20)
- It seems that Daniel was praying out loud; he said that he was speaking (v20)
- The angel Gabriel visited Daniel while he was still praying (v21)
- It seems that Daniel was clothed in sackcloth, and was wearing ashes, when Gabriel came to him (v21)
- Gabriel could fly (v21)
- This angel Gabriel was the same being that Daniel had seen in a previous vision (v21)
- Gabriel physically touched Daniel (v21)
- Gabriel touched Daniel around the time of the evening sacrifice (v21)
- Gabriel talked to Daniel (v22)

- Gabriel went to Daniel to give him skill (v22)
- Gabriel went to Daniel to give him understanding (v22)
- God responded to Daniel's prayer by sending the angel Gabriel to him, to give him understanding of prophecy (v22)
- There are times when God uses angels to give people an understanding of prophecy (v22)
- There are times when God uses angels to answer people's prayers (v22)
- God is the one who gives us skill (v22)
- God is the one who gives us understanding (v22)
- Gabriel was given the command to go to Daniel when he started praying (v23)
- The reason Gabriel went to Daniel was because he was commanded to do so (v23)
- Daniel was greatly beloved by God (v23)
- God wanted Daniel to understand prophecy (v23)
- It seems that it takes a certain amount of time for angels to travel from heaven to earth (v23)
- God wanted Daniel to consider the things that he was about to be told (v23)
- We should seek to understand prophecy (v23)
- We should spend time studying the prophecies that are found in the Bible (v23)
- Prophecy is important (v23)

- God had set aside 70 "sevens" (70 periods of 7 years) for the Jews and for Jerusalem (v24)
- Jerusalem is the holy city (v24)
- The 490 years is intended to bring an end to the sins of the Jews (v24)
- The 490 years is intended to make reconciliation for the iniquity of the Jews (v24)
- The 490 years is intended to bring in everlasting righteousness (v24)
- The 490 years is intended to seal up the vision (v24)
- The 490 years is intended to seal up prophecy (v24)
- The 490 years is intended to anoint the most Holy (v24)
- After the 490 years was over, the Jews would be forgiven (which was what Daniel was praying about) (v24)
- After the 490 years were over, the Jews would never sin again; the nation would never again rebel against God or disobey Him (v24)
- This 490 year period is specifically for the Jews and the city of Jerusalem; it is a Jewish period of time, not a Gentile period of time, and the Jews are the focus (v24)
- God does not plan on destroying the Jews; instead He plans on saving them (v24)
- God still cares about the Jews and He still has a plan for them; God has not forsaken them or rejected them or abandoned them (v24)
- A command would go to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (v25)

- The time between the command to rebuild Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah, would be 49 years and 434 years; Gabriel divided the time into two groups (v25)
- The total time between the command to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah was 483 years; this left 7 years unaccounted for (v25)
- The street of Jerusalem would be rebuilt (v25)
- The wall of Jerusalem would be rebuilt (v25)
- The time when the street and wall of Jerusalem were rebuilt would be a time of trouble (v25)
- After 483 years the Messiah would be cut off; He would die (v26)
- The Messiah was going to die (v26)
- The Messiah was not going to die for Himself; instead He would die for others (v26)
- God revealed exactly when the Messiah would die (v26)
- Since God revealed when the Messiah would die, that means He also revealed when the Messiah would come; this means that if the Jews had been students of prophecy, they could have known when it was time for the Messiah to be born (v26)
- Gabriel spoke of the prince who would come; this seems to be a reference to the antichrist (v26)
- The antichrist would come from the same people group that destroyed Jerusalem and the temple; that would be his ancestry (v26)
- After the Messiah died, Jerusalem would be destroyed

(v26)

- After the Messiah died, the temple would be destroyed (v26)
- God told Daniel that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, but then it would be destroyed again (v26)
- God told Daniel that the temple would be rebuilt, but then it would be destroyed again (v26)
- Before the second temple was ever built, God revealed that it was destined to be destroyed (v26)
- After the Messiah died, there would be a war that would bring with it terrible desolation (v26)
- In the final period of seven years, the antichrist would confirm a covenant with many people (v27)
- In the middle of the final period of seven years, the antichrist would cause the sacrifices to cease (v27)
- After the second temple was destroyed, there would be a third temple (v27)
- Sacrifices will be made in the third temple (v27)
- Daily sacrifices will be made in the third temple (v27)
- The antichrist will make the third temple desolate by reason of the spreading of abominations (v27)
- The temple will remain desolate until the consummation (v27)
- The final period of seven years will bring to an end the prophetic period of 490 years (v27)

[Last updated 6/12/2023]

Daniel 10

- This vision was given to Daniel in the third year of the reign of Cyrus (v1)
- Cyrus was the king of Persia (v1)
- Cyrus reigned for at least three years (v1)
- Daniel was still alive during the third year of the reign of Cyrus (v1)
- Daniel had also been given the name Belteshazzar (v1)
- The vision that Daniel was given was true (v1)
- The vision that Daniel was given would not come to pass for a long time (v1)
- Daniel understood the vision (v1)
- The Bible is very clear that this vision was given to Daniel; it was not given to someone else at a later date (v1)
- The Bible is very clear that Daniel is the one who wrote this chapter; it was not written by someone else at a later date (v2)
- Daniel was in mourning (v2)
- Daniel was in mourning for three full weeks (v2)
- During those three weeks Daniel did not eat any pleasant bread (v3)
- During those three weeks Daniel did not eat any meat (v3)
- During those three weeks Daniel did not drink any wine (v3)

- During those three weeks Daniel did not anoint himself (v3)
- Daniel mourned by not eating any pleasant bread, not eating any meat, not drinking any wine, and not anointing himself (v3)
- Daniel was given this vision when he was beside the river Hiddekel (v4)
- One of the themes of the Bible are prophets seeing things when they are beside a river (v4)
- Hiddekel was a great river (v4)
- Daniel was given this vision on the 24th day of the first month (v4)
- The Bible tells us the exact day, month, and year that Daniel received this vision (v4)
- Daniel saw a man (v5)
- The man was clothed in linen (v5)
- The loins of the man were girded with fine gold (v5)
- Daniel said that the gold was the fine gold of Uphaz (v5)
- It seems that Uphaz had a reputation for producing high-quality gold (v5)
- Daniel was familiar with fine gold (v5)
- The body of the man was like a beryl (v6)
- The face of the man was like lightning (v6)
- The eyes of the man were like lamps of fire (v6)
- The arms of the man had the color of polished brass (v6)

- The feet of the man had the color of polished brass (v6)
- The voice of the man sounded like the voice of a multitude (v6)
- Daniel was familiar with beryls (v6)
- Daniel was familiar with brass (v6)
- Daniel was the only one who saw the man (v7)
- Daniel was not alone when he had this vision; there were multiple other people with him at that time (v7)
- The people who were with Daniel did not see the vision (v7)
- There are times when God gives one person a vision, but the people who are around him cannot see it (v7)
- Although the people who were with Daniel did not see the vision, they became greatly afraid (v7)
- The people who were with Daniel became so afraid that they fled (v7)
- The people who were with Daniel became so afraid that they hid themselves (v7)
- The appearance of this being immediately caused tremendous terror, so much that people ran to hide themselves (v7)
- Daniel was left alone (v8)
- Daniel saw this great vision (v8)
- Once Daniel saw this man, there was no strength left in him (v8)
- Once Daniel saw this man, his comeliness was turned into

corruption (v8)

- Seeing this man was an overwhelming experience (v8)
- Even though Daniel was greatly beloved, and was a very holy man who was righteous and upright and good, seeing this being filled him with a sense of corruption; this being that he was infinitely more holy than Daniel, and made Daniel look very corrupt in contrast (v8)
- Those who have seen the holiness of God are filled with a sense of their own corruption (v8)
- God is infinitely holier than we are (v8)
- This man spoke to Daniel; (however, Daniel did not record what this man said to him) (v9)
- When this man spoke to Daniel he fell into a deep sleep (v9)
- When Daniel collapsed, his face was toward the ground (v9)
- Hearing this man speak caused Daniel to collapse (v9)
- It seems that Daniel was the only one who heard this man speak (v9)
- It seems that Daniel had a visit from the preincarnate Christ (v5-v9)
- After Daniel collapsed, a hand touched him (v10)
- After Daniel collapsed, someone raised him up and set him on his knees and the palms of his hands (v10)
- Daniel had no strength to get up; someone else had to help him rise again (v10)

- It seems that the angel who gave Daniel the prophecy was a different being from the man who caused him to collapse (v11)
- Daniel was greatly beloved (v11)
- The angel told Daniel to understand the words that he was about to hear (v11)
- The angel told Daniel to stand upright (v11)
- The angel told Daniel that the reason he was there was because he had been specifically sent to give this prophetic information to Daniel (v11)
- The angel was a male (v11)
- There were times when God sent angels to prophets to give them prophetic information (v11)
- Hearing the words of this angel did not cause Daniel to collapse (v11)
- After the angel told Daniel to stand, he stood (v11)
- Daniel trembled before this angel (v11)
- It seems that this angel was terrifying (v11)
- Daniel was standing when he was given this prophecy (v11)
- The angel told Daniel to not be afraid (v12)
- One of the recurring themes of the Bible is angels telling people to not be afraid; it seems that when people see angels they immediately become terrified (v12)
- From the very first day that he began chastening himself, God heard Daniel's words (v12)

- From the very first day that he began chastening himself, God sent this angel to Daniel (v12)
- Daniel set his heart to understand (v12)
- Daniel chastened himself so that he might understand (v12)
- Daniel chastened himself for 21 days because he wanted to understand (v12)
- Daniel chastened himself in the sight of God (v12)
- If you lack understanding, one of the things you can do to gain understanding is to chasten yourself (v12)
- There is value in chastening yourself before God (v12)
- This angel tried to reach Daniel, but he was blocked (v13)
- Demons can block angels and prevent them from completing their mission (v13)
- Demons can delay angels (v13)
- There is a spiritual war going on; demons fight against angels and seek to prevent them from carrying out the will of God (v13)
- Some demons have more power than some angels (v13)
- The angel that God sent to Daniel was blocked for 21 days (v13)
- Demons can interfere with our answers to prayer; they can delay the answer from coming (v13)
- It is good to be persistent in prayer (v13)
- The angel was blocked by the prince of the kingdom of Persia; (this being appears to be a demon) (v13)

- When the angel could not get through, Michael came to help him (v13)
- Michael was one of the chief princes (v13)
- There are other chief princes besides Michael (v13)
- There are times when angels help one another (v13)
- There are times when Heaven must send backup to help an angel complete his assigned task (v13)
- The prince of the kingdom of Persia (a demon) was not as strong as Michael (one of the chief princes) (v13)
- God did not send help for this angel until 21 days had passed (v13)
- The devil greatly resisted this angel, in order to prevent him from giving this prophetic information to Daniel; since this did not happen previously, it seems that there is material in this prophecy that the devil very much did not want Daniel to find out (v13)
- The devil resists prophecy and is opposed to it; he does not want it to be given to mankind (v13)
- God wanted Daniel to know these prophetic words; when the devil resisted it, God sent Michael to make sure the angel got through (v13)
- God wants us to know the words of prophecy; He wants us to have this information and to understand it (v13)
- Angelic battles have been fought over prophecy; demons have battled angels in order to try to keep mankind from being given prophecy (v13)
- The revelation of prophecy is so important that angelic

battles are fought over it (v13)

- Heaven views prophecy as being very important (v13)
- Demons view prophecy as being very important (v13)
- The angel remained with the kings of Persia after Michael came and helped him (v13)
- The only angel who came to help break the demonic blockade was Michael (v13)
- This angel was sent to give Daniel understanding of what would happen to the Jews in the latter days (v14)
- This prophecy is focused on the Jews (v14)
- This prophecy is focused on what will happen to the Jews in the end times (v14)
- This prophecy will not be fulfilled for many days; it was for the distant future (v14)
- God wanted Daniel to understand this vision (v14)
- When Daniel heard these words, he turned his face toward the ground (v15)
- When Daniel heard these words, he could not speak (v15)
- Daniel struggled to receive this vision; it was an overwhelming experience for him (v15)
- Even though Daniel sought this information, and even though God gave it to him, it was still very difficult for him to receive (v15)
- A being who looked like one of the sons of men touched his lips (v16)
- This angel was not alone; there was another being with

him (v16)

- The being who touched Daniel's lips was not the angel who had been speaking with him (v16)
- After the being touched Daniel's lips, he could speak (v16)
- Daniel had to be given strength to speak (v16)
- Daniel spoke to the angel (v16)
- Daniel said that seeing the things he had just seen filled him with sorrow (v16)
- Daniel said that seeing the things he had just seen took all of his strength; he had no strength left (v16)
- Daniel spoke to the angel very respectfully (v16)
- Daniel called himself a servant (v17)
- Daniel did not think he was worthy to even be talking to this angelic being (v17)
- There was no strength left in Daniel (v17)
- This chapter repeatedly emphasizes the fact that when Daniel saw these things, there was no strength left in him (v17)
- There was no breath left in Daniel (v17)
- A being who looked like one of the sons of men came to Daniel again and touched him (v18)
- A being who looked like one of the sons of men came to Daniel again and strengthened him (v18)
- Before Daniel could receive this vision he had to be strengthened by an angel (v18)

- Daniel could not receive this prophecy with his own strength; he had to be given strength by an angel before he could hear it (v18)
- A being who looked like one of the sons of men told Daniel that he was greatly beloved (v19)
- A being who looked like one of the sons of men told Daniel to be at peace (v19)
- A being who looked like one of the sons of men told Daniel be strong (v19)
- When the being who looked like one of the sons of men spoke to Daniel, he was strengthened (v19)
- Daniel told the man to speak (v19)
- Daniel told the man that he had strengthened him (v19)
- The angel asked Daniel if he knew why he had come (v20)
- The angel said that when he had finished talking to Daniel he was going to go fight with the prince of Persia (who was apparently a demon) (v20)
- The angel said that the prince of Greece was coming (who was apparently another demon) (v20)
- Persia was backed by a powerful demon (v20)
- Greece was backed by a different powerful demon (v20)
- Powerful nations are backed by powerful demons, who fight against one another for control of the world (v20)
- Angels spend time fighting the demons who control powerful nations (v20)
- There is demonic power behind powerful nations (v20)

- The nations of this world are backed by demonic power; they are evil, not good (v20)
- Different nations are backed by different demons (v20)
- The demons fight one another for control; they are not all on the same team, trying to achieve the same objective (v20)
- This angel told Daniel that he was going to show him the things that were noted in the scripture of truth (v21)
- The things that the angel told Daniel were true (v21)
- This information was revealed to Daniel by an angel (v21)
- The information that was revealed to Daniel came from the scripture; since these things were not found elsewhere in the Old Testament, it seems that this information was taken from some sort of heavenly Scripture (v21)
- This information had already been written down before the angel gave it to Daniel (v21)
- The only one who helped this angel was Michael (v21)
- Michael was the prince of the Jews (v21)
- Michael was the only prince who was good; the rest of the princes were evil (v21)

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Daniel 11

- The angel who was speaking to Daniel strengthened

Darius in the first year of his reign (v1)

- One of the activities of angels is strengthening rulers (v1)
- There are some rulers whose reign is strengthened by angels (v1)
- Angels actively intervene in the lives of kingdoms and kings; they take actions that influence political power (v1)
- Darius was strengthened by God (v1)
- Darius was confirmed by God (v1)
- Darius was a Mede (v1)
- God uses angels to strengthen political rulers (v1)
- God uses angels to strengthen kingdoms (v1)
- The words of this angel are the truth (v2)
- There were going to be three more kings of Persia (v2)
- The fourth Persian king would be much richer than any of the kings that came before (v2)
- The riches of the fourth Persian king would provide him strength (v2)
- The fourth Persian king would use his strength to stir up everyone against Greece (v2)
- Riches can provide strength (v2)
- The fourth Persian king would be an enemy of Greece (v2)
- Next, a mighty king would stand up (v3)
- The mighty king would rule with great dominion (v3)
- The mighty king would do whatever he wanted to do (v3)

- After the mighty king arise, his kingdom was broken (v4)
- The mighty king's kingdom was divided toward the four winds of heaven (v4)
- The mighty king's kingdom was not given to his posterity (v4)
- The way the mighty king's kingdom was divided had nothing to do with his rule or his will (v4)
- The mighty king's kingdom would be plucked up and given to others (v4)
- Even though the mighty king had great dominion, he would not be able to keep his kingdom or give it to his children; it would be taken from him and given to others (v4)
- The king of the south would be strong (v5)
- The king of the south would have a strong prince (v5)
- The king of the south would have dominion (v5)
- The dominion of the king of the south would be great (v5)
- After a period of time the daughter of the king of the south would go to the king of the north to make an agreement (v6)
- The agreement made by the daughter of the king of the south would fail (v6)
- The daughter of the king of the south would be given up (v6)
- Those that brought the daughter of the king of the south would be given up (v6)

- The parents of the daughter of the king of the south would be given up (v6)
- Those that strengthened the daughter of the king of the south would be given up (v6)
- Things would not go well for the daughter of the king of the south, or for her family, or for those who helped her (v6)
- The king of the south would not be able to stand (v6)
- The king of the south would lose his power (v6)
- An offspring of the daughter of the king of the south would stand up in the estate of the king of the south (v7)
- This offspring would have an army (v7)
- This offspring would wage war against the king of the north (v7)
- This offspring would be the enemy of the king of the north (v7)
- This offspring would enter into the fortress of the king of the north with his army (v7)
- This offspring would prevail against the king of the north (v7)
- This offspring would take captives of the king of the north (v8)
- This offspring would carry the captives to Egypt (v8)
- The people of the king of the north were idolaters (v8)
- This offspring would carry the people's idols to Egypt (v8)
- This offspring would carry the princes of the north to

Egypt as captives (v8)

- The people of the king of the north were rich; they had vessels of silver and gold (v8)
- This offspring would carry the riches of the king of the north (their vessels of silver and gold) to Egypt (v8)
- This offspring would live longer than the king of the north (v8)
- This offspring would be the king of the south (v9)
- After defeating the king of the north, this offspring would return to his own land (v9)
- This offspring would have multiple male children (v10)
- The sons of the king of the south would be stirred up (v10)
- The sons of the king of the south would assemble a large army (v10)
- One of the sons of the king of the south would come to the land of Israel (v10)
- One of the sons of the king of the south would invade and overflow Israel (v10)
- One of the sons of the king of the south would pass through Israel (v10)
- One of the sons of the king of the south would then return to his own land (v10)
- One of the sons of the king of the south would then return to his fortress (v10)
- When one of the sons of the king of the south returned,

he was stirred up (agitated) (v10)

- The king of the south would become angry with the king of the north (v11)
- The king of the south would leave his fortress and wage war with the king of the north (v11)
- The king of the north would go to war with a great multitude (v11)
- The king of the north would not win; even though he had a multitude, he would lose (v11)
- The king of the south would defeat the multitude of the king of the north (v12)
- The king of the south would become proud when he defeated the multitude of the king of the north (v12)
- The king of the south would cast down tens of thousands (v12)
- Even though the king of the south would cast down tens of thousands, he would not be strengthened by it (v12)
- The victory of the king of the south over the king of the north would not strengthen him (v12)
- The king of the north would return (v13)
- When the king of the north returned, he would have an army even larger than before (v13)
- When the king of the north returned, he would return with a great army (v13)
- When the king of the north returned, he would return with great riches (v13)

- When the king of the north returned, he would be richer and stronger than before (v13)
- The previous defeat of the king of the north was not a fatal blow; after that defeat he became richer and stronger than before (v13)
- At the time the king of the north returned, many other people stood up against the king of the south (v14)
- At that time those who robbed the Jews would exalt themselves (v14)
- Those who robbed the Jews in those days would ultimately fall (v14)
- The king of the north would come against the king of the south (v15)
- The king of the north would cast a mount against the cities of the king of the south (v15)
- The king of the north would conquer the fenced cities of the king of the south (v15)
- The army of the king of the south would not win; it would not be able to stand against the king of the north (v15)
- The king of the south would be defeated by the king of the north (v15)
- Another ruler would come against the king of the north (v16)
- No one would be able to withstand this ruler (v16)
- This ruler would stand in the land of Israel (v16)
- This ruler would consume the land of Israel (v16)

- The land of Israel is called the glorious land (v16)
- This ruler would decide to enter Israel with the strength of his whole kingdom (v17)
- This ruler would succeed in entering Israel (v17)
- This ruler would give his daughter to the king of the north (v17)
- When this ruler gave his daughter to the king of the north, it corrupted her (v17)
- The daughter would not stand by the side of the king of the north (v17)
- The daughter would not be for the king of the north (v17)
- The ruler will turn his attention to the islands (v18)
- The ruler will conquer many islands (v18)
- One of this ruler's princes will cause the ruler's reproach to cease (v18)
- This ruler's reproach will come back upon him (v18)
- The ruler will turn his attention back to the defenses of his own land (v19)
- The ruler will stumble (v19)
- The ruler will fall (v19)
- The ruler will not be found; he will be gone (v19)
- After the ruler was gone, he would be replaced by someone else (v20)
- The replacement would raise taxes (v20)
- The replacement would be destroyed in a few days (v20)

- The replacement would not be destroyed in anger (v20)
- The replacement would not be destroyed in battle (v20)
- The replacement would himself be replaced by a vile person (v21)
- The vile person would not be given the honor of the kingdom (v21)
- The vile person would take the kingdom peaceably (v21)
- The vile person would take the kingdom through flattery (v21)
- The vile person would overflow other nations and kingdoms (v22)
- The vile person would break other nations and kingdoms (v22)
- The prince of the covenant would be broken before this vile person (v22)
- The vile person would make a league with the prince of the covenant (v23)
- The vile person would work deceitfully (v23)
- The vile person would become strong with just a few people (v23)
- The vile person would enter the wealthiest places peaceably (v24)
- The vile person would be different from his fathers (v24)
- The vile person would be more vile and wicked and violent than his fathers (v24)
- The vile person would look on other nations as prey (v24)

- The vile person would scatter people (v24)
- The vile person would spoil nations (v24)
- The vile person would steal riches (v24)
- The vile person would overcome strongholds (v24)
- The vile person would have power, for a while (v24)
- The power of this vile person would not last forever (v24)
- The vile person would stir up his power (25)
- The vile person would stir up his courage (25)
- The vile person would hate the king of the south (25)
- The vile person would have a great army (25)
- The vile person would wage war with the king of the south (25)
- The king of the south would have a very great army (25)
- The king of the south would have a very mighty army (25)
- The king of the south would go to war with the king of the north (25)
- The king of the south would not win (25)
- The schemes of the vile person would enable him to defeat the king of the south (25)
- The king of the south would be defeated by those who supplied him with food (v26)
- The army of the king of the south would be defeated (v26)
- Many people in the army of the king of the south would

be killed (v26)

- The heart of the king of the south would be to do evil (v27)
- The heart of the vile person would be to do evil (v27)
- The king of the south would lie during negotiations with the vile person (v27)
- The vile person would lie during negotiations with the king of the south (v27)
- The lies told by the vile person and by the king of the south would not prosper (v27)
- The end of the matter would still happen at the time appointed; the lies told by the vile person, and by the king of the south, would not be able to change that (v27)
- The lies and schemes of kings cannot change the course of history that God has set; they cannot change the fate of kings and kingdoms, for events will still unfold as God has ordained (v27)
- The vile person would return to his land (v28)
- When the vile person returned to his land, he would have great riches (v28)
- The vile person would hate the holy covenant (v28)
- The vile person would do exploits (v28)
- After the vile person did exploits, he would return to his own land (v28)
- The vile person would return at the appointed time (v29)
- Even the actions of vile people are appointed by God;

even the course of wicked nations is determined by the Lord (v29)

- The vile person would once again come against the south (v29)
- When the vile person came against the south for a second time, things would not go as well as they had previously (v29)
- When the vile person came against the south, the ships of Chittim came against him (v30)
- When the ships of Chittim came against him, the vile person became grieved (v30)
- When the ships of Chittim came against him, the vile person returned to his own land (v30)
- When the ships of Chittim came against him, the vile person became angry at the holy covenant (v30)
- The vile person would join with those who forsook the holy covenant (v30)
- The vile person would strengthen himself with those who forsook the holy covenant (v31)
- The vile person would pollute the sanctuary (v31)
- The vile person would take away the daily sacrifice (v31)
- The vile person would be responsible for the abomination of desolation (v31)
- When these events take place, there will be a temple in Jerusalem (v31)
- When these events take place, daily sacrifices will be offered in the temple in Jerusalem (v31)

- Since the vile person is responsible for the abomination of desolation, and since Jesus said that event was still in the future, that means this vile person is a future person and not someone in the past; these are events that have not yet been fulfilled (v31)
- In those days there will be people who break the covenant (v32)
- Breaking the covenant is a wicked act (v32)
- The vile person will corrupt those who break the covenant (v32)
- The vile person will corrupt people through flattery (v32)
- In those days there will be people who know God (v32)
- The people that know God will be strong (v32)
- The people that know God will do exploits (v32)
- In those days there will be some people who understand (v33)
- Those who understand will instruct many (v33)
- The Jews will be killed (v33)
- The Jews will be killed by the sword (v33)
- The Jews will be killed by fire (v33)
- The Jews will be taken captive (v33)
- The Jews will be robbed (v33)
- The Jews will be persecuted for many days (v33)
- When the Jews fall, they will receive a little help (v34)
- In those days many people would flatter the Jews (v34)

- Some of those who had understanding would fall (v35)
- The reason why some of those who had understanding would fall is to test the Jews (v35)
- The reason why some of those who had understanding would fall is to purge the Jews of sin (v35)
- The reason why some of those who had understanding would fall is to make the Jews righteous (v35)
- The purpose of this period of time is to test the Jews, and purge them from sin, and make them righteous (v35)
- This period of suffering would last for the appointed amount of time (v35)
- God appointed this time of suffering (v35)
- This period of suffering would not last forever (v35)
- The vile person would be king (v36)
- The vile person would do whatever he wanted (v36)
- The vile person would exalt himself (v36)
- The vile person would magnify himself above all idols (v36)
- The vile person would magnify himself above God (v36)
- The vile person would speak against God (v36)
- The vile person would be the enemy of God (v36)
- The vile person would prosper until the time of God's indignation was over (v36)
- God determined that these things would happen (v36)
- Since God determined that these things would happen,

they would happen (v36)

- The vile person would only prosper until the appointed time was over (v36)
- The vile person would not regard who his ancestors worshiped (v37)
- The vile person would have no regard for the desire of women (v37)
- The vile person would not have regard for any deity or idol (v37)
- The vile person would magnify himself above everything and everyone (v37)
- The vile person would honor power (v38)
- The vile person would honor a god that his fathers did not honor (v38)
- The vile person would give honor to someone (but not the God of Israel) (v38)
- The vile person would give this god honor with gold (v38)
- The vile person would give this god honor with silver (v38)
- The vile person would give this god honor with precious stones (v38)
- The vile person would give this god honor with pleasant things (v38)
- The vile person would have gold (v38)
- The vile person would have silver (v38)
- The vile person would have precious stones (v38)

- The vile person would have pleasant things (v38)
- The vile person would be victorious over the strongest strongholds (v39)
- The vile person would defeat others by the power of a strange god (v39)
- The vile person would acknowledge this strange god (v39)
- The vile person would glorify this strange god (v39)
- The strange god would empower the vile person to rule over many (v39)
- The vile person would divide the land of Israel (v39)
- The reason the vile person would divide the land of Israel was for the purposes of gain (wealth) (v39)
- In the end the king of the south would come against this vile person (v40)
- In the end of the king of the north would come against this vile person (v40)
- The king of the north would come against him very quickly (v40)
- The king of the north would come against him with chariots (v40)
- The king of the north would come against him with horsemen (v40)
- The king of the north would come against him with many ships (v40)
- In the tribulation era (the days of the vile person), modern technology does not exist; nations wage war with

ancient weapons (v40)

- The vile person would defeat the king of the south (v40)
- The vile person would defeat the king of the north (v40)
- The vile person would overflow the armies of the king of the south and the king of the north (v40)
- The vile person would invade the land of Israel (v41)
- The vile person would overthrow many nations (v41)
- Edom would escape the vile person (v41)
- Moab would escape the vile person (v41)
- The chief of the children of Ammon would escape the vile person (v41)
- The vile person would invade the other countries (v42)
- The land of Egypt would not escape the vile person (v42)
- Egypt would have treasures of gold (v43)
- Egypt would have treasures of silver (v43)
- Egypt would have precious things (v43)
- The vile person would gain control over all of Egypt's wealth (v43)
- The vile person would gain control over the Libyans (v43)
- The vile person would gain control over the Ethiopians (v43)
- The vile person would receive news from the east (v44)
- The vile person would receive news from the north (v44)
- The news that the vile person heard would trouble him

(v44)

- The vile person would go to war with great fury (v44)
- The vile person went to war in order to destroy (v44)
- The vile person went to war to kill many people (v44)
- The vile person would have a palace in Jerusalem (v45)
- Jerusalem is called the glorious holy mountain (v45)
- In the end the vile person would be defeated (v45)
- When it was time for the vile person to come to an end, no one would help him (v45)

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Daniel 12

- In the latter part of the tribulation, after the antichrist has defiled the temple with the abomination of desolation, the angel Michael shall stand up (v1)
- Michael is the great prince (v1)
- Michael is the great prince who stands for the Jews (v1)
- In the latter part of the tribulation, after the antichrist has defiled the temple with the abomination of desolation, there will be a time of enormous trouble (v1)
- In the latter part of the tribulation, after the antichrist has defiled the temple with the abomination of desolation, there will be the worst time that has ever happened in the entire history of the world (v1)

- In the latter part of the tribulation, after the antichrist has defiled the temple with the abomination of desolation, the Jews will be delivered (v1)
- The Jews who will be delivered are those whose names are written in the book of life (v1)
- The book of life is a real thing (v1)
- There are names written in the book of life (v1)
- God will deliver those whose names are written in the book of life (v1)
- It is a very good and desirable thing for our names to be written in the book of life (v1)
- The second half of the tribulation will be much, much worse than the first (v1)
- There is an angel who stands for the Jews (v1)
- The angel who stands for the Jews is very great (v1)
- There will be a resurrection of the dead (v2)
- Many people will be raised to life in this resurrection (v2)
- This resurrection will include people who are righteous (v2)
- This resurrection will include people who are wicked (v2)
- The dead are described as those who sleep in the dust of the earth (v2)
- The resurrection is described as waking the dead, who are sleeping (v2)
- Some people will be raised and given everlasting life (v2)

- Some people will be raised and given shame (v2)
- Some people will be raised and given everlasting contempt (v2)
- The righteous will be resurrected (v2)
- The wicked will be resurrected (v2)
- There are some who are dead who will not be raised in this resurrection; (this may be a reference to nephilim) (v2)
- Those who are wise will shine as brightly as the firmament (v3)
- The firmament is very bright (v3)
- Those who are wise will shine (v3)
- It is a good thing to be wise (v3)
- The wise will be blessed when they are resurrected (v3)
- There is a reward waiting for the wise (v3)
- Those who turn many people to righteousness will shine as brightly as the stars (v3)
- Those who turn many people to righteousness will shine (v3)
- It is good to turn many people to righteousness (v3)
- Those who turn many people to righteousness will be blessed when they are resurrected (v3)
- There is a reward waiting for those who turn many people to righteousness (v3)
- The wise will shine forever (v3)

- Those who turn many people to righteousness will shine forever (v3)
- It is good to shine forever (v3)
- We should seek to be wise (v3)
- We should seek to turn many people to righteousness (v3)
- The angel told Daniel to shut up these words (v4)
- The angel told Daniel to seal this book (v4)
- This prophecy was to be sealed until the end times (v4)
- In the end times, many people would run to and fro (v4)
- In the end times, knowledge would increase; (this seems to be saying that knowledge of what this prophecy means will be increased) (v4)
- Prophetic understanding will increase as the end times draw near (v4)
- There are some prophecies that will remain sealed until it is time for them to be fulfilled; this means they cannot be understood until then (v4)
- There are times when God tells us things, but hides the meaning until much later (v4)
- The angel expected Daniel to write this prophecy in a book (v4)
- This prophecy would not be understood until the end times (v4)
- Daniel saw two other angels (v5)
- One angel was on his side of the river (v5)

- The other angel was on the other side of the river (v5)
- There is a recurring theme in the Bible of angels appearing beside rivers (v5)
- Each angel stood on the bank of the river (v5)
- Daniel saw many angels during his life (v5)
- There was an angel dressed in linen (v6)
- The angel was standing on the waters of the river (v6)
- The angel who was standing on the river was asked how long it would be until the end of these wonders (v6)
- This prophecy is described as a series of wonders (v6)
- Some angels know more about prophecy than others (v6)
- There are times when angels ask each other questions (v6)
- Angels are interested in prophecy (v6)
- Angels are interested in knowing when things will end (timelines) (v6)
- Angels are interested in the wonders of God (v6)
- We should be interested in prophecy (v6)
- We should be interested in knowing when things will end (timelines) (v6)
- The angel who was standing on the rivers of water was wearing linen (v7)
- The angel who was standing on the rivers of water lifted up his right hand and his left hand (v7)
- The angel who was standing on the rivers of water swore

by God (v7)

- God lives forever and ever (v7)
- The angel said that all of these things would end after three and a half periods of time (years); (this is a reference to the second half of the tribulation) (v7)
- When the antichrist has scattered the power of the Jews, all of these things would be finished (v7)
- The Jews are describes as the holy people (v7)
- The power of the Jews would be broken before the end finally comes (v7)
- Daniel heard this prophecy (v8)
- Daniel did not understand this prophecy (v8)
- Daniel asked a question to the angel (v8)
- Daniel wanted to know what the end of all these things would be (v8)
- The angel did not answer Daniel's question (v9)
- Daniel was told that this prophecy was sealed until the end time (v9)
- It would not be possible to understand this prophecy until the end time, because God sealed it (v9)
- God can prevent us from understanding things (v9)
- There are times when God deliberately prevents us from understanding things (v9)
- Many people would be purified (v10)
- Many people would be made righteous (v10)

- Many people would be tested (v10)
- The wicked will do wicked things (v10)
- None of the wicked will understand (v10)
- The wise will understand (v10)
- God will use end-times events to purify many people (v10)
- God will use end-times events to make many people righteous (v10)
- God will use end-times events to test many people (v10)
- During the end times, the wicked will do wicked things (v10)
- During the end times, none of the wicked will understand what is going on (v10)
- During the end times, there will be some wise people who understand what is going on (v10)
- From the time that the antichrist takes the daily sacrifice away and sets up the abomination of desolation, to the end, will be 1290 days (v11)
- It seems that the seven-year tribulation may take place during a period of time when there is a 30 day "leap month" in the Jewish calendar, as normally 3.5 years would be 1260 days (v11)
- The antichrist will stop the daily sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem at the midpoint of the tribulation (halfway into the 7 year period) (v11)
- During the first half of the tribulation, daily sacrifices were being offered in the temple in Jerusalem (v11)

- During the first half of the tribulation, there was a temple in Jerusalem (v11)
- The antichrist will set up the abomination of desolation in the temple at the midpoint of the tribulation (halfway into the 7 year period) (v11)
- God has numbered the days of the tribulation; He has established how long it will last and when it will end (v11)
- God has numbered the days of the reign of the antichrist; He has established how long he will reign and when he will die (v11)
- There is a special blessing for those who wait 1335 days (v12)
- Although the tribulation will end 1290 days after its midpoint (when the antichrist sets up the abomination of desolation), the millennial kingdom will not begin until 1335 days later; this means there is a gap of 45 days between the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the millennium (v12)
- Those who wait and reach the millennium are blessed (v12)
- There are some who will survive the tribulation and enter into the millennium without having been killed or martyred (v12)
- The dates and times of the future have all been established by God; He is in control of history, and things will unfold exactly as He has planned (v12)
- Daniel was told that he was not going to be given any further explanation (v13)

- Daniel was told that he would rest (v13)
- At the end of Daniel's life he would stand in his lot (his property in Israel); he would see his homeland again, and he would die there in peace (v13)

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