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INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE



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A STUDY ON **DANIEL**



INTRODUCTION

The book of Daniel is similar in setting to Ezekiel, in that it takes place in Babylonia and addresses the disheartened and disillusioned remnant of Israel. Daniel was among the first of the Hebrews taken captive when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judah. He was deemed “*qualified to serve in the king’s palace*” (Daniel 1:4) and recruited into service by the Babylonian government. At that time, the king assigned the name Belteshazzar to him. The name was derived from the Babylonian god Bel and given to Daniel in an attempt to encourage him to forget the God of Israel and adopt the ways and worship practices of the Babylonians.

However, Daniel remained completely loyal to the God of Israel throughout his life in Babylon – a permissive society, a power-hungry people, a nation without God. Daniel’s situation in Babylon might sound quite like our own as we live in a secular, hostile environment. In the midst of such forces, how can we remain loyal to biblical values? How can we have a positive impact on those around us? Daniel’s life and writings show us how he lived through the fall of the Babylon Empire at the hands of the Persians and the return of the first wave of Jewish exiles under King Cyrus the Great (see 5:30–31; 10:1).

The meaning of the name ‘*Daniel*’ is “***God is my Judge.***”

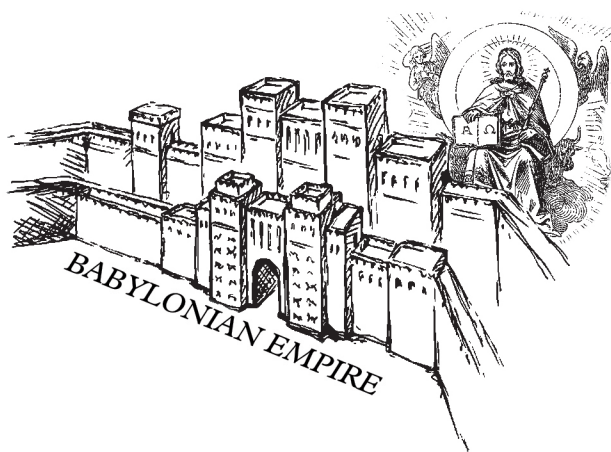
The Main Message of Daniel

The central message of Daniel is unmistakable: **God is sovereign and rules over all people and kingdoms even though it does not always look that way.** Although the Babylonians (and then the Persians) seemed to control the world, Daniel proclaims that Yahweh is still very much in control and is steering history towards establishing His kingdom. Irrespective of whether God's people are safeguarded or persecuted, God's purposes are always fulfilled. All of history, which encompasses even the mightiest empires, is under His control and follows His divine will. He uses Babylon as his agent of judgement against Judah for their sinfulness (1:1-2). Later, He gives Babylon over to the Medes and Persians (5:22-31). The sovereign Lord who determined the destruction of Jerusalem would also bring about its restoration according to His great mercy (9:24-25).

The Almighty God directs history. Whether nations acknowledge God or not, they are part of His plan to establish His kingdom on earth. God is sovereign over every earthly being and power as well as the heavenly realms. Nations and empires, thrones and dominions will rise and fall, but the city of God will endure. His kingdom will last forever, and the gates of hell shall not withstand it.

To reveal His sovereignty and control over earthly events, both present and future, God discloses His future plans and judgements to the Babylonian king (2:45; 4:22-27). Thus, in this book even pagan rulers refer to the sovereign Lord as the “*God of gods*” and “*Lord of kings*” (2:47), the “*revealer of mysteries*” (2:47), and “*the Most High God*” (3:26; 4:2).

Also, the book of Daniel provides hope and a reason to persevere in faith despite our current suffering. This is another theme that runs throughout the book – **faithfulness to God in the midst of a hostile environment**. Daniel reflects on the struggles and hopes of God’s people in exile who sang that sad and bitter song, “*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.*” (Psalm 137). But Daniel kept his faith high as he believed God still had a plan. Daniel assures us that our suffering is not meaningless and that death is not the end, for resurrection and judgement will follow. So as a believer, one needs to be faithful to God in every season.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

The book of Daniel is traditionally broken down into two parts. **Daniel 1 – 6 is made up of stories about the life of Daniel and his Jewish friends in the royal courts of Babylon. Daniel 7 – 12, on the other hand, is made up of Daniel’s prophecies about world empires.** The genre of the first half (1 – 6) is narrative, and the stories are fairly easy to follow. However, the genre of the second half (7 – 12) is primarily symbolic and apocalyptic in nature. Therefore it is not as straightforward or easy to interpret.

Apocalyptic literature makes much use of symbols, which can be difficult to interpret. Although most of the apocalyptic literature describes doom and destruction, it inspires us because it explains how God will ultimately end human oppression and corruption. A time is coming when He will triumph over evil and begin His reign on the earth. Like other biblical prophecies, many prophecies in Daniel have a fulfilment related to ancient historical events, as well as those scheduled for the end times.

The central theme of Daniel 1 – 6 is God demonstrating His supreme power over the monarchs of Babylon and Persia. Daniel 7 – 12 focuses on God’s plan for future world kingdoms and God’s everlasting kingdom.

CHAPTER 1 – 6

Life of Daniel and Friends

Daniel 6:26:

“I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

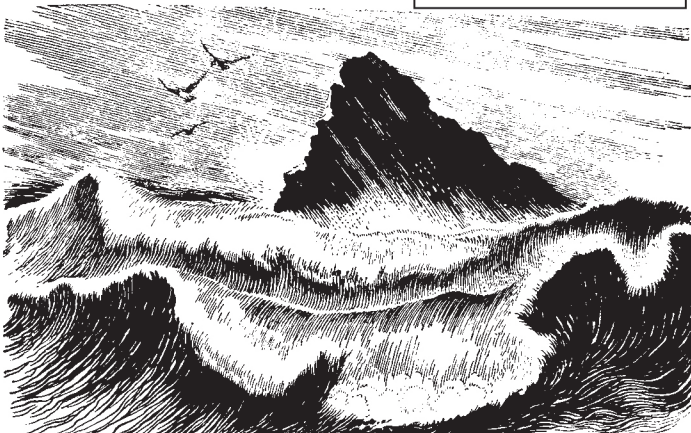
For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end.”

CHAPTER 7 - 12

Prophecies about the Kingdoms of the world and God’s Kingdom

Daniel 7:9-10:

“I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.”



Daniel 1-6 Man Proposes, God Disposes

Daniel 1:1: *“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it..”*

The Book of Daniel opens with two concise statements about the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The first describes the event in terms of secular history, and the second in terms of biblical theology. These two perspectives are interwoven throughout the book. Man is active in history: “**Nebuchadnezzar... came to Jerusalem and besieged it**” (v. 1). Yet God is also active in the same historical events: “**And the Lord gave Jehoiakim ... into his hand.**” (v. 2).

The downfall of Jerusalem was actually the fulfilment of the promise God made in His covenant with Moses “*“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you.... The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar ... They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down.... If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD”*” (Deut. 28:47, 49, 52, 58)

God is faithful to His word—always—no matter what the consequences for Himself or for His people. He is faithful in the blessings He sends, but He is no less faithful in chastisement and judgment but always his mercy triumphs over judgment. The siege of Jerusalem and its terrible consequences formed the most undeniable proof that God does what He has promised. Yet God’s ultimate purpose here was not judgment, but mercy.

The Babylonians, like other nations in the ancient world, had a policy of incorporating the “*best and brightest*” among their captives into the civil service department of their government. Daniel and his three friends were selected, but it was clear—even from the opening chapter of his book—that they had resolved to abstain from being absorbed into the Babylonian culture.

The same pattern that was employed by Nebuchadnezzar to draw Daniel away from the Lord is employed all around us today: isolation from God’s influence to produce holiness in our lives; indoctrination with the worldly ways of thinking; compromise with the riches of this world instead of a commitment to God and His provisions; confusion about our real identity and purpose in life.

Daniel knew that if he was in a foreign land, it was because of the hand of the Lord. He knew that there was nothing either accidental or incidental in the life of the children of God. He would have been able to say in his day what Paul

was later to enunciate as one of the great principles of his life: *“I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel”* (Phil. 1:12).

Babylon and **Jerusalem** represent the two cities to which men and women belong. They symbolize the two loyalties of which Scripture speaks in many different word pictures: two gates, two ways, two masters. In the Hebrew, Babylonia is referred to as Shinar, a name that recalls the tower of babel and its builders who rebelled against God (Genesis 11:1-9). Shinar is also where wickedness will be banished (Zechariah 5:11). The use of this name probably implies that Babylon is a place of “**self-will**” and “**self-glorification**” where faith will be challenged and tested.

Resist Worldly Brainwashing

Nebuchadnezzar was determined to ensure that Daniel and his friends would learn to live and think like the Babylonians. They, too, would in time “*serve in the king’s palace*” (v. 4). Nebuchadnezzar appears to have used several tactics in order to conform these citizens of God’s kingdom to the ways of his own kingdom. These tactics are worth noting because even today Christians are subject to spiritual warfare with similar strategies. (cf. Eph. 6:10–20).

1. ISOLATION from God’s influence - Daniel and his friends were isolated from godly influences – away from Jerusalem. The king anticipated that their faithfulness to the Lord will die out.

2. **INDOCTRINATION** with worldly ways of thinking - They were taught “the language and literature of the Chaldeans” (v. 4). That might seem harmless enough. However, it is designed to retrain their minds to think as Babylonians rather than Israelites.

3. **COMPROMISE** with the riches of the world - The Jewish youngsters enrolled in Nebuchadnezzar’s school were given “a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank” (v. 5). Daniel refused to partake of the king’s delicacies and the wine to prove that “*man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God or rather the standards of God.*”

4. **CONFUSION** about our real identity and purpose in life - Daniel and his friends’ Hebrew names were changed into Babylonian names and day after day they were addressed by it. This was an additional temptation for them to yield to the pressure and think of themselves as citizens of Babylon rather than Jerusalem.

The way we think— about God, ourselves, others, and the world—determines the way we live. If Nebuchadnezzar could only change these men to think like Babylonians, then they would live like Babylonians. Conversely, so long as they thought of themselves as children of God, they would live as His children—even in Babylon. This principle is applicable even today.

The secret to faithfully living for God lies in the way we think. We are not to be conformed to the world, says Paul. We should, rather, transform our lives by renewing our minds (**Romans 12:1–2**).

Apostle Peter tells us that salvation provides us with everything **we need to rise above the prevalent culture and live a life of godliness**. We are not adding to our faith from anything outside of God. We are simply drawing upon what God has already placed in our spirit. **2 Peter 1:3–4**, *“As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*

It is not who you are or where you are that ultimately matters in the kingdom of God. It is what you are. Faithfulness is what counts in God’s kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

The Great Statue (2:1–49)

Daniel 2:16–19: *“So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. ¹⁷Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.*

¹⁹ Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”

Nebuchadnezzar was having divinely prompted nightmares. There were no wise men, magicians, or astrologers in the Palace of the King to recount the dream and interpret it. But Daniel prayed and God revealed it to him. Then he told the king that Jehovah is the only true God who is the source of all wisdom. It was said to reaffirm that God is the ultimate source of power and not the king – Nebuchadnezzar was in control only because God had raised him up. (2:21)

The King’s dream featured a huge, glorious statue of a man. Its head was “*made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay*” (2:32-33). Then a rock cut “*not by human hands*” (2:34) hit the foot of the statue, and the whole image “*became like chaff on a threshing floor,*” while the rock “*became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth*” (2:35).

The historical significance of this vision has long been debated. Certain features of it are clear enough from the passage itself. Daniel indicates that these different parts of the statue’s body represent successive kingdoms or empires. Of these, the Babylonian Empire is the first, “*you are this head of gold*” (v. 38). Three empires follow. If **Babylon** is the first, then the second (chest and arms of silver) represents

the **Medo-Persian** Empire. The “*kingdom of bronze*” represents the **Greek** Empire. It was to “*rule over all the earth*” (v. 39). Here one can point to the remarkable rise to power of ‘Alexander the Great’, who is said to have wept while still in his twenties because there was no more land for him to conquer.

Daniel describes the fourth kingdom in greater detail because it marks the era in which especially significant events occur. It is strong as iron and shatters everything in its path: “*that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others*” (v. 40). Again, almost instinctively we may think of the **Roman** Empire—of which it was said, “*they make a desert and call it peace.*” Inherent to the development of this empire— “*in its feet*”—would lie the seeds of its own decay. Although the Roman Empire possessed longevity surpassing those empires immediately preceding it, it was subject to decline and fall in its morality and spirituality. Historians tell us that Paul’s description of the Roman world (**Romans 1:18**) is no exaggeration.

Daniel tells us that God’s kingdom will be established “*in the days of these kings*” (v.44), that is, the work of establishing the kingdom of God will run parallel with historical events, and will go unnoticed even by the great leaders of history. Ultimately, however, all the kingdoms of the world will be shattered by the kingdom that God establishes. That was the rock cut “*not by human hands*”

The central focus of Daniel's interpretation of the dream is pointing toward the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. He is the stone that breaks the kingdoms of this world in pieces and becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth. Because He is the one into whose hands the Father has committed all judgment (John 5:22). He is the stone that the builders rejected which became the chief cornerstone (Acts 4:11). At present, His kingdom has already come. We have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28). But the final consummation of God's kingdom on earth will be established by the coming again (second coming) of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel when his dream was revealed and interpreted. In his insecurity and instability, it was all he could do as he confessed the greatness of Daniel's God. No wonder he made Daniel and his companions rulers of his people (vv. 48–49). Yet it is significant, as the rest of his biography confirms, that, unlike Daniel, he did not “*seek mercies from the God of heaven*” (v. 18). He was awed, but he was not converted. Nonetheless, God transformed the king's wrath into His praise, and the chapter that began with Daniel's death sentence (v.14) ends with him sitting in the king's court (v. 49).

DANIEL 7

DANIEL 2



LION

BABYLON

GOLD



BEAR

MEDO-PERSIA

SILVER



LEOPARD

GREECE

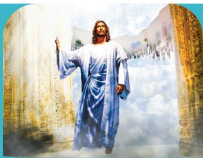
BRASS



FIERCE BEAST

ROME / DIVIDED KINGDOMS

IRON & CLAY



COMING OF JESUS



KINGDOM OF GOD

STONE CUT OUT WITHOUT MAN'S HAND

Faithful Until Death

Through the Fiery Trials

Daniel 3:14-15: “Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my Gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? ... And who is the God who will deliver you from my hands?”

No incident in the Bible more clearly illustrates the affirmation of the early apostles that “We ought to obey God rather than men” (**Acts 5:29**). Down through the ages this section of Daniel has proved to be a constant encouragement to God’s people. Two things about it are noteworthy: (1) the accusation brought against the three friends, and (2) the response of faith they made to it.

Verses 9–12 record the accusation brought by a number of Chaldeans. The very form of chapter 3 heightens the drama because no mention had yet been made of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. The royal decree had been proclaimed (**3:4**); the music had begun (**3:7**); the people had bowed down. Naturally, we are left wondering about the response made by the children of God. The principle on how to live in a hostile environment is given to us in Chapter 1 itself. The people of faith do not have a psychological need to make a “big deal” out of their acts of heroism. They do not need to draw attention to the fact that they are different from others.

However, here, jealousy was the primary reason for being strategically accused and targeted by their fellow Chaldeans (3:8)

What was the response of the Hebrew believers to this challenge by the king - “And who is the God who will deliver you from my hands?” (vs.15)

(1) **They had confidence in the power of God:** “*Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king*” (v. 17). Trust in God implies the recognition of His power, and His omnipotence. Yet as with all true faith, their confidence was not blind to the realities of the situation nor to the fact that God works out His purposes in the way He chooses, not in the way we would choose. So there was a second element to their faith.

(2) **They were completely submissive to God’s will:** whatever that might be: “*But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your Gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up*” (v. 18). If there is true faith in our own hearts, we will want to stand up and cheer as we read these words. In the last analysis, the friends’ faith was not in their deliverance but in their God. In a miraculous way Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were delivered from the flames, or more accurately in the flames. When all seemed to be lost for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, God vindicated them and their message, giving them new life in the face of certain death.

Apostle Peter later adds, echoing the experience of the three Hebrews— we should not be taken by surprise when we encounter such trials as though something strange and unexpected were happening. On the contrary, since we belong to Christ and are citizens of His kingdom, we should expect them. We should rejoice that, because we are the Lord's, those who oppose His kingdom want to oppose us, too. He will be with us, and His Spirit will rest upon us & He will make a way of escape. (1 Peter 4:12-14)

Faithful Until Death

In the Lion's Den

Daniel 6:20: *“And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”*

This event took place in the days of “*Darius the Mede*” (5:31). Under the new regime, Daniel remained in the top tier of administrators and was close to being appointed to the highest place under the king. But, like his friends in Chapter 3, he was surrounded by jealous colleagues and subordinates who put him in a hostile situation that tested his loyalty to God.

The conspirators convinced the king to make a new law, which stated that for thirty days everyone was to pray only to the king and no one else (6:6).

This proposal must have appealed to the king's vanity, while serving to test the loyalty of his new subjects. When Daniel heard about the new law, he simply went home and prayed to the Lord as usual (6:10). The narrative conveys a sense of calm determination. **Daniel expressed no anxiety, nor did he question the Lord or cry out against those who had plotted against him. Even his prayer did not display outright defiance. He simply gave thanks to his God and asked for help as he did**

every day. For him, nothing had changed. He was young when he was captured, and now he was old. He had seen kings come and go and had repeatedly experienced God's control. Hence he was unshaken!



Like the story of the three Jews who trusted God and were rescued from the furnace, Daniel survived miraculously in a hungry lions' den. After the miracle, like Nebuchadnezzar, Darius also decreed that everyone in the empire was to honour Daniel's God (6:25). The king's description of God was also similar to Nebuchadnezzar's, but Darius added, "*He is the living God who rescues and saves*" (6:26) – an appropriate climax for this section the book.

Daniel - A Man of Prayer

Daniel 9:2-3: *“In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”*

Daniel was a man of prayer! Prayer is an expression of what we know of God and of ourselves. Daniel is one of the great biblical models of what it means to know the Lord. He is one of *“the people who know their God,”* as the one who is *“strong and carries out great exploits”* (**Dan. 11:32**). The entire book is about the blessings of knowing God. We see in **2:17–18; 6:10**, that Daniel was a man of prayer. He prayed in times of crisis, but such prayer was the expression of a life of regular, disciplined praying.

God’s word through Jeremiah encouraged Daniel to pray. God had promised the end of the desolation of Jerusalem. Yet Daniel realized in the *“first year of Darius”* (v. 1) that this promise was yet unfulfilled. God’s infallible word must be fulfilled, and so Daniel engaged in prayer.

Two things lie at the heart of all mature praying: a recognition of God’s *“Goodness”* (He is the covenant Lord) and a realization of the nature of our relationship with Him

(we are in a covenant relationship with Him). Both of these elements distinguish Daniel's prayer.

The secret of prayer is that we should ask in accordance with God's will. The prayer of faith asks for unwavering trust in what God has already promised to do. Faith is not a matter of looking within ourselves to see how much we feel capable of requesting. What faith does is search the Scripture to see what God has promised to do. That was what Daniel did.

Daniel's prayer portrays a heart that is conscious of the glory of the Lord and wholly devoted to Him. He appeals for mercy for the people because they bear God's own name (9:19); he appeals for the restoration of Jerusalem because it is God's own city (9:18–19); he longs for the rebuilding of the temple because it is God's own sanctuary (9:17). His prayer magnifies God and humbles himself. It is full of adoration and admiration of the character of God.

Our God is a prayer answering God. Daniel himself was amazed at the immediate response of God to his prayer: *"Now while I was speaking ... Gabriel ... being caused to fly swiftly, reached me"* (vv. 9:20–21). Gabriel explained: *"At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come ... therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision"* (v. 23). God always hears prayer immediately, even when His answer is long in coming.

Daniel's ultimate motive for prayer was the glory of God because it was his great motive for living.

In order to safeguard the power of prayer, one must be aware of things that mislead us. **The first is that the power does not belong to the act of praying or to the prayer, but to God. Prayer is a wholehearted dependence on God.** It is a confession that we can do nothing on our own and that God alone can work. This is required to draw on divine power to aid us in our weaknesses. Spiritual treasure is kept in *“earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us”* (2 Cor. 4:7).

The second is that with God there can be no confusion between the way we pray and the way we live.

Prayer is not a piece of magic, a secret trick that we can use because we have secret knowledge, irrespective of our manner of life. The only prayer that incites power that lasts is the expression of life and desires of a righteous individual who walks in covenant fellowship with God.



THE DANIEL'S DREAMS – THE FOUR BEASTS

Daniel 7:2-3: *“Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. ³And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.”*

Chapter 7 marks the beginning of the apocalyptic section of the book of Daniel. These dreams and visions that the prophet saw were designed to bring hope to the people of God. Even though Jews were allowed to return home during the reign of the Persian King, Cyrus, the future of Israel seemed uncertain. Many wondered what had happened to the everlasting dynasty that God had promised David. In this situation, assurance of the coming Messiah and the establishment of His eternal kingdom inspired hope.

There seems to be an obvious relationship between Daniel's vision in **Chapter 7** and Nebuchadnezzar's dream in **Chapter 2**. In both cases, there is a fourfold progression of the kingdoms of this world; wherein God establishes His kingdom in a dramatic fashion. Can it be that in chapters 2 and 7 the same revelation is being given through different means, for different purposes, and perhaps with slightly different messages to the recipients? In Nebuchadnezzar's dream the focus is on the power of the various kingdoms that are eventually overpowered by the kingdom of God.

In Daniel's vision, the focus is on the moral corruption of the various kingdoms that are outlasted by the righteous kingdom of God.

The first beast resembles a **winged lion** that signifies the Babylonian empire (7:4). The second beast is like a **bear** (7:5) signifying Medo-Persia, while the third beast is like a **four-winged, four-headed leopard** (7:6) signifying Greece. After Alexander's death, the kingdom was divided by his four generals, symbolised by the four heads. **The fourth beast is the most powerful of them all** (7:7). It is not described as a known animal. It has iron teeth and ten horns, which represents Rome. As Daniel ponders about the horns, a small horn appears and replaces three of them (7:8). This little horn has human-like eyes and a mouth, and boasts instruments of pride and evil. But the scene is immediately shifted to the throne of God.



THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

Daniel 7:9-10: *“I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.”*

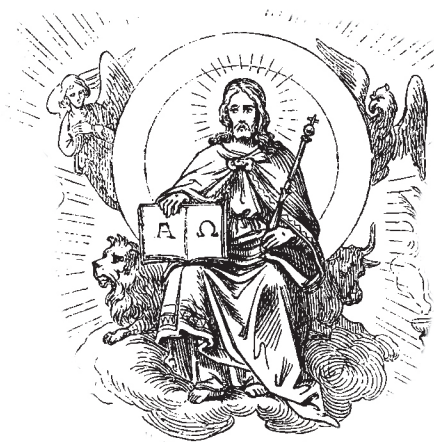
Human kingdoms are always caught up in feverish activity of hurry, power play, military or diplomatic, but **“the Ancient of Days was seated.” He is never taken by surprise, never undecided, never in a panic about His world. He reigns!** In the face of the terrible havoc that people are able to cause, Daniel is reminded that ultimate authority does not reside in Babylon, Persia, Greece, or Rome. It is in the hands of God. It is Isaiah’s age-old lesson that Daniel was to learn and we with him: *“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever... For He brings down those who dwell on high” (Isaiah 26:3–5).* Ultimate power is not centered in Washington D.C., London, Beijing, Moscow, or Delhi. It lies in the hands of God.

In Daniel's vision, **the judgment of the divine court goes in favour of the saints of God**. It means the destruction of the powers of darkness and of the kingdoms of this world order, which is brought to pass when "*The court was seated, and the books were opened*" (v. 10). Daniel is also given an overwhelming picture of the triumph of God: "*A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him*" (v. 10). He was learning some of the implications of Paul's later words, "*Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*" (Colossians 3:1–4).

Christians who have this vision of God and His throne will never feel alone or isolated. They will find their point of orientation not on earth but in heaven (**Philippians 3:20–21**). Their perspective on history will not arise from below (that is, from "*the Great Sea*" of v. 2) but from above, from the throne of God. Others may claim to see things realistically rather than idealistically. Christians, on the other hand, will try to gain God's perspective in order to see them as they really are.

Daniel sees "*One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven*" (v. 13). This figure comes to the Ancient of Days and receives dominion from Him.

Verse 14 describes His dominion as glorious (*“to Him was given dominion and glory”*), universal (*“That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him”*), and everlasting (*“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed”*).



When Jesus called himself the **Son of Man**, He did not have to mention Daniel by name as the source of the title. Everybody knew what text was in view. The same could be said about the six objectives of **Daniel 9:24** - with regard to sin, atonement, righteousness, fulfilment of prophecy, and temple - which were woven into the fabric of the New Testament world. After Jesus' post-resurrection teachings to His disciples (Lk 24:25-27, 44-47), the New Testament writers instinctively related these topics to the person and work of Jesus.

LITTLE HORN AND ANTICHRIST

We have been told that the Antichrist will come in the final days, but that does not preclude our recognizing that many Antichrists have already paraded across the pages of history (1 **John 2:18**). Nevertheless, it is not surprising that many dictators and empire-builders have been identified with the little horn (the fourth beast having a little horn with eyes and mouth to blaspheme God) and have shared some of its worst features.

What are the characteristics of the little horn? In verse 25 Daniel mentions three which appear in all Antichrists and will be revealed fully in the final one.

The little horn:

1. “Shall speak arrogant words against the Most High”
2. “Shall persecute the saints of the Most High”
3. “Shall intend to change times and the law (a man of lawlessness).”

The little horn teaches us a consistent pattern of satanic opposition to the work of God among His people. Just when Daniel anticipated the deliverance of the kingdom of God from its oppression in the form of the return from exile, he learned an important lesson: This conflict is endemic to world history until the end. Rather than decrease, it will be perpetuated until it culminates in the ferocious blasphemies

of the little horn. But the reign of the Antichrist is limited: forty-two months, and no more (**Revelation 13:5**).

Daniel sees two things: (a) **the first is the throne room of God**, the Lord and judge of all the earth. This enables him to face the perpetual conflict in the knowledge that the Lord reigns. (b) **the destruction of the beast**, which appears to be linked with the Son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days on the clouds of heaven to receive His kingdom. This is not the final return of the Son of Man but His approach to the Ancient of Days to receive His kingdom. In all likelihood this should be seen as fulfilled in the death, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of the Son of Man—an event publicized on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of His Spirit (**Acts 2:33–36**). In this way, the kingdom of God is extended. Our Lord claimed at the time of His Ascension that all dominion in heaven and earth was already His; the apostles were to make that a reality by the preaching of the gospel (**Matt. 28:18–20**).

Daniel's attitude illustrates an important biblical principle: **In view of what the future holds, we must live holy lives now.** He caught a glimpse of realities that would take place centuries later. Those events were shadows of the last conflict between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of the world. One day Christ will return and the AntiChrist "*shall be broken without a human hand*".

THE LAST DAYS

The Bible uses the phrase “**the last days**” and “**the last times**” with reference to several different time periods. Since the coming of God's promised Messiah is identified with the last days, there is a sense in which they began with the incarnation of Jesus Christ: “*In these last days He [God] has spoken [finally, once for all] to us by his Son*” (**Hebrews 1:2**), and “*He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake*” (**1 Peter 1:20**).

The last days (*that is, the period from the ascension of Christ and Pentecost until the return of Christ*) will be punctuated by times of stress (**2 Tim. 3:1**). There will be those who reject the crucified Christ, seek to destroy the church, and resist the truth (**2 Tim. 3:2–8**). We must always be on our guard for the sake of the church of the living God because it is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (**1 Tim. 3:15**). Christ will build His church and not even the gates of hell will be able to stand against it. That divine decree does not prevent Satan from launching attack after attack on the church throughout the ages.

Satan is very skilled at introducing wrong thinking and doctrinal controversy into the church—deceitful teaching is always a mark of the antichrist. **How then are we to live?**

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8–9).

THE FINAL HOPE – EVERLASTING LIFE

Daniel 12:2-3: *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

The book of Daniel ends with a vision that demonstrates God’s sovereignty over humanity’s greatest enemy – death. With a glorious note of triumph, God shows that He is a master not only over human beings, earthly events and life itself, but also reaches beyond death to resurrection. God has conquered death and we are with Him.

This resurrection will effect a great reversal in history. The arrogant and powerful will rise to utter shame and condemnation (12:2), and the oppressed and suffering who trust and obey God will be justified and saved. In particular, the wise who led many to righteousness by their teaching will shine... like stars (12:3). Not even the terrible time of suffering can destroy the certainty of the resurrection.

Daniel's great concern was to know when and how all this would come to an end (12:8) It was not for Daniel to know. He was commanded: "Go your way" (12:9). The mysterious prophecy he had been given would be understood only as God unravels history in the unseen future. The important thing for Daniel to know is that the Lord's people will be purified and refined through these events; whereas those who are filled with pride will harden their hearts even more and remain in their wickedness (12:10).

The biblical response to the promises of God's coming kingdom is always ***"Live for that kingdom now—recognize His reign now—be obedient now—fulfil your present responsibilities now."*** Then you will one day hear your Master say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things.... Enter into the joy of your Lord"* (Matt. 25:21). Though His people will suffer, God has limited the number of days the suffering will endure. **With Daniel, we are to persevere in the hope that God is driving human history toward a glorious resolution for those who remain faithful.**

● CONCLUSION ●

We sometimes think that if we only changed jobs, changed churches, changed residences, changed friendships, all would improve. And, yes, sometimes changes are necessary and beneficial. But not always. Instead of anxiously and restlessly hoping things will change, it may be best for us to bloom where we are planted just like Daniel. While everything within us screams, “*This is not fair! This season is painful, and I want out*”, Daniel teaches us ‘*how we should live while in exile*’. One must live faithfully pursuing the Lord and participate actively with people around us to be a light in the darkness. Blooming where we are planted begins and ends with knowing Christ intimately, for our lives are nothing without Him.



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