

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Message:

All the empires of the world are under the sovereign control of God who knows the future because He controls the future.

Author:

The authorship of Daniel has long been debated. Early Jewish and Christian interpreters generally accepted Danielic authorship.¹ However, an early outspoken critic of Christianity in general, and Danielic authorship in particular was Porphyry (A.D. 233).² Porphyry's attack was taken up again in the seventeenth century by proponents of higher criticism and continues to this day.

Critics of Daniel present Daniel as an apocryphal work written during the Maccabean period (ca. 160's B.C.). Their criticisms generally fall into five major categories:³ (1) Daniel's place within the canon of Scripture; (2) Rejection of supernatural predictive prophecy. For example, one commentator states, "We need to assume that the vision as a whole is a prophecy after the fact. Why? Because human beings are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance and to say that Daniel could do so, even on the basis of symbolic revelation vouchsafed to him by God and interpreted by an angel, is to fly in the face of the certainties of human nature";⁴ (3) Rejection of miracles in Daniel (e.g., the fiery furnace story); (4) Alleged textual discrepancies. Some claim that Daniel's use of later Aramaic, Greek and Persian loan words indicate that Daniel, a sixth century prophet, could not have possibly written Daniel; (5) Alleged historical inaccuracies (e.g., the naming of Belshazzar as the last Babylonian king [as opposed to Nabonidus]).

Some of the problems are difficult, but, most can be addressed adequately. (Some criticisms relate to presuppositions such as the denial of the miraculous or supernatural.) The remaining criticisms have been adequately and thoroughly dealt with by scholars such as Archer,⁵ Walvoord,⁶ and Baldwin.⁷ See also Josh McDowell's popular treatment of these issues in his book *Daniel in the Critic's Den*.⁸ To these might be added the fact that both Ezekiel and Jesus

¹ A debate within this debate is the historical existence of Daniel himself. Conservative scholars typically affirm Daniel a historical personage, whereas many critical scholars consider Daniel to be fictitious.

² Porphyry wrote fifteen books entitled *Against Christians*.

³ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971).

⁴ W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 115.

⁵ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 422–46.

⁶ Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*.

⁷ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. D. J. Wiseman, vol. 21, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1978).

⁸ Josh McDowell, *Daniel in the Critic's Den* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1979).

appear to vouch for the veracity of Daniel. As a whole there seems adequate justification for accepting Danielic authorship of the book.

Dating:

The dating of Daniel is closely related to the issue of authorship. If one accepts Danielic authorship, and if one takes the historical references in Daniel seriously (e.g., 1:1; 10:1), then the book must have been written sometime after the fall of the Babylonians in 539 B.C. and the third year of Cyrus (10:1) in 536 B.C.

Original Recipients:

Like the issue of dating, the identity of the recipients is closely tied to the question of authorship. If one assumes that Daniel is the author and if one assumes that Daniel wrote during the Babylonian and Medo-Persian kingdoms, then the audience would likely have been exilic or post-exilic Jews. Daniel's writings would have reminded the Jews that in spite of all that had happened, God still had a plan for Israel.

Historical Background

Three countries figure prominently into the historical context of the Book of Daniel. First, there is Judah – The home of Daniel. Second, there is Babylon (see map p. 6), the ruling power from 612–539 B.C. It is the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar that takes Daniel into captivity (ca. 605 B.C.). The third country that figures prominently in Daniel is Medo-Persia (539–330 B.C.), the successors to the Babylonian Empire.

At least four significant rulers are mentioned in Daniel. Jehoiakim (1:1) was an evil king who ruled Judah from 609-598 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar,⁹ who is the most prominent ruler in Daniel, ruled Babylon from 605-562 B.C. Belshazzar was the last Babylonian King (552-539 B.C.).¹⁰ Cyrus the Great (1:21; 6:28; 10:1) was the king of Persia from 559-530 B.C. He conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. (5:30-31). This latter point might be disputed by some since 5:31 identifies the conqueror as Darius the Mede. However, in my opinion, the evidence seems to suggest that Darius and Cyrus were the same individual.¹¹

⁹ Nebuchadnezzar is also spelled Nebuchadrezzar in some sources.

¹⁰ Belshazzar ruled as co-regent with his father from the third year of Nabonidus' reign until the fall of the empire to the Persians in 539 B.C. Nabonidus is not mentioned in Daniel and little is known of his activities.

¹¹ The identity of Darius the Mede is one of the most difficult historical problems in the entire book. Most major commentaries will address the issue and opinions vary widely.

The Person of Daniel¹²

According to Daniel 6:3–5, Daniel possessed an “extraordinary spirit” and was a man of irreproachable character and spiritual commitment (cf. Ezek 14:14). Ezekiel 28:3 uses Daniel as a standard of wisdom (“Behold you are wiser than Daniel”). He was chosen to serve in the king’s court. He was a statesman, a leader, and a prophet (see Matt 24:15).¹³ Daniel is one of the few characters of which the Bible does not have anything negative to say.

Purpose:

Encouragement appears to be at the heart of Daniel’s purpose. The Jewish exiles needed to be reminded that in spite of all that has occurred, God was still in sovereign control and still had a glorious plan and purpose for Israel. This purpose is revealed through the narratives involving Daniel and his friends and the book’s majestic prophecies.

Contribution:

The Book of Daniel makes several important contributions to the Canon. From a historic perspective, Daniel provides insight into the captivity experience of at least some Jews. As Dwight Pentecost notes, “It bridges the gap between Israel’s historical books and the New Testament. It records certain events in Israel’s history in the 70-year Babylonian Captivity which are recorded nowhere else in Scripture (except for snatches of information in Ezek.).”¹⁴ The book also provides important background information on the character of Daniel. But the greatest contribution of the book is prophetic. It is not without reason that Daniel is called the backbone of biblical prophecy. Daniel provides the clearest and most comprehensive framework for the “times of the Gentiles.”

Literary Features:

There are at least three significant literary features in the Book of Daniel. First, it is noted that the Book of Daniel was originally written in two different languages. Daniel 1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12:13 is written in Hebrew. However, 2:4b–7:28 is written in Aramaic, the *lingua franca*, of the day. It sometimes suggested that the two languages represent two emphases in the book. The sections in Hebrew represent God’s plan for Israel. Whereas, Aramaic is used in regards to God’s plan for the Gentile nations. While this explanation is possible, the fact of the matter is that we do not know why two languages were used.

¹² Daniel’s name means “God is judge” or “God is my Judge.”

¹³ The Apocryphal Susanna and Bel and the Dragon also make reference to Daniel.

¹⁴ Dwight J. Pentecost, “Daniel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Scripture, Victor, 1985), 1327.

Another literary feature relates to the genre of Daniel. It is commonly noted that parts of Daniel (particularly chapters 7–12) appear to fall within the genre of apocalyptic. Ezekiel 37–48, Zechariah 1:7–7:8 and the Book of Revelation are also considered to be apocalyptic. Apocalyptic literature is eschatological literature characterized by dreams, visions, symbols, involving angels and demons, and cataclysmic judgments.

A third notable literary feature is the chiasmic structure of chapters 2–7. While not all would agree that these chapters are chiasmic, there is a remarkable thematic symmetry as reflected below.

- A Dream involving four kingdoms (2:1–49)
 - B God rescues Daniel’s friends from death (3:1–30)
 - C A Babylonian king is humbled by God (4:1–37)
 - C' A Babylonian king is humbled by God (5:1–31)
 - B' God rescues Daniel from death (6:1–28)
 - A' Dream involving four kingdoms (7:1–28)

The Structure:

It is generally acknowledged that Daniel consists of two main sections. But there are slightly different ways in which these divisions are made. Some suggest that the first major division consists of chapters 1–6. Here Daniel records six historical incidents from 605–539 B.C. In the second section, chapters 7–12, Daniel records four visions. The similarities between the dream in chapter two and dream in chapter seven provide a thematic link between the two major sections. Another approach is to take chapters 1–7 as the first major section, keeping intact the chiasm noted above. The second section then would consist of chapters 8–12. We will follow this second option.

New Testament Contribution:

Although there are only about five direct quotes of Daniel in the New Testament, Daniel makes a significant contribution to it. For one thing, there are a number of allusions from Daniel. Matthew, 1–2 Thessalonians, and especially Revelation borrow from the imagery in Daniel. But perhaps the greatest contribution is messianic. For example, Jesus’ favorite self-designation “Son of Man” likely originates in Daniel 7:13–14. The great seventy-week prophecy of 9:24–27 points to the first coming of Messiah.

Christological

1. The return of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom is seen in chps. 2, 7, 9
2. There are christological references such as the “Stone” (2:35, 45), the Son of Man (7:13–14), the Messiah (9:25–26)

Other

1. There are five quotations of Ezekiel in the New Testament.
2. There are about 130 allusions or verbal parallels from Ezekiel in the NT

Benefits for Studying Daniel:

- To provide you a godly human example that you can emulate (We are living in a day where genuine heroes are few and far between).
- To provide encouragement in the midst of discouraging situations (Daniel was a prisoner in a foreign land, isolated, his country under subjugation, working for a king who could have him killed on a whim).
- To remind us that God has a plan for the future and will carry it out.

Map from the *Moody Bible Atlas*.



Exposition:**I. God's servant Daniel is unveiled (1:1–21).**

“The first chapter of the book of Daniel is a distinct unit. It begins and ends with a chronological marker that identifies the beginning and end of Daniel’s career (‘the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim’ [v. 1] and ‘the first year of King Cyrus [v. 21]).”¹⁵

A. Daniel and his friends face changing circumstances (1:1–7).

1. Daniel and his friends face change in their nation (1:1–2).

Critics have made much of the alleged disagreement between Daniel and Jeremiah (25:1) who mentions that it was the “fourth year.” However, there are several good explanations of this difference. Perhaps the best two are that the Babylonian’s used a different dating system for kings than the Jews or the difference in calendars (the Jewish year began in Sept/Oct, whereas the Babylonian year began in Mar/Apr).¹⁶

2. Daniel and his friends face change in their personal situation (1:3–7).

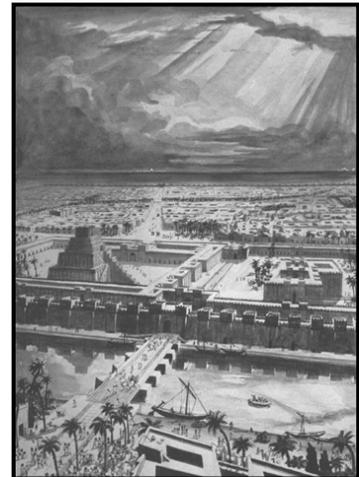
The word translated “youths” (יְדֵי יָ) in verse 4 is a general term that can refer to young children through young adults. However, the length of Daniel’s stay in Babylon (at least 66 years) would suggest that Daniel was quite young, perhaps around 14–15 years of age.¹⁷

a. A change of culture (vv. 3–4)

b. A change of diet (v. 5a)

c. A change of plans (v. 5b)

d. A change of identity (vv. 6–7)¹⁸



¹⁵ Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 42.

¹⁶ Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zonderan, 1994), 334.

¹⁷ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 60. Walvoord concurs and states, “Their age at the time of their training is not specified, but they were probably in their early teens” (Walvoord, *Daniel*, 35).

¹⁸ The Jewish historian Josephus states that Daniel was made a eunuch (*Ant.* 10.186) but the Bible is silent on the matter.

THE RENAMING OF DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS			
Original Name	Possible Meaning	Babylonian Name	Possible Meaning
Daniel	"God is my judge"	Belteshazzar	"May Bel protect his life"
Hananiah	"Yahweh has been gracious"	Shadrach	"Command of Aku"
Mishael	"Who is what God is?"	Meshach	"Who is what Aku is"
Azariah	"Yahweh is my help"	Abed-nego	"Servant of Nebo"
Bel was the primary Babylonian deity. Aku was the god of the moon. Nebo was the son of Bel.			

B. Daniel and his friends have their convictions tested (1:8–14).

1. The resolve of Daniel and his friends is demonstrated (1:8–10).
2. The request of Daniel is stated (1:11–14).

C. Daniel and his friends have their convictions affirmed (1:15–16).

D. Daniel and his friends are commended (1:17–21).

1. Daniel and his friends are commended by God (1:17).

"There are two reasons for directing attention to the fact that Daniel could understand visions and dreams at this point in the book. First, dream interpretation was an important part of Babylonian wisdom and the Babylonians firmly believed that gods spoke through dreams. That Daniel had this gift was noteworthy. Second, the statement prepares the reader for the dreams and visions that follow."¹⁹

2. Daniel and his friends are commended by Nebuchadnezzar (1:18–21).

TRUE SUCCESS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daniel 1 is filled with the sovereignty of God. We must recognize that God is in control. 2. We learn from Daniel and his friends that outward circumstances should not change inward convictions. 3. God rewarded the faithfulness of Daniel and his friends. How might this aspect of the story affect the way you live?

¹⁹ Miller, *Daniel*, 70–71.

II. God's sovereign control over the Gentiles is unveiled (2:1–7:28).

A. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue reveals God's knowledge of and sovereign control over the empires of the world and the future (2:1–49).

1. The dream is introduced (2:1–13).

a. The context of the dreams (v. 1a)

A CHRONOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF DANIEL 2:1		
Nebuchadnezzar's Accession Year	605 B.C.	Daniel's First year of Training
Nebuchadnezzar's First Year*	604 B.C.	Daniel's Second year of Training
Nebuchadnezzar's Second Year	603 B.C.	Daniel's Final year of Training
* In Babylonian chronology, the accession year of a king did not count as the first year of that king.		

The fact that God would use dreams to communicate to pagans is not without precedence.²⁰

b. The consequence of the dreams (v. 1b)

c. The calling of the wise men (vv. 2–4)

d. The command given the wise men (vv. 5–13)

2. The dream is investigated (2:14–30).

a. The poise of Daniel (vv. 14–15)

b. The persuasion of Daniel (v. 16)

c. The prayer of Daniel (vv. 17–19a)

d. The praise of Daniel (vv. 19b–23)

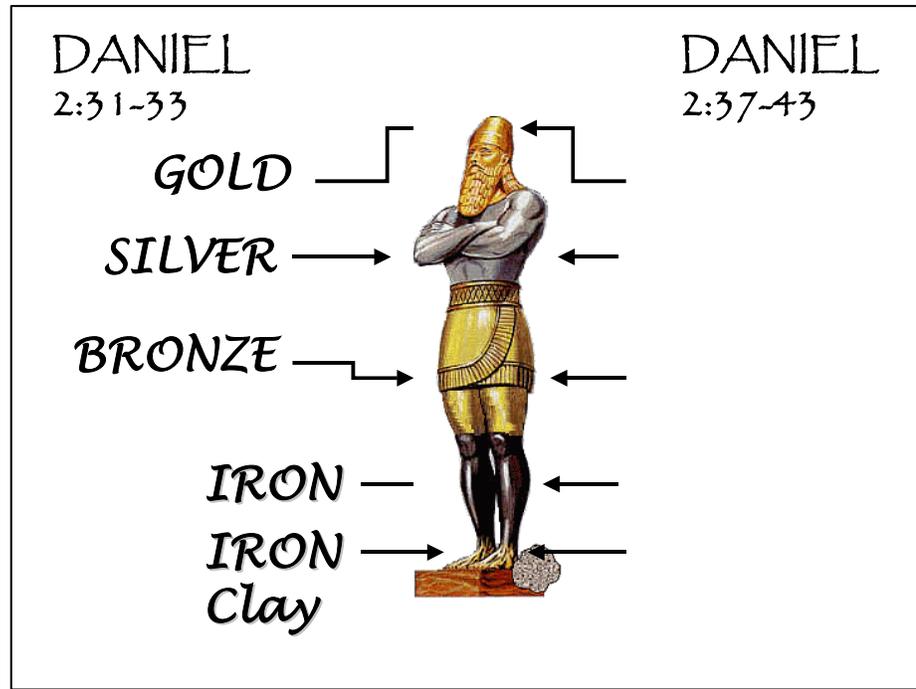
e. The presentation of Daniel (vv. 24–30)

3. The dream is identified (2:31–35).

a. The statue is described (vv. 31–33).

²⁰ See for example Abimelech (Gen 20:3); Pharaoh (Gen 41:3ff.); an anonymous soldier (Judg 7:13–14); Pilate's wife (Matt 27:19). In particular, many interpreters have seen close parallels between Daniel's account and the Joseph dream story

This human-like figure is composed of metals that decrease in value and specific gravity making this statue top-heavy. Conversely, the metals increase in strength from the top down with the exception of the feet.



- b. The statue is destroyed (vv. 34–35).
4. The dream is interpreted (2:36–45a).²¹
 - a. The interpretation is introduced (v. 36).
 - b. The head of gold is interpreted (vv. 37–38).
 - c. The breast and arms of silver is interpreted (v. 39a).
 - d. The belly and thighs of bronze is interpreted (v. 39b).
 - e. The legs of iron is interpreted (v. 40).
 - f. The feet of iron and clay is interpreted (vv. 41–43).
 - g. The kingdom of God is interpreted (vv. 44–45a).

²¹ “There is a tradition of recounting world history by means of metals with declining value as early as Hesiod in his *Works and Days*, composed in the eighth century B.C.” (Longman, *Daniel*, 80). Longman also provides additional documentation in his footnote.

See the excursus on The Destruction of the Statue on page 11.

**THE
IDENTIFICATION OF
THE STONE**

Postmillennialists:
Stone = The Church

Amillennialists:
Stone = First Advent

Premillennialists:
Stone = Second Advent



5. The interpretation is affirmed and Daniel is exalted (2:45b–49).
 - a. The pronouncement of Daniel (v. 45b)
 - b. The praise of Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 46–47)

“Daniel is a model of Israelite wisdom (v 14) and a model of Israelite piety, in his prayer (v 18), his vision (v 19), his praise (vv 19–23), his witness (vv 27–28), his self-effacement (v 30), his conviction (v 45); the fruit of his work is not merely rewards and promotion (v 48) but obeisance and recognition of his God (vv 46–47).”²²

- c. The promotion of Daniel and his friends (vv. 48–49)

FINDING COMFORT IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

1. Even the greatest earthly governments are temporary! Therefore, we should never place our ultimate security in governments, but rather in God.
2. The political developments in the world are both foreknown and ordained by God. Therefore, we need not fear change in a changing world.
3. Believers will ultimately have a share in the eternal and invincible Kingdom of God. Therefore, we can live with hope in the midst of a hopeless world.

²² John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 2002), 36.

EXCURSUS ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE STATUE

Arguments for the destruction of the statue at the Second Coming of Christ.

1. Christ did not crush the Roman Empire at his first coming. Christ was crucified and the Roman Empire continued to rule.
2. The stone (Christ) transforms into a mountain (His kingdom) catastrophically and suddenly. However, the spread of Christianity has been gradual and generally peaceful.
3. The kingdoms preceding God's kingdom are earthly, literal kingdoms. It should be expected then that God's kingdom will also be earthly and literal. Christ did not establish an earthly kingdom at His first coming, but will in His second (Rev 20:4).
4. The Roman Empire was not divided (iron/clay), but united during Christ's first coming. In fact, the Roman Empire did not divide until around 360 years after the death of Christ.
5. The Kingdom of God will not fill the earth until the removal of all earthly kingdoms (see Dan 2:35).
6. Even after 2,000 years of evangelism, "all the world" has not yet been filled with Christianity.
7. The New Testament teaches that Christ is currently the chief cornerstone for the church (Eph 2:20 and a stumbling block to unbelievers (1 Pet 2:8), but indicates that His personal defeat of His enemies is yet future (Rev 19:11–19). This future event seems to coincide with the destruction of the statue by the Stone.

- B. God delivers Daniel's friends from a Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) proving that he alone is sovereign and worthy of worship (3:1–30).

The elapsed time between chapters two and three is uncertain although the Septuagint places it in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (3:1). However as Longman notes, "This is likely an attempt to associate the ceremony with a celebration of his taking Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 52:29) and is improbable."²³

1. Nebuchadnezzar makes a golden statue and orders his subjects to worship it (3:1–6).

Many commentators believe that this image may have been inspired by the dream in Daniel 2 but we are not told specifically what this image looked like. It might have been human-like or animal-like or the likeness of some pagan deity. The sheer size of the image makes it unlikely that it was solid gold, but rather, only overlaid with gold, a common practice in that day.

²³ Longman, *Daniel*, 96.

The image was approximately 90' x 9' but the actual configuration is uncertain. It may have been similar to a totem-pole or a smaller statue resting on a large base. A French archaeologist in the 1800's believed that he had discovered the original base.

Is there any prideful thing that you have erected in your life that shows the world that you have arrived?

2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refuse to worship the statue (3:7-18).
 - a. The acquiescence of the crowd (v. 7)
 - b. The accusation of the Chaldeans (vv. 8-12)
 - c. The audience before the king (vv. 13-18)
3. God supernaturally protects Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego (3:19-30).

- a. The fury of Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 19-23)

It is interesting to note that the soldiers perished outside of the furnace while the Hebrews were preserved in the furnace. This teaches us two things. (1) The fire was hot enough to kill. (2) It is better to be in God's will even if it is a fire than to be outside of it!

- b. The fourth Person (vv. 24-25)

Identification of the Fourth Person

- An Angel
- Preincarnate Christ

- c. The fate of Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego (vv. 26-30)

FIVE OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING FIERY TRIALS

1. Fiery trials are sometimes the results of doing what is right.
2. Trusting in God is the only proper attitude to have when facing a fiery trial.
3. God is with us as we pass through the fiery trial.
4. God can deliver us from a fiery trial in a miraculous way.
5. Unbelievers can be affected by our witness as we pass through a fiery trial.

- C. A Babylonian king (Nebuchadnezzar) is humbled by God who exercises his sovereign control over a prideful king by taking his sanity (4:1–37).
1. God’s sovereign plan for humbling Nebuchadnezzar is revealed in a dream (4:1–18).
 - a. The declaration of Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 1–3)

Archer notes that this “is the only chapter in Scripture composed under the authority of a pagan.”²⁴
 - b. The details of the dream (vv. 4–18)

CLUES FOR DATING NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S INSANITY

- Daniel 4:30 suggests that Nebuchadnezzar had completed his building projects in Babylon, which, in turn, suggests a date later in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.
- Daniel 4:4 suggests that this incident occurred while Nebuchadnezzar was experiencing a period of peace and stability in his empire. Nebuchadnezzar’s early years were characterized by war and conquest.
- Although there is no official Babylonian record of this incident, the Babylonian records are mostly silent concerning the last years of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.

2. Daniel reveals the meaning of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (4:19–27).
 - a. The reaction of Daniel (v. 19)
 - b. The revelation of the dream (vv. 20–27)

By announcing judgment, Yahweh leaves open the opportunity for repentance (cf. Jonah 1:2; 3:1–10).
3. God’s plan for humbling Nebuchadnezzar is fulfilled (4:28–37).
 - a. God’s judgment on Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 28–33)

Notice that Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity was not gradual but immediate. While God’s judgment may be long in coming, when it comes it doesn’t take long.
 - b. God’s grace on Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 34–37)

²⁴ Archer, “Daniel,” 58.

PRIDEBUSTING POINTS

1. Study of the life of Christ. Focus specifically on those aspects dealing with humility.
2. Make it a habit to give credit to others for their contributions to your success.
3. Ask God to reveal to you areas where you are prideful and pray for the strength to deal with these areas.
4. Have persons in your life who you are accountable to and who you know will be honest with you.

D. A Babylonian king (Belshazzar) is humbled by God who exercises his sovereign control over an impious king by taking his kingdom and his life (5:1–31).

1. The impiety of Belshazzar is demonstrated (5:1–4).

Around sixty-five years have elapsed since Daniel’s captivity (1:1). Daniel is probably around eighty years old. For many years, liberal critics of Daniel’s historicity have denied the existence of Belshazzar. However, archaeologists have now uncovered thirty-seven ancient texts that mention Belshazzar.

2. The impiety of Belshazzar is declared by God through handwriting on a wall (5:5–24).

- a. The writing on the wall (vv. 5–9)

THE FINGER OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Exodus 8:19 – Egyptian magicians attribute the plague of the gnats to “the finger of God.”
- Exodus 31:18 – The writing of the Decalogue is said to be written by “the finger of God.”
- Psalm 8:3- David attributes the work of the heavens to God’s fingers.

- b. The words of the queen (vv. 10–12)

Probably the queen mother, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar’s wife, Nitrochis, a woman celebrated for her wisdom.²⁵

²⁵ Longman, *Daniel*, 139.

- c. The witness of Daniel (vv. 13–24)
3. The handwriting on the wall is interpreted by Daniel, spelling out Belshazzar's doom (5:25–31).
 - a. The interpretation revealed (vv. 25–28)
 - b. The immediate reward (v. 29)
 - c. The inevitable result (vv. 30–31)

According to the Nabonidus Chronicle this occurred on the 16 of Tishri, or Oct. 12, 539 B.C. Herodotus and Xenophon state that the Medo-Persians were able to go under the city walls by diverting the Euphrates, and wading under the walls during a time of Babylonian feasting. A few hours later Belshazzar was executed.

THREE WARNINGS FROM DANIEL 5

1. The desecration of the temple vessels and the accompanying punishment remind us that those who thumb their noses at God will ultimately be punished.
2. The fact that Belshazzar knew about God's dealing with Nebuchadnezzar's pride teaches us that we are held accountable for the truth that we know.
3. Belshazzar's misplaced trust in the city walls to protect him teaches us that it is foolish to trust in anything other than God.

- E. God delivers Daniel from a Gentile king (Darius) proving that he alone is sovereign and worthy of worship God (6:1–28).
 1. Daniel's promotion results in a jealous plot to trap Daniel (6:1–9).
 - a. The promotion of Daniel (vv. 1–3)

VARIOUS VIEWS OF DARIUS THE MEDE

- Darius is a fictional character
- Darius is Gubaru (Gobryas), governor of Babylon
- Darius is Cyrus the Persian (Mede)
- Darius is Cambyses, son and successor of Cyrus

- b. The plot of the deceivers (vv. 4–9)
2. Daniel’s praying results in his condemnation and sentence to a lion’s den (6:10–15).

- a. The consistency of Daniel’s praying (vv. 10–11)

“Daniel’s response to the prohibition on prayer is to continue praying. There is no fuss or rush about his stand, such as characterizes every action of his assailants. Nor is he a man who has lost his true human freedom. He retains that, while neither civil servants nor king behave as free men.”²⁶

- b. The condemnation of Daniel’s praying (vv. 12–15)

3. Daniel’s preservation is accomplished by God who keeps him from harm in the lion’s den (6:16–28).

- a. The climactic deliverance (vv. 16–23)

Daniel’s words indicate that his protection was due to his innocence. The angel was probably the angel of the Lord (Gen 16:11–14, etc.). The LXX indicates that God had saved Daniel. This has lead some to conclude that it was the pre-incarnate Christ. Whatever the case may be, it is important to note that God did not make his servant to go through this trial alone.



- b. The concluding details (vv. 24–28)

“Three emphases stand out in this passage: (1) Daniel's God is alive and shows that he lives by the way he acts in history, responding, like a real person, to the requirements of justice and the needs of his people; (2) God's rule is eternal and will never pass away (as do empires built by human power), even though the Hebrew monarchy did not survive its apostasy; (3) God miraculously delivers his true worshipers performing wonders both in heaven and on earth.”²⁷

²⁶ Goldingay, *Daniel*, 131.

²⁷ Archer, “Daniel,” 83.

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD

1. Godly character is essential for living a christlike life in a pagan world.
2. Personal attacks on your faith are inevitable in a pagan world.
3. Stand by your convictions no matter what the cost.
4. God will not desert you when you are attacked.
5. God will ultimately vindicate those who are innocent.

F. Daniel's dream of four beasts reveals God's knowledge of and sovereign control over the empires of the world and the future (7:1–28).

Commentators have frequently noted the significance of Daniel 7.

- **Ferguson:** "Chapter 7 is at one and the same time perhaps the most exhilarating and most puzzling of all the chapters in this remarkable book. It is also in a variety of ways, the central chapter."²⁸
- **Porteous:** "With this chapter we reach the heart of the Book of Daniel."²⁹
- **Collins:** "It is a transitional chapter, tied to the preceding tales by use of the Aramaic language and by affinities with chp. 2, but tied to the following visions by its subject matter and by its close parallels with chp. 8. It is also arguably the most elaborate and powerful chapter of the book and so has been regarded with some justification as the heart of Daniel's revelation."³⁰
- **Walvoord:** "In the interpretation of biblical prophecy, the seventh chapter of Daniel occupies a unique place. As interpreted by conservative expositors, the vision of Daniel provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament."³¹

1. Daniel's dream is introduced (7:1–14).
 - a. The context of Daniel's dream is established (vv. 1–3).

²⁸ Sinclair Ferguson, *Daniel*, Mastering the Old Testament (Dallas: Word, 1988), 145

²⁹ Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1976), 95.

³⁰ John J. Collins, *Daniel: with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Vol. 20 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 80.

³¹ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 145.

Note that this chapter actually takes place prior to chapter 5. Daniel would be about 67 years old.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE VISIONS IN DANIEL 7–12

Daniel 7: The first year of Belshazzar (Dan 7:1; *ca.* 553 B.C.)
Daniel 8: The third year of Belshazzar (Dan 8:1; *ca.* 551/50 B.C.)
Daniel 9: The first year of Darius the Mede (Dan 9:1-2; *ca.* 539/38 B.C.)
Daniel 10–12: The third year of Cyrus (Dan 10:1; 536/35)

- b. The content of Daniel’s dream is elaborated (vv. 4–14).
 - 1) Daniel sees a lion–like beast (v. 4).
 - 2) Daniel sees a bear–like beast (v. 5).
 - 3) Daniel sees a leopard–like beast (v. 6).
 - 4) Daniel sees a fourth terrifying and powerful beast and a little horn (vv. 7–8).
 - 5) Daniel sees the Ancient of Days (vv. 9–10).
 - 6) Daniel sees the horn and the other beasts (vv. 11–12).
 - 7) Daniel sees the Son of Man (vv. 13–14).
2. Daniel’s dream is interpreted (7:15–28).
 - a. The four beasts are interpreted generally (vv. 15–18).
 - 1) Daniel is troubled (v. 15).
 - 2) Daniel seeks understanding (v. 16).
 - 3) The interpretation of the beast–kingdoms (7:17).
 - 4) The interpretation of the final kingdom (v. 18)
 - b. The final beast is interpreted specifically (vv. 19–28).

A COMPARISON OF DANIEL 2 AND DANIEL 7			
CHAPTER 2		CHAPTER 7	
D R E A M	The recipient: Nebuchadnezzar (2:1)	The recipient: Daniel (7:1)	D R E A M
	Interpreter: Daniel	Interpreter: probably an angel (7:16)	
	Historical context: Babylon peaking (the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, 2:1)	Historical context: Babylon declining (the first year of Belshazzar, 7:1)	
	Content: Revelation of five empires (four human, one divine)		
	Representation: Human-like	Representation: Beast-like	
	Distinction between kingdoms: various materials	Distinction between kingdoms: various beasts	
Final Event: a universal kingdom (2:34-35, 44-45)	Final Event: a universal dominion given to a Son of Man (7:9-14, 27-28)		

A CERTAIN FUTURE	
<p>1. What God says about the future should be taken seriously. Daniel was concerned about the right things. Are you?</p> <p>2. Victory for the people of God may not always be immediate, but it is certain.</p> <p>3. The most powerful forces both earthly and demonic are ultimately no match for the ancient of Days.</p>	

III. God's sovereign control over Israel is unveiled (8:1–12:13).

- A. Daniel receives a vision of a ram and goat which reveals God's knowledge of and sovereign control over the empires of the world and the future (8:1–27).

Chapter 8 offers both a continuation and clarification of chapter 7. There is continuation in the symbolic use of animals in reference to two of the same kingdoms referenced in chapter 7. There is clarification in the significance, especially for Israel, of these two kingdoms (i.e. Medo-Persia and Greece).

1. The vision is introduced (8:1–14).
 - a. The context of the vision is established (vv. 1–2).

The third year would be around 550 B.C. and Daniel would be approximately seventy years old.
 - b. The content of the vision is expounded (vv. 3–14).

- 1) Daniel sees a vision of a ram (vv. 3–4).
 - 2) Daniel sees a vision of a male goat (vv. 5–8).
 - 3) Daniel sees a vision of a small horn (vv. 9–14).
2. The vision is interpreted (8:15–27).

INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES TO DANIEL 8

- Historical: All of Daniel 8 has been fulfilled historically
- Futuristic: All of Daniel 8 will be fulfilled in the last days
- Dual Fulfillment: Some of Daniel 8 has been fulfilled in history and some will be fulfilled in the future
- Typical: The historical fulfillment of Daniel 8 typifies similar events in the last days

- a. Daniel encounters the angel Gabriel (vv. 15–19).
- b. Gabriel explains the meaning of the ram (v. 20).
- c. Gabriel explains the meaning of the goat and small horn (vv. 21–26).

THE DIVISION OF THE GRECIAN EMPIRE

THE RULER	THE TERRITORY
Lysimachus	Thrace and Bythinia
Antipater	Grace and Macedonia
Seleucus I Nicator	Syria, Babylon, Asia (except for Asia Minor and Israel)
Ptolemy I Soter	Egypt and Palestine

- d. Daniel is adversely affected by the vision (v. 27).

STUDYING PROPHECY

1. The persistence of Daniel teaches us that God's revelations about the future should be studied.
2. The confusion of Daniel teaches us that understanding God's revelations about the future can be difficult.
3. The encounter with Gabriel teaches us that God wants us to understand His revelations about the future.

EXCURSUS: SUMMARY CHARTS

A SUMMARY OF DANIEL CHAPTERS 2, 7, 8			
THE KINGDOMS (605 B.C.-???)	DANIEL 2 (dream, 603 B.C.)	DANIEL 7 (vision, 553 B.C.)	DANIEL 8 (vision, 551 B.C.)
Babylonia	Head of Gold	Winged lion	
Medo-Persia	Breast/Arms of silver	Bear	Ram
Greece	Belly/Thighs of bronze	Winged leopard	Male goat
Rome	Legs of iron, feet of iron and clay	A dreadful beast	

THE MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE			
DETAILS	DANIEL 2	DANIEL 7	DANIEL 8
An Alliance	Arms of Silver???	Two sides	Two Horns
Persian Dominance of the Alliance		A bear raised on one side	One horn longer than the other
Persia's Dominance would come later			Longer horn comes up last
The Medo-Persian Conquests	Implied by its following the head of gold	Three ribs in the bear's mouth	Ram butting West, North, and South

THE GRECIAN EMPIRE			
DETAILS	DANIEL 2	DANIEL 7	DANIEL 8
The kingdom	Bronze belly/thighs	Leopard	Male goat
Rapidity of Greece's Conquests		Four wings of a bird	Without touching the ground
Extent of the Grecian Conquests	Hinted at by succeeding the breast/arms	Dominion was given to it	The whole earth
Alexander the Great			Notable horn
Alexander's Four Successors		Four heads	Four Notable Horns
Antiochus Epiphanies			A small horn

- B.** Motivated by Jeremiah's prophecy, Daniel prays and receives the vision of Seventy Weeks which reveals God's knowledge of and sovereign control over the empires of the world and the future (9:1-27).
1. Motivated by Jeremiah's prophecy, Daniel prays (9:1-23).
 - a. The context of the prayer is established (vv. 1-3).
The first year of Darius' reign would be 538 B.C. and Daniel would probably be in his eighties.

The passages which captured the interest of Daniel were Jeremiah 25:11–12; 29:10 (cf. 2 Chr 36:20–22; Zech 1:12). Many conservative commentators take the seventy years of desolation to refer to a time between 605 B.C. (the first captivity, including Daniel) and 538/537 B.C. (Cyrus' decree permitting the exiles to return home). There are some commentators who prefer to see the destruction of the Temple in 586 as the starting point and the rebuilding of the Temple in 515 as the ending point. In either case the period is not precisely seventy years, therefore many see this number as a round number. I believe that the first interpretation is preferred. As to the seventy years, I am intrigued by Wood's suggestion that "God was gracious in response to Daniel's prayer and saw fit to shorten the time by a few months."³²

- b. The content of the prayer is elaborated (vv. 4–19).

This prayer is truly one of the great prayers in Scripture and very similar in character to Ezra 9:6–15; Nehemiah 1:5–11; 9:6–37 which Towner identifies as prose prayers of penitence.³³

- 1) Daniel prays concerning the character of God (vv. 4–10).
- 2) Daniel prays concerning the commandments of God (vv. 11–14).
- 3) Daniel prays concerning the commitment of God (vv. 15–19).

Notice that Daniel does not attempt to resolve the tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility both of which are true. Instead he does what he knows to do and that is pray.

- c. The coming of Gabriel to answer Daniel's prayer (vv. 20–23).

"The promise of fulfillment issues when Daniel turns to God, yet it issues before he actually prays his lament, so the story affirms not only the importance of prayer and the place it plays in the outworking of God's purpose (it is in response to prayer that God acts) but also the importance of God's sovereignty (prayer is a means of God's own good will being put into effect). One person's prayer brings about the restoration of the people of God; but it is a

³² Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 233.

³³ W. S. Towner, *Daniel*, 130.

matter of releasing that restoration which God already purposed. The dynamics of the interrelationship of prayer and divine act here may be compared with those in Gen 18:17–33.”³⁴

PRAYER PRINCIPLES

1. Use this week to pray specifically for our sinful society and country.
2. As you pray this week focus on the confession of sin.
3. Read seven biblical prayers this week (one a day). Possible suggestions could include 1 Kings 8:22-61; Nehemiah 1:4-11; Psalm 5, 6, 13, 44, 57, 64, 70, 85, 102; Matthew 6:9-14; John 17; Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21; etc.
4. Begin a prayer journal where you can record both your requests and God’s responses.

2. Daniel is given the prophecy of seventy weeks concerning his people and his city (9:24–27).
 - a. The context of the revelation pertains to the future of Israel and Jerusalem (v. 24).
 - 1) The concern of this prophecy (v. 24a) –
 - 2) The conclusion of this prophecy (v. 24b) –

Daniel starts with the conclusion and then works backwards. All six aspects either occur during or after the three periods mentioned in vv. 25–27.

- “finish the transgression”
- “make an end of sin”
- “make atonement for iniquity”
- “bring in everlasting righteousness”
- “seal up vision and prophecy”
- “anoint the most holy place”

³⁴ Goldingay, *Daniel*, 266.

- b. The chronology of the first period is given: seven sevens and sixty two sevens (v. 25).
- c. The contents of the second period are given: after the sixty-nine sevens (v. 26).
- d. The contents of the third period is given: the final seven (v. 27).

THINK AND DO

1. The literal fulfillment of portions of this prophecy can give us confidence in the remainder of the prophecy pertaining to the last days. Therefore, do not be counted among scoffers.
2. God is never surprised by the events that we experience because He is sovereign and knows all things. For those of you who are facing difficulties, take comfort in that fact.
3. Re-examine verse 24 and pray for the fulfillment of the six things mentioned there.

EXCURSUS: CALCULATING DANIEL'S 69 SEVENS

THREE STEPS:

1. Identify the starting point "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem: (Dan 9:25). Which decree?
2. Do the math (# of years x # of days in a year = total number of days).
3. Add the number of days to the starting point to determine a date for "Messiah the Prince" (keeping in mind the difference between the Jewish lunar calendar and our solar calendar).

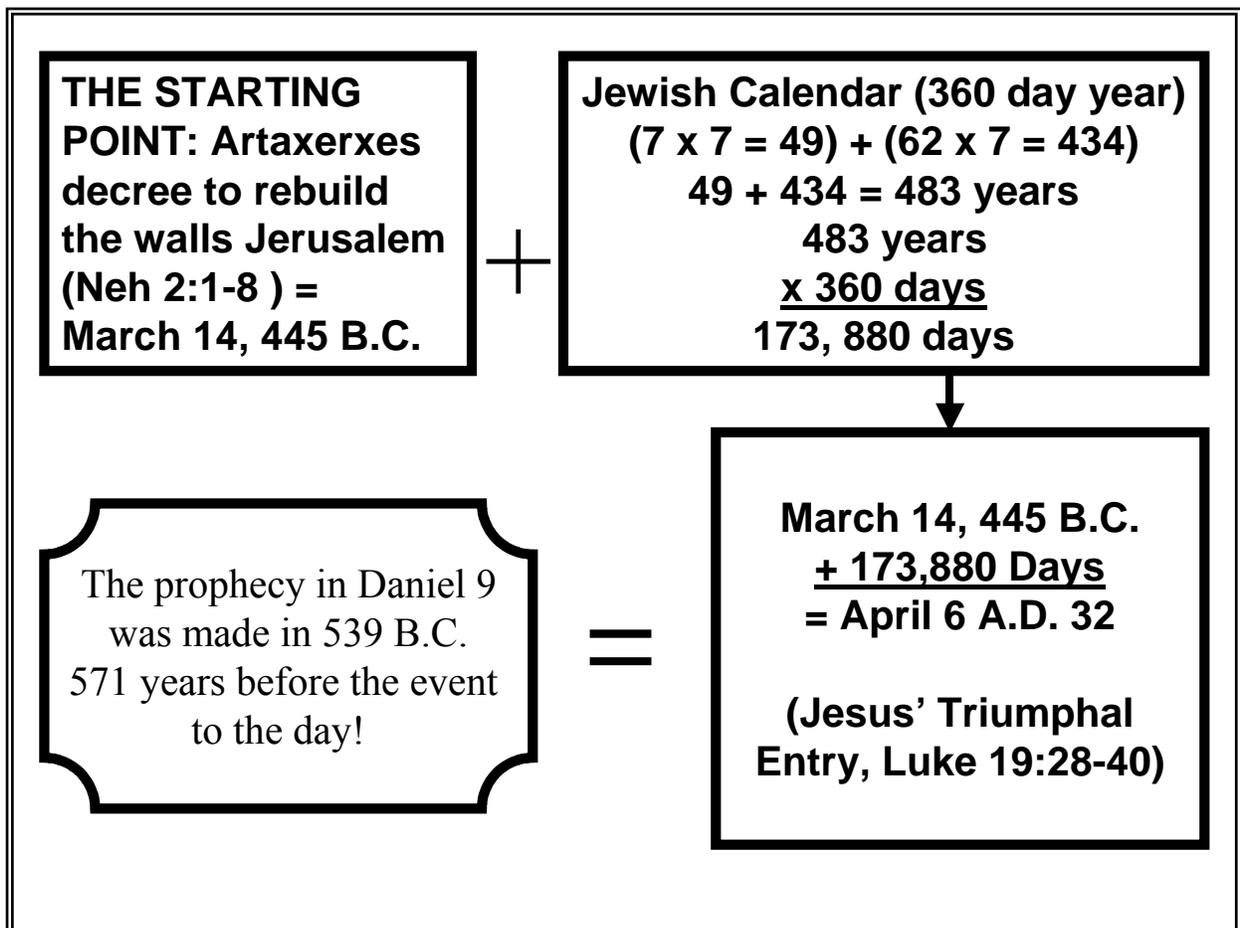
STEP ONE: IDENTIFYING A STARTING POINT

FOUR POSSIBLE DECREES			
WHO	WHAT	WHERE	WHEN
Cyrus	To rebuild the Jerusalem temple	Ezra 1:1-4	538 B.C.
Darius	To reconfirm Cyrus' decree	Ezra 6:1-12	515 B.C.
Artaxerxes	To establish the rights of returning Israelites	Ezra 7:11-26	458 B.C.
Artaxerxes	To rebuild the walls of Jerusalem	Nehemiah 2:1-8	445 B.C.

STEP TWO: DOING THE MATH

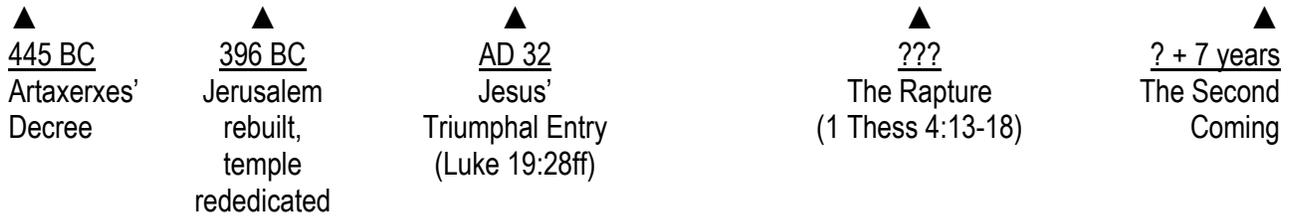
$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Jewish Calendar (360 day year)} \\
 (7 \times 7 = 49) + (62 \times 7 = 434) \\
 49 + 434 = 483 \text{ years} \\
 \begin{array}{r}
 483 \text{ years} \\
 \times 360 \text{ days} \\
 \hline
 173,880 \text{ days}
 \end{array}
 \end{array}$$

STEP THREE: DETERMINING THE DATE FOR "MESSIAH THE PRINCE"



DANIEL'S SEVENTY SEVENS

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES (LUKE 21:24)				
483 YEARS		UNKNOWN GAP	SEVEN YEARS	
Seven sevens of years	Sixty-two Sevens of Years	? of years	3 ½ years	3 ½ years



- C. Daniel receives a final vision which reveals God’s knowledge of and sovereign control over the empires of the world and the future (10:1–12:13).
1. The context of the final vision is established (10:1–11:1).

AN OVERVIEW OF DANIEL’S FINAL VISION

Daniel 10: The context of the final vision
 Daniel 11: The contents of the final vision
 Daniel 12: The concluding instructions for the final vision

- a. Daniel has his first encounter with a Heavenly Visitor (vv. 1–9).
- b. Daniel has his follow-up encounter with a Heavenly Visitor (10:10–11:1).

CLUES FOR IDENTIFYING THE “PRINCE OF PERSIA”

1. He was able to oppose the heavenly visitor for twenty-one days (v. 13).
2. In opposing the heavenly visitor he shows that he is opposed to God (v. 13)
3. This person is somehow associated with the nation of Persia (v. 13)
4. The angel Michael is also called a “prince” (v. 13).
5. The battle with the Prince of Persia is an ongoing one (v. 20)

SOME TRUTHS ABOUT ANGELS

1. Angels and demons really do exist (The words angel, angel's, and angels are used a total of 297 times in the KJV).
2. Angels and demons do battle in an unseen spiritual war. The results of these battles do affect human history.
3. Angels do interact with people on occasion and are able to help them.

2. The content of the final vision is elaborated (11:2–45).
 - a. Daniel is given prophecies concerning Persia (v. 2).
 - b. Daniel is given prophecies concerning Greece (vv. 3–4).
 - c. Daniel is given prophecies concerning the Ptolemies and Seleucids (vv. 5–20).

THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH IN DANIEL 11:5-35			
TEXT	EGYPTIAN PTOLEMAIC KING "King of the South"	TEXT	SYRIAN SELEUCID KING "King of the North"
11:5	Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.)*	11:5	Seleucus I Nicator (312-281 B.C.) [Antiochus I Soter (281-262)] ←Not mentioned
11:6	Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.)	11:6	Antiochus II Theos (262-246 B.C.) (married Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II, 252 B.C.)
11:7-8	Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.)	11:7-9	Seleucus II Callinicus (246-227 B.C.)
11:11-12, 14-15	Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-204 B.C.)	11:10	Seleucus III Soter (227-223 B.C.)
11:17	Ptolemy V Epiphanies (204-181 B.C.) (married Cleopatra, daughter of Antiochus III, 193 B.C.)	11:10-11, 13, 15-19	Antiochus III the Great (223-187 B.C.)
11:25	Ptolemy VI Philometer (181-145 B.C.) Ptolemy VII Euergetes II←Not mentioned	11:20	Seleucus IV Philopater (187-176 B.C.)
* Reignal years.		11:21-32	Antiochus IV Epiphanies (175-163 B.C.)

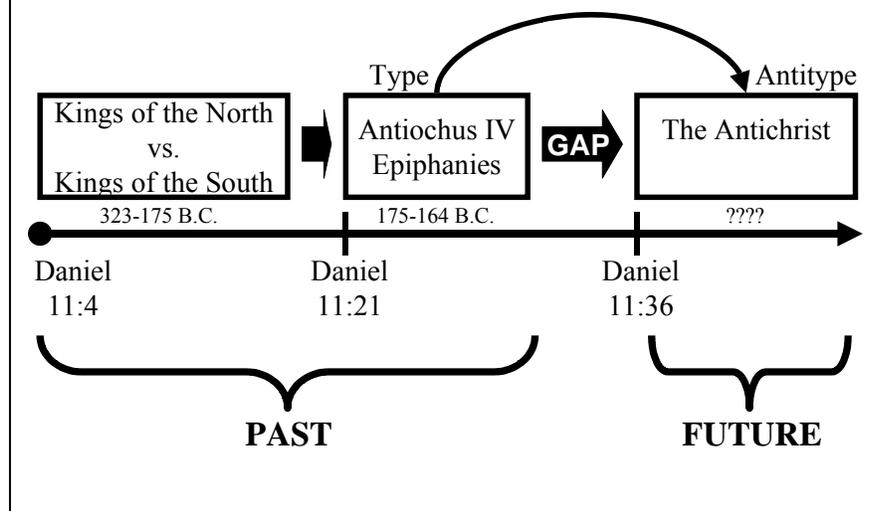
- d. Daniel is given prophecies concerning Antiochus IV Epiphanies (vv. 21–35).
- e. Daniel is given prophecies concerning the Antichrist (vv. 36–45).

WHY THE ANTICHRIST AND NOT ANTIOCHUS IV?

- The events in 11:36-45 cannot be harmonized with the life of Antiochus IV but they do seem to fit the description of the Antichrist found elsewhere, particularly in Revelation.
- According to 11:40, this king will rule during the “end time.” This would seem to favor the Antichrist.
- There seems to be a chronological transition between the period of Antiochus IV and the future period “still to come.”
- Chapter 12, which definitely includes end time details, is connected to the end of chapter 11 by the phrase “Now at that time.” If this connection is valid then 11:36-45 would seem to favor the Antichrist.

Having said all this, one must admit that the textual shift from Antiochus to Antichrist is very subtle. Thus, dogmatism is unwarranted and caution is wise.³⁵

A VISUAL SUMMARY OF DANIEL 11:4-45



³⁵ Longman, *Daniel*, 280-282. Longman identifies the problem well when he writes, “The difficulty is that there is no clear transitional statement between verses 35 and 36 or later between verses 39 and 40. In the earlier part of the chapter, there are clear signals that the narrator moves from one king to the next (cf. vv. 2, 7, 20-21), but not in the present section. Here we have the primary textual reason why we cannot simply rule out of court the argument that verses 36-45 continue the ‘prophecy’ of Antiochus Epiphanies.” Later Longman cautiously concludes that, “Indeed, all that I feel safe asserting is the following: Verses 40-45 look forward to a violent end to history.”

OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING GOD'S JUDGMENT

1. It is God who sets the time of judgment not man (cf. 11:36).
2. A delay in God's judgment should not be seen as a denial of God's judgment.
3. When God's judgment comes no one can help (cf. 11:45).

3. The concluding instructions concerning the final vision are given to Daniel (12:1–13).
 - a. Daniel is instructed concerning the coming distress (vv. 1–4).
 - b. Daniel is given specific clarifying details (vv. 5–13).

A PROPOSED CHRONOLOGY FOR DANIEL 12:7–12

DANIEL 12:7	DANIEL 12:11	DANIEL 12:12
1,260 Days*	1,260 days + 30 = 1,290	1,290 + 45 = 1,335
The Great Tribulation which lasts for "a time, times, and half a time," or 3½ years, or 1,260 days*.	The thirty days may be for the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46).	The additional forty-five days may be for setting up the Millennial kingdom.

HOPE FOR THE HURTING

The people of Israel in the midst of the Tribulation are going to be encouraged by this book. Here are a few observations that may have encouraged them and also can encourage us as well.

1. God has unseen spiritual forces who are on the side of God's people (12:1).
2. God will ultimately preserve you and glorify His people (12:1-3).
3. For those who trust in God a glorious resurrection and awaits whether we understand all these prophecies or not!