

Isagogical Study of Daniel 7 – 12

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by John Zeitler

The book of Daniel provides a fascinating study of a **wide variety of subjects** for the sincere student of Scripture. Miraculous interventions of God that touched powerful world leaders, Messianic prophecies, an eloquent and sincere prayer of repentance, the end of the world, the last judgment, the impact of angels on history, the resurrection of the dead, prophecies of coming world events in amazing detail, the coming of the antichrist, and many other themes make up the wealth of material that rolls forth from these twelve chapters given to us by God through the prophet Daniel.

So unique is the material and the apocalyptic character of this book that those who dwell in the **liberal camp** of theological studies have been quick to jump on its authenticity and to fire endless rounds of negative criticism against its sacred pages. Horace Hummel comments on the reason for these seemingly endless attacks in his introduction to the Old Testament:

The characteristic liberal distaste for the subject roots, it is safe to say, in the fact that apocalyptic highlights (at least by implication) just about everything that liberalism prefers not to highlight: supernaturalism, original sin, *solo gratia* instead of human cooperation, predictive prophecy, verbal inspiration, particularism, final judgment, bodily resurrection, etc. (Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, p. 350)

Leupold also nails down the **origin of this bad liberal habit** to call the book of Daniel a "pseudonymous production" by quoting Kliefoth:

If a man accepts a notion of a God, who either is nothing more than the natural laws, or is so completely bound to His own natural laws that He is unable to break through them by any free act of His own, such a man, we say, cannot conceive of an actual miracle nor of a true prophecy. But he who thus finds his path blocked by his own peculiar conceptions, which eliminate both miracles and prophecy, must of necessity dispose of this book in some way... (Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, p. 8)

Leupold's further comments on the **farcical attempts** of so-called "Bible scholars" to discredit the Bible:

We must confess to our utter inability to understand the position of those who spend page after page of argument in an endeavor to discredit and honeycomb the credibility of the book and its basic reliability and then give us the bland assurance: "Yet no words of mine can exaggerate the value which I attach to this part of our Canonical Scriptures." We do not question the writer's honesty. But we fail utterly to comprehend how such a position can be maintained. Surely, the effect of these extensive arguments, which are designed to stress the errors and the inaccuracies at great length, will be so strongly to confuse the lay reader as well as many of the clergy as to make it utterly impossible for them to read the book with anything other than confusion, if not a painful uneasiness that will make all

constructive approaches to the book basically futile. (Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* p. 27)

Enough comment on the countless negative attacks against the book of Daniel! Let it suffice to remember our seminary isagogics training where we were warned that **to approach the scriptures "critically" is to invite hardening**. The natural man will always resist and fight against God and his word, because to him it is "foolishness."

We approach the Scripture led by the Holy Spirit to accept the premise that it is the **inspired word of God**. Everyone who approaches and studies scripture must have a premise, whether they realize it, or not. Either the entire canon is the inspired Word of God, or it is not. To say that parts of it are inspired and parts of it are not is just a lot of theological mush! We read and study this book of Daniel together with the other books, not to find fault, but to be taught, rebuked, corrected and instructed in righteousness.

The Historical Context

The background of the book is the **Babylonian Captivity** of the Southern Kingdom of Judah which began in 605 B.C. Starting then and continuing for twenty more years, Babylonian armies invaded Judah at least three times and led tens of thousands of Jews into exile in Babylon. In 586 B.C. the Babylonian armies destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple of Solomon. The Babylonians remained a world power until they were conquered by the Medo-Persians and their king, Cyrus, in 536 B.C. The captivity lasted 70 years, ended by Cyrus' decree that released the Jewish captives to return to their homeland.

The Author

Although there is no clear statement in the book naming him as such, it is quite evident from statements made in the book that Daniel is the author. Jesus also refers to him as the author in Matthew 24:15. He is mentioned by Ezekiel, his contemporary, as an example of a God-fearing man (Ezekiel 14:20). Daniel was one of a group of bright young Jewish men to be deported early to Babylon in the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. While in Babylon he was promoted to a high position in the government and became highly respected by the Babylonian rulers. His high position may have been responsible for the unusually fair treatment of the Jews in Babylon. Daniel must have lived well into his eighties in Babylon. Negative critics try to place the author of the book four centuries later after many of the events prophesied in the book had already taken place. Their reasons for doing so, as discussed above, are obvious.

The Purpose of the Book

God's people had experienced the destruction of their country, of their temple, and had seen a large number of their population uprooted and transported almost a thousand miles away from their homeland. The experience was a bitter one. This was supposed to be God's chosen people. A great Deliverer was to come from the line of David in their midst. And now this "chosen nation" had become the victim of a disaster from which no other nation had ever recovered. The **captivity was God's predicted judgment** on their indifference to his will and their failure to appreciate his blessings. They had ignored and persecuted many of the prophets God had sent to them. Was there any hope for them, and would God keep his promise in spite of their disobedience?

In the book of Daniel God **shows the exiles in Babylon what their future holds**. They would be permitted to return home again, but they would never again rise to power as a prominent nation. They would be at the mercy of other, more powerful nations. The future would not always be pleasant, but God would keep his promise. His Kingdom would have the ultimate victory. His people would eventually share in his victory. Daniel's message was a comforting one for God's people and also a stern warning for his enemies then and now. The fact that both **Hebrew** (1-2:4a, 8-12) and **Aramaic** (2:4b-7) languages are used in the book, seems to indicate that God has a message here both for his "chosen people" and for the nations of the world around them. Aramaic was the international language of diplomacy and commerce in that day.

Outline of Chapters 1-6, the Historical Part of the Book

1. Daniel and his three friends are taken to Babylon in the **first deportation** and are trained for government service under king Nebuchadnezzar.
2. In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar asks his wise men to interpret a dream for him which he has forgotten. God reveals the dream and its interpretation to Daniel, who relates to the king the **dream of the great image** and its significance: the four kingdoms that would succeed one another in the future.
3. At another time Nebuchadnezzar casts Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego into the fiery furnace for their refusal to worship the golden image erected by him, but they are preserved unharmed.
4. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's **dream of the tree that is cut down** with only a stump remaining, as meaning that the king will suffer insanity for a season.
5. At **Belshazzar's feast** a miraculous handwriting on the wall appears. Daniel interprets the cryptic message as a warning to the king that he will be slain.
6. Sometime after the Medo-Persians conquer the Babylonians, enemies of Daniel accuse him to king Darius who casts Daniel into the **den of lions**, from which an angel rescues him.

Outline of Chapters 7-12, the Prophetical Part of the Book

7. The **vision of the four great beasts signifies** four great successive kingdoms (Compare Chapter 2). The antichrist arises, but God's kingdom has the final victory.
8. **The vision of the ram and the goat** symbolizes the destruction of the Medo-Persian kingdom destroyed by Greece. The rise of four kingdoms from the single kingdom of Greece is depicted, as well as the rise of one powerful and blasphemous ruler.
9. Daniel prays to God confessing the sins of his people. Gabriel answers Daniel's prayer with the famous **prophecy of the seventy weeks** and "the Anointed One."
10. A divine message is revealed to an anguished Daniel, which serves as an **introduction to the revelation** in chapters 11 and 12. Insight is given into angelic intervention in history.
11. The coming **wars between the kings of Egypt and Syria** are depicted in detail with emphasis on the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, who prefigures the rise and fall of the antichrist.
12. The **final victory** of God's people and the resurrection of the dead are described. Daniel is told to seal up the book and the prophecy is concluded.

Summary and Analysis of Content

Chapter 7

The Vision of the Four Beasts (7:1-14)

In the first year of Belshazzar (son and co-regent of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, and "son" or "successor" of Nebuchadnezzar) Daniel has a vision in which he sees four great beasts coming up out of a churning sea. They appeared to be (1) a **lion** with eagle's wings, (2) a **bear** with three ribs in its mouth, (3) a **leopard** with four bird wings and four heads, and (4) a terrifying and **powerful beast** with large iron teeth and ten horns. This last beast is different from the rest, and it tramples and devours its victims. On this beast a **little horn** appears, uprooting three other horns, and has a man's eyes and a boastful mouth. A court scene follows in which God is depicted in all his radiant glory and is called "**the Ancient of Days.**" The court is seated and the books are opened. The little horn continues to boast, but the beast is slain and thrown into a fire. One "**like a son of man**" comes with the clouds of heaven and approaches the Ancient of Days. He is given authority, glory and power and all peoples everywhere worship him. His kingdom will never pass away.

Interpretation of the Vision Is Given (7:15-28)

A troubled Daniel inquires of an angel standing there and receives an interpretation of the vision. The four beasts are **four kingdoms** that will rise from the earth, but the "saints of the Most High" will receive the kingdom and possess it forever. Daniel inquires further about the fourth beast which is different from the rest, especially about the little boastful horn which defeats God's saints until he pronounces judgment in favor of them. He is told that the **fourth beast has a threefold history**. It represents a (1) powerful kingdom that will rise to devour and crush the whole earth. (2) Ten kings, or kingdoms, will come from this kingdom, and among them one will rise (3) a king who will subdue three kings and who is different from the others. He will utter great things against God and will subdue the saints for "**time, times and half a time.**" However, the court will take away his power and destroy him forever. The saints will receive the power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven in the end, and God's kingdom will last forever. Daniel is deeply troubled and keeps the matter to himself.

Comments on Chapter 7

The four kingdoms in the vision are similar to the four kingdoms described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chapter 2. There we hear of an enormous statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron with feet of iron and clay, which represents four kingdoms each inferior to the other that will arise on earth. The head of gold is Nebuchadnezzar's own **Babylonian Empire** (606 B.C. - 536 B.C.), also represented by the winged lion in this vision. The **Medo-Persian Empire** (536 B.C. - 330 B.C.) would follow, represented by the chest and arms of silver and the bear. The **Greek Empire** established by Alexander the Great (330 B.C. - 146 B.C.) is symbolized by the belly and thighs of bronze and the four-headed four-winged leopard. Alexander would die at a young age and his vast empire would be divided into four kingdoms by his generals: Greece (Cassander), Asia Minor (Lysimachus), Syria (Seleucus), and Egypt (Ptolemy). The future history of the Jews would especially be affected by the empires of Syria and Egypt, Jerusalem being sandwiched in between the two powers. The **Roman Empire** (146 B.C.- 476 A.D., etc.) is the legs of iron with crumbling toes in the one vision and the terrifying beast in this vision. This world empire would

be powerful and mighty, but would break down into many other kingdoms symbolized by the ten horns.

One horn, symbolizing the **antichrist**, would grow out of the ten to exalt itself boastfully in God's face and terrorize God's saints. The time of his rule is given as "**time, times and half a time**," a symbolic number used here, in Chapter 12: 7, and in Revelation 12:14. It is most likely the equivalent of "three and one-half years," very likely a symbolic number that could designate a temporary reign of evil, being a fraction of the complete number seven. A careful study of the these last six chapters of Daniel, II Thessalonians 2, Revelation 13 and other scriptures as well as the Lutheran Confessions helps us to track down the antichrist. I quote Wilbert Gawrisch from his excellent lectures on *Eschatological Prophecies and Current Misinterpretations*:

It is obvious that there is only one phenomenon in the history of the church that has all the marks of the Antichrist given in Paul's prophecy. That is the Roman papacy... The papacy's fingerprints identify it ...as the criminal. Its anathema on the biblical doctrine of justification is the very acme of lawlessness. (Gawrisch, *WLQ* 85:2, p. 115.)

I also quote John Jeske in his commentary on Daniel:

Church history has documented how he (the Antichrist) has made war on the saints. Martin Luther experienced that. Think of how the pope threatened him with excommunication and death if he did not stop his work of reformation. A century before Luther, John Huss, a priest of Prague, Czechoslovakia, was burnt at the stake by order of the pope. For what crime? For publishing a Bible in the language of his people. Where the Antichrist is in control, life is not easy for the children of God. (Jeske, *The People's Bible: Daniel*, p.146)

The subject of the antichrist is not a pleasant one for God's saints to ponder, nor was it for Daniel. The point is that we need to be on guard against him and his powerful, but subtle, influence at all times. The good news is that he will not win out in the end. The "**Son of Man**," our Savior, and those who stay faithful to him will have the final victory when he comes in the clouds of heaven, as Jesus himself stated. (Matthew 24:30; Mark 14:62) In the vision described in Chapter 2, a rock not cut by human hands is thrown at the feet of the mighty iron empire of Rome, smashes the empire's power and becomes a huge mountain, the kingdom of God, that fills the earth and endures forever.

Chapter 8

The Vision of a Ram and a Goat (8:1-14)

Daniel receives another vision in the third year of Belshazzar's reign. From Susa he sees a **ram** with two horns, one longer than the other, become great as he charged unchallenged to the west, north and south. A **goat** with a prominent horn comes swiftly from the west, attacks the ram and destroys him. The goat becomes great, but at the height of his power loses his horn and four prominent horns replace it. **Another horn** comes from one of them, grows in power to the south, east and toward the "Beautiful Land." It sets itself up to be as great as the "Prince of the starry host," trampling some of the starry host of the heavens. He takes away the daily sacrifice, the sanctuary is brought low. He prospers and "truth was thrown to the ground." It will take

2,300 evenings and mornings to fulfill the vision which includes the "**rebellion that causes desolation.**" Then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.

The Interpretation of the Vision Is Given (8:15-27)

Gabriel is instructed to tell Daniel the meaning of the vision. He tells him that the vision concerns the **time of the end**. The two-horned ram represents the kings of **Media and Persia**. The goat is the king of **Greece**. The large horn is the first king, who is replaced by four less powerful kingdoms that will emerge from the first kingdom. A stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise in the latter part of their reign. He will be powerful, deceitful, cause devastation, persecute God's people and take his stand against the Prince of princes. He will arise, not by his own power, and he will be destroyed, not by human power. Daniel is told to seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future. He is appalled by the vision, for it is beyond his understanding.

Comments on Chapter 8

Again we are amazed at the astounding details of world history that are given to the prophet years before they are to take place. Even Daniel is amazed, to the point where he becomes ill for several days. The vision is explained by Gabriel, the angel who also appears in Chapter 9, and in Luke 1 where he announces the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias and the birth of Jesus to Mary.

Two world empires, mentioned previously, are described here. The Medo-Persian Empire, represented by the ram, is made up of two kingdoms (two horns), the lesser Median Empire and the powerful Persian Empire which absorbed the weaker Medes. The Persian Empire would expand west, north and south. From the west, however, comes a challenge from the Greek Empire and Alexander the Great, who at a very young age would muster a lightning swift army of 30,000 soldiers that would defeat the mighty Persian army and establish a powerful world empire. At the height of his power, at the young age of 33, Alexander, the "Napoleon of the Ancient World" would suddenly die, leaving his empire to be divided up into four kingdoms (four horns) by his generals.

The little horn that comes from one of these kingdoms is very likely Antiochus IV Epiphanes who would rule the Seleucid Empire from 175 B.C. until his death in 164 B.C. We know that Antiochus set up two main goals when he came to power: to enlarge his empire without breaking a treaty with Rome; and the Hellenization of his peoples. He conquered Egypt, but was forced to leave by the Romans. His armies swept on into India in the east. He also desired to establish a universal chief god, having a high regard for the Olympian Zeus. Antiochus was treacherous in his treatment of the Jews who refused to leave the worship of the true God. He plundered the temple in Jerusalem, he abolished the sacrifices and festivals and may have erected an altar to Zeus in the place of the altar of God. He burned the books containing the law of Moses. God's truth was forcibly taken from his people. The persecutions by Antiochus would come to a sudden end at his death in 164 B.C.

Since Gabriel told Daniel several times that the vision concerned the "time of the end," and since the vision of the little horn here is very similar to the little horn in the previous vision, it is very likely that Antiochus is also portrayed here as a type or figure of another enemy of God coming in the distant future, the **antichrist**. By studying the reign of terror of Antiochus, we can learn a lot about the methods and reign of the antichrist. Wilbert Gawrisch comments on this feature of prophecy that often pictures a future event with an event that precedes it:

Prophecies often speak of related events without putting them into the perspective of time. They do not indicate that the events which are foretold will be separated by hundreds or thousands of years. Reading them is therefore like looking from a distance at two mountain peaks without seeing the valley that lies between them. (Gawrisch, WLQ 84:3, p. 202)

The most terrifying characteristic of the antichrist is that he will seek to stand in God's place and desecrate his holy temple. The suffering of God's people and humiliation of God's sanctuary will last **2,300 evenings and mornings**. We don't know for sure what these numbers mean. They may be symbolical, they may be the actual time from the rise of Antiochus to the cleansing of the temple. The main comfort in this number is that the days of the antichrist are limited -- they will definitely come to an end!

Chapter 9

Daniel's Prayer (9:1-19)

In the first year of Darius, the Mede, son of Xerxes, Daniel prays after studying Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11-14; 29:10) that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years. He addresses his prayer to the covenant Savior God (יהוה). He confesses his own and his people's sins. "We deserve what we have received." "Lord, you are righteous." "We did not turn from our sins and give attention to your truth." "We do not make requests because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy."

Comments on Daniel's Prayer

The Babylonian Empire had now been crushed by the Medo-Persians under Cyrus. We are not sure exactly who this "Darius, the Mede" really is (see Chapter 6). Darius the Great ruled later on (521 B.C. - 485 B.C.) and the famous Xerxes was his son and successor. This may have been one of Cyrus' governors who was placed in charge of part of the kingdom (Gobryas). It may be Cyrus himself under a different name, or a special title. "Xerxes" is "Ahasuerus" in the original Hebrew, but cannot be the same king mentioned in the book of Esther.

There are **no whimpering or whining notes of self pity** in Daniel's prayer of repentance. The captivity was a just punishment for the people's indifference to God's covenant promises and their ignorance of his prophets. Daniel does not deal with sin flippantly. It is serious business, and the only way out from under it is through God's mercy and grace as previously declared in his covenant promises.

The Prophecy of the Seventy "Sevens" (9:20-27)

Gabriel answers Daniel's prayer with the famous prophecy of the "seventy weeks." The answer had come as soon as Daniel had begun to pray. Seventy "sevens" are decreed for Daniel's people to (1) finish transgression, (2) put an end to sin, (3) atone for wickedness, (4) bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) seal up vision and prophecy, and (6) anoint the most holy. From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the **Anointed One** (משיח), the ruler, comes there will be 7 "sevens" and 62 "sevens." Then the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler will come and destroy the sanctuary and the city. Wars and desolations will continue to the end. For 1 "seven" he will confirm a covenant with many. In

the middle of the "seven" he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. He will set up an abomination that causes desolation until he meets his decreed end.

Comments on the Seventy "Sevens" Prophecy

Jeremiah's "seventy years," as explained by Gabriel, means seventy "sevens." The exact length of the "seven" is not stated, although it is usually interpreted in terms of "years." Seventy of them have been decreed for the purpose of accomplishing the Messiah's work. This Messianic work is described in three negative and three positive terms. Negatively speaking, Christ has fulfilled the prophecy by appearing "once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26) Positively speaking, Christ has brought us the righteousness that "comes by faith" to which "the Law and the Prophets testify." (Romans 3:21-22) Furthermore, after Christ came there was no longer any more need for the Old Testament Messianic prophecies, because he had fulfilled them. It is difficult to discern what the anointing of the "most holy" means. It could mean the opening of the Holy of Holies to the public, symbolized by the tearing of the veil when Christ died. It could mean the founding of the Christian Church as God's temple of "living stones." (I Peter 2:5)

The interpretation of the 70 "sevens" is one of the most difficult problems for serious Bible scholars. No single interpretation solves all of the problems raised by the passage. The negative critics hold to the traditional Jewish interpretation that the time period extends only to Antiochus Epiphanes and that there is no Messianic reference here. The **millennialists** and dispensationalists prefer to think of the time period as extending from Daniel to the end of the world. The oldest interpretation, to which most **Lutheran interpreters** adhere, is that the time period is calculated from Cyrus' edict to return and rebuild Jerusalem to the completion of Christ's work of redemption. This period of time was about 500 years (70 x 7).

The prophecy also divides the period of 70 "sevens" into three segments of 7 + 62 + 1. John Jeske supports the following explanation of the three periods in his commentary:

The **seven "sevens"** represent the period during which Jerusalem's temple and its city walls were rebuilt at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The **sixty-two "sevens"** represent the period from Jerusalem's rebuilding to Messiah's coming and death.

The **one "seven"** is the time in which the Messiah will confirm a covenant of grace with many. Many will be saved through faith in the Messiah before the enemy comes, who will destroy Jerusalem. (Jeske, *The People's Bible: Daniel*, pp. 178-179)

The Messiah will save many before a destroyer comes, namely Titus and the Roman legions, who would set up some **abomination** in the temple. Jesus refers to this coming destruction as an event prefiguring the end of the world. (Matthew 24:15-27) The destroyer will receive his proper judgment in the end. Nothing is said about when the 70 "sevens" will end, just as little is said about when it began.

It is clear, then, that the emphasis is not on the beginning and the ending of this remarkable period of time, but rather upon the mighty events which were to take place in this period. These events have achieved our peace with God. Despite all the difficulties this chapter presents to the reader, one fact stands clear: the central figure is the Messiah. We can therefore afford to turn away from precise dates and mathematical calculations

and instead focus our attention on Jesus Christ. He alone has made reconciliation for sin. Only through him can sinners call God "Father." (Jeske, *The People's Bible: Daniel*, p. 183)

Chapter 10

Introduction to the Final Vision (10:1-11:1)

In the third year of Cyrus a divine message about a **great war** was revealed to Daniel (Belteshazzar) and understanding was given in a vision. He mourned for three weeks. A **man with an awesome appearance** comes to him, causing him to faint. The "man" reassures him that he has come in response to Daniel's prayer. The "prince of the Persian kingdom" had resisted the "man" for 21 days causing him to be detained with the king of Persia, until Michael, one of the chief princes came to help. Daniel is speechless and expresses his fear and anguish. The "one who looked like a man" strengthens him with his word and tells him that he has come to tell him what is written in the **Book of Truth**. He says that soon he will go to fight against the prince of Persia and when he goes, the prince of Greece will come. No one supports him against them except Michael "your prince."

Comments on Chapter 10

By now Cyrus had freed the Jews, many of whom had returned to their homeland to rebuild their temple and the city of Jerusalem. Daniel stays in Babylon, probably well into his eighties by now. Daniel is told of a **great war**, probably the attempt by the Samaritans in his homeland to bring the rebuilding project to a halt. (Ezra 4:4,5) The Jews were frustrated and discouraged, and Daniel's heart was heavy for his people.

The visitor who comes to Daniel is described as having an awesome appearance. He could have been an angel. However, since Michael, an archangel, is mentioned as having protected him, it may be God himself. The "man" is very similar to other visitors in Ezekiel 1:26-28 and in Revelation 1:13-15 (described as "like a son of man") and may very well be the "**Angel of the Lord**," the Old Testament designation for the second person of the Trinity. Daniel is shattered by the experience, and the men around him are driven away even though they cannot see him. (cf. Acts 9:7)

The Angel had come in answer to Daniel's prayer. He also wanted him to know about a **supernatural struggle** that was occurring. He gives Daniel a glimpse into the mysteries of the spirit world where the evil forces of the devil ("the prince of this world" in John 12:31) do battle with God's angels. One of Satan's angels must have been using Persia to try to overthrow God's plan for his people. **Michael**, the only archangel mentioned in scripture (Daniel 12:1; Jude 9, Revelation 12:7), helped the Angel to defeat Satan's evil plan. Michael is described as the particular champion of God's people, a kind of "**guardian angel**." It must have disturbed Daniel to learn how demonic forces were trying to use world powers to battle against God's people, but it comforted him to know that the Lord and his angels were doing battle for them. We are reminded of the words in Ephesians 6:12: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

God's "**Book of Truth**" mentioned here reminds us of Psalm 139:16: "All the days ordained for me are written in your book before one of them came to be." It is comforting for us to know that the future is safely in God's hands. He has full control over the enemies of his people.

Chapter 11

Prophecy of the Kings of the South and the Kings of the North (11:2-35)

Persia, Greece and the Fourfold Division (11:2-4)

The prophecy given by the Angel continues. Details of the near future involving the **divided Grecian Empire** are given in remarkable detail. Four more kings will appear in Persia. The fourth will attack Greece, but a mighty Grecian king will appear, whose empire will be broken up into four parts, which will not go to his descendants.

Comments on 2-4

This is the most detailed prophecy in the bible. The **four kings of Persia** are: Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius Hystaspes, and Xerxes (Ahasuerus, the king in the book of Esther). Xerxes planned for a long time to invade Greece, but lost out to young **Alexander the Great**. Alexander broke the power of Persia and sought to "Hellenize" his conquests. However, he died at a young age. His two sons were assassinated in the power struggle that followed his death. His empire was broken up into four parts among his generals: **Greece** to Cassander; **Asia Minor** to Lysimachus; **Syria and Babylon** to Seleucus; and **Egypt and Arabia** to Ptolemy.

North Vs. South (11: 5-20)

The rest of the chapter speaks of the next 150 years of struggle between the Syrian Kingdom and the Egyptian Kingdom, the kings of the North (Seleucids) and the kings of the South (Ptolemies), again in remarkable detail.

Comments on 5-20

Not all details of future history are given here, just the highlights. Wars, wholesale slaughter, invasions, political marriages, and murder would highlight the coming turmoil. We can find reference in these verses to Ptolemy I (v. 5); Seleucus Nicator (v. 5); Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II, given in marriage to Antiochus II (v. 6); Ptolemy III's invasion of Syria (w. 7-8); Seleucus III and Antiochus III, the Great (w. 10-12); Ptolemy IV's defeat of Antiochus III at Raphia in 217 B.C. (v.13); Antiochus III's return against Egypt, assisted by revolting Jews, and his conquest of Palestine (w. 14-17); Antiochus III giving his daughter Cleopatra in a treacherous marriage alliance to Ptolemy V (v. 17); Antiochus III's invasion of Mediterranean Islands and his being driven back to his country by the Roman armies where he dies (w. 18-19); and Seleucus IV's futile attempt to raise money by taxation (v. 19). The details of this bitter opposition between North and South for the next one and one half centuries were mapped out by the Angel to Daniel. The **future would not be peaceful** for God's people.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21-35)

A "**contemptible person** who has not been given the honor or royalty" will succeed to the throne of the Seleucid Kingdom through intrigue. He will win an impressive military victory in which "the prince of the covenant" will be destroyed. He will win great victories over the richest provinces, but will enjoy it only for a time. He will attack the King of the South, assisted by a conspiracy in the south. The two kings will sit together at the table and lie to each other, their hearts bent on evil. The King of the North will return to his country, but will take action against the holy covenant. He will invade the South again, but be opposed by ships of the west. He will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant, showing favor to those who

forsook the covenant. He would desecrate the temple, abolish the daily sacrifice and set up the "**abomination that causes desolation.**" A great persecution of the "wise" will take place. They will receive a little help, but will be refined until the end which will come at an appointed time.

Comments on 21-35

The rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the "**Antichrist of the Old Testament,**" is predicted. He was not the rightful heir to the Syrian throne, but got it by deception. He made himself master of the southern kingdom of Egypt partly by force and partly by cunning deceit. Ptolemy VI, son of Cleopatra, nephew of Antiochus, was defeated by treachery of his subjects. Under guise of friendship Antiochus and Ptolemy vied with each other in treachery. Returning from Egypt Antiochus attacked Jerusalem, slew many and took captives into slavery. He invaded Egypt again but the Roman fleet came to their assistance and compelled him to retreat and go back home. He vented his anger on Jerusalem and desecrated the temple, assisted by apostate Jews. He wanted to wipe out every trace of God-given faith and replace it with Greek customs and culture. He **defiled the sanctuary** of the temple by abolishing the sacrifices and possibly setting up another altar and the statue of Zeus. Jesus uses the same term to describe the desolation brought to the temple by the Roman armies later on in 70 A.D. (Matthew 24:15)

The reassuring statement is made that God would have a good purpose in this fierce persecution. The "little help" received by the faithful might be the revolt led by Judas Maccabeus against the Syrians around 165 B.C. Many whose motives were insincere joined this movement. In spite of his determined efforts, Antiochus would not be able to stamp out the worship of the true God. The remnant of the faithful would be refined and made spotless in the fire of the furnace of persecution. God and his angels would always have full control of the situation, no matter how violent and hopeless the situation would seem at the time.

The King Who Exalts Himself (11:36-95)

The narrative continues, describing "the king" who will do what he pleases, exalting himself above every god, speaking against the God of gods. He will be successful only until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will honor a god of fortresses, attacking the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. He will invade the Beautiful Land. He will greatly honor those who acknowledge him, making them rulers and distributing land. At the time of the end he will be attacked by the kings of the North and the South. He will invade and sweep through many countries, including Egypt; but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. Reports from the east and north will alarm him and he in a great rage will try to destroy many. He will come to his end and no one will help him.

Comments on 36-45

Is this "king" Antiochus, or is it the antichrist? Much of the description fits Antiochus, but some points do not. Antiochus did not exalt himself above every god. He highly revered the Greek gods, especially Zeus, seeking to force him on his subjected peoples. We have here an Old Testament prediction of the **antichrist**, of which Antiochus was a type, as we said before. The antichrist exalts himself above God, saying blasphemous things which rob God of his glory. He will defy God's institutions, he will influence and control governments, greatly rewarding those who honor him. Some who are already enemies of God are delivered from his influence. He will

have enemies from the north and the south. He will have setbacks. He will be alarmed by reports around him, but he will have the gall to make his residence where God makes his.

Again we cannot help to notice how well the **Roman papacy** has fit this description. The papacy has robbed God of his glory by attacking the very heart of the gospel with its anathema on the central doctrine of justification by faith. The pope has claimed to be the only divinely authorized spokesman for God. He has shown fascination with warlike conquests, influencing governments, and honoring those who honor him. He has had his share of earthly enemies. He has been made uneasy by the voices of the Reformation, Islam, Communism and others. Yet he takes up residence in the place of God as if he were in the temple of Jerusalem. He will come to a sudden end, however. God will have the final word, and no one will help him.

Chapter 14

A Final Word of Encouragement

Michael, who protects Daniel's people, will arise at that time of great distress. Then all whose names are **written in the book** will be delivered. **Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake**, some to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt. The wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens; those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever. Daniel is told to seal the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge. Daniel then sees two others near him who discuss the time for the fulfillment of these things. One swears by God that it will be for a **time, times, and half a time**. All these things will be completed when the power of the holy people is finally broken. A puzzled Daniel asks about the outcome of all this. Daniel is told to go his way, for the words are sealed. Many will be purified, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. The wise will understand, but not the wicked. There will be **1,290 days** from the abomination that causes desolation. Blessed is the one who reaches the end of the 1,335 days. Daniel is told to go his way until the end. "You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

Comments on Chapter 14

Daniel closes his sketches of world history with a "fast forward" to the end. There will be trouble like never before, but also a resurrection of the dead and everlasting glory for the saints. **The times of trouble** would include torture, suffering, the death of whole populations, demon dictators like Antiochus, Titus, Roman emperors, the popes, and more. The struggle will be intense as the antichrist lashes out in desperate fury to subdue God's people. Life as a child of God will not be a bed of roses. There is great need to "watch and pray" and not to be overconfident.

But God not only warns us, he also encourages us through Daniel. Michael, God's archangel, will always be there to defend God's people when distress arises. God has his people's names written down in his Book of Life, and they will not be lost. Death will be overcome in the **resurrection** at the end. Mankind, who was made from dust, who returned to dust because of sin, will be taken from the dust and made alive again. (John 5:25-28) **Everlasting punishment** awaits those who spurned God and his grace in this word. **Everlasting glory** awaits those who remained faithful to him through the turmoil and storms of life. Glory is here described as "like the brightness of the heavens" and "like the stars." Those who led others to this saving God will

shine on that day. Daniel is instructed to preserve these wonderful words for future generations who will need these warnings and this encouragement.

The angel's answer to how long will it be until the end of time is the same unusual expression used in Chapter 7:25, "**time, times, and half a time**," the same amount of time that God had designated for the reign of the antichrist. When God's people are close to annihilation, when the antichrist's complete victory seems very near, God will destroy him and rescue his people. We are not allowed to know the exact time of the end, but only the signs before the end. We have been given all we need to know in order to prepare for that time. Although there are many mysteries in these prophecies, we trust that God will cause us to understand them when the time is right. We need not spend endless hours like those who waste gallons of ink and tons of paper trying to predict the date of the end and trying to find fulfillment for every detail of prophecy in today's events. Wickedness will always be with us to the end, but the wise, who fear the Lord, will understand.

The angel does give Daniel two time periods at the end of the book: **1,290 days and 1,335 days**. Most commentators have preferred to interpret the numbers symbolically. Both numbers are slightly more than three and one half years (1,278 days), a number which keeps reappearing in this Old Testament Apocalypse and in the New Testament Apocalypse (Revelation). Again they are probably the symbolic measure of time, exactly measured by God, when his people will be suffering under the antichrist, both the Old Testament variety (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) and the New Testament variety (the papacy). Since the numbers are about half of a period of seven years, the symbolical complete number, perhaps it means that the troubles and persecutions will last only about half of the time to the end. The main point is that the time is carefully measured out by God. It will not go on forever and ever. "He who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matthew 24:13)

The book of Daniel comes to a close on a **note of victory**. The angel encourages him to continue on with his life, and not to be deterred by what he had learned. He would rest someday in the grave, but would rise again in victory. The terrifying visions and prophecies at times had left Daniel exhausted, faint, and ill. He had received an insight into the future of his world from God's Book of Truth, but in the end he and his people would share in the Messiah's everlasting victory.

Closing Comments

With Daniel we have also received an insight into the future of our own world that may leave us trembling and quite exhausted. This look into the future, together with the glimpses God gives us in the Revelation of St. John and other scriptures, should leave us with several thoughts impressed on our minds and hearts. One is that there is no place for apathetic and indifferent "**cream puff**" Christianity in a world where powerful natural and spiritual forces are battling overtime to undermine God's people and to overthrow his church. We are living in the "church militant," which means we are soldiers of Christ fighting a battle for our lives and for others.

We are also left with the encouragement and assurance that **Christ and all his holy angels are on our side**. We need to remember the mighty arsenal of weapons he has given us, especially the "sword of the Spirit," the word of God. That sword cannot be kept polished and nicely preserved in its scabbard on the living room wall while we fritter our time away with other things. God has put us as pastors in the front lines of the battle, with efficient sharp swords that need to be swinging and conquering. This calls for diligent and faithful mining of the

scriptures, as well as fervent, faithful, and fearless preaching and teaching of the truth in the face of a world that by nature hates the truth and will do almost anything to suppress it.

As was noted at the beginning of this paper, the **modern day bible critic** turns up his nose at the book of Daniel, because it stands for just about everything that he hates and refuses to accept. Obviously, Daniel's piercing words are a bit too sharp and uncomfortable for those who spend a great part of their time undermining the word and doing exactly what the book condemns. Let us not shy away from this powerful prophecy because of bashing by the liberal, or because of flagrant abuse by the millennialist. Rather, let us **boldly hold it up** in these "end times" both to shatter proud hearts that exalt themselves against Christ and his Gospel, and to strengthen weak and trembling hearts crushed by sin and intimidated by God's enemies. We need to review its detailed revelations, visions and prophecies regularly to keep ourselves alert and to remind ourselves that **the Lord is always in control** no matter how futile the situation around us may seem. Even if God's people feel like a small insignificant minority overwhelmed by massive heathen empires, as in Daniel's day, and feel outgunned by the subtle and blasphemous antichrist, the victory, finally, will be ours. That's guaranteed.

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