

Exegetical, Theological, and Devotional Notes
On Daniel: The Message For the Times

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The following work is a brief exegetical, theological, and devotional examination of the Old Testament book of Daniel that was produced as supplemental notes for my church Bible study group where we worked through the text of Daniel from October 2010 through March of 2011. These notes include many questions for reflection and follow the text carefully passage-by-passage suggesting points of particular note (historical, theological, exegetical, philosophical, devotional and pragmatic), related passages both in the OT and NT (as well as Deutero-Canonical) and points to ponder in relation to the text. There is an all too brief bibliography of works cited where one can find several helpful commentaries that were used as the basis for the majority of this particular study and other resources pertinent to the study of Daniel.

The English text that was used for the quotations in order to have some sense of continuity and a unified text in congregational reading was the *New International Version* (1984). However, I have tried everywhere to work closely with the Hebrew and Aramaic text using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* as the base text for translation with due consideration of the LXX and Theodotion, the Vulgate, and Targumim. While the notes do not contain much information with regard to these linguistic features, nor to the history of the text, yet this is simply due to the nature of the notes as such and to their intended audience. This is not to suggest that this was not a significant part of the work that lay behind this project, but only that it was not pertinent to providing such information for a congregational setting that needed some form of devotional supplemental materials. However, where it was felt that this information would provide further insight it has been added. Also, it should be noted that the verse numbers used for this study follow the English versification and neither the Hebrew/Aramaic nor the LXX versification (and such would need to be noted carefully when looking up passages throughout this study).

These notes were developed to enhance the Wednesday night studies and are not in any way constitutive of the full content actually covered in those sessions. These notes offer material that it was felt might provide opportunity for further reflection outside of the church setting and it has already been demonstrated in our congregation's life that this has proven to be effective as a supplement to the regular teaching and life of the Church.

It is hoped that this brief booklet will be a resource for others in furthering their own personal study of this marvelous little prophet and writer who says so much in such a little book and will offer some further insights to spur on reflection and passion for the word of God and for lives dedicated to obedience at any cost until His kingdom finally comes!

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Brief Introduction to the Book of Daniel – Daniel was taken into captivity in the summer of 605BC while Jehoiachim son of Josiah was king of Judah some time after the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish. Jehoiachim had actually been placed upon the throne by Egypt and thus it seemed only fitting that the defeat of the Egyptians spelled the defeat of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, was officially made king of Babylon later that summer upon the death of his father (Miller 56). Daniel and his friends were among those initially taken and he survived until some time after the Babylonian captivity ended with the defeat of the Babylonians by the Persians in 539BC.

The book of Daniel was included in the Hebrew canon among the writings because he does not belong particularly to the prophets (as in the LXX canon and our own), but this does not mean the book was regarded as non-prophetic. In fact, the nature of Daniel is such that it is written as a book primarily about wisdom and understanding in light of the events that have occurred, are occurring and will occur in the future. The question remains as the stories unfold...how will one respond to the situations which confront the nations?

Daniel contains several additions in the Catholic canon (Prayer of Azariah, Song of the Three, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon; and in the original KJV[!]), but this was not received into the Protestant canon of Scripture (these will be briefly discussed at the conclusion of this series and at the appropriate places throughout the text). Many reject Daniel as having been written in the 6th century and instead date it to the Maccabean period (250-167BC), but Archer (421-448) Baldwin (14-80), Walvoord (11-25), and Miller (22-41) have argued rather persuasively for a 6th century date of authorship perhaps shortly after the date of the Babylonian exile in 539BC. This does not mean that there was no editorial working done later upon the text, but only that the initial work was likely done shortly after the claims of the actual events portrayed throughout the account.

The book has been variously divided between the Hebrew language sections (Dan.1:1-2:4a; 8:1-12:13) and Aramaic language section (Dan.2:4b-7:28), but the most helpful distinction is between the stories (Dan.1-6) and the visions (Dan.7-12). What is the core message of this book of the Bible? “This biblical witness challenges the faithful to be awake for the unexpected intervention of God in wrapping up all of human history. The stories of Daniel and his friends picture men who bear eloquent testimony in both word and deed to an unswerving hope in God’s rule. As a consequence, they were made free to hang loosely on the world because they knew their hope rested elsewhere” (Childs 622).

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List of Abbreviations

- 1QS = First Cave of Qumran – The Manual of Disciple
- 1 Macc = First Maccabees
- 2 Macc = Second Maccabees
- 4QOrNab = Fourth Cave of Qumran – The text of the Prayer of Nabonidus
- AD = *Anno Domini* (the Year of our Lord)
- Add.
- Esther = Additions to the book of Esther found in the *LXX*
- Josephus
- Ant.* = Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*
- ANET* = *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* by James B. Pritchard
- Aram. = Aramaic
- BC = Before Christ
- cf. = cross reference
- Heb. = Hebrew
- KJV = King James Version of the Bible

LXX = Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible
NASB = New American Standard Bible (1995)
NET = New English Translation
NIV = New International Version (1984)
NRS = New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NT = New Testament
OT = Old Testament
RSV = Revised Standard Version

The books of the Bible are as follows: Gen. Exo. Lev. Num. Deut. Josh. Jud. 1-2 Sam. 1-2 Kings 1-2 Chron. Ezra Neh. Esther Job Ps. Prov. Ecc. Song Isa. Jer. Lam. Eze. Dan. Hos. Joel Amos Oba. Jonah Mic. Nah. Hab. Zeph. Hag. Zech. Mal. Mt. Mk. Lk. Jn. Acts Rom. 1-2 Cor. Gal. Eph. Phil. Col. 1-2 Thess. 1-2 Tim. Tit. Phile. Heb. James 1-2 Pet. 1-3 Jn. Jude Rev.

Daniel 1 – When in Exile...

1:1-2 – The beginning of captivity. The time note that Daniel provides refers to the year 605BC and though there are no records of any actual siege of Jerusalem, it is not necessary that Jerusalem was laid siege so much as taken captive in that year. Nebuchadnezzar is called “king” because either it refers to his functioning role in the very end of his father’s reign or because it refers to him this way as one who later was king of Babylon. Who is emphasized as responsible for the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over Jerusalem and what is the significance in relation to the book of Daniel? The Lord rules all the nations...great and small. The “temple articles” were promised to be taken to Babylon because of the sin of Hezekiah in showing the Babylonians his treasures (cf. 2 Chron.36:7, 10, 18, 20-23; Isa.39:2, 4, 6; Ezra 1:7-11 and comes into play later in Daniel 5:2-4). Literally, the articles were carried off to “Shinar” (cf. Gen.10:10) which was an ancient name of a city recognized to be a place of opposition to God (Gen.11:1-9; Zech.5:11). What is the significance of putting the articles of the temple of God into the temple of Nebuchadnezzar’s gods? (cf. 1 Sam.4-5) “To all appearances, the God of Jerusalem has been defeated by the gods of Babylon” (Goldingay 21), but Daniel will point in a radically different direction.

1:3-7 – The training of the best of the young exiles. The descriptions of those who were to be trained were that they were taken from the best families (royal and/or nobility; cf. Isa.39:7) and of fine appearance and high aptitude. The terms used are those of the wisdom literature (cf. Prov.1:1-6) with regard to the acumen of these young men (Heb. *yēlādīm* which “covers men from birth to marriage” – Goldingay 5). The literature and language of the “Babylonians” (lit. “Chaldeans” Heb. *kaśdīm*, Aram. *kaśdāy*) included magical, astrological, medicinal, temple, wisdom, and legal texts among others. How could Daniel and his friends spend three years of intensive training in such things and yet remain true to the LORD? John Goldingay astutely notes that the “wise person knows how to learn from the wisdom of other peoples without being overcome by it” (24). The food and wine they were assigned came directly from the king’s table and thus was luxurious but would also have been offered to the god/s of the king (cf. Oppenheim 188-92) before they received it. Four of the chosen young men are named as particularly faithful and deserving of mention: Daniel (“God is my judge”; became Belteshazzar “Bel, protect his life!”), Hananiah (“The LORD has been gracious”; became Shadrach “Command of Aku” *the moon god*), Mishael (“Who is what God is?”; became Meshach “Who is what Aku is?”), and Azariah (“The LORD has helped”; became Abednego “Servant of Nebo” the god of Nebuchadnezzar’s namesake) – on name changes see Gen. 41:45; Esther 2:7. Why were their names changed and why did they not protest this and the learning of the Chaldeans, but did protest the diet that follows?

1:8-16 – The ten day test of food and faith. What might have been Daniel and his friend’s motivation for refusing the food and wine of Nebuchadnezzar and choosing to have “vegetables” (technically refers to “vegetables, grain, and non-meat products generally” Goldingay 6) and water instead? One suggestion has been that they were not “kosher” (cf. Lev.11, 17) and thus would “defile” them, but this would only pertain to meats and not to wine. As was previously mentioned it had been offered to the god/s (cf. 1 Cor.8-10; Rom.14), but so would the

“vegetables” have been (cf. Bel and the Dragon 3; Oppenheim 192; those who denied consuming even the “vegetables” for this reason: cf. Judith 10:5; 12:2; Add. Esther 14:17; Tobit 1:10-11). It is also notable that Jehoiachin was recorded to have eaten daily at the king's table according to 2 Kings 25:29. Goldingay proposes that they refused as symbols of “avoiding assimilation” (19). They had taken the names, learned the wisdom, worn the clothes and by outward appearances become “Babylonians”, but they would hold this one thing as to the LORD. Though Daniel's request found favor with the chief official, the official was too afraid to grant it directly so the “guard” (or more properly the one given direct responsibility over them) exchanged portions with them thus relieving the chief official of responsibility. This act of Daniel and his friends was an outright act of faith on their part. At the end of the ten days they were found to be in much better appearance than the rest of those who ate the royal food so they were permitted to continue with their diet of faith. This is not in any way offered as a vegetarian command since the Law specifically commanded certain sacrifices of meat to be made and eaten every year (though the temple was destroyed at this time and thus the sacrifices could not be made then). “Even a small act of self-discipline, taken out of loyalty to principle, sets God's servants in the line of his approval and blessing. In this way actions attest faith, and character is strengthened to face more difficult situations in the future” (Baldwin 92-3).

1:17-21 – An insight into the end before getting to the end. It is stated the God Himself gave the four young men understanding of all the things they were studying during their three years of Babylonian tutelage. How might this be understood in light of the contents of what they studied? What relation does God's wisdom and knowledge have to the world's? It is specifically noted that Daniel was blessed with being able to understand and interpret dreams (cf. Num.12:6) which comes into play later in the book (though it is not something inherent to him, but something he still prays and seeks). When they finally made their appearance before the king it was noticeable that these four far surpassed all the others, but they would still have opportunities to demonstrate the superiority of their God. The note in verse 21 concerning King Cyrus (see the prophecy in Isa.44:24-45:7) maintains that while Daniel when into captivity he lived to see the end of it under the Persians (cf. Deut.30:3-5; the “seventy years” of Jer.25:12).

Daniel 2 – Dreams From God

2:1-3 – The disturbing dreams of a king. (cf. Gen.41) Nebuchadnezzar appears to have had dreams that were disturbing his sleep and the notation of time seems confusing (“in the second year of his reign) until it is understood that it likely refers to the Babylonian calendar and thus refers to just after the ending of the “three” years of training were completed by Daniel and his friends (see Miller 76-7; Walvoord 45-6). While this is not a guaranteed solution, it seems a very probable one given the all of the evidence. It was common for kings of the ancient Near East to keep such persons as here listed in order to deal with issues such as interpreting omens like those found in dreams that were considered to be from the gods. Certainly a new and fairly young king like Nebuchadnezzar would have many reasons to fear the contents of the dreams he had been having (as laid out by Daniel later in this chapter), because it would suggest some sort of great calamity or foreboding omen. Why would the Lord have given Nebuchadnezzar these dreams and not simply Daniel (as He does in a fuller form later in Dan.7)?

2:4-11 – The impossibility of telling a dream and then interpreting it. His diviners, who are all well trained in dream interpretations, need to be told the dreams in order to offer an interpretation, but Nebuchadnezzar refuses perhaps because he fears they may be somehow plotting something against him (especially since his dream seemed to contain such destructive images). His fears may not have been entirely unfounded given that “two of the next three Babylonian kings were assassinated” (Miller 82). His threats against them are not vain...nor his promises of wealth and honor. Those who excel in the arts of divining the will of the gods and speaking on behalf of the gods clearly declare to the king that no one can do what he has asked, because there is no one who has that kind of contact with the gods.

2:12-18 – The order of death and the prayer for mercy. All of the wise men of (the vicinity) of Babylon were to be executed because of the failure to serve the king in the capacity they were supposed to serve him. What in particular marks Daniel’s statements to Arioch the executioner with “wisdom and tact”? Why should Daniel have been given time, when Nebuchadnezzar had already said that his wise men were seeming to only want to buy more time in order to change the situation? What does this say about Divine favor? What is the first thing Daniel does after getting permission to have more time to interpret the dream (and try to find out what the dream even was)? They specifically pray for “mercy” (cf. Neh.9:28; Isa.63:7; Dan.9:9).

2:19-23 – A psalm. It would appear that during the night while Daniel and his friends were praying the Lord gave a vision to Daniel and showed him the “mystery” which caused him to bless the “God of heaven” (Ezra 1:2; 6:10; 7:12, 21; Neh.1:5; 2:4). This short psalm is indeed “a model of thanksgiving” (Baldwin 101). All praise is due to God who alone is sovereign over all: time (contrast the bold claim of the “little horn” in Dan.7:25), powers, and authorities. There is nothing hidden from Him (cf. Deut.29:29) and Daniel also gets specific about thanking God for this particular revelation that He has given to them.

2:24-30 – Who could reveal the dream to the king? Daniel goes to Arioch who in turn takes him to the king where Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) confesses that this is an impossible task

for the wise men. However, he then clarifies that there is “a God in heaven” who does know and reveal such things and who had done such for Daniel. “Daniel denies that history is determined by the planetary forces that the Babylonians studied (cf. Isa.40:25-26). History is under the control of God in his freedom. It is thus his secret. It cannot be predicted, divined by means of techniques, as the sages have now acknowledged. It can only be revealed” (Goldingay 56). For whose benefit does Daniel say that the dream and the interpretation have been given?

2:31-45 – The dream and interpretation. The king saw a large statue (Aram. *šēlem* “image” which is not an idol) of unknown size and brilliant in appearance. It had a head of pure gold, torso and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze (not brass as the *KJV*), legs of iron with feet partly iron and baked clay. Suddenly he saw a rock (divinely?) cut out that was hurled at the statue and not only toppled it and destroyed it, but ground it to chaff and dust and the wind blew it all away and the rock grew to become a great mountain that filled the whole earth. Why does Daniel address Nebuchadnezzar as the “king of kings” and who is the “we” that is doing the interpreting? The interpretation (which Daniel received further explanation through a dream of his own some forty years later in Dan.7) is as follows: the gold head is Nebuchadnezzar (and his kingdom of neo-Babylon 605-539BC) who is described as having dominion over everyone and everything. How fitting is this? The silver torso and arms represents another kingdom (Medo-Persia 539-331BC) that is “inferior”, just as the bronze one (Greek 331-168BC) is even more so. The fourth kingdom, though tremendously strong (like iron) will be mixed with baked clay and will be a “divided kingdom”. This fourth kingdom is Rome (168BC-436ADWest & 1453East) or at least ancient Rome and some form of a reconstituted Rome (by this I mean to refer to some future kingdom/s as well). How could there be no mention of a time gap? Note the “mountains of prophecy” example: where someone looks at a mountain range from a distance and sees only *a* mountain, but the closer one gets, the more one sometimes sees the great distances between what turns out to be *many* mountains. While there is no mention of there being ten toes on the statue, yet later there are ten specifically mentioned in Dan.7:24 as ten kings (kingdoms or nations) that are somehow a part of what was ancient Rome (cf. Rev.13:1; 17:12). While the kingdoms would grow increasingly more inferior to the one previous, yet they would also grow more fierce and terrible until finally the fourth kingdom would be destroyed by God’s kingdom represented by the “rock” that will utterly destroy all the kingdoms of this world and will be established itself forever and ever. “Lifelike as much of this sculpture was, the figure remained rigid and motionless, the artificial product of human handiwork, and as such the statue was a fitting symbol of man-made kingdoms. The stone, by contrast, was mobile, a ‘living stone’, which had within it the power to grow until it filled the earth” (Baldwin 108). This whole dream actually seems to rule out the view that the kingdom of God is only spiritual (and thus the millennial reign of Christ is only spiritual) because the other kingdoms are all very much a part of this world and they are destroyed in reality and replaced in reality. This would suggest a very real historical acting on God’s part to make His kingdom come. However, one thing should be kept in mind that “the vision offers no hint regarding the chronology whereby God’s rule will arrive; it does invite its recipients to live as people who expect it as a living reality” (Goldingay 62). While Daniel is explaining the very real plan of God in the scheme of world history, yet we are not being given a time-line of world history so as to map out God’s exact prophetic program. The “what” is certain; the “when” is left for another time.

2:46-49 – The results of God’s dreams. While Nebuchadnezzar offers honor and incense to Daniel it appears to actually be to Daniel’s god as the “God of gods and the Lord of kings” (titles that were actually used for Marduk chief god of the Babylonians). While the gods of the Babylonians were silent and their earthly cohorts in the wise men could say nothing, the living God in heaven spoke and His men of wisdom thereby revealed the hidden mysteries. This was not really ever about the wise men, but about the gods and about the absolute ruler of this world. Does this mean that Nebuchadnezzar has confessed his faith in the Lord? No. Since the Lord already knew that he wouldn’t turn in faith, why did He go through the trouble of doing what he did as recorded in this chapter? The king kept his promise of blessing whoever could interpret his dreams. Perhaps the Lord was positioning his servants Daniel and his friends in other places in the kingdom for yet future service. How old would Daniel have been at this time as he was made head over the wise men of the vicinity of Babylon since it was only the second year of Nebuchadnezzar? Also, Daniel’s friends received places of honor and authority because of their part in the interpretation of the dreams. From this it should be evident whose God *is* god...

Daniel 3 – The God Who Saves

3:1-7 – The image of gold. Theodotion and the *LXX* provide an interesting time note that is not included in the Aramaic text found in our Bibles. They actually state that it was Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year when what follows happened and that would place the incident of the fiery furnace in the very year of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (cf. Jer.52:29). This made the trial of the three synonymous with the trial of the people of God and offered hope of salvation through the fires of Babylonian captivity.

It is unclear whether Nebuchadnezzar made the image of himself or (more likely) of one of his gods – Marduk or Bel. The dimensions of the image or statue are irregular. In the Aramaic, it is sixty cubits high and six cubits wide (Walvoord pg.81 notes this as unintentionally the number of man; cf. Rev.13:18) with the NIV giving 90 feet high and 9 feet wide (appearing like an obelisk much like the Washington Monument). In accordance with this, the Babylonians used the Sumero-Akkadian sexagesimal system of measurement which seems to be the explanation for the dimensions being in sixes (we still use this system in telling time: 24 hours, 60 minutes, 60 seconds, etc). “To reduce [the dimensions of] the statue to something normal... [is]...to miss the point that the statue is extraordinary and monumental, even grotesque” (Goldingay 69; cf. Oppenheim 183-9). The place for the dedication was called Dura (meaning “a walled place”) and it was likely a location six miles southeast of Babylon where a massive pedestal of bricks has been discovered.

Why would Nebuchadnezzar set up such an image after his disturbing dreams mentioned in the second chapter? Perhaps the dreams gave him the idea (see the comments of third century Church Father Hippolytus 2.15), but perhaps he simply did not care what the end would be and only obsessed over the present and the head of gold which represented himself. Everyone present was commanded to worship the image at the sound of the music playing to demonstrate their loyalty to the king and to the empire and his gods (cf. Rev.13).

3:8-15 – The three Hebrews who would not bow. Some of the “astrologers” (Aram. *kaśdāyin*) apparently driven by jealousy for the elevated status of the three friends of Daniel accused them before Nebuchadnezzar who otherwise would have been ignorant of their failure to bow and worship the image. With all of the leaders of Babylon that are named as called to the dedication (Aram. *ḥānukkah*) of the image why was Daniel not mentioned specifically? His presence at the royal court might explain his absence from this ceremony (see Dan.2:49; Miller 108) though there may be other explanations as well.

The accusations brought against them are that they neither worship Nebuchadnezzar's gods nor the image he has set up. They are given another chance or will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace of fire. Could Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego have bowed on the outside and still remained true to God on the inside? (cf. 2 Kings 5:18-19; but see Deut.4:27-28; while gross idolatry occurred at that very time in the temple of Jerusalem according to Ezekiel 8, yet the three remained pure in far off Babylon where no one would have been the wiser). Note Nebuchadnezzar's challenge that no god could save the three from his hand (compare the similar comments by Rabshekah in 2 Ki.18:33-35; Isa.36:17-20). In fact, in another place we discover that Nebuchadnezzar did kill two men – Zedekiah and Ahab – by throwing them into a fire

(Jer.29:22). However, this account is not really a contest between Nebuchadnezzar and the three...it is a story about the one True God and His power and presence. This is not a “moral story” but it is a “display of a God who is faithful to His people even in captivity and is ever ready to deliver those who put their trust in Him. The contrast of the God of Israel to the idols of Babylon is a reminder that the god of this world, behind the Gentile dominion, is doomed to judgment at the hands of the sovereign God” (Walvoord 94).

3:16-23 – Thrown into the fire. The three offered no defense of themselves, but left everything to their God. “Formally, the existence of their God is expressed hypothetically; but neither they nor the reader actually question his existence as uncertain. Given that he exists, he is able to rescue...and he *will* rescue (that is a bold, un-evidenced wager parallel to those of 1:12-13; 2:14-16)” (Goldingay 73). According to the fourth century writer Jerome, “They indicate that it will not be a matter of God’s inability, but rather of His sovereign will if they do perish” (Miller 120). They would neither worship Nebuchadnezzar’s gods (which each of the three were named after) nor would they bow before the image outwardly. They stood upon the promise that their God would be with them even through the fire (cf. Exo.3:12; Isa.7:14; 43:1-3) and so in essence they were saying, “Death is preferable to apostasy” (Goldingay 74; note the confession of Job 13:15).

John Walvoord proposes that “the blazing furnace” following the Aramaic should be read without the definite article “the” and therefore would have “the resultant meaning that He [God] could deliver them from any fiery furnace, not just the one immediately at hand” (89). Their denial of worship absolutely infuriated Nebuchadnezzar who had the furnace heated “seven times hotter” which suggests simply that it could not be hotter (on the use of seven times cf. Prov.24:16; 26:16). His rage (as often is the case) moved beyond reason and instead of a slow burn which would have proven more painful to the three, he instead chose to kill them more quickly. The heat of the fires seems to match the heat of his temper.

He called for his strongest soldiers to throw them into the furnace, but this proved fatal to the soldiers. It appears that the three were thrown in through some hole in the top and then later the king saw them through some hole lower in the massive furnace. In the rush to punish the three they are not even stripped of their clothing as would have been normally done and so they were thrown into the fire with all their garments still on (though the exact translation of just what it was that the three Aramaic terms refer to remains unclear the significance is that they were thrown into the fire with clothes on and pulled out with their clothes not even singed or smelling of smoke let alone the any of their hairs singed, but the ropes were burned right off). At this point in the *LXX* the “Prayer of Azariah” and the “Song of the Three Hebrew Children” is inserted between Dan.2:23 and 2:24. The Rabbis have written that at the very moment the three were thrown into the fire Ezekiel was sent to restore the dead in the valley of dry bones...God was protecting and giving life (*Sanhedrin Tractate*, Rodkinson 279).

The Prayer of Azariah (and The Song of the Three Hebrew Children - NRS)

1:1 They walked around in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord.

² Then Azariah stood still in the fire and prayed aloud: ³ "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and worthy of praise; and glorious is your name forever! ⁴ For you are just in all you have done; all your works are true and your ways right, and all your judgments are true. ⁵ You have executed true judgments in all you have brought upon us and upon Jerusalem, the holy city of our ancestors; by a true judgment you have brought all this upon us because of our sins. ⁶ For we have sinned and broken your law in turning away from you; in all matters we have sinned

grievously. ⁷ We have not obeyed your commandments, we have not kept them or done what you have commanded us for our own good. ⁸ So all that you have brought upon us, and all that you have done to us, you have done by a true judgment. ⁹ You have handed us over to our enemies, lawless and hateful rebels, and to an unjust king, the most wicked in all the world. ¹⁰ And now we cannot open our mouths; we, your servants who worship you, have become a shame and a reproach. ¹¹ For your name's sake do not give us up forever, and do not annul your covenant. ¹² Do not withdraw your mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham your beloved and for the sake of your servant Isaac and Israel your holy one, ¹³ to whom you promised to multiply their descendants like the stars of heaven and like the sand on the shore of the sea. ¹⁴ For we, O Lord, have become fewer than any other nation, and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins. ¹⁵ In our day we have no ruler, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before you and to find mercy.

¹⁶ Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted, ¹⁷ as though it were with burnt offerings of rams and bulls, or with tens of thousands of fat lambs; such may our sacrifice be in your sight today, and may we unreservedly follow you, for no shame will come to those who trust in you. ¹⁸ And now with all our heart we follow you; we fear you and seek your presence. ¹⁹ Do not put us to shame, but deal with us in your patience and in your abundant mercy. ²⁰ Deliver us in accordance with your marvelous works, and bring glory to your name, O Lord. ²¹ Let all who do harm to your servants be put to shame; let them be disgraced and deprived of all power, and let their strength be broken. ²² Let them know that you alone are the Lord God, glorious over the whole world." ²³ Now the king's servants who threw them in kept stoking the furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood. ²⁴ And the flames poured out above the furnace forty-nine cubits, ²⁵ and spread out and burned those Chaldeans who were caught near the furnace. ²⁶ But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions, and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace, ²⁷ and made the inside of the furnace as though a moist wind were whistling through it. The fire did not touch them at all and caused them no pain or distress.

²⁸ Then the three with one voice praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace: ²⁹ "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and to be praised and highly exalted forever;³⁰ And blessed is your glorious, holy name, and to be highly praised and highly exalted forever.³¹ Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory, and to be extolled and highly glorified forever.³² Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne on the cherubim, and to be praised and highly exalted forever.³³ Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, and to be extolled and highly exalted forever.³⁴ Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven, and to be sung and glorified forever.³⁵ "Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.³⁶ Bless the Lord, you heavens; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.³⁷ Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.³⁸ Bless the Lord, all you waters above the heavens; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.³⁹ Bless the Lord, all you powers of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴⁰ Bless the Lord, sun and moon; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴¹ Bless the Lord, stars of heaven; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴² "Bless the Lord, all rain and dew; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴³ Bless the Lord, all you winds; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴⁴ Bless the Lord, fire and heat; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴⁵ Bless the Lord, winter cold and summer heat; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴⁶ Bless the Lord, dews and falling snow; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴⁷ Bless the Lord, nights and days; sing praise to him and highly exalt

him forever.⁴⁸ Bless the Lord, light and darkness; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁴⁹ Bless the Lord, ice and cold; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵⁰ Bless the Lord, frosts and snows; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵¹ Bless the Lord, lightnings and clouds; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵² "Let the earth bless the Lord; let it sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever."⁵³ Bless the Lord, mountains and hills; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵⁴ Bless the Lord, all that grows in the ground; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵⁵ Bless the Lord, seas and rivers; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵⁶ Bless the Lord, you springs; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵⁷ Bless the Lord, you whales and all that swim in the waters; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵⁸ Bless the Lord, all birds of the air; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁵⁹ Bless the Lord, all wild animals and cattle; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁶⁰ "Bless the Lord, all people on earth; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever."⁶¹ Bless the Lord, O Israel; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁶² Bless the Lord, you priests of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁶³ Bless the Lord, you servants of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁶⁴ Bless the Lord, spirits and souls of the righteous; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁶⁵ Bless the Lord, you who are holy and humble in heart; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.⁶⁶ "Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. For he has rescued us from Hades and saved us from the power of death, and delivered us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace; from the midst of the fire he has delivered us."⁶⁷ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.⁶⁸ All who worship the Lord, bless the God of gods, sing praise to him and give thanks to him, for his mercy endures forever."

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2:24-30 – The God who walks in the fire. Why might the Lord have allowed Nebuchadnezzar to be the first one to see the three walking in the fire and also a fourth in the fire? They were tied and he noted they were unbound...they were thrown into a fire so hot it killed his strongest soldiers for just getting too close and he noted they were unharmed and walking around (and in the LXX they are actually singing!). Who exactly is the fourth one seen by Nebuchadnezzar in the fire who never emerges from the flames? Note the reference in Isaiah 43:1-3 about the LORD being with His people even through the fire. One who looks like “a son of the gods” (Aram. *bar ’elāhin*) or even “a divine being” is a far more likely rendering in English than the *KJV*’s “Son of God”. Nebuchadnezzar also referred to this fourth being as God’s “angel” (Aram. *mal’ak*) sent to care for His servants.

What sort of transformation should this have made in him or did this make in him? His use of “the Most High God” is really not significant as it is other times spoken by those who were not of the faith of Israel (cf. Gen.14:19; Num.24:16; Isa.14:14). It is not that the king abandons his gods, but that he demanded that none blaspheme the God of the Jews under punishment of the very things he had declared he would do to those who failed to tell him his dreams and then interpret them (Dan.2:5). They were willing to give up their very lives or literally “yielded up their bodies” (and Theodotion adds “to the fire” which Paul adds to his letter to the Corinthians in 1 Cor.13:3) rather than deny their God total worship and trust. It was not a matter of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego knowing how their lives would end. They simply knew that to trust the LORD meant that whatever happened He would be faithful and they must

also be faithful because He was faithful. This story later was taken up by Mattathias to encourage his sons in revolt against the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century (1 Macc.2:59) and also by the writer of the Hebrews concerning those who “quenched the fury of the flames” in their walk of faith without having yet received the reward they sought (Heb.11:34). Contrast the command of Deut.7:25 concerning what supposed to be done to idols with what was done to the three in this account. The conclusion of Nebuchadnezzar is indeed the conclusion of the book of Daniel: no other god can save in the way that the God of Israel saves.

Daniel 4 – The God Who Rules

4:1-3 – The opening address by Nebuchadnezzar. This chapter opens with a personal address to all peoples everywhere and announces the power and majesty of the God of Israel as the Most High God. The confession that he makes here is no small confession coming from a man who ruled the known world and had all things at his personal disposal. This is an announcement that is written after what follows, but also precedes it. Nebuchadnezzar speaks in the first person until verse 19, where the account shifts to Daniel’s interpretation of the dream and to the state of insanity. Then the account returns to the first person once Nebuchadnezzar’s sanity is restored again in verses 34 and following.

4:4-8 – Another dream and another call for interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar opens by describing himself as “contented” (Aram. *šēlēh* “at ease/rest”) and “prosperous” (Aram. *ra ‘ānān* “flourishing/luxuriant”; a term used in Biblical Hebrew to refer to trees which prepares us for the dream that follows; cf. Ps.92:15). In the very place where he felt most secure suddenly he was gripped by fear. His dream, now troubling him as he was awake, needed interpretation, but as before none but Daniel could give the interpretation. This despite the fact that here he actually shares the dream with those who should have been able to interpret it for him and this dream was certainly not difficult to understand the figures, so it appears that somehow the others were kept from the interpretation. The Babylonian name of Daniel is given (Belteshazzar) because that is the name he was best known by among the Babylonians, but still Nebuchadnezzar recognized that it was not per se “his god” that had anything to do with helping Daniel, but “the spirit of the holy gods” that was “in him.” The reference to the spirit by Nebuchadnezzar is a confession “of a real presence of God that contrasts with the spurious presence that the statue of chap. 3 claimed to bring” (Goldingay 87). The spirit of the “gods” (Aram. *‘ēlāhîn*) that Nebuchadnezzar refers to could still be taken in a singular sense (much as the name of the one true God is) even though grammatically it is plural (interestingly Theodotion has the singular *theou*), however it seems more likely that it is still a plural for Nebuchadnezzar given his use of the plural adjective for “holy” (Aram. *qādīšîn*) that is included with the noun.

4:9-18 – The Dream of the Tree. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that Belteshazzar had what the others of his kingdom did not and could interpret mysteries beyond understanding. The dream was as follows: he saw a great tree (cf. Ps.92; Eze.17; 19:10-14; 28; 31) that stood in the middle of the earth and reached to the heavens themselves. This tree provided was magnificent and provided shelter and food for all of the creatures. However, suddenly, in the dream a “messenger, a holy one coming down out of heaven” (this refers in Nebuchadnezzar’s own language to what we might call an “angel” which is a transliteration of the LXX here, whereas Theodotion has “watcher” following the Aramaic *‘îr* which literally means “one who is awake”—see Miller 133—and thus they are just like their Lord—see Ps.121:4; also Karl Barth—*Church Dogmatics* III.3 pp.460-463—proposes that the true ministry of angels is to be witnesses to God’s word and work, and to the God who alone is Lord of all). The command is given to chop the tree down and strip it of everything, but to leave the stump. Actually, the stump was to be “bound with iron and bronze.” Are we to understand this in a positive or a negative way? This is actually a word of ultimate hope to Nebuchadnezzar since he is the tree. The bands on

the stump refer to God's allowing Nebuchadnezzar to "retain control of his kingdom" and let him know that God will eventually restore it to him "after he comes back to his senses" (Walvoord 106). In a time when any sign of weakness could mean a sudden overthrow and assassination, this was no time for insanity. It would actually require divine intervention for Nebuchadnezzar to be spared *and* restored. Suddenly the image shifts from a bound stump to one who will be forced to live as the animals though he had at one time provided for all of the animals. The time frame of "seven times" was set for the duration of this insanity, but does this refer to years or seasons? Miller (134-5) and Walvoord (103) think it likely it refers to years because of its relation to Dan.7:12, 25 and also the LXX translation as "years," however Goldingay (81) and Baldwin (125) understand it to simply refer to "seasons" following the Theodotion translation and the more vague use of the same term outside of this chapter in Dan. 2:8, 9, 21; 3:5, 15. While the sense of "times" may be debated, perhaps also the sense of "seven" should be understood to refer to the fullness of the time for him. Perhaps this is too vague, but it also lends itself to understanding that God's timing is always right on time. John Goldingay notes that the first reason we are given for the felling of the tree is not pride, but simply to "show that God rules" (93). It is only noted as secondarily a matter of humility. The interpretation would seem to be apparent, but for whatever reason the interpretation was not forthcoming from all those in the kingdom who should have interpreted and so Belteshazzar was called upon for the interpretation.

4:19-27 – The interpretation of the dream. Daniel, for obvious and perhaps not as obvious reasons, was reticent to provide the interpretation. He also was greatly bothered by the dream and the meaning. It would appear though that Daniel's concern has less to do with his own self-preservation over giving the king a negative interpretation than to do with a genuine concern for the benefit of the king and therefore of the kingdom. Daniel's concern for Nebuchadnezzar "invites us to care about people in power, even people who abuse power, to appeal to their humanness not their sinfulness, and to treat them as people given a responsibility by God and people who may respond to an appeal to right and wrong" (Goldingay 94). After describing the tree again to Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel declares "You, O king, are that tree!" (cf. Nathan's very similar words to David "You are the man" – 2 Sam.12:7). Note the parallels and contrast between the tree that is Nebuchadnezzar and the description Jesus gave of the Kingdom of God in Mark 4:30-32. Daniel emphatically tells the king that the "Most High" had issued a "decree" against him that he would live like a wild animal for "seven times" until he acknowledged "Heaven rules" (this is the only place in the OT where "heaven" stands for the name of God, but this became more common by the inter-testamental period and was particularly used by Matthew in his many—31 verses to be precise—references to the "kingdom of heaven" where the other Gospel accounts have a preference for "kingdom of God") The acknowledgment that "Heaven rules" was an acknowledgment that the Most High was sovereign over everything and everyone. Nebuchadnezzar was informed that there was mercy in this for him. The Most High would preserve him until he acknowledges this, but he did not have to necessarily even face this suffering (though that would be left to the mercy of God). He could have followed the advice of Daniel and renounced his sins by doing right and also caring for the oppressed. "Nebuchadnezzar might not have been treating others cruelly but he probably did what many people do today, practiced an indulgent lifestyle and simply ignored the misfortunes of others" (Miller 139; cf. Isa.1:17).

4:28-33 – The fulfillment of the dream. Approximately one year after the dream and interpretation everything happens just as it had been predicted. It began with Nebuchadnezzar walking on the roof of one of his palaces (there were several in Babylon) and glorying in the majesty of “the great Babylon” (cf. Rev.14:8; 18:2) that he believed himself to have built by his own doing. Babylon was, of course, one of the most magnificent cities of the ancient world. Walls forty feet high wide enough for chariots to ride upon with gates that were renowned for their magnificence. He also built the hanging gardens for his wife that the Greeks labeled one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Perhaps it was even there that looked out upon that vast city and was in awe of the dozens of temples and the numerous palaces and mighty walls. A truly awe-inspiring spectacle, but just as the words were “still on his lips” suddenly “a voice came from heaven” with the decree that had been given in the dream. God not only was capable of giving all of Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar but of taking it from him, making him insane and keeping him from death in that state of insanity for seven times until he should be humbled and restored. “Perhaps one should say that the true insanity belongs to the Nebuchadnezzar who had earlier been talking as if he were the eternal king and God did not exist. His outward madness is the external expression of a delusion he has already been the tragic victim of” (Goldingay 96). The illness of Nebuchadnezzar finds allusion in the 2nd century BC Abydenus (Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelico* 9.41.1) and the 3rd century BC Babylonian priest Berosus (Josephus *Against Apion* 1.20). Interestingly the LXX has added that his madness happened in his eighteenth year which would be the very year he destroyed Jerusalem (586BC), but the Theodotion Greek does not include this time note and neither does the Aramaic and it seems very unlikely (the LXX having a text that is ¼ longer in chapter four than the Aramaic; despite the fact that the LXX does not have 4:6-10a solving the dilemma of Daniel’s absence that the Theodotion did not have an issue with including). Stephen Miller proposes that it likely happened no later than 571BC which seems probable (128). According to Jewish legend, his son Amūl-Marduk ruled in his stead until his sanity was restored (Baldwin 128). Is it possible that Daniel may have actually cared for Nebuchadnezzar in this state? Somehow he was cared for and kept from the public so that he eventually could be restored. That alone speaks of God’s grace and mercy.

4:34-37 – The insanity ends and sanity begins. Nebuchadnezzar again writes whereas in his previous state he could not and it had to be told in the third person. Now he tells us that he looked to heaven and he was restored. What praise belongs to God who restores us when our profession can be as little as a crazed man who lifts his eyes finally to acknowledge the God who is sovereign over all? Nebuchadnezzar makes a profession of faith in God as sovereign over all, but how much a saving faith is perhaps beyond what we should conjecture. What does Nebuchadnezzar’s profession of faith teach us? Why did God choose to restore Nebuchadnezzar who had been given a chance earlier to do what was right and didn’t? Can we profess trust in a God that we know little about and it be sufficient? What can we learn about the kingdoms and authorities of this world through this account?

John Goldingay comments that though Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the tree between heaven and earth that was glorified and then shamed ends, there would “eventually be a very different tree, one which more effectively links earth and heaven and displays itself—or rather displays the one it bears—before earth and heaven; a tree which, moreover, also has to become a tree of shame—

but not for its own shortcomings—before it can be a tree of glory. That tree will offer life, security, and provision in fuller senses—though the fuller sense must not exclude the physical senses which are this vision’s concern, and which are God’s own concern” (91-2).

Daniel 5 – The Writing Is On the Wall

5:1-4 – The party that ended it all. Daniel 5 moves the book forward in time about thirty years after the events of chapter 4. The date can actually be fixed to October 12, 539BC (Miller 151) based upon certain historical records that give the date for the conquering of Babylon. However, Daniel had already seen the end of the kingdom of Babylon in several visions. He had a vision in the first year of Belshazzar's reign (Dan.7) and again in the third year (Dan.8). Also, the prophets of Judah – Isaiah and Jeremiah – had spoken of the fall of Babylon even naming the conqueror of Babylon and then the deliverer of Israel as Cyrus the Persian (Isa.13:17-22; 21:1-10; 44:28-45:1; Jer.51:33-58). Belshazzar (Akkadian *Bēl-šar-ušur* “Bel, protect the king”) is the “king” of Babylon serving while his father Nabonidus (the actual king) has remained away for the previous ten years at the city of Teima (Tayma) – perhaps due to his worship of the moon god Sin and failure to worship Marduk the chief god of Babylon, but there may have been other reasons for his absence as well including trying to keep control of the empire.

As it turns out, Nabonidus had just been defeated on the 10th of October, 539BC at Sippar (just 50 miles north of Babylon) without battle by the Medo-Persians who had also defeated him at Opis (*ANET* 306). Nabonidus fled, but would be captured after the fall of Babylon days later. His son, Belshazzar determined for some reason to have a drunken party knowing that the Medo-Persian armies were all about Babylon and had conquered much of the empire already. Why would he do such a thing? Perhaps because he did not believe Babylon could fall since it was considered impregnable and had storehouses for a very long siege, or perhaps he was trying to gain bravado in the face of great adversity and wanted to demonstrate how fearless he was of the outside situation to all of his household and kingdom. The text of Daniel, however, makes no mention at all of the defeat of Nabonidus or of the Medo-Persians at the gates until the very end of the chapter when the party has finished and all is accomplished as it was foretold – and even then it is only of the latter. Belshazzar apparently determined to invite as many guests as possible to celebrate and the text suggests something more than that he drank wine “with” them, but that he drank wine “in front of, before” (Aram. *qōbēl*) them. This suggests the idea that he may have been making something of a spectacle of himself in front of these nobles. It is also something quite unimaginable that he included among those invited all of his wives and concubines. The text also seems to suggest that he was inebriated and this contributed to his failure to even recognize the social mores of superstition against desecrating sacred objects belonging to other gods – even the objects of gods from conquered nations.

Why was Nebuchadnezzar called his “father” if in fact Nabonidus was actually his father? All of the other records of history note that there had been several turn-overs of the kingdom since Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus himself had taken the throne, but was not a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. The Aramaic (as the Hebrew also) for “father” carries the meaning of “grandfather,” “ancestor,” or may even suggest “successor” in some instances. It has been conjectured that the relation may have been through Belshazzar's mother to Nebuchadnezzar making him a “son” and Nebuchadnezzar his “father” (on which see notes Dan.5:10ff).

Another question that suggests itself is why he should choose on such a night to drink from the sacred vessels of the temple in Jerusalem? Why specifically use those items? Did he also drink

from the vessels of the other conquered people's gods on that night or was it only of Israel's God? The Scriptures do not tell us, but they do tell us that the king made a point to do this specifically with the vessels from Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar had taken (Dan.1:2) and then to proceed to praise "the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone" (compare also the same phrase in the "Prayer of Nabonidus" in 4QOrNab).

5:5-9 – The writing on the wall and the fear of the king. Just as the praises were being uttered to the gods while drinking the wine, suddenly a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster wall in a well lit place so the king could clearly see his judgment being written out. During excavations in the late 1800s and early 1900s a large throne room (56 feet wide and 173 feet long) was found with a plastered wall behind the throne wall likely being the very place Belshazzar held his last feast and saw the writing on the wall. The effect of the writing (it was on plaster and well lit so the king would not miss it) was immediate. He was terrified so thoroughly that he could not even stand as it were. He "called out" (lit. "called out with strength" or "loudly") apparently frantic for an answer to the omen before him. Despite the promise of the gold chain and purple robe (signs of authority and blessing) and being made "the third highest ruler" (Aram. *taltî*) in Babylon (that is that he would become part of a *triumvir*), none of his wise men could read or interpret what was written. What would it mean to be "the third highest ruler" in this case? It seems likely he means that this person would be after himself who was after his father Nabonidus, but why someone might want such a position when the kingdom seems to be lost seems beyond Belshazzar to grasp. That those who were supposed to have the ability to understand and interpret such things were unable to do so only served to trouble him even more.

5:10-12 – The "queen" has an answer. Who is this "queen" and just what is her relationship to Belshazzar? Given that Daniel has already informed us that the wives and concubines of Belshazzar were all present at the party, it seems more likely this woman is not the "queen" of Belshazzar, but of Nabonidus. Thus she would be the "queen-mother" (see the NIV footnote for verse 10; on the place of the "queen" in the ancient Near East, Oppenheim 104). She may have been the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar (or the former wife as some suggest) and the wife of Nabonidus (see Josephus *Ant.*10.11.2; Miller 159-160). She seems to have heard of Daniel (perhaps from the times of Nebuchadnezzar) since she uses the same description found of him earlier (Dan.4:8, 9, 18) that he "has the spirit [Aram. *rûah*] of the holy [Aram. *godêsh*] gods in him." Further, she elaborates that in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel (who is in his eighties by the time of Belshazzar) was known to have "insight" (Aram. *nahîrû*) suggests illumination from God the source of all light (Dan.2:22), "intelligence" (Aram. *šākl^etānû*) indicates that Daniel not only possesses intellect or talent, but that he actually knows how to use it, and "wisdom" (Aram. *hokmâ*) "denotes in Daniel the supernatural intuition of an interpreter of dreams or omens, that wisdom which also belongs supremely to God (2:20)" (Goldingay 109-110). Daniel is actually attributed with having these attributes "like that of the gods," something which set him above and beyond the others around him. The queen-mother is convinced that Daniel (Beltshazzar) was the one able to interpret this riddle of an omen for Belshazzar.

5:13-16 – The words of the king. Belshazzar calls for Daniel, but seems to regard Daniel in less high esteem than the queen-mother and refers to him immediately as one of the exiles. He also notably leaves off the "holiness" of the gods whose spirit was said to be in Daniel by the

queen mother. Has he done this intentionally? He repeats that the others could not do for him what he needed and also repeats his promise of reward and honor if Daniel can read and interpret (Aram. *p^eshar*) the writing on the wall. He at least confesses that he has heard that Daniel can “solve difficult problems” (lit. “loosen knots” a metaphor concerning difficulties).

5:17-24 – The words of Daniel. Daniel does not wish the king long life as the queen-mother had done (Dan.5:10) and as he knows would be vain to do in this situation given the interpretation. He also renounces the gifts in exchange for delivering the message knowing that no message from God can be purchased (cf. 2 Nu.22:18; Ki.5:16). He begins with recounting the glories of Belshazzar’s “father” Nebuchadnezzar and then of Nebuchadnezzar’s fall from that status for a time because of his pride and arrogance. He reminds Belshazzar’s of God’s sovereignty over all of the kings and kingdoms of the world. Then he turns to Belshazzar and points to his pride and failure to humble himself and all of this in the midst of his drunken revelry with the vessels from the temple of Yahweh strewn about. He charges Belshazzar with having set himself “against the Lord (Aram. *mārē*) of heaven” by profaning the holy, having others do likewise, and praising gods that “cannot see or hear or understand” (cf. Deut.4:28; Ps.115:4-8; 135:15-17; Hab.2:19; Rev.9:20). Above all, Belshazzar failed to honor and praise God who alone holds him and all in His hands. This is the explanation Daniel gives for the hand that wrote on the wall.

5:25-28 – The inscription of God. Exactly how the inscription was written is not clear. Was it written in Aramaic (and therefore without vowels) or Cuneiform (and therefore with vowels)? Was it written from right to left (as would have been normal) or up and down (as the rabbis propose)? Could it really not be “read” by the others of the court of Belshazzar and only by Daniel or does this have some other explanation for why he alone could “read” and “interpret” it? The words that were written were: *mene* (twice for emphasis?), *tekel*, *parsin*. The explanations that have been given include a monetary/weight explanation where *mene* is the *minah* which was equal to 60 *shekels*, the *tekel* was the Aramaic form for *shekel* which was a small sum, and the *parsin* (Aramaic plural for halves of the *shekel*; the ‘*u*’ before *parsin* in some translations and in the NIV footnote is the conjunction “and” in Aramaic and so should not be included as part of what was written). However, the most reliable answer is actually the one Daniel himself provides which is that each of these terms is the Aramaic passive participles. *Mene* meaning “count, appoint, or destine,” *tekel* “numbering, weighing,” and *parsin* from the verb meaning to “broken in half, divided” but also making a play on the name of the Persians since likely this was all written in Aramaic there would have been no vowels and the Aramaic consonantal letters PRSN could work for both the verbal form and the name of the people who were at the gates. These words that were written are explained by Daniel with Aramaic perfect verbs emphasizing the completeness of what God had determined to do that very night.

5:29-31 – The end of Babylon and the beginning of Medo-Persia. Belshazzar still gave the command that Daniel should be rewarded and exalted despite the prophetic interpretation and denouncement that had just been given to him. Did he think to take Daniel down with him if Babylon fell? Or did he not think this could be fulfilled and thought to persuade his guests and family that he was still in control of everything? It is notable that whereas Daniel began in exile as a lowly youth in training from a lowly conquered nation in the ‘mighty and vast’ empire of the Babylonians...he has been raised to the rank of third in the empire by the age of about 80 and

will see the end of the Babylonians himself and will continue to be given an exalted status after the fall of Babylon and the rise of Medo-Persia. Daniel records that it was on “that very night” Belshazzar was killed. The prophecy was fulfilled concerning him (though Daniel would later record what had been given to him years before as written in chapters 7-8 during the reign of the wicked and unrepentant Belshazzar). In other words, the account of Belshazzar tucked as it is in between the accounts of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 and Darius in chapter 6 suggests a tale of three kings...their response to God and to the man of God: Daniel. Two will give glory to God...one will not. It creates a sort of *chiasm* (a poetic structure where God is exalted and praised explicitly in chapter 4 and 6 and carries out his judgment against the wicked king without explicit praise in chapter 5, but demonstrates his sovereignty over every king and kingdom). This also prepares us for the “little horn” that will come and utter blasphemies and exalt himself and ultimately be humbled by the LORD, but not before the end.

We are informed that Darius the Mede “took over” (lit. “received”) the kingdom that night. In what sense did he actually “receive” the kingdom and from whom did he receive it? Also, it is still a curiosity just who “Darius the Mede” is. Some have proposed this is just another name, or title, for Cyrus the Persian (which may be likely). As such, we do not have enough to know beyond that Daniel has elsewhere accurately recorded things for us that have proven vindicated by archeology after being questioned for some time. It has been recorded (though Daniel does not do so) that the Medo-Persian army diverted the Euphrates River into a marsh from entering Babylon and then waded through the lowered waters and under the walls, into the city without a fight. All of this was recorded to have happened on a night while the city was engaged in a drunken revelry (cf. Herodotus *Histories* 1.188-192; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 7.5.1-34). If Babylon had not been in such a state, but had been prepared for an attack the Medo-Persians could never have taken the city in this manner, but as it was the only one said to have died that night was Belshazzar who was put to death. John Goldingay offers an intriguing note on the mention of Darius’ age being “sixty-two”: “The years attributed to Darius ‘sum up’ another aspect of the omen’s meaning: he is the actual person who brings its fulfillment upon Belshazzar” by being the sum of 60(*mene*)+1(*tekel*)+halves(*parsin*)=sixty-two (Goldingay 112). Thus the kingdom of Babylon passes to the Medo-Persians just as the LORD had told His prophets over 150 years before. The fall of Babylon had been prophesied and foretold even that it would be accomplished by His causing them to be in a drunken state while feasting (Jer.51:39, 57). At last, deliverance has come for Israel (though not finally for Daniel).

Daniel 6 – Delivered From Lions

6:1-5 – The kingdom of Darius the Mede. Joyce Baldwin argues rather persuasively that “Darius” may have been Cyrus’ enthronement name used only in his first year (29-31; 141fn107; cf. Dan.5:31; 9:1; 11:1). At the very least, it seems very probable that the two names “Darius the Mede” and “Cyrus the Persian” refer to the same individual (without further evidence forthcoming to demonstrate just who this “Darius” might otherwise be...since the conjectures of Gobryas, Ugbaru or even a mythical composite character seem untenable at best). The “and” in the NIV and other translations (Aram. conjunctive *waw*) can in fact be read as “even” or “that is” in Dan.6:26 (see the NIV footnote) reading “during the reign of Darius, *that is*, the reign of Cyrus the Persian”. This proposal seems more probable than that this individual was only a king of Babylon and not the ruler of the empire whose decision would be irrevocable.

Darius is said to have appointed 120 satraps to give oversight to the kingdom. A satrap was a sort of governor and over these he chose three individuals to give specific oversight...Daniel being one of the three. The 120 would not necessarily each oversee one satrapy, but may have simply shared duties over various regions. The numbers listed for satrapies elsewhere range in the twenties (though Esther 1:1 lists 127 during the later reign of Xerxes). The special appointment of Daniel due to his exceptional qualities made him a target for those who were jealous of his position. This does not necessarily mean that all 122 men were involved in the conspiracy against Daniel, but only that there was a significant group that was leading the way against him. They were forced to admit that any accusations against him would not be successful unless it pertained to the “law of his God” because Daniel was above any sort of reproach, and was a faithful Jew.

6:6-9 – The decree. The plan was to convince the king that there was agreement among all of his officials that he should issue a 30-day decree demanding that all prayers be offered to (through?) him for that time period. The Medo-Persian (Achaemenid dynasty) were Zoroastrians more clearly under the later named Darius I though possibly as early as our king Cyrus (here called “Darius”). Under Zoroastrianism, there was a single god that was worshipped, Ahura Mazda, whom the king was the earthly representative of and so it would not be a far stretch for Darius in Dan.6 to receive prayers or be a mediator of prayers. Besides it would be supposed that this may serve to unite a newly gathered empire in their whole-hearted service of their new king. They further clarify that this decree should be put in writing so that, according to Medo-Persian law, it will be unalterable (cf. Esther 1:19).

The punishment that they surmised would be appropriate was to be “thrown into the lions’ den.” This “den” would have been some sort of pit where lions would have been kept for just such punishments. There likely would have been two compartments to this pit with a divider between them. The lions would be in one part for attacking their victims and that portion would also have an opening for throwing in the victims from the top and sealing it with a stone. The other portion perhaps would also have some hole for enticing the lions into it in order to move them and replace the divider so that any scraps, feces and bones could be removed as needed from the pit where the lions would be kept.

6:10-15 – Daniel’s prayers. It was not a matter of Daniel’s ignorance of the law that led to his violating it, but with his full knowledge of it he went home and did as he had always done...he prayed three times a day (cf. Ps.55:17, 18; Didache 8; though Psalm 119:164 mentions seven times a day). “It is not, as with his three companions [in chapter 3], a question of a positive sin which he will not commit, but of a positive duty which he will not omit” (Miller 182, citing Driver). Daniel apparently had a room on top of his home built with a window specifically facing towards Jerusalem so that he could pray facing in that direction (cf. 1 Kings 8:35, 38, 44, 48; 2 Chron.6:34). Not only was Daniel praying as was his custom, but he was “asking God for help.” What kind of help? Was he asking for help for himself or for the king or for Jerusalem? “To Daniel...this was subterfuge, and he did not swerve whatever from his usual customs in prayer....What a testimony Daniel had that even his enemies knew he would be faithful to God although it would cost him his life” (Walvoord 138). Daniel’s enemies went out of their way to spy on Daniel and report as a group to the king what Daniel had done and make sure the king would enforce his edict. They made sure to mention that he was one of the “exiles from Judah” perhaps in order to emphasize that even though he had been brought as an exile over 70 years prior, he still remained Jewish in his religious practices of prayer (among other things) and was not integrated into the society as they were.

6:16-24 – Daniel in the lion’s den. The king begrudgingly followed through with his edict and had Daniel thrown into the lions den even at his old age and even though he was among those most reliable in his new kingdom. Darius stated “May your God...rescue you” (an imperfect verb and not a jussive as the RSV translated it) meaning that this was not simply a wish, but that Darius was committing Daniel to the hands of Daniel’s God knowing that only Daniel’s would have to be the one to rescue Daniel. The KJV translation suggests too strongly that it certainly will happen which Darius does not seem so convinced about and so he called to Daniel in “an anguished voice” the next morning. Darius is convinced that if anyone will rescue Daniel it must be Daniel’s God, because Daniel has given himself so completely to his God that there could be no other outcome that could be positive and perhaps Darius had heard the stories of deliverance that Daniel recounted for him. The king was so distressed about having Daniel thrown into the lion’s den that he could not even do what he would normally do – whether eating or entertainment (whatever the Aramaic *dahāwān* seems to signify—which is difficult to define), or even to sleep.

It was a custom that once the sun began to dawn a sentence had been served if the individual had survived the night and so the king rushed to the lions’ den even if not fully convinced that he would find Daniel alive or well. Did he call out to Daniel expecting a reply or was this more rhetorical? Note Darius’ use of “the living God” in reference to the God of Daniel (cf. Deut.5:26; Josh.3:10; 1 Sam.17:26; 2 Kings 19:4; Jer.10:10; 23:36; Hos.2:1; Ps.42:3; 84:3). “This rich OT title for God suggests not merely that God is alive rather than dead, but that he is active and powerful, awesome and almighty, involved in bringing judgment and blessing” (Goldingay 133). At any rate, he received the reply of Daniel wishing him long life.

Daniel also testified that God had sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions (Heb.11:33), because of his innocence before God and the king. As Daniel’s three friends had bodily testified to their deliverance in the fire, here Daniel’s body gave testimony once it was lifted out of the den that it was in no way harmed (Ps.91:9-16). Is this intended to be a universal promise of

deliverance for all of God's people? Certainly not. Many have paid with their lives as Hebrews testified and as our Lord Jesus Himself testified. But our God is able and no law of man can over-rule the obedience that is due the Lord. How might we understand his deliverance? (cf. Isa.11:6; 65:25; Hos.2:18) "In the man of God the powers of the world to come have broken in, in anticipation of what will be when the king comes to reign" (Baldwin 145).

The king then commanded all those who had conspired against Daniel to be thrown into the lion's den. Was it all of the 120 or considerably less? The LXX states it was the two other administrators, but this seems a gross re-adjustment to try to downplay how many were involved. While this punishment may be understandable (Gen.12:3; Deut.19:18-19; Esther 7:9-10) for those specifically involved, how should we understand throwing the wives and children of the conspirators in as well? (cf. Num.16:27-33; Deut.24:16; Josh.7:24-25; Esther 9:25; Isa.13:15-16) There is not really any condoning of this practice by mentioning it, but only a record that it was carried out (on this being something carried out elsewhere among the Medo-Persians, see Herodotus *Histories* 3.119). The account also notes that those who were thrown in did not even reach the floor of the den before the lions killed them and "crushed all their bones" thus demonstrating the miraculous nature of Daniel's deliverance and the judgment against those who tried to harm Daniel.

6:25-28 – The decree of Darius to all peoples concerning the God of Daniel. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar had issued a decree against anyone who should speak a word against the God of the three in Dan.3:29, Darius actually commands people everywhere to "fear and reverence the God of Daniel". This is not a command *against*, but a command *for*. Does this command exclude the worship of other Gods? By no means, though it does make clear that Daniel's God endures when other's do not and that Daniel's God performs the miraculous and delivers. This will be poignant for those who face what is revealed in the chapters that lay ahead in Daniel... particularly as other kingdoms and kings are named that are off in the future who will seem to have authority and power that are unlimited. However, God is sovereign and able to deliver His people through whatever they will suffer if they will endure and remain faithful. This chapter closes with the note that Daniel then prospered under the Medo-Persians in an era when God would restore Jerusalem, return the captives and rebuild the Temple. It could be said of Daniel that in his old age as he "prospered" in Babylon that he had indeed become a light to the Gentiles by the mouth of Darius (cf. Isa.42:1-12; 49:1-7; Zech.2:11; 8:20-23).

John Goldingay notes the similarity and contrast between Jesus final days and Daniel 6, when he writes how Jesus, "too, is the victim of conspiracy and betrayal from people whose position is threatened by him and who seek occasion to manipulate higher authorities into executing him, professing that they have no king but Caesar. They, too, will eventually pay for their hostility, along with their children. He, too, is arrested at his customary place of prayer. These higher authorities, too, find no fault in him and labor to free him, but are reminded that the law forbids it. He, too, has to rely on God to deliver him as his tomb is sealed. Indeed, he actually dies, and injury can be found on him after he comes back from the dead: more extraordinary is it, then, that very early, at sunrise, he, too, is discovered to be alive after all" (136).

Daniel 7 – Visions in the Night

This chapter is considered by most to be the most significant chapter of Daniel and also a key chapter of the Old Testament. There are some who have proposed that Daniel has borrowed from the ancient Near Eastern mythologies around him in this composition (such as the account of Adapa, *Enuma Elish*, or the Ugaritic Baal Cycle; see Goldingay 150-151), but Daniels dream and its explanation seem just far more likely to belong to the literature of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) and to Genesis and Psalms where there has been anything expounded upon, but he seems to simply have his own visions and explanations apart from these others as well as in addition to these others.

Chapter seven closes out the chiasmic structure of chapters two through seven (see Goldingay 158) as well as concluding the Aramaic portion of Daniel:

Ch. 2 – A vision of four kingdoms and their end (Nebuchadnezzar)

Ch. 3 – Faithfulness and miraculous rescue (three friends)

Ch. 4 – Judgment presaged and experienced (Nebuchadnezzar)

Ch. 5 – Judgment presaged and experienced (Belshazzar)

Ch. 6 – Faithfulness and miraculous rescue (Daniel)

Ch. 7 – A vision of four kingdoms and their end (Daniel)

“Dan 2 offered world rulers a vision of their position as a God-given calling. Dan 3-6 has portrayed them inclined to make themselves into God; they are thus also inclined to put mortal pressure on those who are committed to God (chaps. 3; 6), but are themselves on the way to catastrophe (chaps. 4; 5). These motifs are taken up and taken further in chap. 7. The tension between the human and the bestial that appeared in chaps. 4 and 6 becomes a key motif: bestiality is now turned on God himself (Barr), but he puts an end to the reign of the beast and gives authority to a humanlike figure (Lacocque). As the real statue of chap. 3 follows on the dream statue of chap. 2, the dream animals of chap. 7 follow on the real animals of chap. 6. As people of all races, nations, and languages were called to bow before the statue (3:4; cf. 5:19), so now they honor the human figure of Daniel’s vision (7:14). Once Nebuchadnezzar testified to God’s lasting power (3:33; 4:31; cf. 6:27); now Daniel’s human figure has this power (7:14). Once Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation was limited to seven periods of time (4:13); now the humiliation of the heavenly ones will be limited to 3 ½ such periods (7:25). Once God demonstrated in history that as ruler in the earthly realm he could give royal authority to the most ordinary of human beings (4:14); now he gives it to a humanlike being at the end of the story of earthly kingdoms (7:13-14). Once Darius took hold of power (6:1); now the heavenly ones do so (7:18). Once Darius acknowledged that God’s rule would persist until the end (6:27) (סופא עד); now the king symbolized by the small horn has his authority destroyed permanently (סופא עד) (7:26). Dan 2-6 have affirmed that God controlled times and epochs, his decree being victorious over the decrees of kings (2:9, 13, 15, 21; 6:6, 9, 13, 16); now a king who think to control times set by decree will lose all power (7:25-26). Chaps. 3-6 indicate why the sequence of earthly regimes is destined to be brought to an end in the way chap. 2 describes. Chap. 7 combines the thrust of the preceding chapters as a whole, and puts them in a new perspective” (Goldingay 158-159).

7:1 – Daniel had a dream. The date indicated by Daniel places this dream between chapters four and five. Daniel states that it was the first year of Belshazzar’s reign: 550-549BC

(Goldingay 157), or 553BC (Miller 194; Walvoord 149) or 552-551BC (Baldwin 153). Chapter eight then follows just two years later (8:1) and chapter nine is dated to between chapters five and six (9:1) with chapters ten to twelve concerning messages that were given sometime around or after the events of chapters six (10:1). Whereas in chapter two it was king Nebuchadnezzar who dreamed of four kings/kingdoms, here it is Daniel and it was still during the days of the Babylonian empire. Daniel proceeded to record what he saw and the interpretations he received.

7:2-3 – Four beasts from the great sea. What might the “four winds” refer to? Is this a sort of reference to the Spirit of God come from all directions? Also, what and where is this “great sea”? While some have proposed that it refers to the Mediterranean (which is the normal meaning of “great sea” in the Old Testament), it seems more likely to refer to the earth...that is to the nations and peoples of the earth according to the interpretation Daniel receives (Dan.7:17; cf. Isa.17:12-13; 57:20; Rev.13:1, 11; 17:1, 15). Who or what are the “four beasts” of Daniel’s visions? They are kings and kingdom—there is often overlap between the two where one may indicate the other (Dan.7:17; cf. Rev.13:1-7; 17:8). They were to be distinguished from one another and to arise in succession. Further, they would rule in ways not like lesser kingdoms, but as world powers who would act beastly in their rule though called by God to their places.

7:4 – The first beast was like a lion, but with wings like an eagle (or vulture?) until the wings were torn from it. It was made to be human-like after the wings were torn from it. What might this refer to? (Jer.4:7; 49:19, 22; 50:17, 44; Lam.4:19; Eze.17:3; Hab.1:8) Many suggest it refers to the account of Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling in Daniel 4. There is little question, but that this kingdom is Babylon. It is beastly: majestic and swift, powerful, but God determined to give it glory as a “man” and to raise it up in a manner that others would not be raised.

7:5 – The second beast was like a bear, but in some manner uneven. It would be less majestic than the lion-like creature, but still powerful and terrible. It is unclear what it means for a bear-like creature to be “raised up on one of its sides,” but it appears to refer to Medo-Persia and the unevenness of the dual empire with Persia as predominant. Also, it remains unclear just what the three “ribs” in its mouth refers to. Some have proposed the three primary kingdoms Medo-Persia conquered: Babylon (539BC), Lydia (546BC) and Egypt (525BC), but this is really nothing more than conjecture. It was further given instructions to eat more despite already eating. The idea would be that it would not be satisfied and look for more to conquer with a voracious appetite.

7:6 – The third beast was like a leopard, but with four wings and four heads. That it was like a leopard suggests speed and that it included four wings suggests that this speed was increased. The four heads suggests four kings or kingdoms in some way composing this empire. This is apparently the Greek empire as under Alexander the Great the empire grew in rapid succession beginning in 334BC until his early death (323BC) whereupon it was divided between his four generals: Antipater over Greece and Macedonia; Lysimachus over Thrace and much of Asia Minor; Seleucus I Nicator over Syria, Babylon and much of Asia except Palestine that part of Asia Minor controlled by Lysimachus; and Ptolemy I Soter over Egypt and Palestine.

7:7-8 – The fourth beast was beyond description with iron teeth it destroyed everything and crushed underfoot all (for the proposal of what empire this is see below). This creature was truly

terrifying and had ten horns which bothered Daniel enough to make him wonder about them. As Daniel watched he saw a “little horn” grow up and displace three of the ten previous horns and this little one had eyes like a man and a boastful mouth (cf. Dan.11:36-37; 2 Th.2:3-12; Rev.13:5-6). The eyes suggest intelligence and the mouth pride. The horns refer to kings specifically as will be explained later (Dan.7:24).

7:9-10 – The blazing court in heaven. While Daniel was bothered deeply by the turbulence of his visions and even the boastfulness and terribleness of this last beast, suddenly he sees the court of heaven convening in the midst of fire and thousands upon thousands standing before the throne. What are the plural “thrones” referring to? (cf. Luke 22:30; 1 Cor.6:2; Rev.3:21; 20:4) How should we understand the name and description of the “Ancient of Days”? Also, what does it mean for a throne to have “wheels” on it? (Eze.1:15; 10:6) What are the “books” that were opened? (Exo.32:32; Isa.65:6; Dan.12:1; Mal.3:16; cf. Luke 10:20; Rev.20:12)

7:11-12 – The judgment. Daniel is immediately wondering what will happen to the boastful horn given the scene he has just witnessed in heaven. Note that not only is the “horn” dealt with, but the fourth beast is “slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire” (cf. Rev.19:20). Why should the whole of the fourth beast be destroyed and thrown into the fire when it was the “horn” itself that was so boastful? In what sense can the kingdom and the king truly be separated from one another? What does this say about those who profess Christ as their king? What might Daniel mean by his comments about the other three beasts being stripped of their authority but being allowed “to live for a period of time”?

7:13-14 – The vision of the “son of man”. John Goldingay seems correct when he writes that Daniel 7 “invites us to focus on the humanlike figure’s role rather than on its identity” (172). However, this should not exclude our asking who is this one “like a son of man” (Aram. *kēbar ’enāš*)? Jesus certainly takes up the language of Daniel here and applies it to himself in the Gospels (Mark 14:64), but the term itself had not been unknown and had before really only referred to being truly “human” (cf. Ezekiel’s regular usage of the term in just this fashion), but did take on great significance in other places in the OT (Eze.1:26; 8:2; and even somewhat in the human significance of the “son” in Psalm 2 and 8:4 among other places in the Psalms). In what sense is the one only “like” a son of man? This one is described in divine terms by “coming with clouds of heaven” and receiving worship in the very presence of God. This one could be none other than God himself...the Son of God as he revealed Himself in the New Testament. Though Daniel was far from such an explanation in his visions. Daniel notes that the kingdom and dominion of this one is forever and ever in comparison to those beasts and that whereas they came from below this one was from above.

7:15-28 – The interpretation of the dream. Daniel was actually bothered by his visions and inquired of one of those (an angel?) who was nearby. The explanation he received was that the four beasts were four kingdoms though he was not told just who the four kingdoms were. He was also told that the “saints” would actually receive the “kingdom” forever despite the ferocity of the kingdoms (and particularly the fourth kingdom and the little horn) that would come and go and all they would try to do against the saints. The only kingdom which Daniel receives explanation of is the fourth one. This one also receives a further description as having bronze claws. The “little horn” (one of the ten kings) would destroy and replace three others and make

war against the saints of God until the very end of days when the final judgment would commence and the saints receive their reward. This fourth kingdom was declared to be very different from the others before it and be truly global and utterly destructive. Part of his agenda will be to “try to change the set times and the laws”. What does that mean? Some believe this refers to his abolition of the Jewish calendar and therefore the setting himself in the place of the LORD, but another likely explanation is that he will try to rule history and determine the course of events against the plan and purpose of God’s will (see Dan.2:9, 21). Daniel is informed that the persecution of the saints will be successful for “a time, times and half a time” which is later connected with approximately 3 ½ years (the 1290 days of Dan.12:11 and the 1335 days of 12:12; the 42 months of the beasts authority in Rev.13:5; the trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles for 42 months in Rev.11:2 and 1260 days in Rev.12:14; and the breaking of a covenant in the middle of the seventieth “seven” which points to the mid-point of a seven year period in Dan.9:27; see Miller 215). In other words, there is a definite limit set to the time for this king and his kingdom and to the suffering of the saints and their endurance.

One should compare this fourth beast with the beast of the Revelation (Dan.7:7, 11, 19, 23; Rev.13:1-2; 17:3). They are both opposed to God and blasphemers (Dan.7:25; Rev.13:1, 5-6); both have ten horns (Dan.7:7, 20, 24; Rev.13:1; 17:3, 12, 16); both persecute the saints (Dan.7:25; Rev.13:5); both have power for three and a half years (Dan.7:25; Rev.13:5); and both are destroyed at the coming and kingdom of Christ (Dan.7:26-27; 2 Th.2:8; Rev.19:19-20). So just what empire is this? Some have proposed it was the Seleucids and the “little horn” was fully fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes, but this would be excluded by the NT parallels to this beast and final ruler. Some have proposed an Islamic Caliphate or a revived Rome (with the latter being the more popular view) – as the first Rome has since passed away and the end has not come. Certainly Rome fulfilled some of what constituted this final world power according to certain elements in the NT, yet John in the Revelation speaks of what is still future. Is there a sense in which this kingdom will be Roman-esque in its severity, but not actually Rome? That seems likely. In fact, it seems likely that Rome was only a type pointing ahead to a final world power and ruler that would exalt himself beyond all others and would make all other kingdoms and powers before him seem rather mild in comparison which is why Daniel describes it as peculiarly “different” than all the others he saw (Dan.7:7).

Judgment is certain and the end of that kingdom will be forever. But better than just the end of all earthly (and beastly kingdoms) is the rule and reign of the Most High and His saints forever and ever. Why might Daniel be so bothered by his thoughts rather than comforted by the ultimate victory of the LORD? “The chapter’s ending on this note of perplexity encourages us as we find ourselves in some perplexity over key aspects of it. If we thought we had a clear and certain understanding of it that would be a sign that we had misunderstood it” (Goldingay 182).

Daniel 8 – The Vision of the Ram and the Goat

8:1-2 – Daniel has a vision three years after the dream of chapter seven (approximately 550BC) while Belshazzar was still in Babylon (and his father, Nabonidus, still king of all Babylon). Perhaps the reason he repeats the “vision” three times is because it was so disturbing to him (8:27). Daniel was taken (much like Ezekiel) in this vision to the “citadel of Susa” (another name for the “city”) located 220 miles east of Babylon and 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf. This city was later to become one of the royal cities of Medo-Persia acting as a winter palace (cf. Est.1:2; Neh.1:1; 2:1). The location is important as it had not yet become a location of prominence again having been destroyed some years before and the Medo-Persians having not yet rebuilt it for full use yet at the time of Daniel’s vision.

8:3-4 – A Ram Appears. The ram has two horns, one longer than the other, but the shorter growing longer than the former. According to one fourth century AD writer (Ammianus Marcellinus 10:1 – see Goldingay 208) the Medo-Persians always carried a golden head of a ram into battle with them as their symbol. More importantly this ram is later interpreted as Medo-Persia and it can be surmised that the initially longer horn was Media which was the initially predominant power of the two, until Persia became the more powerful. The charging of the ram is to the west, north and south following essentially the path of Medo-Persia in her conquests of Babylon, Lydia, Asia Minor, and Egypt. There appeared to be none that could stop this empire. In what sense might the kingdoms of this world all be understood as “animals” in light of the implications of verse 4? What does this suggest about all worldly kingdoms even though they be ordained of the LORD?

8:5-8 – A Goat Appears. This goat is described with a “prominent horn between his eyes” suggesting a single ruler and kingdom (Alexander the Great of Macedon as the interpretation of Dan.8:21 declares). The ram notably charges across the earth “without touching the ground” in a similar manner to the four-headed leopard-like creature of Dan.7:6 that suggested Greece as well. The enraged goat destroyed the ram and the two horns. However, the “large horn” before it could become even greater than it had already become was “broken off” and replaced by “four” (again the connection to Dan.7:6). Alexander’s untimely death off in Babylon (323BC) left his empire shattered and ten years later it was divided among four of his generals.

8:9-12 – A Small Horn. From among one of the four horns of the goat there appeared a small horn initially that grew in the south, east and toward the “Beautiful Land” (Heb. *ṣebî* : that is toward “Jerusalem”; cf. Dan.11: 16, 41; Jer.3:19; Eze.20:6, 15) On this occurring see 1 Macc.1 and 2 Macc.5-6. Who is this “small horn” that grew? History now tells us it was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175BC-163BC) of Syria who assassinated the high priest Onias III in 170BC replacing him with another priest, ended the sacrifices and desecrated the temples setting up an altar to Zeus and sacrificing a swine on the altar in 167BC, that the temple was restored and dedicated December 14, 164BC (*Hanukkah*), while he died shortly thereafter in 163BC. But who are the “host of heaven” that he threw down to the earth and trampled? Certainly not angels. More likely this refers to the faithful of Israel (cf. Dan.12:3; see also Gen.15:5; 22:17; Deut.17:3; Enoch 46:7; Mt.13:43; Phil.2:15; Rev.12:4). Further, he set himself up against the “Prince” of the host...which suggests God Himself. This is done by his taking away the “daily sacrifice” (Heb. *tāmîd* “continually”; cf. Exo.29:38-42; Num.28:3-8) and desecrating the temple.

Why would the LORD allow it to prosper in everything it did and truth to be “thrown to the ground”? Does the LORD have a greater purpose than the immediate or temporary?

8:13-14 – The Conversation. Daniel is meant to overhear a conversation among some of the “holy ones” (angels?). It seems that even they are concerned with the question of humanity, “How long?” (cf. Ps.6:3; Isa.6:11; Zech.1:12) The two speaking are concerned with how long it will take for all of the declared to happen to actually occur. The answer is declared to Daniel (though the LXX and Syriac read that the answer was given to the other holy one) that it will take “2300 evenings and mornings”. How should we understand this? As 1500 days or as 2300 days? The latter seems preferable given the manner in which Hebrew chooses to express the form for the numbers with mornings and evenings. Thus this would be about seven years time from beginning to end. In other words, there is a definite limit set to the wickedness of this king and his kingdom. There is no reason to automatically assume that this “horn” is to be identified with the “horn” of chapter seven since that one belonged to the fourth beast (rather than the third which was Greece) and came from one of the four horns as opposed to that fourth beast's little horn that came up among the ten horns and displaced three. While both chapters speak of little horns, they are distinguished considerably even while both being arrogant and prideful and opposing the LORD and the saints.

8:15-18 – Gabriel Arrives. While Daniel was contemplating all that he had seen and heard he received a messenger like “a man” (Heb. *gāber*) who would explain the vision. There are only two angels ever named in Scripture and this is the first occasion where one is named. “Gabriel” appears again at the announcement of John the Baptist’s birth (Luke 1:19) and Jesus birth (Luke 1:26). “Michael” is the other angel named in Scripture (Dan.10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev.12:7); though in the approximately second-third century BC apocryphal work of 1 Enoch there are several others named as well: Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Saraqqel and Remiel (1 Enoch 9:1; 20:1-8). Gabriel task appears always to be that of messenger in the Scripture (thus “angel” is a fitting name though he is not called that here in Daniel). Daniel kept falling in fear before Gabriel and actually may have passed out, but Gabriel lifted him up. The message Gabriel had for Daniel was that these things pertained to “the time of the end”, but the “end” of what? The end of that era or the end of all things? The former seems more likely if one postulates the historical interpretation at all, but if one still holds to any future sense then there must be also something remaining of the actual “end” of this world and the reign of the LORD.

There are actually four main views for interpreting Daniel 8: (1) Historical – All of Daniel 8 was historical and has been fulfilled; (2) Futuristic – All is still in the future; (3) Dual Fulfillment – The chapter referred both to what happened historically now and what will happen at the Second Coming; (4) Typological – The chapter refers to historical fulfillment but also things typical of that which points to the end of the age (see Walvoord 192-196).

8:19-27 – The Interpretation. Gabriel interprets the vision for Daniel (who earlier in the book had been the interpreter for others) and explains that the ram was Medo-Persia and the goat was Greece and specifically the horn was the first king of Greece. What Daniel has seen up to this point is over two hundred years in the future from his time. He is told that the kingdom of Greece will be divided into four kingdoms none of which will come close to the power of Greece and from one of those will be raised up a particular king (this actually foretells what will occur

350 years in the future). It is noteworthy that this king is raised up when wickedness is complete (cf. Gen.15:16; 1 Th.2:16). The king is noted for his appearance, intelligence, and unknown source of power; and though everything he does even against the LORD and the saints seems to succeed it will only be temporary until the LORD Himself destroys him. What does it mean for Daniel to “seal up” (Heb. *sātam*) the vision? This term when “applied to a book is not strictly ‘seal’ but rather ‘guard from use’ and therefore from misuse (cf. 12:3)” (Baldwin 179). Why should the LORD have told Daniel any of this and not saved such matters for another more near to the time of the incidents? What was the purpose of revealing this in the third year of Belshazzar? Also, does this not point ahead beyond Antiochus IV Epiphanes to one who like him will do much the same even as it would appear that almost similar sorts of calamity overtook Judea in the latter part of the first century (cf. Matt.24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5ff), but still point ahead to “the end”?

Daniel 9 – The Vision of the Seventy Sevens

9:1-2 – Understanding the date. This chapter occurs some time after chapter five and perhaps after chapter six. If this “Darius” the Mede (which seems likely) is “Cyrus” as explained in earlier notes (6:28) then the year would be 538BC and Daniel would be approximately 82 years old. The NIV has curiously followed the LXX reading for Darius’ father’s name “Xerxes” instead of the Hebrew reading “Ahasuerus” (both of which appear to be titles rather than proper names according to Miller 240 and Goldingay 239) as most of the English translations do (but see NIV footnote). In what sense was he “made ruler” over the Babylonian (lit. “Chaldean”) kingdom? Who might have made him ruler? The Hebrew is pointed as a Hophal which is passive (he was “made ruler”), but Theodotian, the Syriac and the Vulgate all suppose an active (Hiphil) verb meaning “became ruler” perhaps in order to smooth out the reading.

Note that Daniel refers to Jeremiah’s book as among the other “Scriptures” (lit. “books” but implying “sacred books”) even though Jeremiah was a near contemporary who wrote his prophecy during Daniel’s youth. The text Daniel was reading seems to refer to Jeremiah 25:11-12 written in 605BC which was the year Daniel was taken to Babylon and also the Jeremiah 29:10 written in 597BC the year Ezekiel was taken to Babylon (cf. 2 Chron.36:21; and compare Lev.25:8; 26:18). Daniel read how the desolation of Jerusalem would last only seventy years according to Jeremiah and knew that meant the time was nearing for it to be complete, but he also understood that this did not simply mean that God would accomplish the restoration apart from His people. How should we understand Daniel taking time to reflect upon the Scriptures in light of his own circumstances and what he felt it required of him? What might this suggest about the process of the formation of the Scriptures and their early acceptance as authoritative by (at least some of) the community?

9:3-19 – The Prayer of Daniel. Daniel fully commits himself to humility and sincerity before the Lord as he prays concerning what he has read in Jeremiah about the restoration of Jerusalem. This prayer finds parallel in the prayer of 1 Kings 8; Ezra 9:6-15; Neh.1:5-11; 9:5-38; Baruch 1:15-38; 1QS 1.22-2.1; 4QWords of the Luminaries. That he fasted implies this did not happen immediately. Further, he put on “sackcloth” which was non-traditional clothing that was irritable and was a sign that one was in mourning. This was also the purpose of the ashes. This is the only chapter in Daniel where LORD (the Hebrew Yahweh) occurs. There are also many Hebrew manuscripts that read LORD in place of Lord (Heb. *’adōnāy*) in verses 3, 15, 16, 17 and 19. Daniel pleads with the LORD not only as the God of his people, but as his own God.

It is important to note that Daniel begins his prayer with praise and adoration of who God is as well as acclaiming the covenant and the faithful-love (Heb. *hesed* ; the two should not be read as “covenant of love” like the NIV since they are differentiated in the Hebrew) of God for those who love Him and keep the covenant. However, Daniel then immediately moves to confession of the failure to live up to the covenant on the part of God’s people and he includes himself in this with the “we”. He lists six things as confessions: “sin” (Heb. *ḥāṭṭā*) as a general category of disobedience, “wrong” (Heb. *’āwōn*) or crooked, “wicked” (Heb. *rāsa*), “rebelled” (Heb. *mārad*), turned away from the LORD’s commands and laws and not listened to the LORD’s servants the prophets. This is quite a litany of charges that Daniel lays out against all of the leadership of his people and, indeed, all of the people themselves including himself.

He ascribes righteousness (Heb. *š'dāqā*) to the LORD, but justified shame to all of the people who are exiled including the ten tribes of Israel, the people of Judah and specifically His city Jerusalem because of unfaithfulness. It is because of sin that shame covers them and this is not only shame for themselves but in some sense it is a shame for the LORD whose name they bear. Daniel moves at times between the second person and third person in his address to the LORD as if to call himself and his people to this joint confession and to faithfulness to the LORD having pleaded with the LORD for his mercy and forgiveness. Daniel is emphatic about the personal failure of the LORD's people despite the LORD's unfailing goodness and despite the clarity of the promise of the covenant concerning the judgment for disobedience (Deut.28:15-68). In what sense could the disaster brought on Jerusalem be considered worse than that brought on other cities that also were destroyed and/or exiled? Because Jerusalem was especially chosen of the LORD for His dwelling and personal revelation as opposed to all other cities. Yet, despite the judgment against their sins there was still no repentance and turning to the truth according to Daniel. This is not to suggest that there were none who did this, but that the people by and large did not and so as a nation they suffered together under the justified judgment of the LORD.

Daniel reminds the LORD of His deliverance of His people from Egypt which serves as THE sign of the LORD's faithfulness to His people and of His self-revelation. He calls on the LORD to hear his prayer for the people, "your city, your holy hill" knowing that the LORD cares and will act according to His own Name. He prays that the LORD would restore all of this for the sake of the LORD's name and glory, because the LORD is righteous and merciful and this is the revelation of His very character to the whole world and not because of anything inherently worthy about the people of Israel or the place of Israel or Jerusalem.

9:20-27 – The Vision of the Seventy Sevens. In the very middle of Daniel's praying, confessing of sins and concern for the restoration of Jerusalem Gabriel arrives with a message. The statement about coming to him "in swift flight" in the English suggests that Gabriel flew to him and follows the popular notion of angels with wings despite that this messenger is never described as having wings. The Hebrew actually may suggest "in *my* extreme weariness" (Heb. *mu'āp bi'āp* ; see the NASB, NET; Goldingay 228; Miller 250-1) which would fit the context better of one who has been fasting and in intense prayer and given his earlier weariness over revelations from the Lord (cf. Dan.7:28; 8:27; 10:8-9, 16-17). The time of the arrival was the time of the evening sacrifice which places it about 3-4PM even though there would not have been any sacrifices because there was not as yet any rebuilt temple to sacrifice in, but this was a normal time of prayer (Ezra 9:5; Ps.141:2).

The message was released for Daniel as soon as he had begun praying even though he was just now receiving it. He would receive special insight into what he had been praying about because the LORD considered him "highly esteemed". What might constitute this estimation by the LORD? Whereas Daniel understood correctly that the seventy years were upon him for the end of the exile, yet there were to be seventy 'sevens' (that is: 490 years broken into three groups... see the notes below) in order to deal with the sins of Israel completely ("finish...", "put an end..." and "atone...") and to fulfill all righteousness ("to bring in...", "to seal up..." and "to anoint...").

The decree to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” could either be the one to Ezra in 458BC (Ezra 7:11-26) or to Nehemiah in 445BC (Neh.2:1ff) and would then be the first seven sevens (49 years) to approximately 409BC or 396BC when the project was completed, but in “times of trouble” (cf. Neh.4:1ff; 9:36-37). The sixty-two sevens to the “Anointed one, the ruler” would be 434 years or approximately (Jesus baptism in) 26AD or (Palm Sunday) 32/33AD. Though precision of dating the latter in such matters depends upon the highly questionable 360 day Jewish prophetic calendar with a thirteenth month included occasionally to offset for the lack of days that results. Just who is the “anointed one” which lacks the definite article in the Hebrew as does the “ruler”? While this could just as easily refer to any king or priest it seems most likely to refer to Jesus as our dating suggests. Especially since this “anointed one” will be “cut off” that is to say that he will be killed or die and be left with nothing some time after the allotted years noted above. So who are the “people of the ruler who will come” that destroys the city and the sanctuary? The antecedent would almost seem to be whomever this “anointed one” was and his “people”, but rather than taking this “ruler” with the “anointed one” that precedes it would seem best to take it with the individual that follows who makes a seven year covenant with Israel and breaks it midway and sets up abominations of desolation until his end. Between these two rulers there appears to be wars and desolations.

While it was not readily apparent in Daniel’s day that there would be a gap of time between the last ‘seven’ and the other sixty-nine sevens history suggests otherwise and Jesus own interpretation of the abomination causing desolation suggests otherwise (Matt.24:15; Mark 13:14). In other words, there appears to still be a future date where the last ‘seven’ years will be accomplished by one who makes and breaks covenant with Israel, putting an end to the sacrifices and offerings three and half years into the covenant and setting up abominations that causes desolation (“on a wing *of the temple*” should not be read with the NIV, but should read “on the wing of abominations”) until his end. This means that the temple must still be rebuilt at some time in the future and the sacrifices be reinstated and Israel will wrongfully make covenant with one who will not be faithful just as they were unfaithful and who will be abominable just as they were abominable. But the LORD is faithful and merciful and He will use this to bring Israel back to Himself and bring an end to sin as has already now been done through our Lord Jesus Christ, but shall be fulfilled at his glorious appearing from heaven.

Daniel 10:1-11:1 – Prepared for the Final Vision

10:1 – The Time and General Content of the Vision. The third year of Cyrus king of Persia would place this vision in approximately 536-535BC. This would also suggest that the recently begun work on rebuilding the Temple of the LORD by the returning exiles under the supervision of Ezra had been stopped temporarily by Samaritan opposition (Ezra 4:5, 24). Why would Daniel suddenly at this point refer to himself as “Belteshazzar” and in the third person? This would seem to tie in the contents of the first chapter with the contents of the last vision (chapters 10-12) by referring to King Cyrus (Dan.1:21; although this refers to his first year) and to Daniel’s Babylonian name (Dan.1:7). Why should the “message” be affirmed as “true” (Heb. *’emet*)? Is this not always the case of messages from the LORD? This serves to mark the vision apart as truly a vision given concerning the future and accurately speaking to matters that will occur. It also suggests that what will occur has already been written in the “Book of Truth” (Heb. *kʹtāb ’emet* in Dan.10:21). There is considered to be some ambiguity about a “great war” (Heb. *šābā’ gādōl*) that is referred to here as is noted by the NIV footnote that reads “true and burdensome”, but the former seems the most likely in light of the conflicts that ensue in the following in the vision of the future. The vision concerns a message of peace, rest and blessedness it also concerns the great conflicts leading to the final conflict of the ages.

10:2-4 – Fasting by the Tigris. Daniel was apparently so perturbed in his spirit before even receiving this vision likely because of the setbacks of the Temple project in Jerusalem that he gave himself to fasting and did so outside of Babylon itself. That he gave up eating “choice food” and then speaks of “meat and wine” means that he had taken these up again some time after his initial training upon arriving at Babylon and proving his faithfulness to the LORD at that time. In other words, he did not consider such things to be a rule or law for all time, but only something that called for the obedience of that appointed time to demonstrate faithfulness. The date of his fasting is important to note because if he had been fasting for three weeks and does not end it until the twenty-fourth day of the first month that means that he fasted for right through the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) that was to occur every year from the 15th of Nissan, sometimes also called Abib (the first month of the year), to the 21st which was required to be observed. Granted that he would not make the journey back to Jerusalem, still, why would Daniel intentionally not observe one of the three Feasts that were required by the LORD (Exo.12:2; 23:15; 34:18; Deut.16:1)? Why should Daniel give himself to fasting at all since he was well into his eighties by this time? It is a little strange that he calls the Tigris river the “great river” since that is the normal name of the Euphrates, but it is not completely out of the question that he should have done so. This would place him anywhere within 20 miles to a couple hundred miles of Babylon depending on where exactly along the Tigris he was. It would seem the most likely that he was somewhere fairly nearby Babylon.

10:5-9 – The Appearance of a Man. The description that Daniel gives of the one he sees and describes as a “man dressed in linen” suggests one who is perhaps prepared for a priestly sort of ministry (cf. Exo.28:42; Lev.6:10; 16:4), but this is also the sort of clothing of the angelic-like “men” that Ezekiel describes (Eze.9:2-3, 11; 10:2, 6-7). He wore a golden belt and his body and face glowed. His eyes were “like flaming torches” and arms and legs “burnished bronze” with a mighty voice of a great crowd. This description fits very closely with that of Ezekiel 1:26-28 and Revelation 1:12-16 and this individual is so imposing that he may in fact be a theophany

(that is, the appearing of God Himself) with later messengers giving the explanations to the revelation (Dan.10:10-14) in much the manner that John in the Revelation would later receive. Why was Daniel the only one who could see the vision of this “man”? Obviously there was something tangible about the whole experience because those who were with him became terrified and ran to hide. Even Daniel described himself as overwhelmed by the vision.

10:10-14 – Affirmation of Daniel. It may be that the one who touched him and speaks in verses 10-14 is not the same as the one in verses 5-6 because if the first one was in fact a theophany then there would have been no need for the help of another (Michael) and he would not have come to only explain. Further, the Hebrew does not designate that there was only one individual there and seems to suggest as in previous visionary visits that there may have been more than one present (cf. Dan.8:13). Daniel is made to tremble on his hands and knees by the touch of this messenger who affirms him as “highly esteemed”. This touch accompanied by the command to consider what he would be instructed and to stand was sufficient to bring him to his feet even though he was still in a trembling state. Though Daniel was “highly esteemed” by the LORD this not only did not exclude him from suffering but seems to have necessitated it at some level, just as it did for Mary the mother of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:30; 2:35) and Jesus himself who was the beloved of the Father. As it was for Daniel, so for us, it should never be taken for-granted that understanding comes natural without applying ourselves to intentionally seek to understand and humble ourselves before God.

The messenger assures Daniel that he came in response to the prayers of Daniel, but was held back by the “prince of the Persian kingdom” for twenty one days apparently the whole time Daniel was praying. However, he was assisted by “Michael” who is here called “one of the chief princes,” who enabled him to be released from the struggle and bring the message to Daniel. Michael is mentioned here and Daniel 12:1, Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7. In each account, he is one who engages in conflict and particularly in Daniel 12:1 defends the people of Israel. He is called an “archangel” or “chief (first) angel” in Jude 9 and as such is the only one named in the Protestant canon of Scripture. It is unclear just who the “prince of the Persians” and the “king (lit. ‘kings’) of Persia” are, but the likeliest explanation at least for the former is some sort of wicked spiritual power. The latter may be a reference to the actual king (or kings) of Persia or to some other form of these spiritual powers.

Certainly there is nothing clear here concerning a structure of authorities by which one can (or should) build a highly structured doctrine of spiritual powers and authorities beyond this very basic teaching that there are actual spiritual beings and realities at work throughout the kingdoms of this world. We cannot (nor should not) simply assume that the kingdoms of this world are all that there is because this is all we may be used to through our own experiences (cf. Eph.6:10-18). There are other references to some sort of gods of the nations that may represent some reality behind them (even when a prophet like Isaiah will confess that they are really “nothing”; cf. Isa.46:2; Jer.46:25; 49:3; see also Deut.32:8 in the LXX and Qumran; Ps.96:4). Since it is not revealed in Scripture how these conflicts among these “princes” actually took place...it would be mere conjecture to make suppositions about how this was and is carried out. The message that was so necessary for him to bring to Daniel was a message about the future and not even about the present. This was something which Daniel seemed more concerned about. What might this say about our present struggles and reality?

10:15-11:1 – The Strengthening of Daniel. Once again Daniel was overwhelmed and bowed over and once again was touched, but this time on the lips. Why would he be touched on the lips? To affirm the message he was being given and his ability to speak it and to allow him to confess his own sense of helplessness and humility. Again he was touched and this time given strength and reaffirmed concerning the LORD's estimation of him. In what sense does the word of the LORD to Daniel to "Peace! Be strong now! Be strong." become the strengthening of Daniel joined to the touch? The message and the touch are not simply passive work, but active and empowering in the life of Daniel as in us. Why would the messenger return to the fight against the "prince of Persia"? The engagement will be taken up until the "prince of Greece" would come. We can only surmise that this would entail a further conflict among the "princes", but this refers to a time in our own history that would not happen until about 331BC with the rise of the Greeks under Alexander (or perhaps slightly sooner).

Before he left he assured Daniel that what he would share with him was already written down in the "Book of Truth" which is apparently a way of referring to what has been determined to be by the LORD. He notes that only Michael supports him against the princes of Persia and Greece. The messenger had taken his stand with Michael two years before against the "prince of Persia" and it would appear that this was to protect "Darius" (though this is less than certain). Why should these struggles among beings that are not human require long term conflict when the LORD could easily resolve them? For the same reason that this world could quickly be redeemed and all wickedness be dealt with in a moment without the conflict of the righteous struggling against sin and principalities and powers until the last Day. The reason is that it all works for the ultimate glory of God as demonstrated in the cross, resurrection and coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead. It is that in the end, he might be demonstrated to be supreme over all (Col.1:15-20).

Daniel 11:2-35 – The Vision of the Kings of the North and the South

11:2-4 – Persians and Greeks. Why should there be note of telling “the truth”? It appears to emphasize that because what follows is given as prophecy of kings and kingdoms that are yet to come, even though some of these things may seem incomprehensible they are yet “the truth” and therefore to be believed. The four kings to appear may refer to those who immediately follow Cyrus: Cambyses (530-522BC), Smerdis (522BC), Darius I Hystaspes (522-486BC) with Xerxes I (486-465BC), or Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:6; Esther 1:1), as the final one who was “richer than all the others” and attacked Greece provoking the hatred of Greece for many years to come. The revelation does not follow everything in detail, which is never to be expected of Scripture, but leaves gaps. The “mighty king” of Greece refers to Alexander the Great (336-323BC) who died suddenly with both of his sons, Alexander IV and Herakles, being murdered within a few short years after his death. His empire was thus divided up among his generals who fought for control of their respective regions and to dominate one another.

11:5-20 – The Kings of the South and North. The “king of the South” (vs.5) was Ptolemy I Soter (323-285BC) of Egypt and “one of his commanders” refers to Seleucus I Nicator (312-280BC) who was made satrap of Babylonia. However, another general of Alexander by the name Antigonus seized Babylon and Seleucus was forced to flee to Egypt in 316BC. In 312BC, Antigonus was defeated and Seleucus re-instated, though he managed to separate himself from Ptolemy I and establish a kingdom (Syria) far greater than Egypt. Conflict broke out between the two kingdoms (Egypt and Syria) and a treaty was able to be brokered between Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246BC) when he gave his daughter, Berenice, in marriage to the grandson of Seleucus I, Antiochus II Theos (261-246BC). As part of the treaty, Antiochus II was to put aside his marriage to his wife, Laodice, but when the treaty went bad, Antiochus II took back Laodice who in turn murdered him and Berenice and their son so as to secure the throne for herself and her own son, Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226BC). As an aside, according to tradition, it was Ptolemy II who ordered the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures in Alexandria that were called the “Septuagint”.

Berenice’s brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221BC), succeeded her father and sought revenge against Syria. He was very successful in his campaigns against them and managed to restore many of the territories to Egypt, to return idols that had been captured many years earlier, and to make Syria a province for a time. However, he made peace with Seleucus II after winning in 240BC in order to try to conquer territories of the Mediterranean. Two sons of Seleucus II, Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223BC) and Antiochus III (223-187BC) both took up the former wars of their father against Egypt. The “large army” (vs.11) likely refers to the conflict at Raphia in Palestine where Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203BC) had a decisive victory in 217BC with his 70000 infantry, 5000 cavalry and 73 elephants against Antiochus III’s 62000 infantry, 6000 cavalry and 102 elephants (Polybius *Histories* 5.79). The Syrians came back with a vengeance because Egypt did not press their victory and so the Ptolemies never dominated again. In 202BC, Antiochus III invaded the territories of the Ptolemies (following the death of Ptolemy IV in 203BC) and captured the important fortress at Gaza from Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181BC) in 201BC.

Daniel 11:14 refers to those of Israel who would join in the conflict against the king of the South and calls the “violent men” (lit. “sons of violence”). This likely refers to Jewish rebels who aided Antiochus III against Ptolemy V (Jos. *Ant.*12.3.3). Even though he was eventually defeated, the Egyptian general Scopas punished the rulers of Jerusalem and Judah who had participated in the rebellion (Polybius *Histories* 16.39.1). Scopas was captured holed up in Sidon in 198BC by Antiochus III who then gained control of Palestine and Phoenicia. Antiochus III gave his daughter, Cleopatra I, to Ptolemy V as a wife in order to try to gain control of Egypt, but she sided with the Ptolemies against Syria. Antiochus III then began a conquest of much of the Mediterranean but was defeated in 191BC at Thermopylae by the Roman Lucius Cornelius Scipio. This forced Antiochus III to flee back into Asia Minor, where he was again defeated, and this time at the Battle of Magnesia near Smyrna in 190BC. Antiochus III was forced to surrender much of his territory and this son Antiochus IV as well as make a heavy tribute of 1000 talents to Rome in 188BC. He returned home in defeat and was killed by an angry mob in 187BC (Dan.11:19). His “successor,” Seleucus IV Philopator, was thus left with a heavy debt to collect and sent the collector Heliodorus to do so. However, Heliodorus managed to poison Seleucus IV and tried to take the kingdom in 175BC. Thus Seleucus did not die “in anger or in battle” (Dan.11:20).

11:21-35 – The “Contemptible” King of the North. Antiochus IV Euphianes (175-163BC) took the throne of Syria upon returning from Rome and another of his brothers, Demetrius I Soter, who was rightful heir to the throne, was held there instead. He put Heliodorus, his father’s murderer, to death and assumed his rule. In 169BC, Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146BC) attacked Syria in hopes of regaining Palestine and Phoenicia but failed and was himself captured. At this time he deposed Onias III as High Priest in Israel and finally had him murdered in 172BC. He then entered a “covenant” with Antiochus IV in order to retake the throne of Egypt from his brother Ptolemy VII Euergetes II which was successful enough to take Memphis, but not Alexandria. However, Ptolemy VI broke his covenant with Antiochus IV to try to do away with the Syrian influence in Egypt at Pelusium by reuniting with his brother. Antiochus IV returned home and found Palestine in revolt so he slaughtered 80000 and looted the Temple with the help of the priest Menelaus (2 Macc.5:12-21). In 168BC, Antiochus IV attempted to reinvade Egypt but failed when he was met by the Roman commander Gaius Popilius Laenas who it is reported drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and told him to consider carefully before stepping out of the circle whether he was willing to face the legions of Rome if he continued in his invasion of Egypt (Polybius *Histories* 29.27; Livy 45). In his anger at not being able to wage war against Egypt he sent his commander Apollonius in 167BC to Israel to collect tribute as a ruse and on the Sabbath he attacked and killed many, rewarding the wicked High Priest Menelaus (1 Macc.1; 2 Macc.4-6). On Chislev 167BC, the altar of the Temple was desecrated by setting up some sort of image (?) to Olympian Zeus on it and ten days later sacrificing a swine on it (1 Macc.1:54, 59). Many remained faithful to the LORD, but they paid with their lives for this (1 Macc.1:62-63). The sons of the priest, Mattathias, led a revolt beginning in 165BC against Antiochus and his generals and successfully restored the Temple. They were called the “Maccabees” in particular after the son Judas called “maccabeus” (meaning “hammer”) who died in battle on Mount Azotas in 160BC (1 Macc.9:3, 15-18). Antiochus IV died in Persia in 163BC according to several reports: “insane” (which plays off the name many gave him of “Epimanes” meaning “insane” in place of “Euphianes” meaning “glorious”; Polybius 31.9; 1 Macc.6:16; 2 Macc.9:1-29).

According to John Walvoord's count there are 135 prophetic statements made in these first thirty-five verses of Daniel eleven and all of them have demonstrated an amazing accuracy (Walvoord 269). This has bearing on the significance of the prophetic messages which remain in the rest of the book concerning another king that is similar to Antiochus IV in his vehement opposition to the LORD's people and proper worship, but this king will do much that Antiochus never did.

Several notable features throughout this eleventh chapter are the repeated mentions of things being done for "a time" which serves to emphasize that all of the kingdoms of this world have their limitations. The LORD alone will rule forever and His kingdom alone is without end. All other kingdoms have only a set time or "appointed time". They rise and fall; they are replaced by others who also rise and fall, but they all eventually meet their end despite the ongoing struggle. Another thing to note in this chapter is the entrance of the fourth beast that was mentioned in Daniel 2 and 7 (?) that speaks of the Romans who were not even on the horizon in the days of Daniel's writing. This pointed ahead to the last kingdom that would rule before the end and thus to the establishment of God's kingdom.

Daniel 11:36-12:13 – The Vision of the End

11:36-39 – The king who exalts himself. This king does have certain levels of overlap with Antiochus IV Epiphanes (and many commentators believe that this individual is one and the same), but the description does not fit as it did in the verses prior. The best explanation seems to be that this king is some yet future king who also exalts himself and of which Antiochus IV was only a type. He is none other than the “little horn” of Daniel 7 and the “ruler who would come” of Daniel 9:26 (cf. the “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thess.2:3-12; the “Antichrist” in 1 Jn.2:18; and the “beast” in Rev.11-20). This king does “as he pleases” and exalts himself “above every god” and even speaks blasphemies against the one true God (cf. 2 Thess.2:4; Rev.13:12, 14-15). Note that he will have a certain leeway to do what he plans until the “time of wrath” if fulfilled or “complete”. What would it mean for him to “show no regard for the gods [the Hebrew could also read “God”, but “gods” is most likely] of his fathers”? It means that he breaks with those before him and does what would have not been thinkable before. He also shows no regard for the “desire of women” which some have taken as a reference to unnatural inclinations, others as a rejection of the messianic hope of the Jewish people and still others as the god Tammuz who was likened to such (cf. Eze.8:14). This last is the most plausible given the context of “gods” before and after. He regards himself and a god of his own strength as his god and even a “foreign god” as his own. In the New Testament, this “god” is described as the dragon or Satan, but here we are left to wonder at who or what this might be. He will give great rewards to those who support him.

11:40-45 – The end of that king. “At the time of the end” points to the time that was to be completed for this king and thus in some sense to the end of all the kingdoms of this world. The “king of the South” once again may be referring to Egypt though it may also refer to some alliance considered “south” of Israel while the “north” (rather than only to Syria) may refer to some alliance primarily to the north of Israel. How these are to be conceived is less important than to consider that this is simply the continuing struggle between kings and kingdoms that fight for control over and in the “Beautiful Land” (the land of Israel; cf. Jer.3:19; Eze.20:6; Dan.8:9; 11:16; Mal.3:12). Many nations and peoples will fall, but apparently the traditional enemies of Israel (Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon – these tribal groups would be in what is now modern Jordan) will not fall to him (contrast Isa.11:14; Mal.1:2-5). Though he will succeed in his assault against the “king of the south” and many others he will be distraught by news of an impending attack from the east and north and he himself will be at “the beautiful holy mountain” (Jerusalem), but this does not exclude the notion of his forces making their final stand at the valley of Megiddo in what has come to be known as the battle of Armageddon (Rev.16:16). The end of the king will come and he will not find any help from anywhere – whether his gods or otherwise. Though he set out to destroy many, he will be destroyed.

12:1-4 – The time of the end. “At that time” refers to the raging of the last portion of chapter 11 and the raging of the king of the north. Michael (“Who is like God?”; cf. Dan.10:18, 21; Jude 9; Rev.12:7) the “great prince” is again named and here declared to defend against Israel’s complete annihilation, but not against many being martyred. The promise of the “time of distress” (Heb. *‘ēt šārâ*) is such that there will no other equal for Israel (cf. Matt.24:21 where it appears that Jesus uses the language of the LXX and thus speaks of *thlipsis*). According to Zechariah 13:8, only one third of Israel will survive, but it will lead to the ultimate salvation of

Israel (cf. Zech.12:10; Rom.11:25-27). The “deliverance” is not from the first death, but the second death (Rev.2:11; 20:6; 21:8) though this is not at all laid out in Daniel with clarity. It is notable that only those whose names are “found written in the book” are spared this. What is this “book”? According to Goldingay, it would be the citizenry of the “true Jerusalem” (306; cf. Ezra 2; Neh.7; Ps.87:6; Isa.4:3; Eze.13:9); though we might assume this to later be the “book of life” (Ps.69:28; Phil.4:3; Rev.3:5; 20:12, 15; 21:27). The “multitudes” (Heb. *rabbîm*) can sometimes mean “all” (cf. Deut.7:1; Isa.2:2), but the typical all inclusive word in Hebrew is *kol*. “The emphasis is not upon many as opposed to all, but rather on the numbers involved” (Baldwin 226). Why are these many said to be sleeping? The very notion of “sleep” for death implies the reality of the resurrection. “The words...do not exclude the general resurrection, but rather imply it. Their emphasis, however, is upon the resurrection of those who died during the period of great distress” (Young 256). The state of those who “awake”, that is are raised to life, is to either everlasting life or “shame and everlasting contempt”. Why should these be contrasted and in this manner? Also, are we to think of a time difference between the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked mentioned here? (cf. Rev.20:5, 12-13 where it is described in terms as separated by the millennium)

Note the blessing that is given to those who are “wise” (or see the footnote in the NIV “who impart wisdom” which may be the likelier reading). They are described as shining “like the brightness of the heavens” and “like the stars forever and ever”. How might this blessing be understood? It was common to consider celestial beings with the notion of the “stars” (Jud.5:20; Job 38:7; Dan.8:10; 1 Enoch 104), but Paul would later take this up as the promise concerning those who were pure and blameless in a wicked and perverse world (Phil.2:15). John Goldingay makes note that the angelic beings of Daniel have all been described in very human-like terms and as such he notes the contrast as follows: “As chapter 10 speaks of celestial figures who are the embodiments of earthly institutions, so chap. 11 speaks of earthly figures who are the embodiments of spiritual principles” (317). What does it mean for Daniel to “close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end”? It does not pertain to making it a secret since he has already written it down, but instead means that it was to be preserved and protected for the appointed time and the appropriate readership (i.e., the “wise”; see Young 257). The idea is that only those who are fit to understand this message will do so. “Many will go here and there to increase knowledge” but they will not discern the times nor the message which was to the wise and discerning (Amos 8:2). It is notable that Daniel is not included among the prophets in the Hebrew canon, but among the writings and it may very likely be because of his emphasis upon wisdom. As such this suggests Daniel as a form of wisdom literature, albeit unlike the traditional proverbs or the likes of Ecclesiastes and Job. Yet, Daniel is intended as wisdom for the future generations who will grapple with hopelessness and despair, but must know that if they will remain faithful they will be raised at the last day and receive their reward despite the terrorizing of the kings of this age and the ages to come. The end will yet come and the wise know this and live accordingly.

12:5-13 – The end of all these things and of Daniel. There were two beings, one on either side of the river and one other who hovered over the middle and wore linen and was likely the one from before (Dan.10:5). Again, Daniel is meant to overhear the conversation. The question of “How long?” was put to the one hovering over the water who raised both hands which gives special solemnity to the swearing by God (normally only one hand was raised – cf. Gen.14:22;

Deut.32:40; Rev.10:5-6) and declares that it will be for “a time, times and half a time” (cf. Dan.7:25; that is for approximately three and a half years). The time designated was to bring to an end the one who would be destroying the “holy people” (see the NET). Daniel was still concerned about the outcome of this time that was yet future, but was assured and told that it would be accomplished and would have the effect that was necessary for the wise and the wicked (cf. Rev.22:11). What should this tell us about applying ourselves to the wisdom of the book of Daniel?

The final notes about the number of days from the time of the ceasing of daily sacrifices and the abomination of desolation offers a problem to the more simple approximate three and a half years of verse 7. Instead, 1290 days are first mentioned which would give forty-three months of thirty days each which gives one extra month and also requires thirty day months for the three and half years. Then the 1335 days for holding out to the end is given which makes for an extra forty-five more days on top of that. According to John Walvoord, these numbers are necessary for adequate time to deal out judgment and for the establishment of Christ’s millennial kingdom (295-6). However, it remains rather obscure as to why and without further elaboration elsewhere in Scripture one is left wondering just what was meant (whereas other such issues have had some clarity brought to bear on them by other Scripture). The best explanation for the days beyond what would be expected seems to be that of Joyce Baldwin: “As in the teaching of Jesus, the emphasis is on endurance to the end (Mark 13:13). A particular blessing awaits one who goes on expectantly even after the time for the fulfillment of the prophecy is apparently passed, as in the parable of Jesus there is a special blessing for the servant who continues to be faithful even when his master does not come home at the stated time (Matt.24:45-51)” (232).

Susanna and Bel and the Dragon

Neither of these two additions to the Book of Daniel has come down in a Hebrew text, but instead in the Theodotion, LXX and Latin Vulgate recensions. They were thus never included as part of the accepted text by the wider community of Israel, but were used regularly by the early Church which used the Greek translations as their Scripture and found much in these tales that they could use for their own purposes. They were, however, not regarded as part of the received "canon" of Scripture by all of the churches, but as that which was early on beneficial to be read in the churches. Even in the KJV these additions were originally included (although they were found not attached to Daniel but in a section labeled "Apocrypha" meaning "hidden" with the notion that these were not considered a part of the received canon of Scripture but were still read in the churches) up until as late as 1826. While these tales do not add anything essential to the story of Daniel, they do offer examples of wisdom in persistent faithfulness to the LORD in the face of wickedness and false worship...something which the Book of Daniel spells out again and again, and something we would do well to pay heed to in our own day.

Susanna 1:1 There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim. 2 He married the daughter of Hilkiah, named Susanna, a very beautiful woman and one who feared the Lord. 3 Her parents were righteous, and had trained their daughter according to the law of Moses.

4 Joakim was very rich, and had a fine garden adjoining his house; the Jews used to come to him because he was the most honored of them all. 5 That year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them the Lord had said: "Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people." 6 These men were frequently at Joakim's house, and all who had a case to be tried came to them there. 7 When the people left at noon, Susanna would go into her husband's garden to walk. 8 Every day the two elders used to see her, going in and walking about, and they began to lust for her. 9 They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering their duty to administer justice. 10 Both were overwhelmed with passion for her, but they did not tell each other of their distress, 11 for they were ashamed to disclose their lustful desire to seduce her. 12 Day after day they watched eagerly to see her.

13 One day they said to each other, "Let us go home, for it is time for lunch." So they both left and parted from each other. 14 But turning back, they met again; and when each pressed the other for the reason, they confessed their lust. Then together they arranged for a time when they could find her alone.

15 Once, while they were watching for an opportune day, she went in as before with only two maids, and wished to bathe in the garden, for it was a hot day. 16 No one was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. 17 She said to her maids, "Bring me olive oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I can bathe." 18 They did as she told them: they shut the doors of the garden and went out by the side doors to bring what they had been commanded; they did not see the elders, because they were hiding. 19 When the maids had gone out, the two elders got up and ran to her. 20 They said, "Look, the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us. We are burning with desire for you; so give your consent, and lie with us. 21 If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was with you, and this was why you sent your maids away." 22 Susanna groaned and said, "I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your

hands. 23 I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord."

24 Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the two elders shouted against her. 25 And one of them ran and opened the garden doors. 26 When the people in the house heard the shouting in the garden, they rushed in at the side door to see what had happened to her. 27 And when the elders told their story, the servants felt very much ashamed, for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna.

28 The next day, when the people gathered at the house of her husband Joakim, the two elders came, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death. In the presence of the people they said, 29 "Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, the wife of Joakim." 30 So they sent for her. And she came with her parents, her children, and all her relatives. 31 Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement and beautiful in appearance. 32 As she was veiled, the scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled, so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. 33 Those who were with her and all who saw her were weeping.

34 Then the two elders stood up before the people and laid their hands on her head. 35 Through her tears she looked up toward Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. 36 The elders said, "While we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids. 37 Then a young man, who was hiding there, came to her and lay with her. 38 We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. 39 Although we saw them embracing, we could not hold the man, because he was stronger than we, and he opened the doors and got away. 40 We did, however, seize this woman and asked who the young man was, 41 but she would not tell us. These things we testify." Because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death.

42 Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, "O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; 43 you know that these men have given false evidence against me. And now I am to die, though I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me!" 44 The Lord heard her cry.

45 Just as she was being led off to execution, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel, 46 and he shouted with a loud voice, "I want no part in shedding this woman's blood!" 47 All the people turned to him and asked, "What is this you are saying?" 48 Taking his stand among them he said, "Are you such fools, O Israelites, as to condemn a daughter of Israel without examination and without learning the facts? 49 Return to court, for these men have given false evidence against her."

50 So all the people hurried back. And the rest of the elders said to him, "Come, sit among us and inform us, for God has given you the standing of an elder." 51 Daniel said to them, "Separate them far from each other, and I will examine them." 52 When they were separated from each other, he summoned one of them and said to him, "You old relic of wicked days, your sins have now come home, which you have committed in the past, 53 pronouncing unjust judgments, condemning the innocent and acquitting the guilty, though the Lord said, 'You shall not put an innocent and righteous person to death.' 54 Now then, if you really saw this woman, tell me this: Under what tree did you see them being intimate with each other?" He answered, "Under a mastic tree." 55 And Daniel said, "Very well! This lie has cost you your head, for the angel of God has received the sentence from God and will immediately cut you in two."

56 Then, putting him to one side, he ordered them to bring the other. And he said to him, "You offspring of Canaan and not of Judah, beauty has beguiled you and lust has perverted your

heart. 57 This is how you have been treating the daughters of Israel, and they were intimate with you through fear; but a daughter of Judah would not tolerate your wickedness. 58 Now then, tell me: Under what tree did you catch them being intimate with each other?" He answered, "Under an evergreen oak." 59 Daniel said to him, "Very well! This lie has cost you also your head, for the angel of God is waiting with his sword to split you in two, so as to destroy you both."

60 Then the whole assembly raised a great shout and blessed God, who saves those who hope in him. 61 And they took action against the two elders, because out of their own mouths Daniel had convicted them of bearing false witness; they did to them as they had wickedly planned to do to their neighbor. 62 Acting in accordance with the law of Moses, they put them to death. Thus innocent blood was spared that day. 63 Hilkiah and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, and so did her husband Joakim and all her relatives, because she was found innocent of a shameful deed. 64 And from that day onward Daniel had a great reputation among the people. (Susanna 1:1-64 – NRS)

Discussion of Susanna

This particular story is usually numbered as chapter thirteen of the Book of Daniel; however, in some Greek texts it was put as the very first chapter which would be awkward as well. This was written to account for Daniel's standing among his own people, but nowhere else in the book of Daniel is this at issue. The book of Daniel is presented simply as an account of Daniel's rise among the Gentiles as one possessed of wisdom and understanding to demonstrate the sovereignty of the Lord over all the other nations. So this particular addition becomes rather difficult to include in light of the overall scheme of Daniel. The text included above (translated by the NRS) is largely taken from the much longer recension of Theodotion as opposed to the much briefer LXX recension. The account notes false judges who attempt to abuse a righteous woman trying to use the Law against her by offering false testimony in order to put her to death (Lev.24:14), but instead they are put to death as false witnesses when proven to be false by the wisdom of Daniel (Deut.19:18ff). "Against the background of accepted theism the narrative showed that the divine will was given normative expression in the Torah of Moses, and that injustice was unequivocally condemned by the written Word. Her experience of God led Susanna to choose death rather than sin, but in making this decision she was actually placing her entire confidence in the divine ability to answer prayer and vindicate the innocent suppliant. By contrast, however, the deceitful wicked were unmasked and exposed, despite their hypocritical pretensions to justice and religion" (Harrison 1251).

Bel and the Dragon 1:1 When King Astyages was laid to rest with his ancestors, Cyrus the Persian succeeded to his kingdom. 2 Daniel was a companion of the king, and was the most honored of all his friends.

3 Now the Babylonians had an idol called Bel, and every day they provided for it twelve bushels of choice flour and forty sheep and six measures of wine. 4 The king revered it and went every day to worship it. But Daniel worshiped his own God. So the king said to him, "Why do you not worship Bel?" 5 He answered, "Because I do not revere idols made with hands, but the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all living creatures." 6 The king said to him, "Do you not think that Bel is a living god? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?" 7 And Daniel laughed, and said, "Do not be deceived, O king, for this thing is only clay inside and bronze outside, and it never ate or drank anything."

8 Then the king was angry and called the priests of Bel and said to them, "If you do not tell me who is eating these provisions, you shall die. 9 But if you prove that Bel is eating them, Daniel shall die, because he has spoken blasphemy against Bel." Daniel said to the king, "Let it be done as you have said." 10 Now there were seventy priests of Bel, besides their wives and children. So the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. 11 The priests of Bel said, "See, we are now going outside; you yourself, O king, set out the food and prepare the wine, and shut the door and seal it with your signet. 12 When you return in the morning, if you do not find that Bel has eaten it all, we will die; otherwise Daniel will, who is telling lies about us." 13 They were unconcerned, for beneath the table they had made a hidden entrance, through which they used to go in regularly and consume the provisions.

14 After they had gone out, the king set out the food for Bel. Then Daniel ordered his servants to bring ashes, and they scattered them throughout the whole temple in the presence of the king alone. Then they went out, shut the door and sealed it with the king's signet, and departed. 15 During the night the priests came as usual, with their wives and children, and they ate and drank everything.

16 Early in the morning the king rose and came, and Daniel with him. 17 The king said, "Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?" He answered, "They are unbroken, O king." 18 As soon as the doors were opened, the king looked at the table, and shouted in a loud voice, "You are great, O Bel, and in you there is no deceit at all!" 19 But Daniel laughed and restrained the king from going in. "Look at the floor," he said, "and notice whose footprints these are." 20 The king said, "I see the footprints of men and women and children." 21 Then the king was enraged, and he arrested the priests and their wives and children. They showed him the secret doors through which they used to enter to consume what was on the table. 22 Therefore the king put them to death, and gave Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed it and its temple.

23 Now in that place there was a great dragon, which the Babylonians revered. 24 The king said to Daniel, "You cannot deny that this is a living god; so worship him." 25 Daniel said, "I worship the Lord my God, for he is the living God. 26 But give me permission, O king, and I will kill the dragon without sword or club." The king said, "I give you permission." 27 Then Daniel took pitch, fat, and hair, and boiled them together and made cakes, which he fed to the dragon. The dragon ate them, and burst open. Then Daniel said, "See what you have been worshiping!"

28 When the Babylonians heard about it, they were very indignant and conspired against the king, saying, "The king has become a Jew; he has destroyed Bel, and killed the dragon, and slaughtered the priests." 29 Going to the king, they said, "Hand Daniel over to us, or else we will kill you and your household."

30 The king saw that they were pressing him hard, and under compulsion he handed Daniel over to them. 31 They threw Daniel into the lions' den, and he was there for six days. 32 There were seven lions in the den, and every day they had been given two human bodies and two sheep; but now they were given nothing, so that they would devour Daniel.

33 Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judea; he had made a stew and had broken bread into a bowl, and was going into the field to take it to the reapers. 34 But the angel of the Lord said to Habakkuk, "Take the food that you have to Babylon, to Daniel, in the lions' den." 35 Habakkuk said, "Sir, I have never seen Babylon, and I know nothing about the den." 36 Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head and carried him by his hair; with the speed of the wind he set him down in Babylon, right over the den. 37 Then Habakkuk shouted, "Daniel, Daniel! Take the food that God has sent you." 38 Daniel said, "You have remembered me, O

God, and have not forsaken those who love you." 39 So Daniel got up and ate. And the angel of God immediately returned Habakkuk to his own place.

40 On the seventh day the king came to mourn for Daniel. When he came to the den he looked in, and there sat Daniel! 41 The king shouted with a loud voice, "You are great, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and there is no other besides you!" 42 Then he pulled Daniel out, and threw into the den those who had attempted his destruction, and they were instantly eaten before his eyes.

(Bel and the Dragon 1:1-42 – NRS)

(NRS = New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America)

Discussion of Bel and the Dragon

These two accounts were placed at the conclusion of the Book of Daniel in the Greek recensions and were numbered as the fourteenth chapter in the Latin Vulgate (even though Jerome called them “fables” [Latin *fabulas*] in his preface to Daniel). The first of the accounts concerns the chief deity of Babylon from about 2275BC onward known as Bel (otherwise known as Marduk). In the neo-Babylonian period (626-538BC) his worship was particularly emphasized under the auspices of Nebuchadnezzar II with his building of the great temple known as Esagila. Apparently after the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon (according to the tale), Cyrus of Persia also worshipped Bel there and believed Bel to consume considerable amounts of food and wine every day. Daniel, however, knew better and sets out to demonstrate to the king that it was not Bel who consumed it all, but the priests and their families which he succeeds in proving and thereby leads to the destruction of this temple of Bel and the deaths of the priests and their families.

It seems possible that the account of the “dragon” (Greek δράκων can be read as “serpent”) was added to the one of Bel because they both deal with the theme of Daniel demonstrating the falsity of worshipping gods that are not the true God (Harrison 1253). This dragon was apparently kept as a god and worshipped, but Daniel wanted to demonstrate that it was not a god so he devised a plan to kill it by convincing it to eat tar. When it died, the people of Babylon were distraught at all that had happened and feared that Daniel had gained influence over the king so they demanded the death of Daniel by having him kept for a week in a hungry den of lions. However, the prophet Habakkuk was taken by the angel of the LORD (by the “hair of his head” cf. Eze.8:3) from Judah to Daniel in Babylon to feed him in the lion’s den. When the week had ended and Daniel was shown to have been preserved (cf. Dan.6) those who had Daniel cast in were themselves thrown in and the king confessed the God of Daniel to be God.