

Lamentations, Habakkuk, and Daniel

**Gardendale church of Christ
2019**

DATE	LESSON	PAGE	Reading
	1	5	Lam. 1
	2	7	Lam. 2
	3	9	Lam. 3:1-33
	4	11	Lam. 3:33-66
	5	13	Lam. 4
	6	15	Lam. 5
	7	16	Hab. 1
	8	18	Hab. 2
	9	20	Hab. 3
	10	23	Dan. 1
	11	26	Dan. 2
	12	30	Dan. 3
	13	33	Dan. 4
	14	36	Dan. 5
	15	39	Dan. 6
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	19	51	Dan. 9
	20	54	Dan. 10
	21	57	Dan. 11
	22	61	Dan. 12

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Introduction to Lamentations

Judah has gone into captivity. She is under affliction and hard servitude. She dwells among the nations; she finds no rest. All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits. (Lam. 1:1)

Lamentations is a group of five poems that describe the suffering of Judah during its seventy years of captivity under Babylon and Persia. The author does not give his name, but tradition says that it is Jeremiah who was living in Judah during the captivity. To understand Lamentations, we must first understand the living conditions of the Israelites after the destruction of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city for a year before he attacked, depleting Judah of its resources. As well, he destroyed the city in such a manner that it could not be easily rebuilt. He was tired of reconquering Jerusalem, and he planned for this to be the last time rebellion was possible. The Babylonians burned the palace and many of the houses. They destroyed the temple. There was no longer a public gathering place for the people. There was no longer a place for the Levites to do their work, to fulfill both their spiritual and civic duties. All those that could rally the people to work together and rebuild Jerusalem were taken to Babylon. The only person that was qualified to lead the people was someone they hated, Jeremiah. All that remained were the “poor people,” but Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar’s captain, gave them vineyards and fields for their own survival. They would have missed that year’s harvest because Babylon attacked in August. They had to work quickly to gather supplies to plant the following year (Jeremiah 39).

Perhaps worst of all from an earthly perspective, Babylon destroyed Jerusalem’s walls. The city walls allowed people security from other nations that lived in the Middle East. The people have the opportunity to gather resources but have no way to protect those resources. Years later in Nehemiah 4, the wall builders had to split themselves in half to guard the city: half would work on the wall, while the other half would hold spears.

Can we picture ourselves living with no infrastructure? Tomorrow, if all the grocery stores were gone, all gas stations destroyed, no water or power, and in the chaos, people were attacking each other, what would we do? If the church building was gone, and God’s people could not safely assemble, what would we do? We would probably lament and pray. That is the attitude that created Lamentations.

Outline

Lamentations 1: Lady Zion

- Jerusalem is personified as the daughter of Zion. There is no one that will come to her aid. She calls on the Lord to look at her distress.
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Lamentations 2: God's Wrath

- Judah acknowledges that this destruction was her own fault. She understands that God's wrath was justified. She still begs God to intervene on her behalf.
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Lamentations 3: Great is Your Faithfulness

- This is the only poem of hope in the book. It is full of language drawn from other books of the Old Testament (Job 3; Psalms 22, 69; Isaiah 53). If God keeps His promise to destroy Judah, then God will also keep His promise to rebuild Israel with greater shepherds (Jer. 3:15). Presently, leaders like Daniel and Esther will preserve God's people. At the end of captivity God will raise up leaders like Zerubbabel, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, Ezra, and Nehemiah who will rebuild Israel. They will not just rebuild Jerusalem's infrastructure but also its spiritual infrastructure. This generation will create the spiritually-minded and "idolatry-free" society that Jesus and the first disciples grew up in.
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Lamentations 4: The Siege of Jerusalem

- This poem compares how the people used to live in prosperity but now suffer in the lowliest position.
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Lamentations 5: A Prayer for God's Mercy

- The people cry out for the Lord to remember them! The poem has an abrupt ending: "Turn us back to you...unless you have utterly rejected us..."

The Daughter of Zion

Lamentations 1

1. What happened to Judah's lovers and friends? (v. 2)
2. Thinking back to Jeremiah, what was usually personified as Judah's lovers and friends?
3. Why did God afflict Judah? (v. 5)
4. What is the message of "Her princes have become like deer?" (v. 6)
5. How was her collapse awesome? (v. 9)
6. What horrible thing occurred during the fall of Jerusalem? (v. 10, Jer. 51:51)
7. What do all those who pass by Jerusalem see? (v. 12-14)
8. The Lord's mightiness is described in v. 15. He crushes mighty men like a man crushes grapes in a _____.
9. What two things has God done to make comfort impossible in v. 16 -17?
10. God's judgement on Judah proved His own _____. (v. 18, Rom. 3:4-5)

11. What did God's judgment on Judah reveal about her lovers?

12. Judah takes comfort in what prophecies? (v. 21-22)

Bonus: Where are those prophecies recorded?

God's Wrath

Lamentations 2

1. The footstool is used as a symbol of humility (James 2:3), What is being said when God forgets His footstool in the day of His anger? (v. 1)
2. God's fury is described as what? (v. 3-4)
3. Who destroyed God's temple? (v. 6-7)
4. What other places in the Old Testament were destroyed that were representations of God's dwelling?
5. Thought Question: In the days of captivity, how was "the Law no more"? (v. 9)
6. What heartbreaking thing was happening in Jerusalem? (v. 12)
7. Who would later weep for Jerusalem? Who else would wish nothing more than to console her? (Luke 19:41-42)
8. Who should the people blame for their despair? (v. 14)
9. What would those who pass by Jerusalem do? (v. 15-16)
10. What does the author call the people to do? (v. 18-19)

11. Describe the setting of Jerusalem. (v. 19-21)

12. God invited Judah's enemies to Jerusalem as if He were inviting them to a
_____. (v. 22)

Great Is Your Faithfulness (Part I)

Lamentations 3:1-33

1. Thus far, Judah has usually been personified as a woman. Verse 1 says, “I *am* the man *who* has seen affliction.” Who is a man that saw Judah’s affliction first-hand?
2. God has besieged the author with what? (v. 5)
3. Looking at v. 5-9, list some words that describe the feeling of being trapped or without escape?
4. What has God turned aside? (v. 11)
5. What is God personified as?(v. 12-13)
6. Where has God moved His soul? (v. 17)
7. What has the author forgotten? (v. 17)
8. The Lord’s mercy and compassion cannot...? (v .22)
9. The Lord is faithful to keep His promises. What promise had the Lord just recently fulfilled?
10. What promise could the author expect for the future of Judah? (Jer. 29:10)

11. What would be a good thing to do during this time of extreme despair? (v. 26)

12. What should the people do while dealing with consequences of their sin? (v. 28-30)

13. Does God afflict willingly? (v. 33)

Great Is Your Faithfulness (Part II)

Lamentations 3:33-66

1. It is not God's desire to crush the captives meaninglessly (v. 34), nor take justice away from man (v.35). As well, it is not His desire to subvert a man in his cause. **Cause** here means "contest." **Subvert** means "to win a contest merely by force unfairly." What was **NOT** God's purpose in captivity? (v. 36)
 1. The false prophet cannot do what? (v. 37)
 2. What should the people **not do** in captivity? (v. 39)
 3. What should the people **do** in captivity? (v. 40-42)
 4. What has God symbolically done to prevent hearing prayers? (v. 44)
 5. When will the author cease his weeping? (v. 50)
 6. What had his enemies done to him (v. 52-54)
 7. How did the author respond to his situation? (v. 55)
 8. If the author is, in fact, Jeremiah, verse 58 presents a special thought. Jeremiah had been trying to intercede for the people throughout his book. Not that it was his fault, but he failed in that role. Who is the author's intercessor in verse 58?

9. What is the author to his enemies? (v. 63)

10. What has a veiled heart? (v. 65)

The Siege of Jerusalem

Lamentations 4

1. The citizen of Jerusalem used to be as valuable as gold, but now are regarded as _____ . (v. 2)
2. How does Jerusalem's cruelty compare with that of dogs or jackals? (v. 3-4)
3. What are the two transitions in verse 5?
4. How is the destruction of Jerusalem worse than the destruction of Sodom? (v. 6)
5. The Nazirites are those that had taken special vows to God. Those vows were not cutting their hair, not touching a dead body, or not eating any product of the grapevine. Certainly, their hair alone would stand out in the streets. During the siege what is said about them? (v. 7-8)
6. Why did the kings and all the inhabitants believe that it was impossible for Nebuchadnezzar to enter the gates? (v. 12-13)
7. Now that the siege was coming to a brutal end, what did the people think about the priesthood? (v. 16)

8. What nation did Jerusalem vainly watch thinking it would come to save them? (v. 17)

9. What warning is given to Edom? (v. 21-22)

10. What message of hope is given to Zion? (v. 22)

A Prayer for God's Mercy

Lamentations 5

1. What does the prayer ask God to do? (v. 1)
2. What are they having to do to gather resources? (v. 4, 9)
3. Instead of God feeding them manna in the wilderness, who is feeding them bread now? (v. 6)
4. What is the appeal in verse 7?
5. Briefly describe how low the people feel by using language found in the prayer. (v. 8,10-16)
6. Research Question: Who else in the Old Testament was made a grinder like these young men? (v. 13)
7. What is the contrast between verses 16 and 19?
8. Do you think this prayer has an abrupt ending? If so, what is the message of that abrupt ending? (v. 22)

The Perplexed Prophet

Habakkuk 1 - 2:1

This book takes place late in the 7th century. Jerusalem still stands, Jeremiah has begun preaching Judah's doom, and Habakkuk knows that Babylonian captivity is on its way. Unlike Jeremiah, Habakkuk is not speaking to Israel and Judah about their demise. Instead, he is conversing with the Lord. He asks if Babylonian captivity can really be considered just, especially when the Babylonians have done many evil things as well. The conversation builds up to the Lord saying, "The just live by faith." God explains that those who are going to truly be just in this world are those who put their faith in Him. The Apostle Paul and/or the Hebrew's writer will use this phrase several times in their arguments for the superiority of the New Testament.

The Lord reassures Habakkuk that Babylon will also be judged. We read about the Lord's judgment against Babylon in Daniel 5 and Jeremiah 50-52.

1. What is Habakkuk's first concern? (v. 1-4)
2. What is he crying out to get the Lord's attention? (v. 2)
3. What type of judgment does he call the Babylonian invasion? (v. 4)
4. The Lord's answer begins in verse 5. How does He describe the Chaldean/Babylonian armies? (v. 6-8)
5. What did the Chaldeans come to Judah for? (v. 9)
6. Research Question: What is the thought in verse 11? (If you are using the KJV or NKJV check another version for reference. If you are already using another version check the NKJV for the other rendering.)

7. Habakkuk responds in verse 12. He first appeals to God's hatred for violence. Now, for the second time, what attribute of God does he appeal to? (v. 12-13)

8. What does Habakkuk see as a contradiction in God's lack of action? (v. 13)

9. How do the Babylonians treat people? (v. 15)

10. What does Habakkuk expect to happen after his prayer? (2:1-2)

The Lord's Answer

Habakkuk 2

1. Why does God want Habakkuk to write his vision down? (v. 2-3)
2. What two types of people are being compared in verse 4?
3. What will be the end of the man described in verse 5? (v. 6-7)
4. Who will plunder Babylon? (v. 8)
5. When the Lord brings judgment on these nation(s), how will the earth change? (v. 14)
6. What profit is the image? (v. 18-19)
7. What is the stone according to verse 19?
8. What do people do to these images according to verse 19?

9. In comparison, what do people do when the Lord is in His temple? (v. 20)

The Lord is My Strength

Habakkuk 3

1. How did Habakkuk respond to the Lord's answer? (v. 2)
2. What does Habakkuk want the Lord to do? (v. 2)
3. What does the Lord coming from Teman and Mount Paran symbolize? (v. 3; Deut. 33:2)
4. How is the Lord described in verse 6?
5. What event might be described with the "tents of Cushan"? (v. 7; Judges. 3:10)
6. What event do you think of when reading verses 8-10?
7. What event is recalled in verse 11?
8. What event is recalled in verse 15?

9. When Habakkuk hears the Babylonian army coming, what will he do? When he sees there is no more food what will he do? (v. 16-18)

10. Since the Lord is his strength, what will Habakkuk be able to do? How does that fit the Babylonian captivity story?

A Study of the Book of Daniel for the Gardendale church of Christ.

Darrin Faris. 2019

Introduction

The book of Daniel is both a narrative history and a prophetic oracle which can be defined as symbolic and visionary literature. The prophet Daniel wrote the book circ. 530 B.C. (Daniel 9:2; 10:2) In it, he records the events of the Babylonian captivity during the period 605-536 B.C.

In chapters 1-6, Daniel wrote about his own life in captivity. Daniel (or Belteshazzar as he is known by his Babylonian name) and his friends made bold and difficult decisions while displaying great integrity standing for Godliness instead of culture. They rejected the king's food, prayed when it was illegal to do so, and refused to bow to the king's idols.

Daniel also came to be known as an Empire-predicting prophet, because he accurately predicted world empires before they actually rose to power—first, Babylon; second, the Medes and the Persians; third, Greece; and fourth, Rome. During the period of the Empire of Rome, the Messiah would return and set up His everlasting kingdom. Daniel also predicted the timetable in which these events would occur. Chapters 7-12 contain the visions that Daniel received from God and the events that are involved in his prophecies. A portion of these includes those surrounding the earthly kingdoms in which he lived. However, he also describes the coming of the Messiah and the events that would surround His eternal kingdom. Jesus himself acknowledged the accuracy of the prophecies of Daniel when He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24 (See v. 15).

The purpose of Daniel's book is to provide a historical account of how God protected and provided for His faithful followers while in captivity. It also includes a vision of future redemption and hope.

Without a doubt, harmonizing and reconciling the symbols and visions described in the book of Daniel have and will continue to create confusion in the minds of many. However, with careful and thoughtful study it is believed we will discover that much of the historical record can be harmonized with the symbols in his book.

The Power of Faith in an Exile

Lesson 1

Daniel chapter 1

Daniel describes the siege of Jerusalem and sets the time as “the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah,” or approximately 605 B.C. (Also note 2 Kings 24:1-2 and 2 Chronicles 36:5-7) The capture of Jerusalem and the first deportation of the Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon, including Daniel and his companions, were the fulfillment of many warnings from the prophets of Israel. God’s children had forsaken His laws and ignored His covenant (Jer. 7:24). God’s judgment and resulting exile would include the deportation of all Israel, including even his most faithful servants (Isa. 24:1-6).

As Christians living in this land in the 21st century, we are, in a very real sense, exiles separated from our “home.” We are but “sojourners and pilgrims” longing for our exile to end. While sojourning, we are engaged in all-out spiritual warfare. Along the way we are going to have to fight personal battles against the hostile actions of our adversary.

Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were just teenagers when they faced the biggest challenge of their sojourn. Having been exiled to the heathen city of Babylon, their challenge became one similar to the temptations we face today in our land of exile. How does one hold to his/her convictions of faith without compromise? When scholarship, professional opportunity, and earthly gain is promised, what is the first thing that enters our minds? What spiritual price are we willing to pay for advancement in this world?

Nebuchadnezzar’s efforts toward Daniel and his friends can be described as indoctrination. The principles of the Babylonians were a vast departure from the teachings and principles they had come to know in Judea, and their re-education was first disguised with seemingly innocent cultural departures. He tried to break down their resistance and gnaw away at their convictions which would have resulted in compromise and, ultimately, a complete change in lifestyle. But the young men from Judea would have nothing of it.

We face the same attempts at indoctrination today whether it is through the things we see on television or in the movies, the music we listen to, or the career paths we choose. We must be very discerning about what we see and do. Are we willing to compromise? How much? Standing on our convictions may be hard and even costly. However, we are merely sojourners and pilgrims.

We press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:14).

For Daniel and his friends, decisiveness was critical. They knew God would be faithful to them as long as they did what was right. And, God was with them all through their trials and difficulties. Even the great King of Babylon was witness to this.

Questions from the Introduction and Daniel 1

- 1) In what year was Daniel taken into exile by the king of Babylon?
- 2) Describe the specifications given to Ashpenaz regarding the type of people he wanted brought into the king's palace.
- 3) What was the intent of Nebuchadnezzar for these exceptional people according to verses 4 & 5?
- 4) Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (as they were known by their Hebrew names) were given Babylonian names. What were those names?
- 5) Daniel says in verse 8, that he would not “defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank.” We are not specifically told, but what do YOU think would have been wrong with eating and drinking what the king set before them?
- 6) Whatever the reason, Daniel and his companions chose not to compromise their beliefs. How would you describe Daniel's demeanor and approach to Ashpenaz regarding their “rebellion?” (1:8-13)

- 7) A counterproposal is made to Ashpenaz's steward regarding the diet that Daniel is proposing. What was that proposal? (vv. 11-13)

- 8) What was the result of the test? Do you think these results were a miracle performed by God?

- 9) These youths also achieved the "knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom" as well as Daniel's ability to interpret dreams, just as ordered by Nebuchadnezzar (v. 5). Who actually gave them this knowledge?

- 10) What measure of knowledge had God actually given them? (v. 2)

The Kingdoms of Men Give Way to the Kingdom of God

Lesson 2

Daniel chapter 2

It would be appropriate at this point to observe that the book of Daniel is not written in strict chronological order. In fact, it seems that the vision of Daniel in chapter 2 and the interpretation of the dream occurred during the three years of training, before the formal presentation of the four youths to the king. Further evidence of this disjunctive timeline is seen in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, which are written out of chronological order. For clarity in understanding the introductory “dating” of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams recorded in chapter 2, please consider the following timeline:

May-June, 605 B.C.: Babylonian victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish

June-August, 605 B.C.: Fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, the general of the army (Daniel and companions taken captive)

September, 605 B.C.: Death of Nebuchadnezzar’s father, Nabopolassar

September, 605 B.C. to (March-April) 604 B.C.: Time period of accession of Nebuchadnezzar as king (first year of Daniel’s training)

(March-April) 604 B.C. to (March-April) 603 B.C.: First formal year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (second year of training of Daniel)

(March-April) 603 B.C. to (March-April) 602 B.C.: Second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, also the year of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (third year of training of Daniel)

The book of Daniel is unique in many ways. In chapters 2 and 7 we are given a comprehensive picture of the chronological events of world history stretching from the time of Daniel to the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom several hundred years later.

The peril felt by Nebuchadnezzar because of his dreams is described in great detail in Chapter 2:1-13. These were no ordinary dreams. They were of such a nature that he lost sleep, made unreasonable demands of his closest advisors, and was brought to the point of murdering all of the “wise” men of his kingdom for their inability to describe and explain the visions he had seen. Clearly the dreams were God-sent. If only Nebuchadnezzar had sought the

counsel of those who had previously been found in all matters of wisdom and understanding to be “ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm” (1:20).

Daniel famously steps in. He, with the added supplications of his companions, turns to God for help. What a contrast! Daniel and his friends sought mercies from heaven as opposed to Nebuchadnezzar issuing a decree of death for the “wise men.” The revelation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream comes to Daniel, which he shares with the King along with its interpretation. With the power of God on his side, the young Daniel is now in control of the situation. Inspired by God’s revelation, Daniel sees the imagery of a great figure that will, when interpreted, reflect the future rising and falling of four world empires.

Nebuchadnezzar had risen to great power over all of Southwest Asia. Little did he know it was only according to the providence of God. The head on the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represented his own greatness as the “king of kings” (Ezek. 26:7) over Babylon, an empire which reigned supreme until its fall in 539 B.C. The second and third empires, described by Daniel as the upper and lower parts of the body of the great figure, go unnamed in chapter 2. However, we know them to be the Medo-Persian and Grecian empires from Daniel’s later identification in 5:28; 8:20-21; 11:2.

The fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, represented by the legs and feet of the image, is obviously the most important one. Daniel gives more attention to this fourth kingdom than to all the preceding kingdoms put together. Daniel stresses the strength of the iron legs and their power to break in pieces and subdue all of its opposition. This, of course, characterizes ancient Rome very well.

Daniel dwells at length upon the fact that the feet and the toes are part of potters’ clay and part of iron. On the basis of this, Daniel observes, “The kingdom shall be divided.” Iron and pottery do not adhere well one to the other. However, the presence of the iron in the feet is an element of strength as Daniel states, “but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron.”

As the iron denotes the firmness of the kingdom, the clay denotes its brittleness. The mixing of iron with clay represents a lack of complete stability in the feet of the image and the representative kingdom of Rome. This is brought out in verse 42 in which the toes are expressly said to be part of iron and part of clay. Daniel interprets this to mean that the kingdom is partly strong, because of the presence of iron, and partly breakable, because of the brittleness of the pottery. To give too much attention to the exact meaning of

the intermingling of iron and clay, representative of this fourth kingdom, might well be an effort in futility. The more important observation is found in what occurs during the reign of this fourth kingdom, Rome. God will set up his eternal kingdom “that will never be destroyed.” This is exactly what happened!

Questions for Daniel 2

- 1) Based upon our timeline, when during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and when during Daniel’s captivity did Nebuchadnezzar have his troubling dreams?

- 2) What specific demand did Nebuchadnezzar make of the “wise men” of his kingdom regarding his dreams?

- 3) Having no ability to meet the demands of their king, what was to be the fate of these men?

- 4) Upon hearing of the murderous decree of the king (which would have included Daniel and his companions), what was Daniel’s course of action? (2:14-16)

- 5) Where did Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah go for help with this matter?

- 6) Describe the parts of the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

- 7) Describe the interpretation of the dream and its image given by Daniel.
- 8) What characteristic of the fourth kingdom was not mentioned of the three prior kingdoms? (v. 40)
- 9) What did Daniel predict would happen during the reign of the fourth kingdom?
- 10) What was the reaction of King Nebuchadnezzar upon hearing Daniel's interpretation of his dream?
- 11) As a result of Daniel's interpretive power, Nebuchadnezzar honored Daniel by making him ruler over the whole province of Babylon. What request did Daniel then make of the king?

The Courage of Faithful Youths

Lesson 3

Daniel chapter 3

Lauding himself over the revelation that the head of gold in his dream, as interpreted by Daniel, is indeed an image of himself and representative of his rule over the Babylonian empire, Nebuchadnezzar now considers himself worthy of worship among all that are in his kingdom. While other chapters in Daniel are written out of chronological order, clearly chapter 3 follows chapter 2 in the sequence of events (See 3:12).

Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold described as being sixty cubits (90 ft.) high and six cubits (9 ft.) broad erected in the plain of Dura. The proportions would not indicate a normal human form. The obvious intent was to impress by the size of the image rather than by its particular features. The worship that was demanded exceeded what we would recognize today similar to a salute of the flag as an expression of political solidarity and loyalty to the country in which we live. It was, in effect, an honor demanded by Nebuchadnezzar who at this point considered himself as some form of deity. At the sound of the music, all those gathered were to “fall down and worship the golden image.”

The herald made it clear that anyone who did not obey the command to fall down and worship would be cast immediately into the burning fiery furnace. The fact that the Jews, specifically Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, had not worshiped the image presented an occasion for the Chaldeans to bring accusation against them. They reminded the king of the details of his decree and the penalty for disobedience. The king had set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon and yet, as the Chaldeans point out, the three had not shown any regard or loyalty to the king himself.

Nebuchadnezzar was enraged. Yet in spite of his anger, he gave them a second chance which lesser men might not have been offered. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not bend. Their faith in God held firm. Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten Daniel’s amazing interpretation of his dream and the credit given to the God of heaven for that great prophecy. How incredible it is that he would ask, “Who is the God who will deliver you from my hands?” Nebuchadnezzar felt supreme in his power and did not expect any god to interfere.

Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego arrogant in their response to the king, or did the confidence of their faith simply bring them to the logical conclusion of the situation? Even the possibility that they might have to die for their stand with God did not change their thinking. They considered that sometimes it is not in the purpose of God to deliver faithful ones from persecution or even death.

These young men of God stood strong against the most powerful man in the world. His anger was boundless. Nebuchadnezzar had the men prepared for execution and when the furnace reached excessive heat, the king demanded an immediate death.

However, in full view of the king, the young men were delivered without harm. It was immediately apparent to Nebuchadnezzar, as well as the others who watched, that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was greater than the gods of Babylon.

Just as Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged Daniel's God at the conclusion of chapter 2, so here Nebuchadnezzar recognizes the delivering power of their God "who has sent his angel, and delivered his servants who trusted in him."

Questions for Daniel 3

- 1) What were the specific consequences for failure to worship the golden image created by Nebuchadnezzar?

- 2) What were the three charges against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego cited by the Chaldeans in verse 12?

- 3) After they were brought before him, what two questions did Nebuchadnezzar ask of the three men?

- 4) After careful examination of the three charges and the two questions asked by Nebuchadnezzar, do you think it was simply a political stand that the three were making?

- 5) Nebuchadnezzar felt supreme in his power and did not expect any god to interfere. Rabshakeh made the same arrogant and blasphemous claim when threatening King Hezekiah (Is 36:13-20). Do we hear arrogant claims of our leaders today? What do we call this in our modern vernacular?

- 6) Did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego know for certain whether or not God would deliver them out of the furnace unharmed? What DID they know?

- 7) Nebuchadnezzar witnessed a physical demonstration of God's presence in verse 25. What did he see?

- 8) Nebuchadnezzar not only recognized the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego but made a remarkable admission concerning Him in verses 26 and 29. What did he now recognize?

- 9) What an incredible account of young men who remained true to God under severe trial. In spite of separation from their families and of the corrupting influences of Babylonian religion, political pressure, and immorality, they did not waver in their hour of testing. What examples can you think of where you have been tested in this way?

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Lesson 4

Daniel chapter 4

The end is coming for Nebuchadnezzar, just as Daniel had predicted. Nebuchadnezzar, at times, demonstrated a clear recognition of the excellence of Daniel and his companions and even acknowledged the Most High God of heaven. However, his pride and inability to hold to that source of all that he had accomplished spelled his ultimate downfall. In this chapter we will see that God ultimately succeeds in bringing Nebuchadnezzar to the realization “that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will” (Dan. 4:25).

This chapter begins with a decree of Nebuchadnezzar. He is so impressed by the “signs and wonders of the Most High God” that he wishes to share them with his entire realm.

However, at a time of ease and comfort, Nebuchadnezzar sees another vision in his sleep that instills great fear in him. With no one among all the wise men of Babylon able to interpret its meaning, Daniel comes in to explain the meaning of his vision of a great tree that would be chopped down to the stump. The dream makes Nebuchadnezzar afraid, and its meaning even alarms Daniel. Apparently, the inevitability of the fulfillment of Daniel’s previous prophecies, as well as this one, was ominously known to both men. Perhaps Daniel was not only troubled by the content of the dream but also by the need to tell Nebuchadnezzar its interpretation.

Daniel immediately identifies the tree as representing Nebuchadnezzar. Just like the tree in the dream, the king has grown and become strong, and his dominion spreads all across the land. However, Nebuchadnezzar’s vision indicates that he would be driven from his position among men and he would dwell with the beasts of the field. Eventually, it was predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would retain control of his kingdom after, once again, acknowledging the almighty God of heaven, the source of all that Nebuchadnezzar ever had.

Daniel, as a prophet of God, then concludes his interpretation with an exhortation to the king. He urges the king to replace his sins with righteousness and his iniquities with showing mercy to the poor.

“All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar” (v. 28). Twelve months later, as he walks in the palace in Babylon surveying all the wondrous things he has built, the kingdom would “depart” from him. It would take the utter ruin of his kingdom and a deprived existence equal to that of an ox in a field to cause him to finally come to himself. Is it not true that for most of us, it takes being reduced to our lowest point to come to the realization of the source of our successes? While not a fairy tale ending for King Nebuchadnezzar, his life story still teaches great lessons in the necessity of humility and honoring the great God of heaven at every turn in our lives.

Questions for Daniel 4

- 1) How does Nebuchadnezzar describe the kingdom of the Most High God in 4:3?

- 2) Describe the mental state of Nebuchadnezzar BEFORE he had the dream? (Note 5:4)

- 3) Research Question: The king, in recognition of the fact that Daniel’s God is the interpreter of his dream, calls Daniel by his Hebrew name. To what did the last part of Daniel’s name refer in the Hebrew language? But then Nebuchadnezzar explains his name Belteshazzar was given to Daniel according to the name of his god. What god was Nebuchadnezzar referring to?

- 4) Briefly describe the dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

- 5) In the dream, special instructions are given regarding the stump. The stump is to be bound with a band of iron and brass. What do YOU think the meaning is for this added detail?

- 6) Daniel's consternation at the interpretation of the dream is indicated in that he "was astonished for a time." Some versions say "one hour." What do you think were the factors that caused such dismay on the part of Daniel?

- 7) Briefly describe Daniel's interpretation of the dream.

- 8) After all that he had witnessed from Daniel indicative of the power of the Most High God, what indication do we get that Nebuchadnezzar still didn't understand who was in charge? (4:30)

- 9) How long would it take for Nebuchadnezzar to FINALLY "get it" and have his kingdom restored to him? (4:32)

- 10) What similarities do you see in the declarations Nebuchadnezzar made at the beginning of chapter 4 (before he lost everything) and at the end of the chapter after his "understanding returned" to him?

The Writing Is on the Wall

Lesson 5

Daniel chapter 5

King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. History tells us that Babylon would fall some 23 years later in 539 B.C. Between the time of Nebuchadnezzar's death and the eventual end of the Babylonian Empire, three lesser-known kings and a king by the name of Nabonidus sat on the throne. Daniel gives no reference to any of these kings. After their apparent uneventful reigns, Belshazzar came onto the scene and would be sitting on the throne when the kingdom was vanquished. As we read from the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2, Daniel told him "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours" (Dan. 2:39). As we come to chapter 5, that prophecy is fulfilled.

As mentioned in the introduction to our study, some of the recorded text of Daniel is written out of chronological order. Towards the end of the quarter of a century that elapsed between chapters 4 and 5, the revelations given to Daniel in chapters 7 and 8 occurred. Chapter 7 was revealed to Daniel "in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon" (Dan. 7:1) and the vision of the ram and male goat in chapter 8 occurred "in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar" (Dan. 8:1). Therefore, the information given in these two visions, was known to Daniel before the event of chapter 5 which chronologically came after chapters 7 and 8.

As the last days of the Babylonian Empire approached, Belshazzar made a great feast to which a thousand of his lords had been invited along with their wives. It is interesting to note that, while not under siege yet, the surrounding territories of the city of Babylon had already been conquered by the Medes and the Persians. How bold it was to have a feast to honor the pagan Babylonian gods under such circumstances. The brashness did not end with the feast alone. Belshazzar commanded that the gold and silver vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar almost seventy years before be brought in for use at the banquet.

While the feast was in progress, suddenly the fingers of a man's hand appeared writing on the plastered wall of the palace.

The effect upon the king was immediate. His countenance changed and Daniel records that he became pale. He was filled with terror to the point that "the

joints of his hips were loosened, and his knees knocked.” In classic Babylonian king fashion, Belshazzar called for a suitable number of the wise men to read the writing and provide the interpretation. A large reward was offered; however, the wise men who assembled could not read the writing nor interpret it.

The obvious solution to the problem came to the mind of the queen rather than Belshazzar himself. Too often the world, like Belshazzar, is not willing to seek the wisdom of God until disaster is imminent. Oftentimes, as in the case of Belshazzar, we seek the counsel of God in our decisions far too late. Daniel lived daily according to the direction and counsel of the Almighty God. Daniel, who was known by Nebuchadnezzar as one capable of helping in such matters, could surely interpret the writing. The queen urged that he be brought in to solve the present problem.

In addressing Belshazzar, there is no formal greeting by Daniel as there was with Darius in Daniel 6:21 or with Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:19.

Belshazzar’s hours are numbered. Having detailed the rise and fall of his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel expresses in verse 22, “But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.” Belshazzar’s situation and his knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling made all the more blasphemous his taking of the vessels captured in Jerusalem from the house of the Lord and using them to drink wine in praising the gods of Babylon.

The words that Daniel read transliterated into English, are “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.” The interpretation is simple but ominous for sure. Belshazzar is made to understand that Babylon will be given to the Medes and the Persians. Even while Daniel was interpreting the writing on the wall, the prophecy was being fulfilled as the Medes and the Persians poured into the city. “That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.”

Questions for Daniel 5

- 1) The events of Daniel chapter 5 come to pass swiftly and decisively. After Belshazzar’s blasphemous use of the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, how much time elapses before the appearance of the hand writing on the wall? Do you think this timing is significant?

- 2) As the old saying goes, “the writing is on the wall.” What was Belshazzar’s reaction to this event? Why do you think this countenance repeats itself when the king’s wise men could not read nor interpret the writing?
- 3) Who was the calming influence when the King and his wise men were “beside themselves?”
- 4) How do you think the queen gained the perspective she had allowing her to be able to give the good counsel to the king? Who was this queen?
- 5) How did she describe Daniel in verse 12?
- 6) In contrast to the relationship that Nebuchadnezzar had with Daniel, what are we led to believe about Belshazzar and his relationship with Daniel, as apparent from verses 13 & 14?
- 7) From time to time, we have seen respectfulness given to Nebuchadnezzar by Daniel (2:31, 37; 4:19, 22). Similar respect will be given to Darius (6:21). Do you see that same respect given to Belshazzar by Daniel? (5:17, 22)
- 8) What was Daniel’s interpretation of the words *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin*?
- 9) How long did it take for this prophesy to be fulfilled?

Daniel and the Lions' Den

Lesson 6

Daniel chapter 6

The account of Daniel being cast into the lions' den is one of the most familiar stories of the Old Testament. This story is important to any student of God's word, young or old.

With the successful conquest of Babylon and the surrounding territory, it now became appropriate to organize the new kingdom under the reign of Darius. As referenced in our previous lesson, it was apparent that the last King of Babylon, Belshazzar knew little or nothing about Daniel, one of the most capable men in his entire realm. This was not so of Darius. "The king planned to set him over the whole kingdom" (6:3). However, in so doing, all the other men of authority grew jealous and had great contempt for Daniel.

The organization of the new kingdom, in addition to Daniel's position, included the appointment of one hundred and twenty princes or "satraps." Daniel himself was named one of the three presidents who would coordinate the work of the 120 satraps. Among the duties of Daniel was his oversight of the financial interests of the king. Within Daniel was seen an "excellent spirit" (v. 3) and in him the governors and satraps "could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful" (v. 4). All of this sets the stage for the supreme test of Daniel that would follow.

The integrity of Daniel apparently became a barrier to the ambitions of Daniel's fellow officials. Whether he interfered in their attempts at governmental corruption or possibly stood in the way of ill-gotten advancement is not certain. But all the governors and satraps hated Daniel so much, that they united their efforts to find a way to destroy his reputation in the mind of Darius. There was no legitimate complaint against Daniel to be found; therefore, they had to develop one. Their scheme involved creating a conflict between official regulations and Daniel's conscience and observance of the law of God. In our age, such conflicts between governmental laws and our consciences are presented almost daily. However, when someone purposefully develops such a conflict in order to cause one to stumble, this is nothing short of a direct work of Satan himself. That is what Daniel faced.

Darius fell for the scheme of the governors and satraps. At their behest, he enacted a law requiring all that were in his kingdom to bow to no other god(s) than himself. The penalty for disobedience? The guilty would be cast into a

den of lions. The conflict for Daniel was obvious. However, his remarkable faithfulness was similar to that of his three companions in chapter three as they faced the fiery furnace. His prayer life (“bowing down”) never wavered, and no apparent attempt was made by Daniel to hide it. Recall the instructions of Jeremiah to the elders, priests, prophets and all the people in captivity: “Then you will call upon Me, and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me, and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:12, 13). Daniel was not seeking to be martyred. He was faithfully following through with what he had known his whole life. Nothing would change that.

So, the matter quickly became known to his enemies. The conspirators, with the evidence that Daniel had violated the decree, now crowded once again into the king’s courtroom. They accused Daniel of disregarding the king and his decree and doing so three times a day as he offered prayer to his God. Darius, instead of being angry with Daniel, realized that he himself had made a mistake and hoped for a loophole. But there was no way out. By law, he was forced to issue the command that Daniel be cast into the lions’ den. Darius mourned the decree. He declared, “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you” (v. 16). Throwing Daniel into the den of lions left the king in anguish.

At dawn the following day, the king cried out for Daniel: “Daniel, the servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” (v. 20). Daniel responded “O king, live forever....” Daniel would go on to attribute his salvation to the God to whom he had been praying every day.

The king was overjoyed at the deliverance of Daniel and immediately gave order that Daniel be taken up out of the den of lions. Daniel was found completely unharmed because of his faith in God (Heb. 11:33). That would not be the case for Daniel’s accusers. They, along with their wives and children, in a most brutal display, were cast into the lions’ den and immediately devoured by the lions. This served notice to the rest, if they had any further inclination to plot against Daniel, they too would experience the wrath of the king as well as the judgment of God. Furthermore, as Nebuchadnezzar had done in chapter 3 and again in chapter 4, Darius issued a decree calling on men everywhere to fear the God of Daniel.

Daniel would continue and prosper in the reign of Darius and in the subsequent reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Questions for Daniel 6

- 1) According to verse 2, what was one of the primary tasks of the satraps and the governors?
- 2) How had Daniel been “distinguished above the governors and satraps?” (v. 3, 4)
- 3) The satraps appeared to know right away how to create the conflict between Daniel and Darius. They apparently knew Daniel’s habits. How do you supposed Darius, who thought very highly of Daniel, failed to recognize what his decree would do to Daniel?
- 4) Where did Daniel immediately go when he found out about the decree?
- 5) In contrast to Nebuchadnezzar who showed no compassion for Daniel’s three companions when they were cast into the fiery furnace, Darius manifests unusual concern. What attempt did Darius make to get Daniel out of the sentence? (v. 14)
- 6) What declaration did he make to Daniel about God? (v. 16)
- 7) What effect did the execution of the sentence have on Darius? (v. 18)
- 8) The next morning where did Darius go and what did he cry out when he arrived? (vv. 19 & 20)
- 9) After the event, what was Darius’ new decree? (v. 26, ff)

Four Great Beasts

Lesson 7

Daniel chapter 7

The vision seen by Daniel in chapter 7 provides the most comprehensive prophecy of world events in the entire Bible. In this chapter, Daniel traces the course of four great world empires, namely, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, concluding in the climax of world history in the coming of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the eternal kingdom of God. Through the use of pictorial language, this chapter forms a major outline of future events to which additional details are given later in the book of Daniel and in the New Testament, especially in the book of Revelation. Daniel's vision "refers to many days in the future" (8:26). It was to be fulfilled at "the time of the end" (12:4, 9). For this reason, Daniel was told to "seal up the vision" (8:26), "seal the book" (12:4), and "rest" until he rose to his inheritance "at the end of the days" (12:13).

Daniel, for the first time in his book, speaks of his own dream in which he saw four great beasts rise out of the sea. The four kingdoms, which were symbolized in chapter 2 by the different parts of the human image from the head to the feet, are the same as those which were symbolized by these four beasts in chapter 7. In the vision, four winds are seen stirring up a great sea. Symbolically, the sea may represent the mass of humanity or the nations of the world as in Matthew 13:47. The turbulence of the sea may well represent the wickedness of the world itself (Isa. 17:12-13; 57:20; Jer. 6:23). Daniel was told in chapter 7:17 that the four beasts represented four kings (or kingdoms) that would rise from the earth. It is within this context that we examine each beast.

Daniel describes the first beast as being like a lion but having the wings of an eagle. He saw the wings plucked from the beast, the beast lifted from the earth, made to stand upon his feet, and given a man's heart, that is, a man's mind or nature. The lion is a common representation of royal power. Solomon, for instance, had twelve lions on either side of the steps leading up to his throne (1 Kings 10:20; 2 Chron. 9:19). The lion was indeed the king of the beasts. In like manner, the eagle was the king of the birds of the air. In Ezekiel 17:3, 7, a great eagle is used as a picture first of Babylon and then of Egypt. In spite of the power indicated in the symbolism of the lion and the eagle's

wings, Daniel sees the wings plucked and the lion made to stand upon his feet as a man, to which a man's heart was given. This is most commonly interpreted as the symbolic representation of Nebuchadnezzar's experience in chapter 4 when he was humbled before God and made to realize that, even though he was a great ruler, he was only a man. His lion-like character, or royal power, was given to him only at God's pleasure.

The second beast of Daniel's vision is described as corresponding to a bear. As Daniel observes, the bear raises itself on one side and Daniel notices three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. Daniel hears the instruction given to the bear to "Arise, devour much meat." This second beast must be representative of the Medo-Persian Empire. Some might say this is not possible in that the Medes and the Persians are two separate empires and cannot be represented by just one beast. However, to consider the Medes and the Persians as separate and not representative as one entity is erroneous and devoid of historical facts and Daniel's own statements.

The Persian ruler Cyrus himself came to conquer Babylon in less than a month DURING the early years when Darius the Mede ruled, thus the myth of a separate Median empire at this time is not supported by the facts. In chapter 6 of Daniel, a combined kingdom of the Medes and Persians is mentioned repeatedly in verses 8, 12, and 15. Daniel's record corresponds to historical facts.

The bear is described as having three ribs in its mouth. Normally a bear lives mostly on fruits, vegetables, and roots, but will eat flesh when hungry and attacking other animals and men. This bear, however, is the symbol of government and military conquest and perhaps the ribs are conquests of the Medes and Persians in the years which followed the fall of Babylon.

Daniel describes a third beast differing from either of the two preceding animals. The third is like a leopard, having four wings on its back and having four heads. The third beast is commonly identified as the empire of Greece. The only thing said about this beast is that dominion was given to it.

While less grand, majestic, and powerful, a leopard is swifter and much feared as an animal of prey. In Habakkuk 1:8, the horses of the Chaldeans are described as swifter than leopards. Leopards characteristically would lie in wait for their prey (Jer. 5:6; Hos. 13:7) and then pounce upon their victims with great speed and agility. The impression of great speed inherent in a leopard is further enhanced by the presence of four wings on its back. In contrast to the earlier beasts which had only one head, there are four heads of

the third empire which well-serve to represent four governmental divisions with corresponding heads.

The history of Greece under Alexander the Great corresponds precisely to what is described. With the swiftness of a leopard, Alexander the Great conquered most of the civilized world all the way from Macedonia to Africa and eastward to India. The lightning character of his conquests is without precedent in the ancient world. Furthermore, it is a historical fact that Alexander had four principal subdivisions within his kingdom. With little doubt, this third beast represents the ancient Empire of Greece.

The crucial issue in the interpretation of the entire book of Daniel, and especially of chapter 7, is the identification of the fourth beast. Remember, four kingdoms were represented in Nebuchadnezzar's vision in chapter 2. It is reasonable to assume that they are the same four kingdoms reflected here. As in the prophecy of chapter 2, during the fourth earthly kingdom (beast) of chapter 7, "the Ancient of Days" would begin its reign. Of course, we know this occurred during the mighty reign of the kingdom of Rome which came to full power in 31 B.C.

However, the descriptions of the fourth beast of chapter 7 have been the source of much consternation. We will examine what we know. Daniel describes the fourth beast in verse 7 as "dreadful and terrible, and exceedingly strong." The Roman Empire was ruthless in its destruction of civilizations and peoples, killing captives by the thousands and selling them into slavery by the hundreds of thousands. But, at what point in Rome's development did Daniel see her with ten horns? Who are the three horns uprooted by the little horn? Who is the little horn? Who are the saints with which the little horn was waging war and when did they take possession of the kingdom?

Any attempt to answer these questions must be made in view of two obvious realities. First, the Roman Empire no longer exists. Any explanation of Daniel 7 must take into account that all the details of its meaning are sealed in recorded history. There is NOTHING that remains unfulfilled in the chapter. Second, the little horn makes his appearance BEFORE the Son of man receives the kingdom (7:8-9), and he makes war with the saints BEFORE they possess the kingdom (7:20-22).

The "ten kings" (v. 24) may simply represent a symbolic use of a full number (ten) or multiplicity of powerful rulers that controlled Rome. The three horns uprooted by the little horn appear to be part of the multiplicity (ten) of rulers. During the days when Rome was a Republic (prior to 31 B.C.) it was ruled by

a Senate (multiplicity) power structure. After that time, smaller coalitions (of three) which included the Caesars took control. They were termed “The Three-Headed Monster.” Assumptions could be made in an effort to apply specific names to the kings described in Daniel chapter 7. However, this is unnecessary in deriving the meaning. Daniel’s vision accurately describes the transformation of power in Rome.

Now we will examine the kingdom that would be established during the time of that fourth kingdom (Rome). Again, remember that any explanation of Daniel 7 must take into account that all the details of its meaning are sealed in recorded history. There is NOTHING that remains unfulfilled in the chapter 7. Jesus was born during the reign of Octavius (Augustus) and He established God’s everlasting kingdom at that time. Once Jesus fulfilled his role, the saints could then “possess” this eternal kingdom. Prior to that possession, “warring” between the fourth beast and the saints occurred. From the time Rome was established until it finally fell several hundred years later, the remnant saints of the nation of Israel and those who lived during the time of Christ were “warring” with the empire of Rome. However, the seating of the Ancient of Days upon His throne sealed the end of that last earthly empire.

So, finally we address the judgment that would come in favor of the Most High God (7:22). These are the saints who remained faithful to God throughout. At the hands of the fourth beast (Rome) the whole earth would be trampled. The little horn would “speak pompous words against the Most High,” and eventually “the saints would be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time” (7:25) before his dominion would be taken away and destroyed forever. Is this describing a judgment upon Rome or the power of Israel as a nation being consumed and destroyed? It could apply to both. Consider the words of Jesus himself in describing what He knew to be coming upon the wicked nation of Israel during the time of the Roman Empire: “Behold your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:37, 38). Throughout the New Testament, we learn that the power of Israel would be consumed at the coming of the everlasting kingdom of Christ (Gal. 3:13; Eph. 2:13-16; Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 10:9-10). Indeed, judgment would come to both Rome and the city of Jerusalem at the hands of the Most High God. And, as we will see, the remainder of Daniel’s include prophecies of judgment against physical Israel.

Questions for Daniel 7

- 1) During what time period does Daniel indicate that he saw the dream and visions? (7:1)
- 2) According to Daniel, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea (7:2). In the following passages, who was attributed to the use of wind to achieve the intended purpose? (Gen 8:1; Ex 10:13-19; 14:21; 15:10; Num 11:31; 1 Ki 18:45).
- 3) Describe the four beasts seen in Daniel's vision.
- 4) Describe the Ancient of Days sitting on the throne.
- 5) Describe the kingdom given to the Son of Man in 7:14.
- 6) How is the fourth beast different from the others? (vv. 23-25)
- 7) Upon the coming of the judgment described in v. 26, to whom would the everlasting kingdom be given?

The Ram and the Goat

Lesson 8

Daniel chapter 8

This chapter identifies the time period as that of the third year of Belshazzar's reign in Babylon. The first of Daniel's own visions is recorded in chapter 7 (two years earlier) and is a broad summary of the future predictions of Gentile empires with emphasis on the climactic events culminating in the coming of Christ to the earth during the Roman Empire. Beginning in chapter 8, Daniel's second vision concerns the empires of Persia and Greece as they relate to Israel. Under the Persian government, Israelites went back to rebuild their land and their city, Jerusalem.

The vision of chapter 8 is somewhat different in character from that of chapter 7, as it apparently did not occur in a dream or in a night vision. In fact, Daniel was in the king's residence at Susa in the province of Elam by the river Uai when the vision came to him.

In his vision, Daniel sees a ram with two horns which are unequal, one higher than the other, and the higher one growing out of the ram last. As Daniel watches, he sees the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward; but, no mention is made of it pushing toward the east.

The interpretation provided in verse 20, identifies the ram as Medo-Persia, with the two horns representing its major kings. The portrayal of the two horns representing the two major aspects of the Medes and the Persians, is very accurate, as the Persians coming up last and represented by the higher horn were also the more prominent and powerful. The directions which represent the conquests of the ram include all except east. This well represents the prominent movements of the kingdom of Persia.

Daniel then sees a goat that would become exceedingly great with its horn, only to have that one great horn give way to four notable horns. There is little question that this goat represents the king of Greece, and the single notable horn between its eyes, also identified in verse 21, is "the first king," that is, Alexander the Great. The conquests of Alexander throughout the known world at that time are well documented. The implication in the vision, where it states that the goat moved across the earth "without touching the ground," is the impression of tremendous speed, which characterized the conquest of

Alexander. This characteristic was also described in Daniel's vision of chapter 7.

Daniel then sees the goat attack the ram "with furious power." The attack ends with the goat casting the ram to the ground and stomping on it. All of this, of course, was fulfilled dramatically in history. The forces of Alexander first met and defeated the Persians at the Granicus River in Asia Minor in May 334 B.C. A year and a half later, a battle occurred at Issus (November 333 B.C.) near the northeastern tip of the Mediterranean Sea. The power of Persia was finally vanquished at Gaugamela near Nineveh in October 331 B.C.

But then an unexpected development takes place. The great horn between the eyes of the goat is broken just when the goat has reached the pinnacle of its strength. Out of this grows four notable horns described as being "to the host of heaven."

History reveals to us that the four kingdoms represented by the four notable horns are (1) Cassander's rule over Macedonia and Greece; (2) Lysimachus' control of Thrace, Bithynia, and most of Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus' rule of Syria and the lands to the east including Babylonia; and (4) Ptolemy's established rule over Egypt and possibly Palestine and Arabia Petraea. Thus, with remarkable accuracy, Daniel in his prophetic vision predicts that the empire of Alexander was divided into four sections.

From one of the four horns would come a little horn that would grow exceedingly great in power even toward the "Glorious Land." This horn "exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host." The obvious ruling power after that of Greece was Rome and the descriptions given by Gabriel of this fourth ruling kingdom are troubling to Daniel.

Much of the interpretations of Daniel's vision are clear to us today with a view of world history and the remainder of the divine account of the fulfillment of God's eternal kingdom made possible through His Son. However, for Daniel, the interpretation of his vision was difficult and he sought to understand it. At the request of "one having the appearance of a man," the angel Gabriel provided the interpretation of Daniel's vision. He would make known to him what would happen "in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be" (v. 19). Daniel would come to understand the rise and fall of the empires of the Medes and Persians and Greece. Under the Grecian Empire, civilization would remain in a divided state, as described above, until the rise of the Roman Empire under Julius Caesar. The Romans would then rule it with a rod of iron. Gabriel describes, "His power shall be mighty, but

not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the might and also the holy people” (v. 24). These things would be fulfilled in 70 A.D.

Questions for Daniel 8

- 1) When did Daniel receive his second vision, and where was he when he received it?

- 2) Briefly describe the ram seen by Daniel.

- 3) Briefly describe the goat seen by Daniel.

- 4) What happened to the horn of the goat?

- 5) What came out of one of the four horns?

- 6) A description is given of the resulting works of this little horn displaying mighty and destructive power. A “holy one” would ask “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation...?” What was the answer given?

- 7) Because of the whole context of the vision, the powerful presence of Gabriel, and the voice, which was likely the voice of Deity, Daniel is afraid and falls on his face. Can you think of a New Testament writer that describes a similar terror of the vision he saw?

- 8) To what does Gabriel indicate the vision refers? (v. 19)

- 9) What is Gabriel's interpretation of the ram and the two horns?

- 10) What is Gabriel's interpretation of the goat? ...the four horns?

- 11) When would the "king with fierce features" arise?

- 12) How is this king described?

- 13) After all of Gabriel's descriptions and interpretations, what was Daniel's reaction? (verse 27)

70 Weeks

Lesson 9

Daniel chapter 9

Under Grecian domination, the city of Jerusalem and the temple were again desolated. Daniel 9 presents Israel's history from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah to the inauguration of the kingdom of heaven at the coming of Christ immediately preceded by the time of great trouble for Israel. Chapters 10-11 reveal the events relating the Persian and Greek Empires to Israel, with emphasis on the Gentile oppression of Israel. The final section, 11:36—12:13, deals with the end of the age.

In the first year of Darius, king of the Medes, Daniel prayed to God confessing his sins and the sins of the people of Israel. God heard that prayer and while Daniel was still praying, He sent Gabriel to give him "skill to understand" and to let him know he was "greatly beloved." Another vision followed.

In the vision, concerning the children of Israel and their city, 70 weeks were determined. That symbolic time was allotted for the restoration and building of Jerusalem; the coming of the Messiah, the Prince; the finishing of the transgression; to make an end of sins; to make reconciliation for iniquity; to bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up the vision and prophecy; and to anoint the Most Holy. The culmination and finality of this 70 weeks period is obvious with this anointing. Furthermore, verse 27 speaks of occurrences in that final week. The Messiah would be "cut off." This is obviously a reference to the crucifixion of the Christ. A covenant would be confirmed, and an end to sacrifices and offerings would come. Abominations of the nation would be brought to their completion and consummation. In summary, the prophecy forecasts the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the coming of the Messiah, and the end of Israel as a nation.

As to the timeline given by Gabriel, consider each week representative of seven years. At the 70th week, the Messiah would begin His personal ministry. During that "week" He would be "cut off." Jesus' ministry to the lost sheep of Israel lasted 3 ½ years. This continued after His death for approximately three more years eventually resulting in the gospel being taken to the Samaritans and the Gentiles (Acts 8 and 10) which would help establish the length of the figurative "week" in Daniel. The 70th week lasted approximately seven years. Indeed, it was during that 70th week (seven-year period) that the Messiah was

“cut off,” the transgressions of the nation of Israel came to their fullness, and an end of sins was made just as Gabriel foretold.

With that in mind we can now equate the figurative 70 weeks to 490 years. With the Messiah being cut off in 30 A.D. and the end of the 70th week being 32-33 A.D., working backwards on our timeline we come to 457 B.C. This is precisely the year that Ezra left Babylon to make repairs to the temple and to restore the services in the house of God (Ezra 7). Thirteen years later Nehemiah would begin his work to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its walls. This fits well with the prophecy of Gabriel.

Regarding the destruction that was to take place by the “people of the prince who is to come” we find Jesus identifying himself as the one who would actually destroy the city of Jerusalem (Luke 13:34 & 35; 21:25-32; Acts 6:14). Through the instrument of the evil Roman Empire, the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed in 70 A.D. We are now beginning to clearly see this prophetic thread through this latter section of the book of Daniel. “Then He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering and on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate” (9:27).

Questions for Daniel 9

- 1) During what ruling kingdom did Daniel come to an understanding about the desolations of Jerusalem?
- 2) How many years did Daniel say would be accomplished in these desolations?
- 3) What characteristic of Daniel is clearly seen in 9:5-10? Did HE himself commit all the sins for which confessing?

- 4) In the second part of his prayer, what is Daniel acknowledging? (vv. 11-14)

- 5) Even with the visions (and interpretations) Daniel has had regarding the fate of the nation of Israel, for what does Daniel pray? (vv. 15-19)

- 6) While he was still “speaking, praying, and confessing” his sin and the sin of his people, what happened next? (vv. 20-23)

- 7) Think logically! What do you think the theme of the “understanding” provided by Gabriel would be centered around?

- 8) Again, think logically! What was the state of the temple in Jerusalem at the time of Gabriel’s prediction of the destruction of “the city and the sanctuary?” With that answer in mind, what had to first happen before that city and sanctuary could be destroyed?

- 9) Thought question: What was the symbolic meaning of the tearing of the veil of the temple at the death of Jesus? (Matt. 27:51)

- 10) What was to happen to the “vision and the prophecy” at the end of the 70 weeks? (9:24) What do you think this means?

“What Will Happen to Your People”

Lesson 10

Daniel chapter 10

The final three chapters of the book of Daniel is an extensive revelation of the prophetic future spanning from the time of Daniel all the way to the “latter days.” Especially as we read chapter 11, the account is nothing short of a stunning and unprecedented prophecy of future events given with great detail. The entire content of chapter 10 is introductory, indicating the extensive character of the prophecy to follow. The introduction actually extends through the first verse of chapter 11.

The date of the vision is clear, “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (536 B.C.). This would place this event nearly seventy-two years after he had been carried away as a youth to Babylon. The previous visions had left unanswered questions in Daniel’s mind, although he had faithfully recorded what he had seen and heard. This was not the case for this vision. He, at least in some measure, has understanding of this one.

Prior to the vision of chapter 10, Daniel spent three weeks in mourning during which he did not eat the delicacies of the king’s table, abstained from meat and wine, and did not anoint himself at all. No word is given as to the reason for his fasting.

The place of the vision is declared to be by the side of the Tigris River. This is an indication that, indeed, Daniel did not accompany the other children of Israel who returned to Jerusalem.

Daniel records that he had a vision of a glorious man whose clothing, appearance, and voice were glorious to behold. Whether or not he was an angel is unknown. However, his appearance caused Daniel to fall on his face in a deep sleep.

While resting on his knees, Daniel heard the words of the man. The man gives him the title, “man greatly beloved.” God loves the entire world so much that He gave His own Son as its Savior. However, from time to time, certain individuals, because of their special relationship to God, are the objects of unusual recognition. David, in spite of his sins, was considered “a man after His own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), and the apostle John was “one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (Jn. 13:23). It seems apparent that the heart of God responds to those who love Him most.

The man then exhorts Daniel to understand his message and to stand upright to receive it, for this was the purpose of his coming to Daniel. Upon this exhortation, Daniel is able to stand upright although trembling.

The man attempts to allay the fears of Daniel by informing him that, due to his humility and prayerful heart, God sent this man to tell him of His plan. The experience may not be exactly the same. But what a reassurance it is that when we approach God as Daniel did, with humility and a heart to understand, we may expect a positive response. WE can know God's plan if we will but seek it.

The description of "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" who "withstood me twenty-one days" indicates an opposition to the messenger of Daniel. But, with the help of Michael, that spiritual conflict was ended and the man was able to come to Daniel to make him understand what would happen to his people "in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days to come." The man explains that much time is involved in the vision. The phrase "in the latter days" refers to the entire history of Israel as culminating in the climax of the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God. Although Daniel probably did not understand the details, he would be reassured that God had a plan which ended in the ultimate victory. Although the prophecies made clear that there were powerful forces at work against Israel which would inflict upon them much suffering and loss, in the end the power of God would triumph and spiritual Israel would be exalted as a nation.

Daniel's weakness once again overwhelms him. Speechless, he turns his face to the ground. However, Daniel is strengthened once again by the appearance of "one having likeness of the sons of men." Another messenger has appeared.

For the third time in this chapter, Daniel is strengthened supernaturally by one who comes and touches him. This one again exhorts Daniel with the reassuring title, "O man greatly beloved." Daniel was then strengthened and was able to say, "Let my lord speak; for you have strengthened me."

The stage is now set for the great revelation to follow. It would be quite natural after Daniel's experience of physical weakness and being unable to speak, to consider the purpose of the message. Thus, he attempts to speak. However, the messenger reveals that he is obligated to return to "fight with the prince of Persia" and, by implication, later with "the prince of Greece." The mention of both Persia and Greece certainly directs our attention to the second and third major empires which are involved in the prophecies of the next chapter.

Questions for Chapter 10

- 1) The general nature of the revelation that is to come is described in verse one of this chapter. How is the “thing” (or word) described?
- 2) In contrast to the previous visions, how is this one different for Daniel? (verse 2)
- 3) Thought question: What do you think was the occasion for Daniel’s mourning and fasting for these 21 days?
- 4) Describe the appearance of the man. (vv. 5-7)
- 5) What happened to the men who were with Daniel when the man appeared?
- 6) What was apparently happening DURING the period of Daniel’s fasting and prayer? (verse 13)
- 7) How many times throughout this chapter was Daniel strengthened in order to receive the revelation he was about to see? What does that say about the nature of the revelation?
- 8) What question was posed by the second man? (verse 20)

The Kingdoms of Earth

Lesson 11

Daniel chapter 11

As suggested in the last lesson, chapter 10 and the first verse of chapter 11 serves as an introduction to the fourth and final vision given to Daniel. The next section addresses events that would occur in the immediate future, from Darius king of the Medes, and Cyrus, king of Persia, to later historical events that primarily include the rise of the Grecian Empire until the time of the end of the nation of Israel which includes the rise of the Roman Empire (11:2-11:45). A closer look at the very end of the nation is given to Daniel and recorded in chapter 12.

It is important to recognize that Daniel's account of his fourth vision does not contain all the history of the period nor name all the rulers. Furthermore, its interpretation must come in view of what we already know. We must remember what has already been established in the three visions prior to this one. There would be four world kingdoms that would come and go, culminating in the coming of the Messiah during the fourth rule (Rome). The vision of chapter 11 focuses primarily on the turmoil within the third kingdom, Greece.

The year of this fourth vision is 538 B.C. Both Darius, king of the Medes, and Cyrus, king of Persia, were in power. Daniel saw a vision that described the major rulers of the Persian Empire and, with unusual detail, some of the major events of the Grecian Empire and conflicts that occurred within that earthly kingdom. A prolonged war between Egypt and Syria is described in great detail. Key participants in the conflict include the "king of the south," a strong "prince" of this king, the "daughter of the king of the south," and the "king of the north." As previously established in chapter 8, the Grecian Empire of Alexander the Great would fall into the hands of his four generals. Of those four, Ptolemy II is known to have ruled Egypt and Seleucus, Syria. History confirms the details of Daniel's prophecy in the conflicts between the two and the attempt for peace around 250 B.C. involving Ptolemy's daughter Berenice. Berenice's brother ("a branch from her roots") would succeed Ptolemy II and conquer the capital of Syria. "Who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail."

The victories for both sides (Egypt and Syria) were mixed over a 150-year period of time. However, Syria would eventually overthrow Egypt and, as a result, the promised land would return wholly to Syrian control. This set the stage for the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, which may well be the what is under discussion in verses 21-29.

It is fascinating to note the interjection of verse 30. It is almost universally believed that the “ships of Cyprus (Kittim)” are a reference to a defeat delivered by Rome against Antiochus in Egypt. This reference further reinforces the previous prophecies of Daniel confirming the development of Rome and her part in God’s plan. The Pulpit Commentary renders this verse: "And the Romans shall come, and shall drive him out, and shall make him wroth, and he shall return and be enraged against the covenant of the holy, and shall do and return and plot against those on account of whom they left the covenant of the holy."

Disgruntled by his defeat in Egypt at the hands of Rome, Antiochus seems to have vented his wrath upon the Jewish people. “And he shall return in rage against the holy covenant...” (v. 30b). He would eventually profane the temple and fortress and he would take away the daily sacrifices. This “abomination and desecration” would be repeated many years later when the temple was finally and completely destroyed at the hands Rome at the end of the nation of Israel.

In keeping with the tenor and theme of all of Daniel’s prophecies, it is apparent that verses 36-45 bring us to the end of the third kingdom of the prophecy leading up to the rise of the fourth kingdom of Rome resulting in the eternal kingdom of God brought about by the coming of the Messiah.

Verse 36 identifies a king with obvious and familiar characteristics. Remembering our previous study of Daniel’s first vision in chapter 7, a Roman world ruler, symbolized as the little horn, was prophesied. According to 11:36, the ruler seen here would be an absolute ruler who “shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god...” This describes very well any of the Caesars that ruled under Rome.

The time of the end introduced in verse 35 is again mentioned in the opening portion of verse 40. Therefore, the end of this prophecy refers to a climactic conclusion of historical world events. In keeping with the rest of the prophecies, the Grecian reign will end with Rome ruling until the time of Christ. God had appointed a final world kingdom to serve as His instrument of wrath. It is by this instrument that Israel’s punishment would come.

In chapter 11, with great details (some understandable and some not), Daniel predicts the conflicts within the kingdoms of the Medes, Persians, and especially that of the Greeks, culminating in the rise of Rome. The common thread throughout this vision and the three previous is the coming of the end of the earthly kingdoms as well as the destruction of physical Israel giving way to the appearance of the Messiah and the establishment of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. No book in the Bible is so prophetic over such a long period of time.

Questions for Chapter 11

- 1) According to verse 1, when can we set the time of Daniels final vision?
- 2) Consider our study of chapter 8. Who do you think is described in verses 3 and 4?
- 3) Who is the “king of the south” referenced in verse 5? Who is the “daughter of the king of the south?” Who is the “king of the north?”
- 4) Wicked rulers and mighty battles are described in chapter 11. Verse 16 indicates that one will rise up and take control of “the glorious land.” To what do you think this land refers?
- 5) Describe the tactics of the “vile person” in verses 21-24.
- 6) Who do you believe the “vile person” is describing?

- 7) A defeat is described for this king in verse 30. What resulted from that defeat as described in verses 30 & 31?

- 8) What would be said of some during this persecution? (vv. 31-35)

- 9) Is the king described in verse 36 the same as the one described in verse 41? If not, who could this king be?

- 10) Who is the “him” being described at the “time of the end” in verse 40? Who would rise up and attempt to overthrow “him?”

- 11) Where would this king of verse 40 become victorious? (verse 41)

A Time of Trouble Never Before Seen

Lesson 12

Daniel chapter 12

The division between chapter 11 and chapter 12 of the book of Daniel is unfortunate. The narrative of chapter 11 does not end until the fourth verse of chapter 12. This section actually began at the beginning of chapter 10.

By way of review, this previous section of Daniel's prophecy (11:36-12:4) includes the following: (1) world rulers, (2) world wars, (3) a time of great tribulation for Israel, and (4) deliverance for those written in the book.

The tribulation is exactly that which was foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 wherein Christ described it as beginning with "the abomination of desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet" (Matt. 24:15). Christ's warning to the children of Israel at that time was that they should "flee to the mountains," not taking time to secure clothes or food. Christ graphically described the period in these words, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been seen since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24:21-22). Indeed, there would be no precedent to this end-time trouble.

In their distress, the children of Israel would be aided by Michael, the archangel (Jude 9). As we remember earlier in our study, mention was made of Michael in Daniel 10:13-21 where he participated in the angelic warfare which had prevented the messenger from reaching Daniel promptly. Because of the purpose of God and the ministry of Michael, it is revealed to Daniel that "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

In Daniel 12:4, Daniel is instructed to "Shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (v. 4). The time of these events were told to Daniel by a man clothed in fine linen. He said, "It shall be for a time, times, and a half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished" (v. 7). Elsewhere we have learned that this time of the end begins with the breaking of the covenant by "the prince that shall come"

(Dan. 9:26-27) and that the “time of the end” will last for three and one-half years (Dan. 7:25).

In verse 9, Daniel is once again informed that the revelation given to him will not be completely understood until the time of the end. Daniel is not rebuked for his curiosity, as it is only natural to ask the questions he raised. However, for Daniel, and for those of us today, all of the answers to these questions will not be found until all is fulfilled and we gather around the throne.

Then Daniel received a bit more information concerning the events revealed to him. In verse 10 we learn that the time of the end will include two kinds of people: first, many will purify themselves; second, the wicked will act wickedly. Likewise, understanding the events of the time of the end will be reserved only for “the wise.”

In verses 11 and 12, two important revelations are given by way of clarification of the duration of the time of the end. According to verse 11, a period of 1,290 days will elapse from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up. On this occasion this expression, which originated in Daniel 9:27, has reference to the end of sacrifices in the middle of the seven-year period (70th week). Dating this event as occurring during the time of the life and death of Jesus is aided by the prophecy of Christ in Matthew 24:15 where “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet” is given as a sign of the great tribulation. From these passages, it is obvious that the last three and a half years of the time of the end is in view.

Anticipating that Daniel would not completely understand these additional revelations, the angel instructs him, “But you, go your way till the end.” The angel predicts that Daniel will “rest,” that is, die, and “arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” He and all the saints of all time will one day be resurrected and worship the Lord for all eternity. When the plan of God has run its full course, it will be evident then to all. “Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). How grateful we are to have such a wonderful book as Daniel to serve as further evidence of our belief in the promises of God for all his people for all time.

Questions for Chapter 12

- 1) Referring back to Daniel 11:40-45, at what time will Michael rise? (12:1)
- 2) Describe what would be seen at that time according to verses 1-3.
- 3) How long would the words be shut up and the book be sealed? (verse 4)
- 4) How long was Daniel told it would be until the end of all that he had been told according to verse 7?
- 5) Did Daniel understand this explanation?
- 6) Do you think that we are expected to understand all these things now?
- 7) What two types of people are described at the time of the end?
- 8) To what are the 1,290 days and 1,335 days assigned?