

Daniel

The Words of a Prophet

by Robert J. Neral

A Study of Daniel

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A STUDY OF DANIEL

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INTRODUCTION: THE MAN WHO STOOD IN THE GAP

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There are figures in Scripture who appear in a single chapter and then disappear. They play their part and step off the stage. And then there are figures who span generations — men and women whose lives become the hinge on which entire ages of history turn.

Daniel is one of those figures.

He was taken from his home as a young man and carried into captivity in one of the most powerful empires the ancient world had ever seen. He served in that empire for decades — outlasting kings, surviving conspiracies, interpreting dreams that no one else could decipher. He watched the Babylonian Empire rise to its height and fall to the Medes and Persians. He served under both. He was still serving when the first exiles began to go home.

And in the middle of all of it — through the palaces and the furnaces and the lions' dens and the prophetic visions that left him shaking on the ground — he prayed three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem.

That is who Daniel was.

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SETTING THE STAGE

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Before we read a single verse of this book, we need to understand the world Daniel walked into — because the historical backdrop is not incidental to the message. It is part of it.

Babylon had been rising for nearly a century. In 626 B.C., Babylon rebelled against the Assyrian Empire — the dominant power of the ancient Near East — and began its own bid for supremacy. In 612 B.C., the Babylonian armies overthrew Nineveh, the great Assyrian capital. And in 605 B.C., Babylon became the undisputed master of the Middle East when it defeated the Egyptian armies at the Battle of Carchemish.

It was in that same year — 605 B.C. — that Nebuchadnezzar, the new king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and took the city under siege. The young men of Judah's nobility were taken as captives. Among them was a young man named Daniel.

He was probably a teenager when he was taken. He would be an old man before he saw the end of the captivity.

"Daniel 1:1 — In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god." (Daniel 1:1–2)

Notice something in verse two: "the Lord gave Jehoiakim into his hand." This was not a military accident. This was not a political miscalculation. The God of Israel was the one who allowed this to happen. Judah had been warned by the prophets for generations — repent, return, keep the covenant. They had not listened. Now the consequences were arriving. And even in the consequences, God was in control.

This is a truth we will encounter again and again in the book of Daniel. The nations rise and fall. Empires collapse. Kings build golden statues and go mad and are restored and die. And through all of it — above all of it — the God of Israel is sovereign. He gives kingdoms to whomever He

chooses. He takes them away when He decides. And He is working a purpose that no empire, no matter how powerful, can thwart.

Daniel understood this. It is what kept him praying three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem, even when a decree had been signed making such prayer a capital offense.

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THE FOUR YOUNG MEN

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Nebuchadnezzar did not simply want to conquer Judah — he wanted to absorb it. To take its best young men, educate them in Babylonian language and literature, feed them from the royal table, and eventually use them in the service of the empire. It was a sophisticated strategy: take the intellectual elite of a conquered people, give them three years of formation, and turn them into loyal servants of Babylon.

"Daniel 1:3–4 — Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace."

Four of these young men stand out from the beginning: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Their Hebrew names — names that referenced the God of Israel — were replaced immediately with Babylonian names. Daniel became Belteshazzar. Hananiah became Shadrach. Mishael became Meshach. Azariah became Abed-Nego.

This renaming was significant. It was an attempt to rewrite identity — to replace the God of Israel with the gods of Babylon in the very names these men carried. The empire was saying: you are ours now. Your past does not define you. We do.



But Daniel had a different answer.

Before we ever hear Daniel interpret a dream or survive a lions' den, we see this:

"Daniel 1:8 — But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."

He purposed in his heart.

Three words that tell us everything about the man. Not "Daniel was forced to refuse." Not "Daniel reluctantly declined." Daniel made a decision — quietly, privately, before any external pressure required it — that he would not allow Babylon to redefine what he was permitted to eat, how he was permitted to live, or to whom he was ultimately accountable.

This is the first great lesson of the book of Daniel. It is not the dream or the furnace or the lions — it is the quiet decision made in the heart before the test arrives. The man who stands firm in the lions' den is the same man who decided in advance what he would and would not compromise.

God honored that decision. Daniel asked for a ten-day test: let the four young men eat vegetables and drink water, and then compare them to the young men eating from the king's table. The steward agreed.

At the end of ten days, Daniel and his three companions looked better and were healthier than all the young men who had been eating the royal food. The steward removed the royal provision and gave them vegetables instead.

And then this:

"Daniel 1:17 — As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

It was not the vegetables that made them exceptional. It was God. Their faithfulness created the conditions for God's blessing to flow. They honored God in a small thing — what they ate — and God honored them with something extraordinary: wisdom, knowledge, and in Daniel's case, the gift of understanding visions and dreams. A gift that would define the rest of his life and shape the destiny of nations.

Similar to Joseph, who was chosen to be a leader while in prison and rose to be second only to Pharaoh in ruling Egypt, their being chosen was God's favor in their lives. God uses faithful men in unlikely places to accomplish His purposes.

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THE END OF THE BEGINNING

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Chapter one closes with a note that is easy to miss in its brevity:

"Daniel 1:19–21 — Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus."

Ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in all the realm.

Ten times better — not because they were smarter, not because Babylon's educational system had failed them — but because they served the God who gives wisdom, and they had been faithful to Him when it cost them something.

And Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus — approximately 536 B.C. He had been taken captive in 605 B.C. That means Daniel served for approximately seventy years, from the beginning of the captivity to its

end. He lived long enough to see the promise of Jeremiah fulfilled — that after seventy years God would restore the people to the promised land.

Seventy years. An entire lifetime. And through every year of it, he purposed in his heart to honor God.

That is the foundation of everything that follows. Before we read a single dream or vision, before we see the furnace or the lions, we need to understand the man who walked into those moments. He was not extraordinary because of what happened to him. He was extraordinary because of what he decided before anything happened.

Purpose in your heart. That is where every great act of faith begins.

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# **SECTION ONE: THE DREAM OF THE STATUE — DANIEL CHAPTER TWO**

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We established in our introduction that Daniel was a man who purposed in his heart. Now, in chapter two, we see the first great test of what that purpose means in practice. And it is not the test we might expect.

Daniel had already passed one test — the food test. He had refused the king's delicacies and trusted God to honor his faithfulness. He had been vindicated. He and his three companions were found ten times better than all the wise men of Babylon. He had every reason to believe that his life in the service of Nebuchadnezzar's court would continue smoothly.

Then came the dream.

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## **THE DREAM THAT TROUBLED THE KING**

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"Daniel 2:1–3 — Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said to them, 'I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.'"

A dream that troubled a king was not a minor matter in the ancient world. Kings understood dreams as messages from the divine realm — omens

about what was coming. A king who could not understand his dream was a king who could not prepare for what lay ahead. And in Nebuchadnezzar's case, the dream was so unsettling that it robbed him of sleep.

He summoned his entire professional religious establishment: magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, the Chaldeans — the intellectual and spiritual elite of the most powerful empire on earth. But he gave them an impossible assignment. He refused to tell them the dream. He demanded that they tell him both the dream and its interpretation. If they could not do it, they would be executed. If they could, they would receive gifts and honor.

This was not simply a test of their abilities — it was a test of their truthfulness. Nebuchadnezzar was a shrewd ruler. He knew that his advisors could invent plausible interpretations of a dream once they knew what the dream was. By demanding that they first tell him the dream itself, he was requiring actual supernatural knowledge — not professional cleverness.

The Chaldeans had an honest answer, at least:

"Daniel 2:10–11 — There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

They were right. No human being could know what another man had dreamed without being told. The gods of Babylon — carved stone and molten metal — certainly could not help. There was only one God whose dwelling was actually with flesh, who actually knew the secrets of the heart and the visions of the night. And it was not any god that Babylon worshiped.

Nebuchadnezzar's response was fury. He ordered all the wise men of Babylon to be executed — and the decree swept up Daniel and his companions as well, even though they had not been summoned to the first

assembly.

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THE PRAYER MEETING THAT CHANGED HISTORY

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When the captain of the king's guard came to carry out the execution, Daniel asked a question that reveals the texture of his character:

"Daniel 2:15 — He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, 'Why is the decree from the king so urgent?' Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel."

He did not panic. He did not rage. He asked a question. He wanted to understand the situation before responding to it. And when he understood — when he knew that the king's wise men had been unable to reveal the dream — he went to the king himself and asked for time.

Then he did the most important thing he could do.

"Daniel 2:17–18 — Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."

In other words: they prayed.

Facing a death sentence, surrounded by the most sophisticated religious apparatus the ancient world had to offer — all of it powerless — Daniel gathered his friends and they asked God for mercy. Not strategy. Not an escape plan. Mercy. They laid the situation before the God of heaven and asked Him to reveal what no human being could know.

And God answered.

"Daniel 2:19 — Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

Notice what Daniel did immediately when the vision was given. He did not rush to the king. He did not go directly to Arioch to stop the executions. He stopped and blessed God. He took the time — even with lives on the line — to acknowledge that the revelation came from God alone, not from his own wisdom or prayer technique.

His prayer in verses 20–23 is one of the great doxologies of the Old Testament:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him." (Daniel 2:20–22)

He removes kings and raises up kings. That is the theological anchor of everything that follows. What Nebuchadnezzar was about to hear was not just a dream about history — it was a declaration that history belongs to God. The kings and empires that were coming were not autonomous powers writing their own story. They were instruments in the hands of the God who gives kingdoms to whomever He chooses.

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THE GREAT IMAGE

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Daniel stood before the king and was careful about one thing before he said anything else:

"Daniel 2:27–28 — Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, 'The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is

a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days."

But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets. Daniel refused to take the credit. In the most politically advantageous moment of his career — standing before the most powerful man on earth with an answer that would save his life and the lives of all the wise men of Babylon — he pointed away from himself and toward God. He would not let Nebuchadnezzar walk away thinking that Daniel was remarkable. He wanted the king to understand that God was remarkable.

Then he described the dream.

Nebuchadnezzar had seen a great image — a statue of extraordinary size and brightness, standing before him in terrifying splendor. Its composition told a story in descending value:

- Head of fine gold
- Chest and arms of silver
- Belly and thighs of bronze
- Legs of iron
- Feet partly of iron and partly of clay

And then, while the statue stood, a stone was cut out of a mountain — but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and shattered them. The iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were crushed together and carried away like chaff by the wind — so that not a trace of them remained. And the stone grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

"Daniel 2:36 — This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king."

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THE INTERPRETATION: FIVE KINGDOMS

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Daniel's interpretation of the great image is, as he himself summarizes it, the briefest and most concise overall picture of the history and future of the world in the entire Bible. It describes five kingdoms — five great empires of human history — in order:

The head of gold: Nebuchadnezzar himself, and the Babylonian Empire. God had given him a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. Babylon was the gold standard of the ancient world — wealthy, magnificent, the wonder of the ancient age.

The chest and arms of silver: the next empire, inferior to Babylon in glory but successor to its dominion. This is the Medo-Persian Empire, which would overthrow Babylon in 539 B.C. — exactly as Daniel predicted.

The belly and thighs of bronze: the third kingdom, which would rule over all the earth. This is Greece, under Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world with breathtaking speed between 334 and 323 B.C.

The legs of iron: the fourth kingdom, strong as iron, which would break in pieces and shatter everything. This is Rome, which defeated Greece at the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C. and ruled the Mediterranean world for centuries.

The feet of iron and clay: the final form of the fourth kingdom, a confederation of nations that is partly strong and partly fragile, that will not cohere — iron and clay do not mix. This is the last world empire before the end, the empire of the Antichrist.

And the stone cut without human hands: the Kingdom of God, which strikes the final empire and destroys it, growing into a mountain that fills the whole earth. A kingdom that shall never be destroyed, never passed to another people, but standing forever.

"Daniel 2:44–45 — And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold — the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

The dream is certain. The interpretation is sure.

I want you to stop and consider what you have just read. A man in the sixth century B.C. — standing in the court of the king of Babylon — described the sequence of world empires that would follow: Persia, Greece, Rome, and the final empire that God Himself would destroy. History has borne out every word of it. Persia came and fell. Greece came and fell. Rome came and fell. And we are now living in the shadow of the last great empire — watching the pieces of the old Roman world reconfigure themselves in ways that Daniel described twenty-six centuries ago.

The stone is coming. The kingdom that has no end is coming. And it will be cut not by human hands.

Jesus made the same point when He quoted the Psalms to the religious leaders of His day:

"Matthew 21:44 — And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

He was talking about Himself. He was the stone. He is the kingdom. And He was telling the leaders of Israel that they were standing at the moment when the stone had arrived — and they had the choice of falling on it in humility or being ground to powder by it in judgment.

That choice is still before every person who reads this book.

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WHAT THE KING CONCLUDED

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Nebuchadnezzar's response was immediate and extraordinary:

"Daniel 2:46–47 — Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. The king answered Daniel, and said, 'Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.'"

The most powerful man on earth fell on his face before a Jewish captive. And he confessed — with his own mouth — that Daniel's God was the God of gods, the Lord of kings.

But note what happened next: he promoted Daniel, gave him great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. And then Daniel, at his own request, had his three companions — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego — appointed over the affairs of the province.

The Jewish captives were now running Babylon.

This is the consistent pattern of this book. Faithfulness in the small thing — the food test, the prayer when lives are on the line — leads to vindication in the larger thing. And the vindication always has a purpose beyond the individual. It was not just Daniel who was being honored. It was the God of Daniel who was being made known to the nations.

Daniel 2 is the briefest and most concise overall picture of the history and future of the world in the entire Bible. Everything that follows in the book of Daniel — the visions of chapters 7, 8, 9, and 11 — is an expansion and elaboration of what was introduced here in one night's dream. The same four empires. The same final kingdom. The same stone cut without human hands.

The foundation has been laid. Let us now see how God builds on it.

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# **SECTION TWO: THE FURNACE AND THE LION — DANIEL CHAPTERS 3 THROUGH 6**

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We have seen that Daniel and his companions rose to positions of extraordinary influence in Babylon. The God of Israel had vindicated them. The most powerful king on earth had prostrated himself before them and confessed that their God was the God of gods.

What followed?

The king built a golden idol ninety feet tall and commanded everyone to bow down to it.

This is the human story in miniature. A man encounters God — genuinely, powerfully, undeniably — and then turns back to his old habits. Nebuchadnezzar's conversion lasted until the political pressures resumed. His confession that the God of Daniel was the God of gods did not survive his next ambition.

Let us read carefully what happened next, because it teaches us something essential about the nature of faith tested by fire — literally.

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## **THE GOLDEN IMAGE — DANIEL CHAPTER THREE**

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"Daniel 3:1 — Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon."

Notice: this is not a statue of the God of Daniel. This is the image of the gods that Daniel had already proven powerless to reveal the king's dream. Having been shown that his gods were not God, Nebuchadnezzar doubled down on them.

What would force a king to go against the God of gods and the Lord of Lords?

Pride. Always pride.

He assembled every official in the empire for the dedication of the image. A herald proclaimed the command: at the sound of the music, fall down and worship the golden image. Whoever does not fall down will be cast immediately into a burning fiery furnace.

All the people fell down. Every nation, every language, every level of official — they all fell down.

Except three.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused. Word reached the king through accusers — men who had never accepted that these Jews were placed over them in the province of Babylon. The king summoned them.

His question was foolish, as Pastor Robert notes — because it had only been a short time since Daniel had proclaimed and the king agreed that the God of Daniel was the one true God. The king knew he was asking these men to deny what they had all witnessed together. And yet he asked:

"Daniel 3:15 — 'Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a

burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

"Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" — a stupid question, as Pastor Robert puts it directly in his notes. The king had already been shown the answer. He had said it with his own mouth. But pride makes people ask stupid questions.

The three young men's answer is one of the great statements of faith in all of Scripture:

"Daniel 3:16–18 — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.'"

Read that middle phrase carefully. "He will deliver us from your hand, O king." That is faith. Then: "But if not" — that is faith of a different and deeper kind. They were not claiming to know what God would do. They were claiming that whatever God did, they would not bow. Their obedience to God was not conditional on God's protection of them. They would not worship the idol whether they survived the fire or not.

This is the purest form of faith in Scripture. Not "I believe God will rescue me, therefore I will obey." But "I will obey whether He rescues me or not, because He is worthy of my obedience regardless of the outcome."

They were bound and cast into the furnace — heated seven times hotter than usual, so hot that the soldiers who threw them in were killed by the heat.

And then:

"Daniel 3:25 — 'Look!' he answered, 'I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like

the Son of God."

Four men in the fire. Three went in. One came alongside them in the midst of the flames.

This fourth figure was so bright — so unmistakably other — that even Nebuchadnezzar, peering into the blazing furnace, recognized Him as something beyond human. Like the Son of God.

This is reminiscent of the transfiguration — when Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain and was transformed before them, His face shining like the sun and His clothes as white as light. The same glory that appeared on the mountain appeared in the furnace. The pre-incarnate presence of the One who would later become flesh and dwell among us was there — standing in the fire with the three who had refused to bow.

They came out of the furnace. Their hair was not singed. Their garments were not affected. There was not even the smell of fire on them.

And Nebuchadnezzar made his declaration a second time:

"Daniel 3:28–29 — 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him... there is no other God who can deliver like this.'"

The result is always the same, no matter how many times He is tested.

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## **THE KING'S MADNESS — DANIEL CHAPTER FOUR**

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Chapter four is remarkable for its point of view. It is written largely in the first person by Nebuchadnezzar himself — and it describes the most humbling experience a monarch has ever recorded.

The king had a second dream: a great tree, visible to the ends of the earth, providing food and shelter for all living creatures. A holy watcher descended from heaven and declared: cut it down. Strip its branches. Scatter its fruit. Let the stump remain, bound with iron and bronze. And let the man whose heart was that tree live like a beast of the field for seven times — until he acknowledges that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

Daniel was called to interpret it. And he did not rush to reassure the king. He said plainly:

"Daniel 4:22 — It is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth."

Then he delivered the judgment: the king would be driven from human society, living like an animal in the open field, wet with the dew of heaven, eating grass like an ox for seven times — until he acknowledged that the Most High rules the kingdom of men.

Daniel added a word of counsel:

"Daniel 4:27 — O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

God gave Nebuchadnezzar twelve months. Twelve months to repent, to turn, to acknowledge what he had been told twice already: that the God of Israel was sovereign over all kingdoms.

He did not repent. Instead, a year later, standing on the roof of his palace in Babylon, he said:

"Daniel 4:30 — 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?'"

My mighty power. My majesty. The very sentence that judgment had been waiting for.

While the words were still in his mouth, a voice fell from heaven. And immediately — that very hour — Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like an ox. His hair grew like eagle's feathers, his nails like bird's claws. He lived like an animal in the open field for seven years.

And then:

"Daniel 4:34 — And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever."

That phrase — "lifted my eyes to heaven" — is the whole secret. The moment Nebuchadnezzar stopped looking at his own kingdom and looked up, his understanding returned. Pride is always a form of looking down at what we have made. Humility is looking up at the one who made us.

His kingdom was restored, and excellent majesty was added to him. And this time, Nebuchadnezzar did not merely confess in a moment of crisis — he wrote a testimony for all peoples, nations, and languages, declaring:

"Daniel 4:37 — Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down."

He serves the Lord with his lips, and even now his heart still struggled with pride. But the lesson had been inscribed in his memory with fire. The God who removes kings and raises up kings had demonstrated His power personally, in the body of the greatest king on earth.

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## **THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL — DANIEL CHAPTER FIVE**

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Nebuchadnezzar died. His son Belshazzar came to power — and revealed immediately that the lessons of his father had not been inherited.

He threw a great feast for a thousand of his lords, drinking wine in front of them all. And in the middle of the feast, with the wine flowing, he gave an order:

"Daniel 5:2–4 — Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone."

This was not ignorance. Belshazzar knew exactly what he was doing. Nebuchadnezzar had twice confessed that the God of Daniel was the one true God. His son had grown up with that knowledge. To take the sacred vessels of the Temple of the Most High — the vessels that belonged to the God of Israel — and use them to drink toasts to idols of silver and gold was a deliberate insult. A calculated act of defiance.

In the same hour the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall.

The king's countenance changed. His thoughts troubled him. The joints of his hips were loosened — a vivid expression for what happens to the body when genuine terror strikes. His knees knocked against each other. He called for his wise men and they could not read it. They could not interpret it.

As in the time of Joseph, there arose a new king who did not know Daniel. But the queen remembered:

"Daniel 5:11–12 — 'There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him.'"

Daniel was brought in. The king offered him gifts and honor — the third rulership in the kingdom — and Daniel's response is characteristic:

"Daniel 5:17 — Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation."

He did not want the king's gifts. He simply told the truth. And the truth was this:

Your father Nebuchadnezzar was given everything — kingdom, majesty, power. When his heart became proud, God humbled him. He ate grass like an ox until he knew that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

You, Belshazzar, knew all of this. You knew, and you still lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You used the vessels of His house to honor gods that cannot see or hear. And the God who holds your breath in His hand — the God who owns all your ways — you did not glorify.

"Daniel 5:25–28 — This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

Weighed in the balances and found wanting.

That night, Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans was slain. Darius the Mede received the kingdom. The prophecy of the statue — the silver chest and arms succeeding the golden head — was being fulfilled in real time, exactly as Daniel had said.

Notice: Daniel had now correctly predicted this transition decades before it happened. He was now living inside the prophecy he had interpreted. The Medo-Persian bear of the statue was rising, exactly on schedule.

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THE LIONS' DEN — DANIEL CHAPTER SIX

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Darius recognized Daniel's exceptional spirit and gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. This triggered what it always triggers: jealousy, conspiracy, and the determination of lesser men to find a way to bring down someone they cannot match.

"Daniel 6:4-5 — So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, 'We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.'"

Read that again. They could find no charge. No financial irregularity. No abuse of power. No favoritism. No compromise. Daniel's public life was so clean that his enemies had to target his private life of prayer to have any avenue of attack.

They convinced Darius to sign a decree: for thirty days, no one may petition any god or man except the king himself. Anyone who does will be cast into the den of lions.

Daniel knew the decree had been signed. He went home. He went to his upper room, where his windows were open toward Jerusalem. He knelt down three times that day and prayed and gave thanks before his God — exactly as was his custom since early days.

This is worth pausing over. Daniel did not change his practice. He did not close the windows. He did not find a more private location. He did not

lobby Darius to reconsider. He simply did what he had always done, in the place where he had always done it, at the time he had always done it. The decree changed nothing about Daniel's prayer life because his prayer life was not something he had ever negotiated.

His enemies found him. They reported to the king. Darius was greatly displeased with himself — he had been manipulated and he knew it. He labored until sunset to find a way to deliver Daniel. He could not. The law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed.

He sent Daniel to the lions with these words:

"Daniel 6:16 — 'Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.'"

Contrast this with what Nebuchadnezzar had said before the furnace: "Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" Darius's faith, born from watching Daniel's character, was already greater than Nebuchadnezzar's had been in that moment. Darius did not have to be convinced twice. He had watched Daniel. He already knew what Daniel's God could do.

The stone was sealed over the mouth of the den. Darius spent the night fasting, with no music brought before him. His sleep fled from him. At first light, he ran to the den:

"Daniel 6:20 — 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?'"

"Daniel 6:22 — 'My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.'"

Daniel was taken up from the den — and no injury was found on him, because he believed in his God.

The accusers and their families were cast into the den. The lions had them before they reached the bottom.

And then Darius did what Nebuchadnezzar had done before him — the third time the God of Israel was demonstrated to be the living God before the rulers of the earth:

"Daniel 6:26–27 — 'I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.'"

The result is always the same, no matter how many times He is tested.

Isaiah saw it centuries before Daniel was born:

"Isaiah 45:22–23 — 'Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.'"

Every knee shall bow. Nebuchadnezzar bowed after the furnace. Darius bowed after the lions' den. History is moving toward the day when every knee — every ruler, every nation, every power that has ever challenged the God of Israel — will bow.

Daniel prospered. The vision was being fulfilled. The kingdoms of men were passing, one after another, exactly as the dream had predicted. And the God who raises up kings and removes kings was still at work.

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# SECTION THREE: THE FOUR BEASTS — DANIEL CHAPTER SEVEN

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We have spent the first six chapters of Daniel in the realm of history — watching a faithful man navigate the courts of empires, interpreting dreams for kings, surviving furnaces and lions' dens. In every case, God was vindicated. In every case, the kings of the earth were confronted with a power that exceeded their own.

Now, beginning in chapter seven, the perspective shifts.

Chapters one through six showed us Daniel interpreting the dreams of the kings. Chapters seven through twelve show us the dreams and visions given to Daniel himself. And these visions are staggering in scope — reaching from Daniel's time all the way to the end of history.

It is important for us to remember why God established Daniel's credibility in those first six chapters. He was setting the stage. He was ensuring that the people of Daniel's time — and every generation since — could trust the words of Daniel. Not because he was particularly brilliant, but because he had demonstrated that he spoke for the one true God.

Let us enter the visions.

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## THE VISION OF THE NIGHT

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"Daniel 7:1–3 — In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. Daniel spoke, saying, 'I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.'"

The great sea here refers to the totality of mankind — all the earth, all the nations, all the peoples. The four winds represent strife, war, and conflict. Out of the churning of humanity and its conflicts, four great kingdoms would arise.

Before we look at each beast, let us establish a key principle that Scripture itself provides: a beast represents a kingdom. We are not guessing at this symbolism. Daniel 7:17 tells us plainly: "Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth." And verse 23 adds: "The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth."

Now let us look at the four beasts.

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THE FIRST BEAST: THE LION

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"Daniel 7:4 — The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it."

A lion — the king of beasts. Eagle's wings — the swiftness and superiority of the chief bird of the air. Together they represent Babylon at the height of its power under Nebuchadnezzar. The lion with eagle's wings was a prominent symbol on Babylonian coins and on the walls of Babylon itself. The image was fitting: Babylon was indeed the golden head, the lion-eagle of the ancient world.

But what does it mean that the wings were plucked off, the beast was lifted to stand like a man, and a man's heart was given to it?

We have just read the story of Nebuchadnezzar's madness and restoration. The great king who prowled the earth like a lion was humbled — reduced to living like a beast in the open field — and then restored to human dignity only when he lifted his eyes to heaven and acknowledged the sovereign God. The plucking of the wings, the standing upright, the man's heart: this is Nebuchadnezzar's story, pictured in the beast.

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## **THE SECOND BEAST: THE BEAR**

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"Daniel 7:5 — And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'"

The bear represents the Medo-Persian Empire. The bear is an apt symbol — not as swift or brilliant as the lion, but massive, powerful, and relentless. The Persians were known for the sheer size of their armies. Where Babylon conquered with excellence, Persia conquered with overwhelming numbers.

The bear is raised up on one side — indicating that one part of the alliance was stronger than the other. Persia eventually dominated the Medes, just as the higher horn of the ram in chapter eight represented Persia rising over Media.

The three ribs in the bear's mouth represent the three great nations conquered by Medo-Persia: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. And the command — "Arise, devour much flesh!" — was fulfilled in the great Persian campaigns that extended the empire from India to the borders of Greece.

Medo-Persia ruled the Middle East from 539 to 331 B.C.

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THE THIRD BEAST: THE LEOPARD

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"Daniel 7:6 — After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it."

The leopard is Greece — specifically, the empire of Alexander the Great. The leopard is the perfect symbol: fast, agile, unexpected in its strike. And wings on a leopard — four of them — speak of a speed that exceeded even what a leopard could achieve on its own.

Alexander conquered the known world in ten years. He moved so fast that his enemies could barely organize before the battle was already over. He crossed the Hellespont in 334 B.C., met the Persian armies, and dismantled the greatest empire the world had seen — empire by empire, city by city — before dying in Babylon at the age of thirty-three in 323 B.C.

The four heads tell the story of what happened after his death. When Alexander died without a mature heir, his four generals — Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy — divided the empire among themselves. The four heads of the leopard were the four successor kingdoms that arose from the wreckage of Alexander's conquest.

Bible prophecy is incredibly accurate. The Greeks ruled from 331 to 168 B.C.

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THE FOURTH BEAST: THE TERRIBLE ONE

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"Daniel 7:7–8 — After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it

was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words."

This beast is different from all the others. Daniel does not compare it to any known animal — it is simply dreadful and terrible and exceedingly strong. This is Rome.

The Roman Empire — as strong as iron, which crushes and breaks in pieces — conquered the Greek world in 168 B.C. by defeating the Greeks at the Battle of Pydna. Under the Caesars, Rome ruled the Mediterranean world for centuries. Its iron — its military machine — was like nothing the ancient world had seen. It broke and ground down everything it faced.

But notice the ten horns. And then — rising among them — a little horn. A small beginning among the ten, subduing three of them, speaking pompous words against the Most High. This is the figure we will encounter again and again in these visions: the Antichrist. The final ruler of the final form of the old Roman empire, who will appear on the stage of history in the last days.

The connection between Daniel's fourth beast and the book of Revelation is explicit. John was given the same vision:

"Revelation 13:2 — Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion."

John's single beast combined the three previous beasts of Daniel — the lion, the bear, the leopard — because the Antichrist's final empire will be the summation of all the empires that came before it. Everything that Babylon and Persia and Greece and Rome were, the final empire will be, in its most concentrated and devastating form.

The ten horns are ten kings who will arise from the final form of the old Roman world. This has not yet happened. But when the Antichrist appears — rising from among those ten, subduing three of them, speaking his blasphemies against the God of heaven — the people who know their Bible will recognize exactly what is happening.

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THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

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Then Daniel's vision shifted from the beasts to something far more glorious:

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

The Ancient of Days. There is no image in Scripture more majestic than this one. God seated in judgment — not with the trappings of earthly royalty, not with gold and armies and the pomp of human power — but in absolute, terrifying, uncreated purity. White as snow. The court of heaven assembled. A thousand thousands ministering. A river of fire flowing from before Him. And the books opened.

This is the court of final judgment. The great beast — the terrible fourth kingdom, the pompous little horn — is brought before this court and its end is announced:

"Daniel 7:11 — I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame."

And then:

"Daniel 7:13–14 — Behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

One like the Son of Man. Jesus used this title for Himself more than any other. He was telling His disciples — and through them, every generation since — that He was the One who came to the Ancient of Days and was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. An everlasting dominion. A kingdom that shall not be destroyed.

Don't you just love when the prophets ask for explanations and it's given to us? Daniel asked for the interpretation, and the heavenly messenger answered plainly: the four beasts are four kingdoms. And then: the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess it forever.

The four empires of human history — Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome — and the final empire of the Antichrist, all of them coming to an end under the judgment of the Ancient of Days. And then the Son of Man receiving an everlasting kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages will serve.

This is the climax of the book of Daniel. Everything else in the remaining chapters is an expansion of these themes — more detail, more precision, more prophetic specificity. But the great outline is here: human empires rise and fall, the Antichrist appears and speaks his blasphemies, the Ancient of Days renders judgment, the beast is destroyed, and the Son of Man receives His eternal kingdom.

The visions of Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7 are the same vision, in the same order, with the same ending. We can now see that they also align with the book of Revelation. Three independent windows looking at the same future — and they all agree in every detail.

This is what it means when Daniel says: "The dream is certain and its interpretation is sure."

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THE LITTLE HORN AND THE FINAL TRIBULATION

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Daniel's attention was drawn particularly to the little horn, and the angel's interpretation gives us the clearest description in the entire book of what the Antichrist will do:

"Daniel 7:25 — He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time."

Time and times and half a time. This is three and a half years — the period of the Great Tribulation, the last half of the final week of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy. Three and a half years when the Antichrist will have authority over the saints, will speak his blasphemies, and will persecute those who refuse to bow to him.

But his reign has a fixed end:

"Daniel 7:26–27 — But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

All dominions shall serve and obey Him. The kingdoms of men — every empire, every government, every authority that humanity has ever erected — will ultimately serve the one to whom dominion and glory were given in the presence of the Ancient of Days.

What Daniel saw in the night vision, troubled in his spirit and pale in his countenance, was the full arc of human history from his day to the end of the age. He kept the matter in his heart. He continued in the king's service. He prayed three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem.

And he wrote it all down, so that we might read it twenty-six centuries later and recognize where we are in the story.

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SECTION FOUR: THE RAM, THE GOAT, AND THE SEVENTY WEEKS — DANIEL CHAPTERS 8 AND 9

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We have seen the great outline of history in Daniel chapters 2 and 7. Now, in chapters 8 and 9, the prophetic lens narrows — focusing in detail on specific empires and then on the most precise prophetic timetable in all of Scripture.

Chapter 8 gives us the ram and the goat. Chapter 9 gives us the seventy weeks.

Together, they are among the most remarkable prophecies in the entire Bible.

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THE RAM AND THE GOAT — DANIEL CHAPTER EIGHT

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"Daniel 8:3–4 — Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great."

The ram with two horns — two powers, one stronger than the other, the stronger one rising later. This is the Medo-Persian Empire. The angel Gabriel identified it explicitly in verse 20: "The ram which you saw, having the two horns — they are the kings of Media and Persia." Persia, the higher horn, rose after Media and surpassed it.

The ram pushed in every direction — westward, northward, southward — and none could stand against him. This was Persia at the height of its power, stretching from the borders of Greece to the edge of India.

Then came the goat:

"Daniel 8:5–7 — Suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns."

The goat coming from the west, moving so fast it did not seem to touch the ground — this is Greece, and the notable horn is Alexander the Great. The rage against the ram was real: Alexander was consumed by the desire to avenge the Persian attacks on Greece. He moved with such breathtaking speed that the Persian Empire — which had seemed invincible for two centuries — was dismantled in a matter of years.

But then:

"Daniel 8:8 — The male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven."

When he became strong, the great horn was broken. Alexander died at thirty-three, at the height of his power. In his place, four kingdoms arose — the four successors of chapter 7. Bible prophecy predicted this not after Alexander died, but centuries before he was born.

From one of those four successor kingdoms came a little horn — a figure who would exalt himself, take away the daily sacrifices, and cast truth to the ground. This is Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king who desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem in 167 B.C., stopped the sacrifices, and erected an altar to Zeus in the holy place. He is the near prophecy — the foreshadowing, the type — of the Antichrist who will do the same thing in the last days.

The angel Gabriel gave Daniel the timeline: two thousand three hundred days, and then the sanctuary would be cleansed. This was fulfilled in 165 B.C. when the Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple — the event still celebrated today by Jewish people as Hanukkah.

But Gabriel was also clear that the vision had a deeper reference — to the time of the end, to a future fulfillment that would go beyond Antiochus. The small horn of chapter 8 is the near prophecy; the little horn of chapter 7 is the far prophecy. The first was Antiochus. The second is the Antichrist. The same pattern of behavior — temple desecration, stopping the sacrifices, blasphemy against God — appears in both.

Jesus made the connection explicit:

"Matthew 24:15 — 'Therefore when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place' (whoever reads, let him understand)."

Future to the time of Christ. Jesus was not pointing to something that had already happened with Antiochus — He was pointing to a future event that would replicate it on a larger scale. The abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place again — in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, in the last days. And when it does, the people who know this book will understand what has happened.

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## **DANIEL'S PRAYER — DANIEL 9:1–19**

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Chapter nine opens with a remarkable moment. Daniel is reading the scroll of Jeremiah and comes across a prophecy:

"Jeremiah 29:10 — After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place."

Daniel was a man of faith. He studied Scripture and believed the word of God. He knew that the captivity was coming to an end — that God had promised, through Jeremiah, that after seventy years He would restore the people to the promised land.

This was certain. God had promised it. Daniel did not doubt it.

What happens next takes some study and understanding, because instead of celebrating, Daniel went into mourning.

"Daniel 9:3–4 — Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession."

Daniel mourned because he understood something that the general population did not. He knew not only the book of Jeremiah but the books of Moses — the Law. And in the Law, God had made a promise that went beyond the seventy-year captivity.

In Leviticus 26, God had outlined the consequences of disobedience in escalating severity:

"Leviticus 26:18 — And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."

Seven times. If Israel did not repent during the first period of punishment, God had promised to multiply the discipline sevenfold.

Daniel understood that the people during the captivity in Babylon had not repented. They had drawn further from God. They worshiped idols in the name of self-preservation, ate unclean food, and acted the role of the harlot. The captivity had not produced the repentance it was designed to produce.

And so Daniel knew: the same faithful God who had kept every promise He had made was about to keep this one too. Not seventy years, but seventy times seven. Not a time of jubilation but a time of mourning.

He prayed the prayer of a man who understood his people's sin, accepted their guilt without making excuses, and cast himself on God's mercy:

"Daniel 9:5-7 — We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face."

To us belongs shame of face. Daniel was one of the most righteous men in the history of Israel — yet he did not stand apart from his people and point at their sin from a safe distance. He said "we." He identified with their failure. He confessed as one of them, not above them.

This is the posture of genuine intercession. Not "Lord, look at what they have done" — but "Lord, we have sinned."

He pleaded with God on the basis of His own righteousness, not Israel's:

"Daniel 9:18 — We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies."

And Gabriel came swiftly, while Daniel was still speaking:

"Daniel 9:23 — At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved."

You are greatly beloved. That is the word that came to Daniel in his mourning, in his confession, in his fasting and sackcloth. God saw His servant — the man who prayed three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem, who refused to defile himself, who pointed to God in every moment of triumph — and He sent the angel running.

The greatest prophetic revelation in the book of Daniel came to a man in the posture of humility and confession.

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THE SEVENTY WEEKS — DANIEL 9:24–27

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What Gabriel revealed is the most precise prophetic timetable in all of Scripture. It is a calendar of God's plan for Israel from Daniel's time to the end of the age. And it must be understood correctly, because everything else in prophetic interpretation depends on it.

"Daniel 9:24 — Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy."

First, notice the address: your people and your holy city. Jerusalem. Israel. The gentile nations had nothing to do with the Babylonian captivity — it was Israel's punishment for Israel's disobedience. And the seventy weeks that follow are also Israel's — not the Church, not the gentile nations. This is the vision of Daniel for the people of Daniel.

If you remember this one truth, you will be able to hear all the details of the seventy weeks clearly and you will understand the gap — in which we now stand — that comes between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week.

Second, notice the Hebrew word for "weeks." The word is shabuwa — it means a period of seven. Seven days or seven years. In this context, it

means seven years. Seventy weeks of years — seventy times seven — equals 490 years.

"Daniel 9:25 — Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks."

Seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks equals sixty-nine weeks. Sixty-nine weeks of years equals 483 biblical years. In 360-day biblical years, 483 years equals 173,880 days. Converted to solar years: 476 years and 27 days.

The starting point is the command to restore and build Jerusalem. This is not the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C., which concerned the Temple. The specific command that matches Gabriel's description — to restore the city of Jerusalem, including its streets and walls — is the edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus given to Nehemiah in 445 B.C.

Beginning at that edict and counting 173,880 days forward — the only timeline that fits, the only starting point that connects to an event worthy of the title "Messiah the Prince appearing" — leads us to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The day the people laid their garments on the road and cried "Hosanna!" was the day the 69th week of Daniel's prophecy was completed.

Sir Robert Anderson, the Scotland Yard Inspector who first worked this calculation in detail in the late 19th century, confirmed that the timeline is a perfect fit — accurate to within two days. His landmark work, *The Coming Prince*, is still available for study today.

"Daniel 9:26 — And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself."

After the 69th week, Messiah was cut off. Jesus was crucified — but not for Himself. He was cut off for us. And the people of the prince who is to come destroyed the city and the sanctuary. In 70 A.D., the Roman armies

under Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple — the people of the prince who is to come. The same Roman empire that would one day produce the final Antichrist.

And then there is a gap.

"Daniel 9:27 — 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."

The last week — the seventieth week — has not yet started. The city was destroyed in 70 A.D. and the people were scattered across the globe. The final week could not begin until those two things were restored, which in major part has already happened. We have watched as God has fulfilled His word to bring His people back from the four corners of the globe, and we have watched as they have rebuilt the city.

The stage is set for the final act.

The seventieth week begins with a worldwide event: the prince who is to come — the Antichrist — will confirm a covenant of peace between Israel and her enemies for seven years. When that covenant is signed, the clock begins again. You will be able to count the days from that moment to the coming of the Son of Man.

Three and a half years in — in the middle of the week — the Antichrist will enter the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem and bring an end to sacrifice and offering. He will set up the abomination of desolation that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24. The last three and a half years — the Great Tribulation — will begin.

When people make statements suggesting that the tribulation has already started or that certain events have already fulfilled these prophecies, remember these two timed events:

First — the signing of the seven-year covenant for peace between Israel and her enemies. That has not happened. When it happens, the clock starts.

Second — after 1,260 days, the abomination of desolation. The Antichrist entering the Temple in Jerusalem. That has not happened either.

And remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 24: immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.

That has not happened yet. You can believe it.

The final act is about the enemy trying to destroy God's people and God showing His glory in defending and rescuing them. The gentile world and the Church are not the key players. It is the Antichrist, the Jewish nation, and God. At most, we are witnesses.

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SECTION FIVE: THE SPIRITUAL WORLD BEHIND HISTORY — DANIEL CHAPTERS 10 AND 11

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We have walked through the great prophetic outlines of Daniel. We have seen the statue of chapter 2, the four beasts of chapter 7, the ram and goat of chapter 8, and the precise timetable of the seventy weeks in chapter 9. Each vision has expanded on the one before it, adding detail, adding precision, adding the connecting tissue between what Daniel saw and what we can see unfolding in our own time.

Now, in chapters 10 and 11, something different happens. Before God gives Daniel the final and most detailed vision of all, He pulls back the curtain on something most people never stop to consider: the invisible world that operates behind visible history.

The battles of nations are not merely political. The wars between kingdoms are not merely military. There is a spiritual dimension to history — a realm of angelic and demonic conflict — that is as real as anything you can see on a map or read in a history book. And Daniel chapters 10 through 12 give us one of the only direct windows into that realm in all of Scripture.

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THE MAN IN LINEN — DANIEL CHAPTER TEN

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"Daniel 10:2–6 — In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude."

This is a stunning vision — a figure of such overwhelming glory that the men who were with Daniel, though they did not see the vision, were seized with great terror and fled to hide themselves. Daniel alone remained, but all his strength left him. He fell into a deep sleep on his face.

This vision bears comparison with two others in Scripture. The first is Isaiah's vision of the Lord in Isaiah 6 — the seraph touching Isaiah's lips with a live coal, purging his iniquity. The second is John's vision of the risen Christ in Revelation 1 — a figure with hair like white wool, eyes like a flame of fire, feet like burnished bronze, and a voice like the sound of many waters.

The similarities are not coincidental. Daniel, Isaiah, and John each encountered the overwhelming majesty of divine presence — and each was undone by it, and each was strengthened by a touch.

The man in linen identified himself:

"Daniel 10:11–12 — 'O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.' While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. Then he said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.'"

From the first day. From the very first day that Daniel set his heart to understand and to humble himself before God — that day, the command went out. The answer had been in motion since the moment the prayer began.

But then comes the extraordinary revelation:

"Daniel 10:13 — But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."

The messenger — Gabriel, the news bearer to Israel and the prophets — had been delayed. Not by geography or logistics. By a spiritual prince. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him for twenty-one days.

This is not a metaphor. This is a description of real spiritual warfare in the heavenly realm. Behind the Persian Empire — behind its political decisions, its kings, its armies — was a spiritual prince, a demonic power aligned with Persia, that was opposing the purposes of God for Israel. Gabriel was engaged in warfare with that prince for three weeks, until Michael — the archangel, Israel's champion, the warrior — came to help.

There are two archangels spoken of in Scripture. Gabriel is the news bearer to Israel and the prophets. Michael is the warrior, Israel's prince. Together they stand in service to the purposes of God for His people.

And behind the nations of the world — behind Persia and Greece and Rome and every empire in human history — there are spiritual forces at work. This is what Paul was pointing to when he wrote:

"Ephesians 6:12 — For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

The battles of history have a deeper dimension. The kings of the earth rise and fall not only because of human ambition and military strategy — but because of the conflict in the heavenly realm, where the purposes of God

are being contested and ultimately established.

Daniel received the message he needed. Gabriel strengthened him and then told him what was coming — three more Persian kings, then a fourth who would stir up all against the realm of Greece. And then:

"Daniel 11:3–4 — "Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven."

Alexander. His kingdom divided into four. Every word confirmed by history.

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## **THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH — DANIEL CHAPTER ELEVEN**

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Chapter eleven is the most historically detailed chapter in all of prophetic Scripture. From verse 5 through verse 35, it describes in precise detail the wars, marriages, alliances, betrayals, and military campaigns of the successor kingdoms that arose after Alexander's death — the Ptolemies of Egypt (the king of the South) and the Seleucids of Syria (the king of the North).

Historians who have studied this chapter carefully have been consistently astonished at its accuracy. It describes specific battles, specific marriages, specific political maneuvers — all of which can be verified in the historical record. Critics who cannot accept the supernatural nature of prophecy have argued that Daniel must have been written after the fact — that someone simply recorded history and called it prophecy.

But the chapter does not stop with Antiochus Epiphanes. It transitions — and the transition is unmistakable — from the near prophecy to the far

prophecy, from the historical events of the second century B.C. to the end times.

Beginning in verse 36, the language shifts:

"Daniel 11:36 — Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done."

This is no longer Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus was stopped — he was brought down by Rome's intervention, and he died of illness and madness in 163 B.C. But this king shall exalt himself above every god — not just the God of Israel, but above all gods. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor any god, because he shall exalt himself above them all.

This is the Antichrist — the final form of the little horn — described now in his fullest character.

He will honor a god of fortresses — a god of military power, a god of force and domination. He will use wealth and military might to advance the worship of this god. He will move through the nations like a whirlwind — overwhelming Egypt, stretching his hand over the treasures of gold and silver, pursuing his enemies with fury.

And then, at the end:

"Daniel 11:45 — And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him."

The glorious holy mountain is the same mountain on which Isaac was offered and on which Jesus died. It is referred to as the mount of the Lord. The Antichrist will plant himself there — will attempt to control the very place where God met Abraham, where Solomon built the Temple, where Jesus was crucified. He will attempt to occupy the center of God's

redemptive history.

And he shall come to his end. No one will help him. Not his armies. Not his political alliances. Not the god of fortresses he has honored. He will simply come to his end.

Because the Ancient of Days is seated. And the court has rendered its verdict.

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## **THE THREAD THAT RUNS THROUGH EVERYTHING**

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Before we move to the final chapter, let us pause and see the thread that has run through all of chapters 10 and 11.

Behind visible history there is an invisible war. The nations of the earth are contested by spiritual powers — princes of darkness aligned with human kingdoms, archangels of light carrying the purposes of God. The delay of Gabriel's answer to Daniel's prayer — twenty-one days — was not God's indifference to His beloved servant. It was the reality of spiritual warfare in the heavenly realm.

But the outcome of that warfare is never in doubt. Michael came. Gabriel was freed. The message was delivered. Because the God who says "from the first day that you set your heart to understand, your words were heard" does not leave His purposes unaccomplished.

The king of the North and the king of the South warred for generations. They used marriages and armies and alliances and betrayals. They built fortresses and conquered cities and scattered populations. And all of it — every detail — was already written in the scroll of truth that Gabriel read to Daniel in his moment of weakness and trembling.

The scroll of truth. That phrase appears in Daniel 10:21: "I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth." There is a scroll in heaven that contains what will happen. The history of nations is not improvised. It is written. And what is written will happen, exactly as written.

This is not fatalism. It is not determinism in the sense that human choices do not matter. The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits — Daniel 11:32 says this in the middle of the darkest period of persecution. The righteous walk in the ways of the LORD, even when the wicked do not understand them.

But the end of the story is fixed. The Ancient of Days will sit. The court will convene. The beast will be destroyed. The Son of Man will receive His kingdom. And the glorious holy mountain will belong — forever — to the One for whom it was always intended.

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# **SECTION SIX: THE END OF ALL THINGS — DANIEL CHAPTER TWELVE**

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We have arrived at the final chapter of Daniel. And we arrive here knowing where we are in the story — because the angel told us at the end of chapter 11: we are at the time of the end. The Antichrist has planted his tents between the seas and the glorious holy mountain. He has come to his end, and no one will help him.

What happens next?

Daniel chapter 12 gives us the answer. And it is one of the most concentrated passages of prophetic hope in all of Scripture.

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## **THE TIME OF TROUBLE — AND THE DELIVERANCE**

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"Daniel 12:1 — At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book."

Michael stands up. The great warrior angel of Israel — who held back the prince of Persia for twenty-one days before coming to help Gabriel — now stands up fully. Not to fight and struggle. To stand. To take his place as

Israel's defender in the final moment of her greatest peril.

And there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. Jesus described the same moment:

"Matthew 24:21 — For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

The Great Tribulation. The final three and a half years of the seventieth week. The time of Jacob's trouble — as Jeremiah named it:

"Jeremiah 30:7 — Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."

He shall be saved out of it. Not from it — out of it. Through it. This is the consistent word of God across the entire prophetic tradition: Israel will enter the fire, but she will come through. The time of trouble is real and it is terrible, but it is not the end of Israel. It is the beginning of Israel's salvation.

Jeremiah saw it. Daniel confirmed it. Jesus affirmed it.

The people of God shall be delivered — everyone who is found written in the book.

And who will be found written in the book? The same ones who were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world. The ones who did not worship the beast or his image, who endured to the end. The ones who trusted in the God who raised Jesus from the dead — who is both Israel's Messiah and the Savior of the world.

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## **THE RESURRECTION — DANIEL 12:2**

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Then comes a verse that startled the ancient world and has never ceased to astonish:

"Daniel 12:2 — And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Resurrection. In the sixth century B.C., in a world where the dominant conception of death was simply the end of consciousness — where even many of Israel's contemporaries believed that death was final — Daniel declared that the dead would rise. Not metaphorically. Not symbolically. The dust of the earth would give up its dead.

Some to everlasting life. Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Many Jewish people in history have not believed in hell or everlasting punishment. But Daniel sure did. He stated it plainly — without qualification, without apology. There are two destinations beyond the grave, not one. Those who are found written in the book will awake to everlasting life. Those who are not will awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

This is not a comfortable word. But it is an honest one. And Daniel did not soften it.

Jesus did not soften it either. He spoke more about hell than any other figure in the New Testament — not to frighten people into compliance, but to tell them the truth about the stakes. The same Jesus who said "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" also said "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

The resurrection is real. The judgment is real. The distinctions in the outcome are real. And the only basis for hope in that judgment is the same thing it has always been: the mercy of the God who ransoms from death.

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THE WISE SHALL SHINE — DANIEL 12:3

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And then — immediately after the most sobering statement in the chapter — comes one of the most glorious:

"Daniel 12:3 — Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."

Those who are wise shall shine. Not the powerful. Not the famous. Not the politically connected or the militarily successful. The wise. The ones who understood what was happening and walked accordingly — who knew their God and were strong and carried out great exploits even in the darkest times.

And a special word for those who turn many to righteousness. Like the stars — forever and ever. The work of evangelism, of teaching, of bearing witness to the truth of God's word, of pointing people toward Jesus — this work has an eternal weight that cannot be measured in earthly terms.

Think about what Pastor Robert has spent his ministry doing. Teaching. Week after week after week, for decades. Sitting with rabbis to understand the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith. Helping hundreds of people over forty years deepen their faith in the Word of God and in Jesus as the Messiah. Spending his own money to print his books and give them away to people who needed them.

Those who turn many to righteousness — like the stars, forever and ever.

The stars are not awarded at the end of one's earthly career. They are given in the age that Daniel is describing — the age that begins after the tribulation, after the resurrection, after Michael has stood up and the time of trouble has passed. The stars are the permanent, eternal recognition of a life given to pointing others toward God.

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## **THE SEALED BOOK AND THE TIME OF THE END**

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"Daniel 12:4 — 'But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.'"

Until the time of the end. The vision was sealed — not destroyed, not hidden forever, but protected until the generation that would need it most. When the time of the end arrived, the seal would be broken and the words would be understood.

We know we are in a time when knowledge is increasing rapidly. We also now have understanding of the visions of Daniel that no previous generation possessed in the same way. The connections between Daniel and Revelation, between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the events unfolding in our world today — these are visible to us in ways that they simply were not to previous generations.

The book is no longer sealed. It has been revealed. And God said it would be sealed until the time of the end — which, as Pastor Robert notes, would tell us that we are at that time.

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## **THE FINAL QUESTIONS — DANIEL 12:5–12**

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Daniel saw two other figures standing on the riverbanks. One asked the glorious man clothed in linen — the one standing above the waters of the river — how long these wonders would be.

"Daniel 12:7 — Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished."

Time. Times. Half a time. One year, two years, half a year: three and a half years. The same number that has echoed through the entire book: forty-two months, 1,260 days, the great tribulation. When the power of the holy people — Israel — has been completely shattered, all these things will be finished.

Daniel heard but did not understand. He asked: "My lord, what shall be the end of these things?"

The answer was gentle but firm:

"Daniel 12:9 — 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'"

Some things are not for Daniel to understand in his time. They will be revealed at the appointed moment. And in the meantime, the instruction is simple: go your way.

But then the numbers grow:

"Daniel 12:11–12 — 'And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.'"

1,260 days — the length of the tribulation. Then 1,290 — an additional 30 days. Then 1,335 — an additional 75 days beyond the tribulation itself. What are these extra days?

To understand the 75 days, Pastor Robert draws our attention to something Jesus said in Matthew 24:

"Matthew 24:37 — 'But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.'"

Jesus pointed to Noah as a model — not a casual remark but an intentional and specific connection. And when we look at the story of the flood, we find something remarkable:

"Genesis 8:4 — Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat."

The flood ended on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. But we need to understand that before the time of Moses, the people followed a seasonal calendar in which the seventh month was what we now call Nisan. When God spoke to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, He reordered the calendar:

"Exodus 12:2 — 'This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.'"

God made Nisan the first month — the month of Passover and the Exodus. And we know that Jesus was crucified on the fourteenth day of Nisan and rose on the seventeenth day of Nisan — the Feast of First Fruits.

So the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat on the seventeenth day of the seventh month under the old calendar — which is the seventeenth day of Nisan under the new calendar. The same day Jesus rose from the dead. Two new beginnings for humanity — one at the end of the flood, one at the resurrection — happening on the same date in the Jewish spiritual calendar.

Now what happened after the ark rested? The waters continued to decrease for another 75 days, until the first day of the tenth month, when the tops of the mountains could be seen:

"17th to the 30th day the seventh month = 14 days 30 days the eighth month 30 days the ninth month 1 day the tenth month Total: 75 days"

Seventy-five days after the ark rested, the earth became visible again — cleansed, renewed, ready for a new beginning for mankind.

Pastor Robert sees these 75 days after the return of Jesus as a period of cleansing of the earth — whatever that cleansing involves — before the millennium reign of Christ can begin. Before mankind can again enjoy the earth as God intended. Before Jesus and His people start the thousand-year

reign.

1,260 days of tribulation plus 75 days equals 1,335 days.

"Daniel 12:12 — 'Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.'"

Blessed is he who waits. Not merely survives — waits. There is a quality of patient, expectant, faith-filled waiting that Daniel is describing here. The one who endures the tribulation and then the additional 75 days — who holds on, who trusts, who keeps his face toward Jerusalem like Daniel himself — that one is blessed.

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## **THE FINAL WORD TO DANIEL**

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The book of Daniel closes with a word addressed to Daniel personally:

"Daniel 12:13 — 'But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.'"

Go your way till the end.

Daniel would not see the fulfillment of these visions in his lifetime. He was an old man when these final visions were given to him. The seventy years of captivity were nearly over. The Medes and Persians were already in power. He had outlasted Babylon, survived the lions' den, interpreted the handwriting on the wall, and written down the most comprehensive prophetic vision in the Hebrew Bible.

And now the angel told him: go your way. Rest. You will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

This is a key phrase. Daniel will arise to his inheritance at the end of the days — not at the death of the believer, not at the time of the Church's rapture, but at the end of the days described in the vision. The pre-Church



saints will receive their resurrected bodies at the end of the age — as the millennium is beginning, as the new beginning is being established.

"1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 — For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

The dead in Christ rise first. Daniel will arise. The patriarchs will arise. Every faithful witness from Abel to the last martyr of the tribulation — they will arise at the appointed time to receive their inheritance.

Go your way, Daniel. Rest. Your work is done. Your inheritance is secured. The God who used your faithfulness to demonstrate His sovereignty over Babylon and Persia — the God who vindicated you in the furnace and in the lions' den, who sent Gabriel running with the message because you are greatly beloved — that God will raise you up at the end of the days.

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# CONCLUSION: WHAT DANIEL TEACHES EVERY GENERATION

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We have walked through all twelve chapters of Daniel. Let us stand back and take account of what we have seen.

We have seen a young man who purposed in his heart — before the test came, before any external pressure required it — that he would not compromise what he owed to God. And that private, quiet decision shaped everything that followed. Every crisis that Daniel walked through was navigated by a man who had already settled the fundamental question before the crisis arrived.

We have seen that God vindicates faithfulness. Not always immediately. Not always in the ways we would choose. But the pattern of this book is unmistakable: those who honor God, God honors. Nebuchadnezzar bowed three times. Darius declared the living God to every nation. Daniel was promoted above everyone. Not because they were clever politicians, but because the God they served is the God who removes kings and raises up kings.

We have seen that history belongs to God. The statue of chapter 2 — the four beasts of chapter 7 — the ram and the goat of chapter 8 — the detailed narrative of chapter 11 — all of it was written in the scroll of truth before it happened. The nations do not write their own story. They play their parts in a story that was written from before the foundation of the world.

We have seen that prophecy has layers. The near and the far. Antiochus and the Antichrist. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the tribulation yet to come. We are standing in the gap — in the space between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks — watching the pieces of the ancient prophecy fall into place around us.

We have seen that there is a spiritual world behind the visible one. The prince of Persia delayed Gabriel for twenty-one days. Michael came to help. Behind every empire in human history, behind every political struggle and military campaign, there is a spiritual contest in the heavenly realm. The outcome of that contest is not in doubt — but it is real.

We have seen that the end is not destruction — it is inheritance. Daniel will arise. The wise will shine like stars. Those who turned many to righteousness will shine like the brightness of the firmament forever and ever. The time of trouble is real and terrible. But the morning that follows it is the morning of a new world — a world where the Son of Man reigns, where the Ancient of Days is enthroned, where the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

And He shall reign forever and ever.

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WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

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There is a question that runs through the entire book of Daniel, from the food test in chapter 1 to the final word in chapter 12. It is the same question Hosea asked. It is the same question all of Scripture asks, in one way or another:

Will you be found faithful?

Not: will you be powerful? Not: will you be famous? Not: will you be comfortable? Will you purpose in your heart — before the test comes,

before the furnace is heated, before the decree is signed — that you will not compromise what you owe to God?

Daniel answered that question with his life. His three companions answered it with three words: "But if not."

The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. That is the word for every generation that reads this book and recognizes where we are in the story.

We are at the end of the gap. The stage is set. The pieces are moving into position. Israel is back in her land. Jerusalem is rebuilt. The final week has not yet begun — but the conditions for its beginning are the most advanced they have ever been in human history.

What are we to do with that knowledge?

The same thing Daniel did. Go our way. Pray with our windows open toward the One who holds our inheritance. Purpose in our hearts not to defile ourselves. Trust the God who reveals secrets to His greatly beloved servants.

And wait. Because blessed is he who waits, and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

The God who kept every promise He made to Daniel will keep every promise He has made to us.

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END OF A STUDY OF DANIEL

By Robert J. Neral

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