

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: DANIEL

DANIEL

PREFACE

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Duncan Heaster

DANIEL CHAPTER 1

Dan 1:1 *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Jerusalem, and besieged it-* This means that Daniel would have been within the very first wave of captives taken into Babylon; he would have experienced the arrival of others over the next few years, all telling an increasingly bad story of the situation in Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar was not at this point "king", he was regent, although *melech* could apply to any such leader as he was at the time. This explains the possible chronological problem in Dan. 2.

Dan 1:2 *The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God-*

God would give *the land and people of Judah / Israel* "into the hand of" the king of Babylon (Ezra 5:12; Ps. 106:41; Jer. 20:4,5; 22:25; 32:3,28; 34:2,20,21; 44:30; Ez. 16:39; 39:23). Within the book of Daniel the point has been made; for the book opens with the statement that the king of Judah has been 'given into the hand of' the king of Babylon (Dan. 1:2). The entities described in Dan. 2 are therefore mentioned from the perspective of their reigning over the land and people of Yahweh.

Nebuchadnezzar put Yahweh's temple vessels in the house of his god as a sign that he considered that his god had vanquished Judah's. But in fact it was Judah's God who had given His people and temple into the hand of the Babylonians. He is all powerful. Daniel thus opens with what will become a major theme: That those who consider themselves, and are considered, the mighty and powerful in this world... are in fact not so, but are raised up and used by the one true God of Israel. But as God "gave" Jehoiakim into the hand of his enemies, so God would "give" [s.w.] Daniel grace in the eyes of his captor (:9) and "gave" wisdom to the group of young Jews (:17). Yahweh was and is pulling all the strings in personal and international politics. This is to be a theme in Daniel; that all such apparent disasters have God in control of them. The remainder of the vessels were taken in later waves of the invasion (2 Kings 24:13; 2 Chron. 36:18), confirming that Daniel was taken amongst the very first wave of captives (:1). Babylon's original plan seemed to have been to make Judah a tributary state, taking away the leadership and seeking to make the youngsters like Daniel completely Babylonian, with a view to them returning and governing Judah. Hence only part of the vessels were initially taken. But this changed to a policy of complete destruction.

And he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god: and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god- The captives were paralleled with the temple treasures; they were taken into the temple as evidence that Yahweh and His people had now been apparently dominated. But Isaiah had prophesied that Bel would be rendered helpless and judged (Is. 46:1,2). The faithful captives would have remembered that, even when it seemed their chips were down.

The mention of "Shinar" surely points us back to the tower of Babel / Babylon, and its inevitable fall. The "them" who were brought to the temple differs from the vessels brought into the treasury. GNB clarifies: "He took some prisoners back with him to the temple of his gods in Babylon, and put the captured treasures in the temple storerooms". The exiles were brought into the temple of Bel, and the changes of names were therefore conscious statements about the supposed vanquishing of Yahweh, as the Babylonians saw it. The exiles were made to bow before the gods of Babylon at this point, for this was typical behaviour of the victors. They saw victory as a case of their gods having defeated those of their enemies. There is no note to the effect that Daniel and his friends objected. The Babylonian Chronicle reports how after such victories, "everyone must swear a loyalty oath to [the king] by bowing down and paying homage to his gods. He commanded that everyone [of the vanquished] had to worship them". We can safely assume this was done by Daniel and his friends; and we are left to infer their later spiritual growth.

Dan 1:3 *The king spoke to Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring in some of the Israelites, those of the seed royal and of the nobles-* This fulfilled the prophecy to Hezekiah: "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (2 Kings 20:17,18). This would mean that Daniel and his friends may well have been castrated. There is no mention of Daniel ever getting married or having children. So we are to imagine these young men looking forward to a rather bleak life; and they instead put their energy into devotion to their God and separation from the evil empire which has seeking to psychologically dominate them. So whilst Daniel's devotion to Yahweh is to his credit, it is also psychologically understandable given this background. If Daniel and his friends were "of the seed royal", they would not have been 'well brought up' in spiritual things. They would have seen the tragedy

which occurred because attention had not been paid by their families to God's word; and they were determined to do better. Josephus claims Daniel was in fact a son of Zedekiah.

Dan 1:4 *Youths in whom was no blemish*- Both Xenophon and Plato record that the three year program began at age 14. Nebuchadnezzar presents as an anti-God figure, demanding the best for his service rather than God's. For "without blemish" is the language of the sacrifices (Lev. 22:19-21) and priests (Lev. 21:16-24). These young men were to be trained up in the culture and religion of Babylon. There is a specifically spiritual aspect to the intention to educate them, so that the princes of Judah become princes of Babylon, with loyalty wholly to Babylon and her gods, and not Judah and Yahweh. There was therefore heavy pressure on these young men, with the intention of effectively brainwashing them into a totally different worldview, so that Judah would have no princes loyal to her any more.

But handsome, well educated, knowledgeable- They were to be "wise", that is, made wise, in the wisdom of Babylon. "The wise" in Daniel however are those who reject this and are wise in Yahweh's ways (Dan. 11:33,35; 12:3,10).

Understanding science, and such as had the ability to stand in the king's palace; that he should teach them the learning and the language of the Chaldeans- There is an intended echo here of Moses' experience in Egypt; situations repeat within and between the lives of God's people, that we might learn from Biblical history and from the experiences of our brethren contemporary with us. Daniel and his friends surely saw and were inspired by the similarities with Moses. They would later see the similarities with Joseph.

The learning and speech refers to the alphabet and language of the Babylonians. Akkadian was the language of Babylon and it had an alphabet of nearly 700 symbols. It was a complete change of culture for these young people. The stress on the alphabet may also be because the books of magic were written in a unique form of Cuneiform script, and they were to study these books, or clay tablets as they were in reality. "The Chaldeans" in this context refers to a specific type of magician, rather than an ethnic group. Their "tongue" or alphabet and language refers to the thousands of clay magic tablets written in a specific style of Cuneiform. These tablets contained total nonsense about the gods influencing man, demons, omens, potions, curses and how to avoid them. These things were the very opposite of the monotheism of Yahweh worship, and the visions of Daniel deeply and fundamentally deconstruct them. But God gave Daniel understanding and excellence in his studies of these things. On the other hand, Jeremiah had taught Daniel's generation: "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2). Yet God gave Daniel success in learning that "way", although also teaching Daniel that God's "way" and wisdom was infinitely higher than that of the heathen. And insisting that Daniel had to stand up and be counted for Yahweh's wisdom over that of the world. We marvel at the complex weaving God makes in human lives.

Dan 1:5 *The king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's dainties, and of the wine which he drank, and that they should be trained for three years; that at its end they should stand before the king*-

It was a compliment to send anyone a portion of food from the table of a king or great man (Gen. 43:34; 2 Sam. 11:8; 2 Kings 25:30). We can feel the same at the breaking of bread. Daniel's objection was not because the food was unclean- that is specifically not mentioned. And whether it had been offered to idols or not was not of itself defiling, as we will discuss later. His conscience was apparently impacted by the idea of eating a "portion" from the king, as if it were an act of fellowship with him which he objected to. The word "portion" is repeatedly used here (Dan. 1:5,8,13,15,16). The root word is used in the phrase "piece [portion] of bread" in Gen. 18:5; Jud. 19:5; 1 Sam. 2:36; 28:22; 1 Kings 17:11; Prov.

28:21), almost sounding like our 'breaking of bread' communion service. Here in Dan. 1, the "portion" of food / bread occurs three times together with reference to 'the wine of his drink' (Dan. 1:5,8,16). It all sounds an allusion to some religious fellowship, presumably vicariously partaking in an idol feast. And that is exactly what Paul teaches is wrong. We are not to have fellowship with idols in this way. We note that the king of the South in Dan. 11:26 is destroyed by those he assumed were loyal to him because they ate his portions: "they who eat of his dainties shall destroy him". We note that later, Daniel did eat meat and wine (Dan. 10:3). His refusal of this meat and wine was therefore not due to any issue with the meat and wine of itself, but with what it represented in this context.

We note the allusion to the manna, "a daily portion so that I may test them" (Ex. 16:4). The daily "portion" of the king's meat was rejected by Daniel in favour of "seeds", which he set up as a "test". We recall the manna was like coriander seed (Ex. 16:31). Perhaps Daniel perceived this; because he perceived that Babylon with all its grandeur was but the desert, part of his wilderness journey, out of the Egypt of Babylon back to the promised land. And we think of how the purpose of the manna was to humble Israel and make them realize that man lives by every word of God (Dt. 8:3), and Daniel was a man devoted to that word. He saw the truth of Dt. 8:16: "He fed you with manna in the wilderness, unknown to your fathers, in order to humble you, and in order to test you to bring about good for you in the end".

"Delicacies" is literally an offering. This is a classic case of meat offered to idols. And yet Paul argues that since an idol has no real existence, he who rejects idolatry can freely eat such food. He only must pay attention to not making others stumble. Daniel however displays a finely tuned conscience, over and above what the law required. For there was no Mosaic precept forbidding eating such meat, if it was not done as a conscious form of personal idol worship.

To "stand before the king" doesn't mean they would just come before him. It is a technical term referring to his senior attendants, (Dt. 1:38; 1 Kings 10:8; 12:8). The Persians and Babylonians typically trained such candidates intensely for three years from the age of 14. We can assume that this was the age of Daniel and his friends when they first made their stand for principle. Food and wine had religious significance. They were being made to participate in the king's idolatry. For his table was seen as the table of the gods he worshipped. Right at the start of the book, we are introduced to the idea of a daily sacrifice- this pagan one mimicked the true daily sacrifice of the temple.

Dan 1:6 *Now among these were, of the Judeans, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah-* All these names had the name of God in them, either as *el* or *Yah*. They were perhaps from amongst the minority influenced by Jeremiah's attempted reformation on the eve of the Babylonian victory against Jerusalem. Or perhaps these were names they gave themselves, for Semitic peoples often are given or give themselves names appropriate to their belief system or life experience. "Daniel" is 'God is judge', the idea being that although Babylon had judged Jerusalem, God was the ultimate judge who had merely used Babylon; and Babylon would be judged too. "Hananiah" is "Whom Yah has favoured", and this word is used of how God would "favour" Judah with restoration (Ps. 123:2,3; Is. 30:19; 33:2; Mal. 1:9). "Mishael" is from the two words *misha* ['who is like'] and *el*, 'God'. These same two words are used in the classic restoration prophecy of Is. 40:18 and Mic. 7:18, the idea being 'Who is like the God who restores Judah'. 'Who is like God!' was the commentary upon God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 15:11). "Azariah", 'help of Yah', is likewise a term associated with God's promise to "help" Judah in restoring them (s.w. Is. 41:13,14; 44:2; 49:8; 50:7,9). So I suggest these young men chose their names in hope, in faith and in defiance of where they were being taken.

Jewish tradition claims that he was of the royal family, and was descended from Hezekiah. In this case we would have the fulfilment of Is. 39:7: "Of your sons which shall issue from you... shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon". Daniel was a young man who had been castrated and had lost all his hopes of a life and career in his homeland. It speaks volumes that he retained his faith in Yahweh and was so sensitive in conscience for Him. As we learn from Ezekiel, so many of the exiles were bitter with God and felt they were unjustly suffering for the sins of their fathers.

Dan 1:7 The prince of the eunuchs gave names to them: to Daniel he gave the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego-

"Gave names to" is literally 'determined', and the same word occurs in :8 where Daniel equally 'determined' in his mind not to be defiled by Babylon. The determination of the world, the evil empire, is matched by his determination not to let them defeat him. And he won. Just as we are in a similar spiritual battle of determination.

As noted on :6, the names of these young men all spoke of their faith and hope in the restoration of the Kingdom, and they may have chosen them in defiance of where they were being taken and the unashamed program of brainwashing they were now subject to. The names they were given were an intentional subversion of Yahweh worship. "Belteshazar" is "Keeper of the hid treasures of Bel". The treasures of Yahweh's temple had been transported to the temple of Bel in Babylon, and Daniel was likewise transported.

The intention in each case was the obliterating of the name of God: Daniel, 'God is my judge'; Hananiah, 'Yah is gracious'; Mishael, 'Who is what God is?'; Azariah, 'Yah has helped'.

Belteshazzar was the name of the personal God of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:8 "Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god"). Apparently Daniel was singled out to have the most Babylonian name, "the wisdom of Bel". The king found Daniel full of wisdom (:20), so we can take that as referring to his name, the wisdom of Bel. The implication is that Daniel trotted out the wisdom of Bel just as a Christian might trot out answers in a science exam that he doesn't personally agree with. Indeed he was called later "Master of the magicians". Yet he knew that the wisdom of Babylon had perverted her and would be the cause of her downfall (Is. 47:10 "Your wisdom and your knowledge has perverted you"). The magic arts of the Babylonians are specifically condemned in Is. 47:9,11-13. And yet Daniel excelled in them and it seems was given fluency in them by Yahweh. There was a fine line between believing the information studied, and seeing it merely as false information to be regurgitated on demand. So it is with we who are to use this world but not abuse it. We note therefore his bravery in repeatedly stating that wisdom belongs to Yahweh (Dan. 2:20,21,23,30) and he himself had no true wisdom. Matters of conscience are a major theme in Daniel. Although he bowed to Bel initially, and could well expound Babylonian magic, he was led by God to positions where he had to nail his personal colours to the mast. We are all led over time to come out publicly for our faith.

"Shadrach" is "Filled with the spirit of the sun god". Hananiah was amongst those to be trained as Babylonian astrologers, and according to the Babylonian understanding, to do his job he would have to live up to his name, and be "Filled with the spirit of the sun god".

Mishael was tweaked to Meshach, alluding to Misha-Aku, 'Who is what Aku is?'. The first syllable was retained, but *el* was replaced with Shak, the goddess of Babylon, also called Sheshach (Jer. 25:26; 51:41), which also means Venus, the goddess of love and mirth. But that goddess and the attempt to make Mishael into Meshach was subverted by the fact that it was during her feast that Cyrus took Babylon. Or we could see a similarity with Akkadian mesaku, "I am of little account". In this case we see how the evil empire was doing down the

people of God, just as the world does to us. Likewise "Shadrach" may be the Akkadian Sliduraku, "I am very fearful". We too can be dumbed down by society to consider ourselves of little account and fearful. But we are to see ourselves as God sees us, just as Daniel and the friends clearly retained their Hebrew names.

Azariah became "Abednego", "servant of Nebo", the god of wisdom, or "servant of the fire god". This was subverted wonderfully when Azariah was put in the fiery furnace, sacrificed to Nego, and yet survived thanks to Israel's God. The psychological pressure consciously exerted upon these young believers was huge, and matches that which we all live under in this latter day Babylon. Is. 46:1 was a prophecy surely known to the young men; that Nebo would bow to Yahweh.

Dan 1:8 *But Daniel determined-* Although all his surrounding circumstances were changed and pressured him into conformity, Daniel's heart was devoted to God. "Determined" is the same word translated "gave the name to..." in :7. Babylon was determined to rename him, but he was determined not to give in to this brainwashing. He sets an example to all youngsters.

Not to defile himself- Daniel is the more commendable in this because the other captives didn't have the same sensitivity of conscience; and he is mentioned alone as the initiator in this refusal, with the three friends only coming in afterwards. The same word is used of how the later restored exiles did pollute themselves (Mal. 1:7,12; Ezra 2:62; Neh. 7:64). It is so much harder to take a stand for things when others amongst God's people don't do so.

With the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself-

It could be argued that to eat defiled food in captivity was part of Judah's prophesied punishment: "And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them" (Ez. 4:14); "they shall not dwell in the Lord's land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt; and shall eat unclean things in Assyria" (Hos. 9:3). Paul seems to argue that eating food offered to idols is not wrong in itself, seeing an idol "has no real existence" and in any case, "there is nothing unclean in itself". His objection to doing so was because in the local context of the church in Corinth, doing so might make other Christians stumble. There was no Mosaic command about this matter. And we can't assume that Daniel refused the food for kosher reasons; for he refused the wine, which was not a forbidden drink under the law of Moses and there was no kosher issue with it. To eat such food was not in itself an act of idol worship, whereby food was eaten as part of the worship ceremony. Of course the diet was part of the attempt to immerse the young Jews in Babylonian culture, just as the British fed local recruits in the Indian Army bacon and sausages at breakfast and roast beef for dinner, in order to deculturize both Hindu and Muslim.

The objection was not so much because of unclean food or the nature of its preparation, but because Daniel perceived that eating meat offered to idols was purposefully intended by the Babylonians to make these young Jews effectively part of idol worship in every meal they ate. Paul's reasoning in 1 Corinthians is based upon this; to partake in food knowingly offered to idols, when your eating was perceived as idol worship, was wrong. "The king's dainties" is better "the king's portion of food", the food that had been placed upon the idolatrous table of the king; and it is used in Dan. 11:26 to describe those on the king's side, his fellow worshippers.

Dan 1:9 *Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion with the prince of the eunuchs-*

On one hand, God's intention was to destroy Judah in captivity. On the other, He promised to make their captors show them pity and kindness (1 Kings 8:50; Ps. 106:46). Here we have an example of that grace shown to Daniel, just as Hatach showed it to Esther, the king did to Nehemiah (Neh. 1:11 "Give success to your servant today and grant him compassion in the sight of this man!") and the prison keeper did to Joseph (Gen. 39:21 "the Lord was with Joseph and showed him grace; he gave him favour in the sight of the chief jailer"). Why would this man risk his life for the sake of the foibles of a teenage captive? He had no good reason for doing so, there was nothing in it for him. The answer is that here as in the other cases of Esther, Nehemiah and Joseph, God worked on his heart, as He will on the hearts of those in our lives, even if they themselves aren't believers.

We could read :9 as a summary of what happened, and then we read of how it happened. Or it could be that God intervened in the heart of this man in :9, he resisted somewhat, and then God's intervention achieved the required end in :16. Thus there was a gap between Divine intervention in a man's heart and the achievement of the required outcome. And such gaps are ongoing all the time in our lives and in the lives of those around us. During those gaps we have to exercise trust / faith in His work. But during the gap, Daniel had to make some human effort. The "prince of the eunuchs" basically said "no" to Daniel in :10, but Daniel then approaches another man, "the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel" (:11), and he agrees. And presumably it was that steward who persuaded his master, "the prince of the eunuchs" whose heart God had already touched, to allow Daniel's request.

Finding *chesed* kindness and compassion was the language used of finding such mercy from God. But God had shown it to Daniel through the prince of the eunuchs. Dt. 13:17 had used the term in explaining that if none of the unclean things of the gentiles defiled God's people, then Yahweh would show His people mercy and compassion. Daniel was not willing in his heart to be thus defiled, and so God showed him this promised "kindness and compassion". But how, mechanically, did it work out? We wonder if this man who was himself a eunuch may have been homosexually attracted to Daniel, who was a handsome young man and also a eunuch. "Compassion" is AV "tender love". I am not suggesting that they had a homosexual affair, but possibly the prince of the eunuchs had a homosexual attraction to Daniel and did him a favour because of it. God works in all manner of ways to bring about His purpose and work in the lives of those faithful to Him. The Hebrew however has the idea of "pity", and is the word used in Ps. 106:46: "He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives".

Dan 1:10 The prince of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king who has appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths who are of your own age? Do you really want to endanger my head with the king?-

We meet here for the first time in Daniel the theme of risking death in order to disobey the king. This theme is a significant one throughout the book. Daniel here disobeys the king, as does the prince of the eunuchs, but in secret. For the king never finds out. But this quiet disobedience and willingness to potentially lose life becomes developed by God. For Daniel will later have to openly disobey the king and accept loss of life as a threatened consequence. We see how God leads us so gently, by incremental steps and experiences. We are also here introduced to the irony of how the apparently omnipotent king was disobeyed by the friends, but then chooses and congratulates them. Human power is shown to be manipulated by the Divine hand and His servants, embedded as they are within those human power systems.

We sense this man had indeed "tender love" (:9 AV) towards Daniel but naturally feared the consequences. We also have here a window into the despotic manner of Nebuchadnezzar, who beheaded his servants for the slightest perceived lack of obedience and servitude

towards him. Daniel and his friends grew up as teenagers within the threat of instant death hanging over them. It seems the king personally had come up with this idea of making the young Jews eat and drink what had been offered to idols upon his personal table; he had a personal interest in breaking the culture of Yahweh worship which these youngsters had.

Dan 1:11 *Then Daniel said to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah-* It seems Daniel didn't respond directly to the prince of the eunuchs but to the steward, AV "Melzar". It seems those four had one "steward" responsible for them; with only four charges under his control, he would have observed them carefully and known them well.

Dan 1:12 *Test your servants, I beg you, for ten days; let them give us vegetables to eat, and water to drink-* "Ten days" is elsewhere a period of testing (Rev. 2:10 etc.). "Vegetables" is more correctly 'seeds', that is, pulse (:16). This, along with water, was exactly the food Ezekiel had eaten "daily" before the exiles [in Daniel's youth?], in order to 'bear their iniquity', to take away their sins: "wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt" (Ez. 4:9,11). It could be that Daniel had this in view, and wished to "daily" eat such food rather than fine food and wine. He wanted to suffer as he knew God's people should suffer for their sins, in order that the punishment would be experienced by him and thus the people freed from punishment.

Dan 1:13 *Then let our faces be looked on before you, and the faces of the youths who eat of the king's dainties; and as you see, deal with your servants-* "Faces" or 'appearance' is the word specifically used in Daniel of the "visions" about the ending of gentile power over Israel. The idea could be that this was a hint that those looking after them were invited to look upon the later visions and judge for themselves.

Dan 1:14 *So he listened to them in this matter, and proved them ten days-* The Hebrew is literally 'He heard / obeyed them in this word', the phrase so often used in appealing to people to hear God's word. Those in charge of Daniel are presented as spiritually perceptive. We observe how Daniel was allowed to follow his religious conscience rather than just assuming that it was going to be impossible to do so. Likewise it seems he was well known for praying towards Jerusalem with his windows open. And probably it was known that he had written down his visions. All these acts were contrary to the spirit of the empire, with its demand for total loyalty to the current regime. He somehow was allowed to 'get away with it'- despite in the course of his life serving under six Babylonian and two Medo-Persian kings. God will find a way...

Dan 1:15 *At the end of ten days their faces appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths who ate of the king's dainties-* Or, "the king's portion". There was a fair chance of word getting out about Daniel and his friends, but the men in charge of their feeding took that chance. "Fair and fat" is the very Hebrew phrase used about the seven fat ears of corn in Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41:5). There are so many echoes of the Joseph story in Daniel. We are to understand that it served as a Divine template for the situation Daniel found himself in; and our familiarity with God's word coupled with sensitivity and self-examination enables us to discern such templates working out in our own lives. "Zaphnath Paaneah", the name given to Joseph, can mean 'interpreter of dreams'; and Daniel's interpreting the king's dreams, at one stage being summoned out of obscurity to do so, is so clearly based upon Joseph's experience. Man is not alone- in that no experience is without Biblical precedent, in essence. For other connections with Joseph, see on Dan. 1:19.

Dan 1:16 *So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them vegetables-* This was all the same a great risk, to disobey the king, and not give "the king's portion" ("dainties") when he had specifically stipulated it should be given them. The steward had sympathy for them.

Dan 1:17 *Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams-* The intention was that they should obtain such learning and wisdom from their education in the school of Babylonian mythology; interpretation of dreams was specifically connected with idolatry. Hence the emphasis that Israel's God gave them wisdom. Daniel's wisdom was proverbial throughout the empire (Ez. 28:3). The language recalls how Bezaleel was "filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge" (Ex. 31:2,3) in order to build the tabernacle; these young men were given wisdom to effectively lead to the rebuilding of the temple. God is shown here to be able to operate directly on the human heart by His Spirit; and He can do so to this day (James 1:17; Eph. 3:15-22). We don't read here that Daniel and the four youths got wisdom from their own unaided Bible reading; rather, God gave them knowledge.

Dan 1:18 *At the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar-* The King wanted to see how far they had progressed out of the Yahweh cult, as he would have seen it, into the Babylonian mindset. The fact he was impressed with them was a result of the wisdom given to them and probably various providential situations which enabled them to answer his questions in an impressive way. Dan. 2:1 says that Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream in his second year, so it's possible that this examination ceremony was actually after that; chapter 2 is explaining, in this case, how the huge reputation of Daniel had been built up. However, the commentaries all give various suggestions about the chronological issues in Daniel and there are other apparently valid ways of understanding it.

Dan 1:19 *The king talked with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah: therefore they served the king-* The other young Jewish men had compromised their faith in order to gain acceptance with the king; but their efforts somehow failed. "They served the king" is literally 'they stood before [the face of] the king', and the same term is used of Pharaoh being brought before Pharaoh and his 'standing before [the face of]' that king (Gen. 41:46). As noted on Dan. 1:15, this is another background allusion to Pharaoh which sets up the similarities with Joseph. Both of them interpreted dreams three times when the wise men couldn't do so, both were cast into a pit to die. Both are described as having "the spirit of God / the gods" (Gen. 41:44; Dan. 4:5). Their exaltation in reward is very similar; Daniel's exaltation by Nebuchadnezzar matches that of Joseph by Pharaoh: "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's hand.... He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command". Joseph's ministry started at age 17 and ended with his death at 110, a total of 93 years (Gen. 37:2; 50:22). Daniel's ministry may likewise have been 93 years: twenty years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign until the fall of Jerusalem (his accession year plus the 19 years of 2 Kings 25:8), seventy years of exile (Dan. 9:2) and three years of king Cyrus (Dan. 10:10). See on Dan. 2:1.

Dan 1:20 *In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters who were in all*

his kingdom- They were not only better than the other Jewish youths, but ten times better than the existing Babylonian magicians. "Ten times" may connect with the ten days testing which they initially gave their steward (:14). Already the seeds of jealousy were sown; these young foreigners were found to be so far ahead of their teachers. It was thereby obvious that they had access to a wisdom far beyond that of their teachers.

The mention of the "wise" shining for ever in Dan. 12:3 forms an inclusio with the opening of the book of Daniel. Daniel is presented as the truly wise man because he has God's wisdom in contrast to the wise men of Babylon, who are shown to be fools. Daniel is thus presented as typical of the entire class of those who will be saved. He is our pattern. His wisdom was not in all the human wisdom which he was taught and even excelled at, according to Dan. 1. It was in using *God's* wisdom to turn many to righteousness.

Dan 1:21 *Daniel continued up to the first year of king Cyrus*- This may refer to the length of Daniel's uninterrupted court service. The first year of Cyrus was when the command was given to allow the Jewish exiles to return and rebuild the land. This isn't necessarily when Daniel died, but the point is being made that he lived to see that significant moment. Some Jewish traditions claim Daniel returned to Judah at that time, but then went back to Babylon to die there. The idea is that Daniel outlived the apparently immortal Babylonian empire. He lived to see the prophecy of Dan. 2 begin to come true. We note Dan. 11:1 LXX "The first year of Cyrus".

DANIEL CHAPTER 2

2:1 The Image of Daniel 2

Daniel chapter 2 begins the Aramaic section of the book. Although God can inspire and use who He wishes, it has been argued that Daniel would have known both Hebrew and Aramaic fluently. And God clearly used that. The section concerns the future of the Gentile nations with respect to Israel; the fact Daniel spoke or wrote it in Aramaic was because he wanted to witness to the world around him in their language. He wanted to tell them their destiny, with the implication that they should repent. Another reason for this Aramaic section may simply be to tie as it were bind the two halves of Daniel together, as suggested by Collins in his commentary on Daniel (*Collins, John J. (1984): Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature, Eerdmans*) p. 31:

PART I: Tales (chapters 1:1–6:29)

- 1: Introduction (1:1–21 – set in the Babylonian era, written in Hebrew)
- 2: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four kingdoms (2:1–49 – Babylonian era; Aramaic)
- 3: The fiery furnace (3:1–30 – Babylonian era; Aramaic)
- 4: Nebuchadnezzar's madness (3:31–4:34 – Babylonian era; Aramaic)
- 5: Belshazzar's feast (5:1–6:1 – Babylonian era; Aramaic)
- 6: Daniel in the lions' den (6:2–29 – Median era with mention of Persia; Aramaic)

PART II: Visions (chapters 7:1–12:13)

- 7: The beasts from the sea and the Son of Man (7:1–28 – Babylonian era: Aramaic)
- 8: The ram and the he-goat (8:1–27 – Babylonian era; Hebrew)
- 9: Interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy weeks (9:1–27 – Median era; Hebrew)
- 10: The angel's revelation: kings of the north and south (10:1–12:13 – Persian era, mention of Greek era; Hebrew)

Daniel chapter 2 contains an outline of the powers who were to dominate the people of Israel within the land of Israel; that is the *eretz* / earth / land which is in view, not the whole planet. One popular schema is that it begins with a head of gold (Babylon), then breast and arms of silver (Persia), thighs of brass (Greece), two legs of iron (the two halves of the Roman empire) and then feet part of iron, part of clay. Each part of the image corresponds in proportion to how long each empire dominated the land of Israel and the Jewish people- thus the legs were longest because the Romans dominated the land for longest. After AD70, the Jewish state ceased to be a nation. But now, it is once again, for the first time in nearly 2000 years. The final part of the image therefore represents a group of nations (perhaps divided into two groups, symbolized by the two feet) who will dominate Israel in the last days. A stone cut out of a mountain without hands (representing the Lord Jesus Christ) then hits the image on its feet, growing into a mountain which fills the earth. The interpretation is given, and it clearly refers to the second coming of Christ to destroy the kingdoms of men who have dominated His land and His people, and to establish God's Kingdom on earth: "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people; it shall crush to powder and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). The vision requires that the image stands complete in order to all be destroyed together. The latter day entity represented by the feet will also be headed up by a latter day Nebuchadnezzar, and will comprise elements of all the previous entities which have dominated God's people.

And yet there is another view possible. Bible prophecy is often conditional. At Daniel's time, there was the possibility that in some sense, a Messiah figure could have appeared and re-established Israel as God's Kingdom on earth. Many of the prophecies we understand as referring to the establishment of the Kingdom on earth at the Lord's return could have then been fulfilled. Ez. 40-48 is the clearest example; the returning exiles were intended to build a temple of the dimensions given, replete with a Messiah figure. But most remained in the soft life of Babylon, and those who did return were disobedient to the Kingdom potential, as prophets like Malachi, Haggai and Zechariah make clear. Daniel's prophecies likewise outline a possible scenario which could have led to the re-establishment of the Kingdom; but it didn't happen, because of men dropping the baton, missing the opportunities, refusing to use the potential of the Spirit.

Understanding Daniel 2 is programmatic to making sense of Bible prophecy about the last days. The beasts of Daniel 7 are clearly an extension and development of the four metals of the Daniel 2 image, and those beasts morph into the beasts of Revelation, where we find them presented with various aspects and with additional details. As to why the beasts morph over time, I would suggest that this is because Bible prophecy is conditional. What could have come true e.g. in Daniel's time, did not- because of the indolence of God's people and the lack of repentance amongst the Gentiles. And so the prophecies morphed into another form, and then another, meaning that the essence of God's prophetic word will still come true, even if the form of fulfilment is not that which was initially or ideally intended. Daniel 2-7 are written in Aramaic [Chaldee], not Hebrew. The section has a concentric structure, in which the visions of chapters 2 and 7 form the opening and concluding parts. They are clearly to be related to each other:

Daniel 2- Vision of empires

Daniel 3- Deliverance of three Jews from death

Daniel 4- God's discipline of the king
Daniel 5- God's discipline of the king
Daniel 6- Deliverance of Daniel from death
Daniel 7- Vision of empires

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was given a dream which Daniel interpreted. He saw an image comprised of various materials, in the form of a man. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, followed by the breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, two legs of iron, and finally two feet [10 toes] made from a brittle mixture of iron and clay. A stone cut out from a mountain without hands then struck the image on its brittle feet, and destroyed the gold, silver, brass, iron and clay. A whirlwind carried them all away, and the stone grew into a mountain which filled the earth and will never pass away as the previous kings and kingdoms passed away. This is interpreted as the establishment of God's eternal Kingdom on earth (Dan. 2:44). The stone is a fairly common symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 118:22 cp. Mt. 21:42-44; Acts 4:11; Is. 8:14; 28:16; Rom. 9:32,33; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4,6-8), the Messiah of Israel (Gen. 49:24; Zech. 3:9; 4:7,10), the begotten Son of God, cut out without human hands.

Bible prophecy can be understood on a number of levels. It would be legitimate to see these four empires as referring to the succession of kingdoms which had dominion over "all the earth". We must remember that the Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek and Chaldee. We read through the mask of translation. The Hebrew word and concept of *eretz*, translated "the earth", can refer either to the whole planet, or specifically to the land promised to Abraham, between the Nile and the Euphrates. The word is used in modern Hebrew to refer to *eretz Israel*, the state of Israel. Clearly enough, the domination of "all the earth" (Dan. 2:39) doesn't mean the entire planet. It surely refers to domination of the land promised to Abraham, and the people of that land, i.e. Israel. Likewise Babylon is described as being ruler over "wherever the children of men dwell" because they had been "given into your hand" (Dan. 2:38). This isn't speaking of a literal dominion over every human being on the planet. The reference was to the way that Babylon had scattered the Jews amongst the various areas of the *eretz* [land promised to Abraham] under its control. The very same words for 'give into the hand' are used of how God would give *the land and people of Judah / Israel* "into the hand of" the king of Babylon (Ezra 5:12; Ps. 106:41; Jer. 20:4,5; 22:25; 32:3,28; 34:2,20,21; 44:30; Ez. 16:39; 39:23). Indeed, within the book of Daniel the point has been made; for the book opens with the statement that the king of Judah has been 'given into the hand of' the king of Babylon (Dan. 1:2). This is all quite some emphasis- the people 'given into the hand' of Nebuchadnezzar do not refer to all people on the planet, rather are they specifically the Jewish people. Likewise, the earth / land which is in view isn't the whole planet, but rather the land promised to Abraham. Note too that 'the earth' [*eretz*] is often understood as the people of Israel within their land. Thus: "Concerning Samaria and Jerusalem... hear, all you people; hear, O earth [*eretz*] and all that therein is" (Mic. 1:2). Frequently, the physical land of Israel is addressed by the prophets, when clearly it is the people of the land which is in view. Ezekiel 6 is full of this: "Set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places... I will cast down your slain before your idols... I will scatter your bones around your altars... your works wiped out... and you shall know that I am the

LORD” (Ez. 6:2-7). Therefore the domination of the land / *eretz* can be understood specifically as the domination of the people of Israel within that land. This would explain why there is an apparent gap in fulfilment of the Daniel 2 and 7 visions- the historical fulfilment appears to stop once Rome was no longer dominating Israel, and then restarts in the very last days, in the period of the ten toes / horns. This would be because there was no land / state / people of Israel in their land to dominate.

After Babylon’s domination of the land, there followed the Medo-Persian empire (breast and arms of silver), then the Greeks (belly and thighs of brass), followed by the Roman empire, divided as it was into Western and Eastern parts, symbolized by the two iron legs. Out of this arose the two feet with their ten toes. But after the Roman empire, the people of Israel were exiled from their land, only becoming a nation again in 1948. The two feet with their ten toes would then represent a brief period of mixed domination of the land, under a confederacy of ten groups broadly divided into two camps. I say ‘brief’ because in proportion to the size of the image, the feet are not very large. The proportions of the different parts of the body match the length of time over which the various empires dominated Israel. Thus Babylon dominated Judah for 70 years, and they are represented by the head, which is not a large part of the human body.

The prophecy of Daniel goes further to provide more details of this series of empires. Daniel 7 describes the same succession in terms of four beasts, which also represent the same empires as the metals in the image of Daniel chapter 2. The fourth beast has ten horns, corresponding to the ten toes of Daniel’s image; and out of them, one particular horn is prominent. This beast becomes the prototype for the beasts we encounter in the book of Revelation, who likewise dominate God’s people and will be destroyed by Christ’s return.

Radical Islam and the Land Promised to Abraham

Radical Islam has a lot to say about the land promised to Abraham- what the Bible prophecies refer to as the *eretz* or land / earth. Radical Islamist groups such as The Islamic State and al-Nusra Front have spoken much about it; their definition of the Levant or Sham is pretty much that of the land promised to Abraham. ‘Nusra’ is an acronym standing for the Front for the Defense of the Levant. They claim to be fighting to prepare the way for the coming of the Mahdi to establish God’s Kingdom worldwide; they call the land promised to Abraham “Land of *Malahim*,” or “epic battles”, and they expect there to be the *al-Malhamah al-Kubra*, the “Great Battle of the last hour”, at Jerusalem. This is what the Bible calls Armageddon. When the true Jesus appears in Jerusalem, all nations in the earth / land will be gathered together to battle at Jerusalem. And the jihadist theology is preparing them for this. They consciously speak of their caliphate as being extended over the land promised to Abraham, and they are urging people to leave their native lands as Abraham left his, and journey to live in the caliphate, comprised as they wish it to be, of the territory promised to Abraham. They call their caliph or leader ‘Caliph Ibrahim / Abraham’, and urge migration or *hijrah* to the land promised to him. The pieces are all falling into place to fulfil the Biblical pictures of the last days. Jihadist theology makes much of ‘signs of the times’, leading up to the coming of the Mahdi and the final battle against the antiChrist. These ‘signs of the times’ they look for are often the same signs which are to be found in the Bible, e.g. the re-establishment of Israel as a nation before Armageddon. So as they apparently come true, Islamists are the more convinced that antiChrist [who they call *Dajjal* and understand to be a Jew] is about to appear in Jerusalem, and they must fight him in the last great battle, in order to enable the Mahdi to return. Who they consider to be the antichrist will in fact be the

true Christ. They will rush to fight Him, believing Him to be the antichrist they are expecting. Their destruction by Him will presage the establishment of God's *true* Kingdom on earth, the revived and restored kingdom of Israel. This would explain why many Biblical terms used about the very last days are also found in Jihadist theology. They speak of the events of the very last days before the Mahdi returns as being "the hour"; and yet Revelation speaks of how the kings of the earth / land will have power for "one hour" and be destroyed likewise in "one hour" (Rev. 17:12; 18:10,17,19). These similarities are unsurprising because Mohammed clearly plagiarized the Bible and Judaism for his teachings.

The changing of times and laws by the antichrist figure of Dan. 7:25 sounds like the radical Islamist desire to impose the Islamic calendar and *sharia* law in the land promised to Abraham, which they see as their caliphate; and for sure, if Israel becomes part of an Islamic state, then the keeping of the Jewish calendar will be outlawed. The implementation of *sharia* law and changing legal structures to reflect it, is a major theme in their program. It's clear that the three and a half year domination of Jerusalem and changing of the Jewish law and calendar had an initial fulfilment in the abuses of Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple. There was a three and a half year period from the edict of Antiochus in June 168 BC to the rededication of the temple in December 165 BC. The little horn of Daniel 8 comes out of the Greek kingdom, but the horn of Daniel 7 out of the fourth kingdom. I suggest that this is because the prophecy could have been fulfilled totally at the time of Antiochus- Messiah could have come and destroyed him. But the various required preconditions weren't met, and so there was another possibility of it coming true out of the Roman kingdom [another possibility is that the four beasts and metals refer to Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece rather than Babylon-Medo Persia-Greece-Rome]. Revelation uses the same imagery to describe the antiChrist of the last days, who will incorporate some elements of the previous historical fulfilments of the little horn in men like Antiochus Epiphanes.

Issue number 3 of the Islamic State magazine *Dabiq* frequently talks of the call to follow Ibrahim [Abraham] in making *hijrah* [migration] to the land promised to him: "Islam in the end of times will be more manifest in Shām... So the best of the people on the earth in the end of times will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah, which is Shām" [Majmū'ul-Fatāwā]. Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahullāh) also said, "So he informed that the best of the people on the earth are those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah, in contrast to those who pass through it or leave it. The land that Ibrāhīm made hijrah to is Shām... the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah... And the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah, has been made for us equal to the land of our Prophet's hijrah. The best people on earth will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah". Note how the theology of these jihadists effectively replaces the land of Saudi Arabia and the city of Mecca with that of the Levant, the territory promised to Abraham; and Mecca is replaced in their focus by Jerusalem. With Saudi Arabia now supporting the Western coalition against radical Islam, such a shift in emphasis isn't surprising. But it means that all is being prepared for the last days- for the Bible prophecies focus upon the domination of the land of Israel and Jerusalem in particular. It's significant that the Caliph of the Islamic State Caliphate is referred to by his followers as Caliph Ibrahim / Abraham; the idea is that the faithful will follow him in migrating from their homelands to the land promised to him- which is the very same *eretz* which is the focus of the Bible's latter day prophecies, and which is to be dominated by an antiChrist figure and his beast.

The Image Stands Complete in the Last Days

The image of Daniel 2 must stand complete in the last days- the whole image, not just the toes, are to be broken in pieces “together”. This feature of the prophecy is crucial to correct interpretation. Babylon, the head of gold, must therefore rule over the system which the image represents. The image is a man- let’s not forget that. The head is Nebuchadnezzar. The entity which will be destroyed by the Lord’s coming is therefore headed up in an individual; and there are other Bible themes and specific predictions which flesh out the picture of this anti-Christ of the last days.

According to the interpretation given in Dan. 2:38-40, the first kingdom (Babylon) was destroyed by the second (Medo-Persia), and the second was destroyed by the third (Greece); but we read that the iron (Roman) kingdom would break in pieces all the previous empires, not just the Greek empire: “iron breaks in pieces and subdues all [these]; and as iron that crushes all these, shall it break in pieces and crush them” (Dan. 2:40). This was achieved in the sense that there were elements of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires in the Greek empire which Rome crushed; as Keil puts it in his commentary, “the materials of the first two kingdoms were comprehended in the third”. And likewise there are elements of the iron in the last part of the image- for the feet are made of iron mixed with clay. On this basis we can conclude that the final part of the image, the feet of iron and clay, will incorporate elements of all the previous empires which dominated Israel.

Apart from the head of gold, all the metals / beasts have a strange feature in common- they subdue three previous powers. The second beast has three ribs in its mouth’ (Dan. 7:5)- speaking of three powers subdued by the Persians. The third entity, Greece, subdued “three... even four” kings of Persia (Dan. 11:2). I suggest this is a Semitism which effectively means ‘three very great ones’- cp. “for three transgressions and for four” in Amos 1, “three things... even four” (Prov. 30:15,18,21,29). The fourth entity, the legs of iron (Dan. 2) and the terrible fourth beast (Dan. 7) devoured, broke in pieces and stamped upon the remnants of the preceding three beasts / powers (Dan. 7:19). The little horn roots up three of the ten horns [cp. the ten toes], meaning that “he shall subdue three kings” (Dan. 7:24). Clearly the final phase of the kingdoms of men will include this feature which was in all the preceding ones. We should look, therefore, for a system which subdues three other kings or kingdoms.

If you tried to build a replica of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar, with human dimensions and the same metals, it would not stand up. The relative gravity of the materials is such that it would be pulled over by the weight of its head. Gold has a specific gravity of 19.6, and the other materials have progressively lower gravities- clay has only 1.8 [silver 11, brass 8.5, and iron 7.8]. Specific gravity refers in layman’s terms to the tendency of the material to fall to the ground. The whole image is pulled down to the earth by the weight of the head of gold. The specific individual heading it up therefore has an overpowering effect upon the whole entity. This of itself indicates not only how fragile are the Kingdoms of men, but how a specific individual, the latter day head of gold, will bring the image down. The whole colossus of humanity is actually kept standing by God- because the image as it is described could not stand. God is in history, He was and ever shall be and will bring it all down at the appointed time. This of itself is great comfort, as we feel dwarfed by the seeming inexorability of historical event and the apparent colossus of human corporation and empire.

Some of the words used about the behaviours of the elements of the image are elsewhere used specifically about the persecution of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar, and indeed the other empires, are described as 'ruling' over the earth / land (Dan. 2:38 etc.), but the equivalent Hebrew word is used specifically about how the enemies of the Jews sought to rule over the Jewish people. The word is used of how Haman the Agagite [the man of Gog] sought to "have power over" [s.w.] the Jews (Esther 9:1). Likewise, the word used for how the iron would 'subdue' (Dan. 2:40) is only used elsewhere of how the Israelites were subdued or 'made feeble' by their Egyptian persecutors (Dt. 25:18). The iron would "break" all beneath it, and this word is used of Esau [forefather of the Arab Moslem peoples] 'hurting' Jacob (Gen. 31:7), the Egyptians breaking Israel in Egypt (Ex. 5:22,23; Num. 20:15; Dt. 26:6), the Assyrians 'breaking down' the land of Judah (Is. 24:19) and the Babylonians breaking down Jerusalem (Jer. 25:29; 31:28). God's Kingdom will "consume all those kingdoms" (Dan. 2:44), using the same word as used about the 'consuming' of all things *upon the land of Israel*, both Gentile dominators and the apostate within Israel (Zeph. 1:2,3).

So much of God's prophetic word had some initial fulfilment and relevance to its first audience. But always we are left with the sense that the fulfilment was only partial. The prophecies of Israel's restoration from Babylon did indeed have a fulfilment in the return of the exiles, as did those of Babylon's judgments, but clearly the major and complete fulfilment is yet to come. And thus it will be in the last days and in the return of Christ to earth that the entire prophetic word has its complete fulfilment. The word will take on the full flesh of reality in a way it has never done previously. The fulfilments and applications of Revelation's prophecies about the beast over history are but a prelude to that which is yet to come. We are seriously mistaken if we think that because we can discern a historical application of these prophetic words, therefore there is no future fulfilment. The schema of the image in Daniel 2 visually demonstrates this; the sequence of empires which can be discerned is not the main fulfilment of the prophecy. Rather is the ultimate and main fulfilment in the way that the image stands complete in the last days and is destroyed by Christ's return to earth. Likewise all the beasts exist at the coming of Christ (Dan. 7:12). The arising of four beasts from the sea doesn't mean they had to arise at different times; they are a parody of the four beasts representing God's Angelic organization. John describes these in Rev. 4:7; clearly he saw them all at the same time: "The first creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf, the third creature had the face of a man and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle". Because the continuous historical application is true as far as it goes doesn't preclude the main fulfilment of the prophecy in a rather different way in the very last days. And thus the book of Revelation too can have discernible historical applications over history, but throughout the book there is the strong impression that the prophecies speak of situations immediately before Christ's return, appeals and judgments which are urgently poured out immediately prior to 'the end' - and in that sense He is spoken of as coming "soon" (Rev. 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,12,20), in that the ultimate message of the book is for the generation who will be alive at the Lord's coming.

The complete image will have elements within it of the previous entities who dominated God's people in their land. But it's also possible that for the image to stand erect there will be four entities dominating the *eretz*, represented by the four beasts and four metals, with one of them sprouting ten toes / horns and an antichrist figure. This scenario would explain how after the fourth beast is destroyed the other three beasts have their dominion taken away (Dan. 7:11,12).

The Head of Gold

Nebuchadnezzar was given a kingdom of power, strength and glory (Dan. 2:37 LXX). Biblically, this is *God's* Kingdom, which at that time was Israel. The animals and birds given into his hand (Dan. 2:38) surely refer to those of the land promised to Abraham, rather than literally the whole planet. For in what sense were the birds of the Amazon or Australian kangaroos given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar? The phrase 'beasts of the field and birds of Heaven' is repeatedly used to represent the 'wild' nations living in *eretz* Israel, from the Euphrates to Egypt. It is they who were at one time protected by the great empires and then turned against them (Ez. 29:5; 31:6,13; 32:4); they are used as symbolic of the nations in the invasion of Ezekiel 38:20, and of Israel's neighbouring enemies (Ps. 79:2; Hos. 2:18). It was *these* which were given into Nebuchadnezzar's hand; and later in Daniel we read that the birds and beasts represent the nations dominated by Babylon (Dan. 4:2,21). Clearly Nebuchadnezzar's dominion was not global, and I submit that the only other clearly definable domain for 'the entire earth' is the earth / land promised to Abraham. God is said to have 'given' the beasts and birds 'into the hand' of Nebuchadnezzar. This exact phrase is used of how God gave the people of Israel into his hand (Ezra 5:12). It is so often stated that God would give His people into Babylon's hand (Jer. 20:4,5; 22:25; 32:3,28; 34:2,21). Clearly it is the Jewish people in their land who are in view. As Babylon reigned over them as the head of gold, so the succeeding empires likewise would reign over them, and the entire image would stand therefore upon the land and people of Israel in the last days. Nebuchadnezzar was "made ruler over all"; but the "all" requires definition. I suggest it means all the *eretz* promised to Abraham, and all God's people within it. The same word is used of how the Persians wished to ruler over / have power over God's people (Esther 9:1). The 'all the earth' over which these kings / kingdoms had power (Dan. 2:39) is not referring to the entire planet, but specifically to the land promised to Abraham and God's people within it.

The whole intention of the vision was to "make known to the king what shall be in the latter days" (Dan. 2:28). Now that of course can simply mean 'in the future' ("hereafter", Dan. 2:29). But "the latter days" is a term often used in the Bible regarding 'the last days'- the period directly prior to the return of Christ to earth. So we are invited to see the entire prophecy of the image standing complete and being broken as speaking of events to happen directly prior to the Lord's return. This requires the image to stand complete, and for the entire prophecy to have a primarily latter day fulfilment. The form of the entire image was "terrible" (Dan. 2:31), and this is the language of the last beast which would exist at the time of Christ's return (Dan. 7:7,19 s.w.). That beast, which is the basis of the beasts we meet in Revelation, is a summary of all the components of the image. The stone cut out without hands (Dan. 2:34) must be connected with the way in which the antiChrist figure of the very last days will stand up against the Prince of Princes [Christ] and be broken "without hand" (Dan. 8:25), just as the stone quarried without hands would 'break' the entire image. The individual of Dan. 8:25 is therefore the embodiment of the entire image of Daniel 2; the entity represented by the image will be incarnated in its individual leader, who will exist at the very time of the Lord's coming. And the language of Dan. 8:25 is clearly picked up in the prophecy of the "man of sin" in 2 Thess. 2, who will challenge the Lord Jesus and be destroyed by the brightness of His second coming.

The Feet of Iron and Clay

The ten toes are split into two groups, represented by the two legs. This could refer to the deep division between Sunni & Shia Islam, or to the latter day entity having two

foundations within the land of Israel- in the West Bank, and in the Gaza Strip. Imagine the image standing with its two legs standing on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Jerusalem in the middle; if the image is facing East, it would be looking precisely towards Mecca, as if it is an observant Moslem. Or it could be that there will be ten leaders, or ten groups, within the land promised to Abraham. Another consideration is that the "emirate" of the IS claimed to be headed by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and his "cabinet" of ten "ministers".

The cementing together of the iron and clay recalls the words of the Koran in Surah 61:4: "Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure". And yet the prophecy requires that they will be mixed together, but will not cleave with each other. And this will be the basis of their destruction, just as the disunity between Israel's historical enemies was the basis of their destruction. Ps. 60:8 and 108:9 predict that God will triumph over Philistia- literally, He will split, divide them. But their own internal divisions are effectively their own judgment. And this is how God so often works.

The military arm of Hamas is the Qassam Brigades; *kassam* in Arabic means 'divider', another allusion to the feet part of iron and part of clay, when the Kingdom of Israel's oppressors shall be "divided" (Dan. 2:41). *Hamas* means 'strong', and the Gaza strip / Hamas controlled area will be part of the final strong / weak, iron / clay entity that briefly dominates the land according to Daniel 2. The uniting of the disparate elements in the ten toes is matched by the great emphasis in the Moslem world upon unity. We read of "King Hussein's plan for the establishment of a so-called United Arab Kingdom" (Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant And Its Meaning* (Totowa, N.J: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1979) p.135). This sounds exactly like the 'uniting' of the iron and clay in the entity of the last days which will dominate Israel. "The Palestinian National Authority will strive to achieve a union of the confrontation countries [i.e. "all nations around about" Israel- D.H.]... or a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity" – Political Programs of the P.L.O., Article 8. "The Arab 'nation' is made up of 'peoples' and the (one) Arab homeland comprises the national homeland of these peoples... the relationship of the people and the individual to the overall Arab homeland and nation is called in modern Arabic *Qamwiyya* (nationalism)... like the trunk of a tree that branches off into offshoots of local patriotism...the splitting up of the Arab region into separate states carved out by the colonial powers. However, once Arab unity is achieved and the frontiers wiped out..." (Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant And Its Meaning* (Totowa, N.J: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1979) p. 31).

There is a gap in historical fulfilment between the end of the iron legs, the Roman empire, and the brief time of the iron and clay [the feet are a small proportion of the image of a man]. This need not concern us unduly. It could be that this is because there was no nation dominating Israel in the land promised to Abraham, because the Jews were in dispersion from Roman times until the 20th century revival of the state of Israel. This period may be what Jesus had in mind when He spoke about "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24). Or it may be that indeed the prophecy had a possible fulfilment in the first century, or even earlier, that didn't happen- and so the fulfilment was delayed, resulting in this apparent gap in fulfilment. We encounter a similar gap at the end of Daniel 11, when the fulfilment jumps from the time of the Greek empire to the last days; likewise Daniel 8 makes the very same jump. And the 70 weeks prophecy in Daniel 9 seems to require a similar jump from the time of Jesus to the last days. Another possibility is that the entire thrust of the Daniel 2 prophecy is indeed, as

Daniel said, to show what shall be in the last days. The fulfilment over history is not exact and is only a dim primary fulfilment of the vision.

Muslim Unity and Disunity

The entire image with all its component metals is "broken to pieces *together*" by the little stone (Dan. 2:35). The Chaldee word translated "together" is the equivalent of the Hebrew *echad*, one. The various metals, along with the feet of iron and clay, may not naturally cleave to each other and yet in another sense they are one. And this is exactly the scenario we see developing- bitter intra-Islamic rivalry, whilst united passionately. The only commonality they all have is their joint hatred of Israel and desire to destroy the Jewish people and dominate their land. The same word is found, almost untranslated, in Dan. 2:31, where we read that the king saw *a* great image. The "a" translates the same original word which is translated "together" in :35. The image was not just 'an' image, but a together, united image, "one" image. The different metals were united together in one form and person, as a conscious imitation of Nebuchadnezzar and ultimately, Mohammad, whom the IS and the jihadists claim to embody. Remember article 8 of the Hamas Covenant: "Allah is its target, the Prophet is its model". Recall too that the IS developed out of the *Tawhid wa al-Jihadi* group, meaning 'Unity & Jihad'. Unity is such a major and recurrent theme in the founding documents of so many jihadist groups, not least the IS [ISIS] and Hamas.

The 'Palestinians' were historically destroyed not by Israel but by the king of the north: "Howl, gate! Cry, city! You are melted away, Philistia, all of you; for smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks" (Is. 14:31). Historically, God seems to prefer to provoke division and confusion amongst Israel's enemies so that they turn on themselves and self-destruct. The horns hate the whore riding the beast, and there are many other hints at such a scenario in the last days. The King of the North, a re-formed Babylon, or Assyria *redivivus*, will likely end up conflicting with Hamas, or the final rulers of Gaza, and likewise destroying them.

Intermarriage of the Clay and Iron?

But Biblically, the potter's clay is Israel. They and the Arabs do not mix with each other. The strong iron, fragments and elements of the iron legs, the fourth beast system, will be mixed with them but they will not cleave to each other. Hamas / Gaza, the strong ones ['Hamas' and 'Gaza' both mean 'strong'], will be mixed with a weak remnant of Israel within the land- and the whole entity will be destroyed by the Lord's coming. Iron and clay don't cleave or marry to each other (Dan. 2:43). The same word for "cleave" is used about marriage in Gen. 2:24. They are mixed with each other- and the Hebrew and Chaldee words *arab* are used here. Clay is a symbol for Israel (Is. 64:8; Jer. 18:6). The Jeremiah 18 reference is significant in that God says that Israel are as clay and He will break them in pieces because they didn't respond to His appeals. The very same image is used of the destruction of the feet of clay in Daniel 2. The clay is specifically "potter's clay" (Dan. 2:41). And that is really the key to the interpretation, because Jeremiah 18 speaks of Israel as the clay in the hands of the Divine potter. The iron in the toes is clearly to be connected with the iron of the legs, which corresponds to the terrible fourth beast with iron teeth (Dan. 7:7,19). The dominators of Israel in the last days will seek to cleave [in marriage] to the clay, Israel. The clay is called "the seed of men" (Dan. 2:43), recalling the descriptions of Israel as "the seed of the Jews" (Esther 6:13). Mingling with the men of the seed would certainly suggest marriage. Is this a reference to a future Islamic domination of Israel unsuccessfully forcing the remaining Jews to marry Moslems? The iron and

clay are "mixed" with each other; and the same word is used in Ezra 9:2 of how the people of Judah "mingled themselves" in marriage to the peoples of the land. The suggestion is that the iron and clay 'marry' but do not cleave to each other in that relationship. This is a feature of radical Islamist domination of territories. In Tunisia and other areas brought under Moslem domination, the Jews there were either killed or, if they were women, forced to marry (polygamously) Moslem men. It would not be out of character with the IS if those they conquer [Israel in particular] were given the same choice.

Religious Hypocrisy

The image is clearly presented as an idol- this is how the word translated "image" is usually used in the Old Testament. The chief deity of Babylon was Marduk who was considered to be the "god of gold". Herodotus described the image of Marduk as a golden statue seated upon a golden throne before a golden table and a golden altar. Pliny also notes that the robes of Marduk's priests were interlaced with gold. The word used for the breaking in pieces of the image (Dan. 2:34) is that used frequently about the breaking in pieces of idols (Ex. 32:20; Dt. 9:21; 2 Kings 23:6,15; 2 Chron. 34:4). The sequence of metals (gold, silver, brass and iron) is found again in Dan. 5:4,23 in describing the materials used by the Babylonian kings for their idols. It's as if they wanted to show that actually all the metals of the image were comprehended within their empire- and they would last for ever. The latter day entity will be distinctly religious, too. The IS, as Sunni Moslems, are passionately against any idols or memorials, hence their destruction of any Shia shrines they take control of. But in a turn of irony which can only be Divine, their religious system is of itself an idol, which is to be destroyed by the Lord's second coming. The entity represented by the image of Daniel 2, which I suggest refers to an Islamic state established in the land promised to Abraham, is destroyed by the return of Christ as of a stone cut out without hands. But the Kaaba stone, the black stone of Mecca which is the central point of the grand mosque in Mecca towards which Moslems pray, is believed by Moslems to have been cut out without human hands and to have come to earth from Heaven, and will reappear at judgment day (1). And yet this stone, which serves as the focal point of Islam, will be shown to be but a parody of the ultimately true stone cut without hands, the Lord Jesus, who will return from Heaven as the stone to smash the image.

We can likewise observe that the description of the beast in Rev. 17 is very un-Islamic- in fact, the very opposite. The beast is ridden by a prostitute who is drunk- both abominations to radical Islam. The woman has a golden cup- drinking from golden cups is specifically forbidden to Moslems by the Quran. The cup is full of idolatry- and Sunni Islam particularly is passionately against any idolatry or worship of anything apart from God. An image is set up to the beast and worshipped- also abomination for Moslems. The false prophet does miracles- whereas Moslems claim that Mohammed did no miracles and the Quran itself is the one supreme miracle of Islam. The gawdy decoration of the beast and whore of Rev. 17 is far from the sobriety of jihadist Islam. Why the apparent contradictions? The similarities with what Islam is *not* are so pronounced that a point is surely being made. The beast of Revelation is how God views the Islamic State and radical Islam. From His perspective, they are the very and exact opposite of all they are claiming. And as has often been observed, the supposed 'religion of peace' is responsible for huge destruction and mass murder. Another possibility is that the more opulent descriptions of the beast actually match well with the Islamic conception of Paradise- as defined, e.g., in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Article 'Jannah'): "One day in paradise is

considered equal to a thousand years on earth. Palaces are made from bricks of gold, silver, pearls, among other things. Traditions also note the presence of horses and camels of "dazzling whiteness", along with other creatures. Large trees are described, mountains made of musk, between which rivers flow in valleys of pearl and ruby". It may be that the radical Islam will seek to portray their caliphate as paradise come on earth.

The Destruction of the Image

The 'breaking in pieces' of the colossus is described using the same word as is used about how Israel will break in pieces their latter day enemies (Is. 41:15; Mic. 4:13). Whilst God ultimately will do this, it may be that He uses the tiny, ragged, repentant remnant of natural Israel to do so in the last days, achieving the most humanly unlikely, David versus Goliath victory of all human history. For it is God's style to always work through some human mechanism in achieving His judgments. The destruction of the nations will be as the wind blowing away the chaff from the threshing floors at harvest time (Dan. 2:35). But God usually works through a mechanism. It is a repentant Israel who will be Yahweh's threshing instrument and who will trample their enemies to pieces and destroy them as chaff (Is. 41:15; Mic. 4:13- very much the language of the destruction of the image in Daniel 2). Thus again we have the picture of the tiny, now faithful remnant of Israel being mightily used by the Lord to destroy their oppressors. And yet unbelieving Israel are described as chaff (Is. 5:24; 33:11; Jer. 23:28; Hos. 13:3; Zeph. 2:2). Those Jews who come into covenant with the oppressors will be treated as them and share their judgment, just as those who do not come out of Babylon will share in her plagues, and the unfaithful Christian believers will be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). The work of the Elijah ministry will culminate in the Lord Jesus appearing on earth in order to destroy the chaff (Mt. 3:12). So we can infer that the work of the Elijah prophet in appealing for Israel's repentance occurs at the same time as Israel's domination by the oppressors. For both activities culminate in the Lord Jesus destroying the chaff.

The image of threshing definitely connects with other prophecies describing the judgment process at the Lord's second coming as being a threshing. Mic. 4:11,12 predict that the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem in order that they may be threshed there. Jerusalem has been the attraction for these peoples- and Islam so strongly desires it. Those who are threshed are the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2, the 10 horns of the beast of Daniel 7. These therefore represent nations who desire to take Jerusalem. It is Babylon who will be threshed in the last day (Jer. 51:33), so we can understand these collected together nations as all under the control of Babylon. Which is what the image requires, because it was what Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon effectively saw as it were in the mirror, it was him, with his face. Joel 3:2,12 envisages these nations being gathered into the valley of Jehoshaphat as a result of a holy / sanctified war which they have declared, a jihad (Joel 3:9), where God will first plead with them to repent (Joel 3:2) and then judge them at the harvest (Joel 3:12,13). The Joel 3 passage is developed in more detail in Revelation 16, where we read that once the Angels restraining the forces of evil at the Euphrates release them, the kings of the East will come charging towards God's people. And the hordes of Islamic fundamentalists are currently gathered at the Euphrates river. But this will in reality be a gathering of them together unto Armageddon, meaning a heap of sheaves in a valley. Still within this same metaphor, Daniel 2 describes the threshing process, resulting in the wind blowing away the ground up peoples like chaff.

The image of a nation being threshed into dust is used in 2 Kings 13:7 of how the

Syrians did this to an apostate Israel- inviting us to see the feet of iron and clay as having at least some reference to Israel. "The precious sons of Zion" are likened to potters' clay being smashed by the Babylonian invasion (Lam. 4:2); and the toes are of potters' clay (Dan. 2:41). The imagery suggests the destruction of an apostate Israel by a latter day Syrian / Babylonian. The stone which does the destruction is the Lord Jesus, but it is He working through the enemies of Israel to do this, just as God did so many times in judging His people historically.

Notes

1. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh *Some Religious Aspects of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) pp. 120–124.

Conditional Prophecy in Daniel

The Olivet prophecy quotes and alludes to various parts of Daniel's prophecy, and yet the Olivet prophecy's intended fulfilment in AD70 didn't happen as was potentially possible, and was rescheduled. This therefore implies that Daniel's prophecies, which are alluded to, are thereby capable of a similar more elastic fulfilment. And looking in more detail at Daniel, this does indeed seem to be the case. Daniel prophesied whilst Judah were in captivity, and the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are full of potential prophecies of how the Messianic Kingdom could have been established at Judah's return after 70 years in Babylon. Ezekiel's conditional prophecy of the temple system is a parade example, although this was more commandment than prediction. I have discussed this in great detail in *The Exiles*. I suggest that like the Olivet prophecy, the prophecies of Daniel were an outline of a potential schema of events that could have taken place, leading up to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. But due to Judah's overall preference to remain in Babylon, and the lethargy of those who did return, that schema was rescheduled and was given a longer term application over history, culminating in the events of [our?] last days and the final, inexorable establishment of the Messianic Kingdom on earth.

As is well established, Daniel's prophecies are interrelated. The metals of the opening vision in Daniel 2 develop into the beasts of Daniel 7, and the other prophecies give more details of potential fulfilments and developments of the beast systems, culminating in the war between the Kings of the North and South and the final revelation of Israel's triumphant Messiah and the resurrection in Daniel 12. The sequence of metals in the image of Daniel 2 speak primarily of four kings, each having a king-dom, a dominion over which they reigned. The word translated "kingdoms" can as well be rendered "reigns", or effectively, "kings". And they all form part of the image of an individual *man*. Nebuchadnezzar personally, rather than the Babylonian empire, was represented by the head of gold (Dan. 2:38). The ten toes of the image represent "kings" (Dan. 2:44 "in the days of these kings"). The prophecy started to be fulfilled- for in Daniel's lifetime, the head of gold, Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty, gave way to Darius the Mede (Dan. 5:31), and still in Daniel's lifetime, to Cyrus the Persian (Dan. 6:31). Daniel immediately perceived that it was about a succession of kings, not kingdoms (Dan. 2:21). But even that sequence need not have happened the way it did if Nebuchadnezzar had repented more quickly; if he had, there would have been a "lengthening of your tranquility" (Dan. 4:27). If he had, perhaps the next metal of the image would have followed him directly, rather than following his son. The time period intended for him could have been changed. The same word translated "lengthening" occurs only again in Dan. 7:12, where we read

that the beasts had their “lives *prolonged* for a season and time”. Their intended time periods were added to. The setting up of God’s Kingdom on the earth / land of Israel was exactly what had been prophesied in Jeremiah and Ezekiel as happening once the captivity in Babylon had ended; at that time, the stone could have hit the earth and destroyed the situation envisaged in the image of Daniel 2. But this intended sequence of four kings followed by ten kings didn’t come about as intended. Ezra lamented the intermarriage of the Jews with the surrounding peoples, but even that could have been the fulfilment of the iron and clay mingling themselves with the seed of men (Dan. 2:43); but still the Kingdom was not established. The attempted reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah and the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi didn’t bear enough fruit; and the potential Messiah figures such as Joshua and Zerubbabel all failed.

The captivity was intended to last for 70 years, but in reality it lasted longer—hence Daniel’s confusion and pleading with God in Daniel 10 to do what He had promised. And yet his prayer of Daniel 9 suggests that he realized Judah’s sins were such, and their lack of real repentance in Babylon was such, that the restoration program had been delayed. His response to understanding the 70 year period is to pray to God admitting Israel have sinned and are still impenitent— as if he realized this was why the period had been extended (Dan. 9:2,3). In Dan. 9:19 he asks for God to forgive, to accept his repentance on Judah’s behalf, and therefore not to “defer” or delay any longer. Clearly he saw that the intended 70 year period had been extended, because Israel had not repented as required. It seems to me that this was the same reason for the ‘delay’ in Christ’s second coming; the bridegroom does indeed “delay”, the same word translated “tarried” (Mt. 24:48; 25:5). It didn’t happen in the first century as planned but was delayed, just as the coming of the Messianic Kingdom was delayed in Old Testament times.

The beasts of Daniel 7 are based upon the four metals of the image in Daniel 2, with the feet and ten toes of iron and clay matched by the horns upon the fourth beast. The first beast was given a man’s heart and stood up looking like a man, showing it represented a personal king (Dan. 7:4). Dan. 7:9 speaks of how “the thrones were cast down” and then the last judgment sat. The beasts are therefore kings or “thrones”; their casting down is the same as the smashing of the metals of the image. My point is that the beasts were initially intended to be seen as kings, individuals rather than empires. Dan. 7:17 is clear: “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth / land”. Likewise “the ten horns... are ten kings” (Dan. 7:24). We are so familiar with the rescheduled, long term application of the prophecies, rolling through the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, that we can overlook the simple fact that the intended fulfilment was in a swift succession of kings after Nebuchadnezzar which would conclude with the return from exile and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom upon the ruins of the Babylonian kings. When it became clear that there would be some delay, Daniel was given the vision of Daniel 8, in which another version of the horns on the fourth beast was given. In this vision, a ram with a great horn spawned four leaders, out of whom came another horn, which persecuted Israel and defiled the sanctuary for 2,300 days, placing the desolating abomination (Dan. 8:13). This time period has no obvious fulfilment. But this very verse is quoted by the Lord Jesus in the Olivet prophecy; and clearly it has the capacity for various potential fulfilments which can be rescheduled if human repentance and response is inadequate. Dan. 8:20-22 says that the two horns on the goat represented the kings of Media and Persia— both of whom Daniel served under (Dan. 5:31; 6:31). After them, four kings could have arisen, followed by a

charismatic leader who would conflict with “the prince of princes” [Messiah] and be “broken without hand” (Dan. 8:25) just as the little stone cut out without hands would destroy the image of Daniel 2. Such a situation could have happened in Daniel’s time, or at least in the time of Alexander the Great. But it didn’t. Firstly, in Daniel 2, he saw a succession of four kings. But then, after the second king, he has a vision of another four kings needing to arise; in other words, another element has been added to the sequence, delaying the fulfilment somewhat. Daniel’s response was feeling depressed (Dan. 8:27)- because obviously he wanted the fulfilment as soon as possible.

In Daniel 9, Daniel pleads for the prophecy of restoration to be fulfilled, recognizing that the 70 year period had been extended; he is recorded as repenting on behalf of Judah, and asking that God will not further delay the fulfilment (Dan. 9:19). The answer is the prophecy of the 70 *weeks*. This could mean that 70 *weeks* were going to be added to the 70 *years*. This could have meant a literal 70 weeks from the time of Daniel’s prayer, or the seventy sevens could be a total of 490 day / years. Despite many ingenious attempts, there is no persuasive interpretation of the 70 weeks prophecy. It could be that it is a series of potential possibilities; seven literal weeks from the commandment to restore Jerusalem unto Messiah, and then 62 weeks from Messiah’s coming to His ‘cutting off’. But then the prophecy speaks of how the city and sanctuary would again be destroyed and the destroyer then himself destroyed. This would’ve been most discouraging for Daniel, who was expecting and hoping for the immediate restitution of the temple.

Then in Daniel 10, Daniel was told that the appointed time had been made longer (Dan. 10:1 Heb.). This was in the third year of Cyrus, when according to the earlier prophecies, Daniel was looking for a new king to arise (Daniel 2), or four kings (according to the sequence of Dan. 8). Seeing Daniel had lived through the reigns of at least three kings, he likely expected the reign of these kings to be very brief, so that he might see the coming of the restored Kingdom. But now he is told that the time period has been extended. No wonder Daniel mourned this vision for three weeks (Dan. 10:2). Daniel then symbolically dies and resurrects; the comfort being that he would ultimately be resurrected to the life eternal, but the sadness being that he must die because “the vision [i.e. its fulfilment] is still for many days” (Dan. 10:14). His praying and weeping for those three weeks had not brought about a reverting of the time period back to that originally planned- it was yet or still for many days. In the spirit of Moses, Daniel had tried to change God’s will. All we learn at least from this is that prophetic time periods are open to change. The Olivet prophecy speaks of how “the days”, and the context suggests the ‘days’ of Daniel’s prophecies were in view, will have to be shortened otherwise even the elect will fall away (Mt. 24:22). Dan. 11:2 went on to explain to Daniel that now another series of four kings was envisaged, this time all Persian kings, in contrast to the idea of four *Greek* kings arising in Daniel 8; and this would culminate in two leading kings, of the North and South, who would have a series of conflicts climaxing in the temple being captured again, and conflict with Messiah leading to the resurrection (Dan. 11:40-12:2). This scenario also didn’t happen- and it would explain why no very credible interpretation has been found for Daniel 11. When we read allusions to these prophecies in the Olivet prophecy, and perceive that the Lord had in mind fulfilling them in the first century but later rescheduled that, we must remember that those prophecies had already had various potential fulfilments which had not worked out because of the lack of repentance

within Israel. This is the all important sign of fruit on the fig tree, and an encouragement to give highest priority to preaching to Israel.

Daniel's response is to ask "How long to the end of these things?" (Dan. 12:8 Heb.). He's given various time periods of days, but told that these do not concern him, for he is to fall asleep in death, and then stand again "at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:13), however many they were, whether shortened or extended, "the end" would come all the same, and he would be resurrected then. And this is the great comfort to all of us as we reflect whether we will live to see the Lord's coming or not.

Dan 2:1 *In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar-* The miserable critics point out that Daniel and his friends were tried for three years by Nebuchadnezzar when he was apparently already king (Dan. 1:18,19). In a book as subtle and carefully internally coherent as the Bible, it beggars belief that such an obvious mistake would be made by some conman author. I suggest the opposite is true; someone who was writing the truth and who had lived close to the situation would write things which may appear contradictory to those reading from a distance. The four Gospel records are another example. And so here, at the time of Dan. 1 Nebuchadnezzar ruled as regent or subordinate to his father, Nabopolassar; whereas "the second year" refers to Nebuchadnezzar's sole sovereignty. Jer. 25:1 likewise uses the idea of "the first year" of Nebuchadnezzar to refer to the first year of his sole reign. Or we can go with the alternative textual readings, which offer "the twelfth" for "the second year". Another option is to understand Daniel 1 as summarizing how Daniel and his friends came to be so highly acceptable to Nebuchadnezzar after three years; and the events of chapter 2 explain how that came about. This kind of literary device is common in the Bible.

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him- There are so many similarities with the young, handsome, captive, faithful Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and getting rewarded; here the connection is with Gen. 41:8.

They are both described as good looking (Gen. 39:6; Dan. 1:4), given new names, taken into captivity as 'boys' (Gen. 37:30; Dan. 1:4) but are promoted to the helm of Gentile power after interpreting a king's dream. As noted on Dan. 1:9, "God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion with the prince of the eunuchs" just as the prison keeper did to Joseph (Gen. 39:21 "the Lord was with Joseph and showed him grace; he gave him favour in the sight of the chief jailer"). The parallels are particularly strong between Daniel 2 and Genesis 41. The records both begin with a two year period (Gen. 41:1; Dan. 2:1). Both times, the king is described as agitated (Gen. 41:8, Dan. 2:1) because neither he nor his assistants can interpret the dream (Gen. 41:8, Dan. 2:1-11). Both Joseph and Daniel have someone at court who presents them as a Hebrew to the Gentile king (the cupbearer in Gen. 41:9-13, Arioch in Dan. 2:25). They both say that the interpretation of dreams is with their God (Gen. 40:8; Dan. 2:28), not with them, and that God makes known the future and it is certain of fulfilment (Gen. 41:25,32; Dan. 2:28,45). The Gentile monarch is delighted with the message and rewards the Israelite by giving them gifts and promoting them. The similarities are such that we can assume that Daniel based his words upon those of Joseph, perceiving the similarity of situation. Just as we are to allow ourselves to see the parallels between our life situations and the essence of such situations in the lives of faithful Biblical characters; and act like them. "Zaphnath Paaneah", the name given to Joseph, can mean 'interpreter of dreams'; and Daniel's interpreting the king's

dreams, at one stage being summoned out of obscurity to do so, is so clearly based upon Joseph's experience. Man is not alone- in that no experience is without Biblical precedent, in essence.

The parallels continue beyond Daniel 2. Thus in Dan. 4:8,9 the foreign monarch realizes that the spirit of God is in Daniel, just as Pharaoh did with Joseph. The reward for telling the vision is a gold chain in both Gen. 41:42 and Dan. 5:7,16,29. Daniel's words to Nebuchadnezzar are clearly inspired by Joseph's example. He perceived the similarities between his situation and that of a Biblical precedent- and spoke and acted accordingly. Truly a pattern for every Bible reader. Both of them interpreted dreams three times when the wise men couldn't do so, both were cast into a pit to die. Both are described as having "the spirit of God / the gods" (Gen. 41:44; Dan. 4:5). Their exaltation in reward is very similar; Daniel's exaltation by Nebuchadnezzar matches that of Joseph by Pharaoh: "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's hand... He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command". Joseph's ministry started at age 17 and ended with his death at 110, a total of 93 years (Gen. 37:2; 50:22). Daniel's ministry may likewise have been 93 years: twenty years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign until the fall of Jerusalem (his accession year plus the 19 years of 2 Kings 25:8), seventy years of exile (Dan. 9:2) and three years of king Cyrus (Dan. 10:10).

We note though that Daniel is presented as a greater than Joseph. He not only interprets but recalls the king's dream; the dream is of far greater and eternal moment than those which Joseph interpreted; and Daniel is presented as more prayerful and more eager to give glory to Israel's God for the interpretation. Indeed Joseph is never once recorded as praying. Moses and Daniel are presented as resisting assimilation, whereas Joseph assimilates into the Gentile world. Daniel states clearly and more bravely than Joseph, that this Gentile monarch is given his power by God alone. Daniel is repeatedly critical of the impotence of Gentile wisdom, unlike Joseph. And it could be argued that the Gentile king was finally converted to Israel's God by Daniel's interpretations, whereas that isn't said of Pharaoh.

Dan 2:2 *Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the enchanters, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams-* Babylon was deeply religious; the real leaders were the religious leaders, and the sorcery for which Babylon was infamous was a large part of their religion. Hence "the Chaldeans" refers to Babylonians generally, as well as to this class of religious leaders. They were the quintessence of all Babylon was. For them to be exposed as fraudulent failures was therefore a blow to Babylon's entire religious structure, just as the dreams of Pharaoh and later the plagues struck at the very core of Egypt's religious beliefs.

So they came in and stood before the king- Perhaps in the middle of the night; see on :3.

Dan 2:3 *The king said to them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream-* The implication of :1 could be that the king couldn't get back to sleep, and so he called the magicians immediately, at night. It could even be that the king commanded them to be killed immediately (see on :5), and the executioner then went to the house of Daniel to kill him too. But that same night Daniel went to the king (:16) and assured him that he would find the interpretation; he returns to pray, goes to sleep [despite all the pressure and drama], and in a night vision, perhaps later that very same night, receives the answer (:19). If something like this scenario is

correct, then time was of the essence. Daniel would have wanted an immediate answer from God; but he had to exercise faith in going to the king and asking for time for the answer to come. And he went to see the king that night knowing that he had a death penalty upon his head. The heads of his department [as it were] had just been condemned to death; and he the very junior underling now goes to the king to ask for more time. Then he comes home, chats with his friends and prayers with them about the matter and goes to sleep in peace; and that night, he gets a vision which is the answer. This is all typical of the deep faith and peace which we sense in Daniel.

Dan 2:4 *Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in the Syrian language, O king, live forever: tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation-* The group are summarized as "the Chaldeans". As noted on :2, "the Chaldeans" refers to Babylonians generally, as well as to this class of religious leaders. They were the quintessence of all Babylon was. For them to be exposed as fraudulent failures was therefore a blow to Babylon's entire religious structure, just as the dreams of Pharaoh and later the plagues struck at the very core of Egypt's religious beliefs. That they spoke in Syrian may seem unsurprising, but perhaps the idea is that as this part of Daniel is written in Aramaic ["Syrian"], we are reading the very words they actually spoke.

Dan 2:5 *The king answered the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me-*

A case could be made that Nebuchadnezzar was paranoid that the Chaldees / magicians were seeking to overthrow him. Dan. 2:9 uses the word for 'conspiracy' about them: "For you have agreed together ['conspired'] to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed". For such rebellions led by this group were not unknown. His dream was a reflection of those fears. The text never says he forgot the dream- if we interpret :5 as meaning "The thing [command to kill you] is gone from me" unless you interpret the dream to me. This would make sense of his otherwise unreasonable demand, that they recall the dream as well as interpret it. He was seeking for an excuse to kill them. This approach makes better sense of the otherwise strange statement: "Tell me the dream that I may know that you can declare to me its

interpretation" (Dan. 2:9 NASB). He knows the dream, but asks them to tell him what he dreamt, so that he can then trust their interpretation of it. And why would a king be worried silly about a dream he said he had forgotten? How do I know I had a terrible dream last night if I have forgotten it? The awfulness of the image would surely have remained in the king's mind; it is surely stating too much to claim he remembered absolutely zero about this dream. If he had indeed had a dream about his future, including his apparent destruction, he would be desperate to understand it. And that is exactly the scene we have. This would make sense of Daniel saying that he would make known to the king "the thoughts of your heart". And Nebuchadnezzar saying that "My spirit was troubled to know / understand the dream" (Dan. 2:3), as if it was the interpretation aspect which bothered him rather than the lack of recall.

We note that Nebuchadnezzar had only recently won the victory against the Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish, whilst his father was still on the throne. This hugely extended Babylonian power and made Nebuchadnezzar some kind of a hero. And he naturally internally wondered what would be his future; and whether the forces of jealousy within Babylon would be his end. Jer. 46:2-12 had prophesied this battle and his victory, but stating that Nebuchadnezzar was merely Yahweh's agent. If Nebuchadnezzar was aware of that prophecy, he would naturally have wondered

about his role and relationship with Yahweh. His victory there was huge and he lost very few men compared to the complete destruction of massive Egyptian forces. He must have surely seen some higher hand at work. That was just two or three years previous to him having become king; for soon after the battle he became king on his father's death. And his reign began with rebellions in Media and Persia; and the growth of powerful competitors in Greece. Truly "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (Shakespeare, Henry IV). His dream and paranoia is absolutely psychologically credible.

It's unclear whether "the thing" refers to the dream, which had gone from him in the sense of forgetting it, "the thing" is the same word translated "matter" in :8,23; or whether the reference is to the decree which he intended sending out to kill the Chaldeans unless they recalled his dream for him and interpreted it. The same word for "thing" is translated "commandment" in Dan. 3:22,28 when the king again commands the death of his wise men. And it is translated "word" in Dan. 4:31; 6:12: "the word still (being) in the mouth of the king", clearly referring to a command from the king. A similar phrase is "the commandment came forth" (Dan. 9:23). Surely the king would have referred to the dream as a "dream" and not a thing / word. I suggest that if the reconstruction of events offered on :3 is correct, then "the thing" refers to the command to kill the wise men unless the dream was retold and interpreted. The reasoning in :8 confirms this. The magicians wanted to "gain time" not because the dream had gone from Nebuchadnezzar, but because the decree to kill them had gone forth from him.

If you don't make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a compost heap- The cutting in pieces is to be connected with how the stone was to break the image in pieces, including the head of gold which represented Nebuchadnezzar. He was to be taught that it was not for him to arrogate to himself such power of condemnation. For contrary to what he liked to imagine, he was not eternal, nor was he God. Rather, he was under Divine judgment.

Dan 2:6 *But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore show me the dream and its interpretation-* This is the language of a man who considers that he has the power to give any reward in his kingdom, which he considered to be the kingdom of a divine being, of God. The gifts and rewards given to Daniel were of political power within the kingdom. "Receive" is elsewhere used in Daniel of receiving the kingdom; and yet ultimately it is the people of God who would receive or "take" the Kingdom (Dan. 7:18 s.w.). "Great honour" is the word elsewhere translated "glory"; it was this glory which was so prideful and which led to Nebuchadnezzar's downfall (Dan. 4:30,36). The glory of the Kingdom was to be finally given for ever to God's people (Dan. 7:14 s.w.). So it was precisely the attitude Nebuchadnezzar had at this point, considering that all reward and glory in the Kingdom of God was *his* to distribute at will, which had to be taken away from him. He was playing God, and this is so unacceptable to Him.

Dan 2:7 *They answered the second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation-* Their humanity is being taught to both them and the king. The idea was that they had special dialogue with the gods which others didn't have, and therefore could give interpretations. But their limitations are

apparent; it was God's attempt to teach all of them, and the king, that their religion was woefully weak and they should accept the one true God. The whole scene here parallels Joseph before Pharaoh, and that was also the intention then. We marvel that God would make such effort to convert the likes of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, the very types we would have passed over and ignored as unsuitable candidates for any evangelism attempt.

Dan 2:8 *The king answered, I know of a certainty that you would gain time, because you see the thing is gone from me-* The king is suspicious that they were not who they claimed to be, because they could not tell him what he had dreamt. The thing that went from him sounds like the command to kill them (see on :3,5). The king's sensitivity to any appeal for extra time therefore made Daniel's approach to request just that all the harder and more dangerous; although :16 could suggest Daniel as it were booked an appointment with the king, whilst as yet he had no answer. He was so sure that prayer would be answered and he would have an answer to give.

"To gain the time" meant they wanted time because they were going to try to flee and escape. This explains why the command to slay them was hastily executed, before they could escape. This makes Daniel's request for more time even more amazing, seeing the king wanted to kill the magicians quickly. It shows his trust in prayer, and shows that prayer isn't instantly answered. Surely here we have a prime case when immediate answer to prayer would've been appreciated. But that wasn't God's way. As it often isn't today.

Dan 2:9 *But if you don't tell me the dream, there is but one law for you; for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, until the time be changed-* The magicians had presumably come out with some airy words and were begging for more time, in the hope that the death penalty would be lifted. "Words" is the same word as "matter" in :10; perhaps they had come up with some dream which was not the word or matter which the king had dreamed. But Nebuchadnezzar had to be taught that God alone can 'change the times'; Daniel uses the same phrase in :21. The lives of the magicians were held in his hand as if playthings; but he was to learn that his life was in God's hand in just the same way. It was God through His people who could change the king's word of command (Dan. 3:28), which was supposedly unchangeable.

"Until the time be changed" is the idea behind Daniel's later marvel in :21 that God changes times and seasons and sets up and removes rulers. The king appears paranoid that being in such a hopeless position, his magicians were now plotting a changed time, an overthrow of his kingdom. Subconsciously he was clearly worried about his future, as he later admits. There is irony yet again, for Daniel gives the interpretation that effectively, the king would be overthrown or pass from power; and is gloriously rewarded by the king for stating that which he feared.

Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation- He perceives that the dream and its interpretation cannot be separated; the magicians were making a difference between the two, but the king was not going to be fooled. If they truly had Divine powers, then they would know what he had dreamed. His test of them was to ask them to tell him what he had dreamed, and this would then confirm to him that their interpretation was correct. He knew what he had dreamed, or else this test had no power. Clearly he perceived from the dream that his time was limited, and he feared that the Chaldeans were behind this and would interpret the dream as meaning that he must lose or abdicate from power. If the idea

was that the king had forgotten his dream, then the Chaldeans could presumably have made up any dream and interpreted it to him.

Dan 2:10 *The Chaldeans answered before the king and said, There is not a man on the earth who can show the king's matter, because no king, lord or ruler has asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter or Chaldean-* By saying this they were admitting that they were merely men upon earth. They reasoned that there was no historical precedent for such a request. And yet they were setting themselves up to have to make an exception to all their received wisdom; the one true God could inspire one man upon the earth, and show the matter.

Dan 2:11 *It is an unusual thing that the king requires, and there is no other who can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh-* They were admitting that they were not in fact in contact with the gods, although this was what their profession was supposedly all about. And they were setting up an acceptance that therefore Daniel was God manifest in flesh.

Dan 2:12 *Therefore the king was angry and very furious, and he commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed-* As noted on :11, they had effectively admitted that they had no connection with the gods; they were fakes, and may as well be fired from their jobs and "destroyed". The same word is used of how the power of destruction is ultimately with God alone (Dan. 7:11,26). Again, the king is portrayed as playing God, and being educated as to his error.

Dan 2:13 *So the decree went forth that all the wise men were to be slain; and they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain-* I suggested on :3 that this all happened the same night. Perhaps the more prominent wise men were indeed slain, leaving their posts open for Daniel and his friends to replace them. Indeed we can translate to the effect "the decree went forth, *and* the wise men were slain"; the LXX supports this ["The decree went forth, and they began to slay the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to slay them"]. This is why Arioch, the chief of the executioners, was sent to the wise men. But circumstances again repeated. This servant of the king, like Melzar, 'for some reason' took pity upon Daniel and let him have a few hours respite in order to pray to God. We note God didn't give an instant answer, for Daniel surely prayed immediately about the matter. Momentary prayer isn't always what He seeks, but intense and extensive prayer lasting hours.

Dan 2:14 *Then Daniel returned answer with counsel and prudence to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who was gone forth to kill the wise men of Babylon-* We imagine Arioch coming to Daniel, sword in hand. "Arioch" may well be a title for the court executioner.

Dan 2:15 *He answered Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so urgent from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel-* As suggested on :3, this may have been very late at night.

Dan 2:16 *Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would appoint him a time, and he would show the king the interpretation-* The king had made it clear that there was to be no playing for time. If they were indeed in contact with the gods, he expected an immediate answer. But Daniel asks for time because he has to contact the

one true God and wait for an answer. But it could be that although Daniel had not received any revelation at this point, he was certain he would; and he made the appointment to see the king in absolute faith that it would be given to him. Again we sense the calmness and faith of Daniel, reasoning as if what he did not then have, he effectively did have. See on :25.

We know from the story of Esther that access to kings was not quickly nor easily given. I will suggest on :25 that actually Arioch never went to the king and asked for this extension of time- the king was clearly not in a mood to give it. If however we read the text on face value, that an extension of time was given, then this was remarkable. Perhaps [depending how we read the chronology here] the king recalled Daniel had great ability with dreams (Dan. 1:19,20). Or he was impressed that Daniel's offer was to recall and not just interpret the dream, reflecting thereby his extreme anxiety about the dream. But above all these things there would have been the influence of God's Spirit directly on the mind of this man.

Again we marvel that God did not immediately grant Daniel insight. Daniel's faith in intense prayer was being tested, and for all time we are taught that God doesn't always give instant answers to prayer on demand. For surely Daniel had tried momentarily begging God for the answer. In the age of instant access and impatience with delayed response, we have a powerful lesson. Daniel was confident the answer would come, but recognized it wouldn't come immediately and that intense prayer requires time. He was so persuaded of this that he asks the king to give him time [see AV] so that he could receive the answer to his prayers for the interpretation to be given him. He does this aware that the king has ordered the deaths of the other magicians because he thought they were trying to 'buy time' (:8). So his request for more time was the more audacious and driven by absolute need and conviction that prayer is answered, but, it takes time.

Dan 2:17 Then Daniel went to his house, and told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions- As suggested on :3, this was in the middle of the night. "Companions" suggests those he was joined to, through sharing covenant relationship with Yahweh. Perhaps there were no others amongst the young exiles whom he felt were abiding in the covenant. As noted on :30, this is why Daniel later says that the dream was revealed to him simply so that he and his three friends might be saved from death at that time.

Dan 2:18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; so that Daniel and his companions should not die with the rest of the wise men of Babylon- Daniel realized that his own prayers might not be enough, and so he awoke his friends late at night (see on :3) with the request that they join in prayer about the matter. "Mercies" is better "pity". Their motivation was admittedly to save their own skins. Daniel's request to his friends to pray for him as he went before the king (Dan. 2:17,18), so that they should not die, contrasts with Esther asking her friends to simply fast for her- with no reference to God (Esther 4:16).

Dan 2:19 Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven- Effectively, Daniel dreamed the same as Nebuchadnezzar did, making him effectively equal to the king who thought he had no equal. And because he remembered the dream and the interpretation, he was thereby declared greater than him. The night vision reflects the fact that Daniel could sleep under the

threat of execution the next day, rather like Peter in prison, all reflects the depth of his faith. See on :3. Daniel's first response was to thank God for the answer, rather than to race off to the king.

Dan 2:20 *Daniel responded, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His-* Daniel had been shown that the Kingdom of God was to be on earth "for ever and ever", and he envisages praise to God for eternity. The required wisdom was of God, and not of Daniel; this is a major theme in Daniel's speech to the king, but it reflected how he felt within himself; for his spontaneous prayer of thanks recognizes it. "For wisdom, and might are *His*" surely stresses the "His". Seeing Daniel had been trained in all the wisdom of Babylon and excelled at it.

Dan. 2:20-23 are in fact a carefully crafted poem or hymn. There are two verses or strophes, the lines of which clearly relate to each other:

"Let the name of God be praised for ever and ever" = "You God of my fathers I honour and praise"

"wisdom and strength" = "for wisdom and strength you gave to me"

"He is the one who reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with him" = "You have made known to me what we asked from You; the dream of the king You have made known to us".

Higher critics would claim that this therefore was composed by an editor well after the event. But another option is that instead of rushing off to the king with the interpretation, as we may well have done, dominated by the fear of death, the executioner knocking at the doors and with not a moment to [apparently] lose... Daniel not only uttered a few words of praise, but deeply reflected on God's grace to him. And ended up composing this brief poem or hymn, there and then. Such composition requires a focus of mind; and he would have had that focus despite all the pressures of the moment. A fine example to us, not to be dominated by the urgencies of the moment, but to retain calm spirituality throughout it all. This is what we see exemplified to the ultimate in the Lord's endurance of eight hours of torture on the cross.

Dan 2:21 *He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings, and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding-* The whole prophecy of the image was to result in God's praise and glory (:20). The challenges of working out the symbolism and its correspondence to geopolitics should not lead us to forget that. Daniel was faced with a "time" and commandment for his own death, made by a despot who considered his own word unchangeable. But for God to change that was a small matter (:9 s.w. "changed"), for He changes the times and seasons of the world powers. "He gives wisdom to the wise" is not Daniel being self congratulatory. Rather he accepts that he and his friends had retained their spiritual wisdom and understanding of God's ways, and it was in response to that, that he had been given the required insight. The four beasts were "changed" from each other, AV "diverse one from another" (Dan. 7:3 s.w.). This is saying that the changes between the metals of the image and then the beasts of Dan. 7 were all orchestrated by God. Daniel understood the image as referring to a succession of kings, not kingdoms; as suggested on :1, this was the primary potential of the prophecy. There would have been a series of kings after Nebuchadnezzar, which would have ended with the mountain of Judah's kingdom being re-established on earth upon their ruins.

Daniel marvels that God "changes", not just coordinates, the "times and seasons". This could be a reference to the various potential fulfilments of the prophecy- in Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty, in the Greek empire, in the first century Roman empire,

and finally in our last days. The phrase "times and seasons" is used of the times relating to the Lord's return (Acts 1:7; 1 Thess. 5:1). We are to understand therefore that these times and seasons are variable, due to the conditional and potential nature of such prophecies. Although just as there were four seasons, so there would be four reigns manipulated and brought about by God rather than man. Which again raises the questions of whether Nebuchadnezzar was the first reign, and whether the feet or iron and clay are a fifth empire or entity. The allusion to four seasons could suggest that 'the end' could potentially have come before that.

Dan 2:22 *He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him-* If as suggested on :3 all this happened in one night, then these allusions to light and darkness make the more sense. The future is "darkness" to us, but God reveals the essence- that the process of human history will climax in the establishment of His Kingdom.

Dan 2:23 *I thank You, and praise You, You God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might, and has now made known to me what we desired of You; for You have made known to us the king's matter-* The reference to his "fathers" must be meshed with Ezekiel's observation that the exiles tended to blame their fathers for their predicament. Daniel instead sees that Yahweh had still been the God of his apostate fathers, even if they had denied that relationship. "Made known to us" reflects Daniel's solidarity with his friends. Daniel's praise is not that God has hereby saved his life by revealing the vision; but rather praise of God's wisdom and the glory of His workings amongst men.

Dan 2:24 *Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon and said this: Don't destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show to the king the interpretation-* The command to kill them had been issued in the middle of the night (see on :3), and so we envisage Daniel walking or running through darkened streets to find Arioch. We note too that the wise men owed their lives to Daniel. And yet in Dan. 6 they sought to kill him. This is the power of jealousy; it so often develops from an arrogant refusal to be grateful to a person for the grace of God to us which was manifested through them.

Dan 2:25 *Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said: I have found a man among the captives of Judah who will make known to the king the interpretation-* this appears to conflict with the impression given on :16 that Daniel had gone in to the king; but it seems that :16 means that he made an appointment to see the king and tell him the dream, seeing it was now the dead of night. Arioch's reference to "the captives of Judah" heightens the sense that Babylonian religion and wisdom was being overturned. And Arioch himself seems confident that Daniel has really been given the answer.

"I have found a man..." definitely appears to contradict the apparent agreement from the king to give Daniel time to find the answer. See on :16. Perhaps Arioch had not in fact asked the king for the delay. And now Arioch takes the glory by claiming he is responsible for finding the answer. He has great faith Daniel really has got the answer, but wants to take credit for that. Again, what seems so bad- that Arioch never actually asked the king for more time- is turned to good under God's hand.

Dan 2:26 *The king answered Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Are you able to*

make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?- The king addressed Daniel as Belteshazzar, a reference to the god Bel. Daniel responds by saying immediately that it is the one God of heaven, not Bel of Babylon, who had provided the answers.

Dan 2:27 *Daniel answered before the king, and said, The secret which the king has demanded can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, show to the king-* We would likely have answered the king's question by saying "Yes, sir!". But Daniel is so awed by Yahweh's majesty that he loses no chances to emphasize that this revelation from Yahweh was an effective trashing of all Babylon's religious leaders; for the "wise men" were the religious leaders. If I were Daniel I would have just blurted out the dream and the interpretation. But Daniel sought to convert Nebuchadnezzar and to bring glory to Yahweh. And so he begins by rubbishing all Babylonian wisdom. A brave thing to do before the king of Babylon. Daniel was effectively stating that all his knowledge and success in the wisdom of Babylonian dream interpretation was meaningless.

Dan 2:28 *But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head on your bed, are these-* The Babylonians thought that their god Bel lived in Babylon. Daniel stresses therefore that His God is in Heaven. Cyrus later defines Yahweh as "Yahweh, the God of Heaven" (Ezra 1:2). The God of or in Heaven was therefore a known title for Israel's God. "The latter days" is a term which refers both to the final end time, when Messiah shall destroy the image as it stands complete in the last day; and also to the general 'future' immediate to Nebuchadnezzar.

"The latter days" could refer just generally to the future; or there may be a specific reference to the end times. LXX has "at the end of the days". What was to happen in those latter days was that the stone was to hit and entire image, destroy it, and become God's eternal kingdom on earth. Possibly the vagueness of the phrase is because Nebuchadnezzar's repentance could have brought about a totally different outworking of things. The 'last day' could have come in the immediate future at that point. Constantly, we see flexibility in the possible outworkings of things.

Dan 2:29 *As for you, O king, your thoughts came into your mind on your bed, what should happen in the future; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what shall happen-* 'Those who reveal secrets' were the magicians and wise men; but Daniel says that it is God alone who reveals secrets, through his agency. I would have been tempted to just blurt out the dream and its message, knowing that the king was wary of the slightest attempt to delay, and had ordered my execution by Arioch, who was presumably standing next to Daniel at the time. Just one irritation of the despotic king could lead to Daniel's head being severed from his shoulders. But still he stresses the glory of Israel's God before he reveals the dream.

Dan 2:30 *But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but to the intent that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart-* "But to the intent that the interpretation may be made known to the king" is AV "But for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king". Daniel wishes to connect his friends to himself in this matter. He is saying that he has been chosen to reveal the secret just so

that Daniel and his friends would not be executed. And yet there were many other young exiles from Judah with them at the time; Daniel seems to count them as not really within the covenant (see on :17).

Dan 2:31 *You, O king, saw, and behold, a great image. This image, which was mighty-* The original states that the image was "one". And it was an image, whose head was that of Nebuchadnezzar. It was united, "one", and thus the entire entity was destroyed at one time. The clear implication is that the whole image was Nebuchadnezzar. The obvious interpretation is that it refers to his dynasty, the three kings who followed him, all progressively weaker: Amel-Marduk, Neriglissar, and Nabonidus [who may or may not be the same as the Biblical Belshazzar]. These three rose and fell within just a few years after Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was initially succeeded by his son, Amel-Marduk, but Amel-Marduk's reign only lasted for two years before Neriglissar usurped the Babylonian throne and put him to death. Neriglissar ruled four years before dying and being succeeded by his son Labashi-Marduk. The Uruk King List says Labashi-Marduk reigned only three months before being usurped by Nabonidus; and then killed either by Nabonidus or his son Belshazzar. It's unclear if Nabonidus and Belshazzar were the same person. The later brief rulers of Babylon were seen as either legitimate or illegitimate according to whether they were married in to the descendants of Nebuchadnezzar or his wives. This would explain the allusion to marriage in :43 "the rulers of that empire will try to unite their families by intermarriage" (GNB). And this is the snug fit interpretation of the fact that the head of gold is Nebuchadnezzar personally, according to Daniel's own interpretation. We note the parallel four beasts of Dan. 7 are interpreted as "four kings" (Dan. 7:17). All the 'empires' interpretations have to make the head of gold mean Babylon rather than Nebuchadnezzar personally. They are never going to be a snug fit on that point.

In this case, the best fit interpretation would be:

Gold = Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC)

Silver = Amel-Marduk (562-560 BC)

Bronze = Neriglissar (560-556 BC)

Iron = Nabonidus (556-539 BC)

The "mixed with clay" period would then refer to Nabonidus' coregency with Belshazzar, weakening the kingdom. We note that Nebuchadnezzar is repeatedly called the father of Belshazzar (Dan. 5:17,22 especially). This wasn't strictly the case. But if the image prophecy had an initial possible fulfilment in the immediate dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar, ending in Belshazzar, all is clear. This would explain why Belshazzar is described as the "son" of Nebuchadnezzar when he was a descendant but not his literal son. "Son" can legitimately be used of any descendant. We also note the opinion of several scholars that "Belshazzar" was Nebuchadnezzar's son Evil Merodach. The fall of the Babylonian empire and Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty was therefore the fall of Nebuchadnezzar, seeing the whole image represented him. For he was the head of it. This is why Jer. 25:12 speaks of the downfall of Babylon after 70 years as if it would be the fall of Nebuchadnezzar personally: "It shall happen that when seventy years are accomplished, then I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, says Yahweh, for their iniquity". "The king of Babylon" in the context is Nebuchadnezzar. And yet Nebuchadnezzar personally could have repented and not sinned... and in this case another possible scenario would have worked out.

The stone could have hit the image at that point, if the Jews had obeyed the calls of Haggai and Zechariah to rise up against the Babylonians and re-establish the Kingdom. They didn't, and so the image prophecy had other potential fulfilments. Likewise Cyrus of Persia could have been the Messiah figure, as Isaiah makes clear-but he failed that potential. These likewise didn't happen, because the fulfilment of prophecy in this context required human freewill input which wasn't provided by the Jews. The other potential fulfilments were never the snuggest fit interpretation. But finally the essence of the image prophecy will be fulfilled in the Lord's return to earth and destruction of the beast system which is the summation of all the metals. But it all could've happened so much earlier.

In Dan. 4:10, Nebuchadnezzar sees himself as a tree that is felled. God was again trying to get Nebuchadnezzar to see the truth of the image prophecy of Daniel 2. For a tree was seen as symbolic of a man. "Trees have toe-like roots, arm-like branches and stand upright from root to crown, between earth and heaven". This confirms that the initial application of the image with Nebuchadnezzar's face was to Nebuchadnezzar himself and his immediate dynasty.

The end of the exile and the restoration was the time when the prophecies of Jeremiah about 70 years would be fulfilled. It should be noted that Jer. 25:11 specifically states that the 70 years would be the length of the Babylonian kingdom: "And those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years". Jer. 29:10 is explicit: "When Babylon's seventy years are over". I suggested on Dan. 2 that the initial possible fulfilment of the image prophecy was in the Babylonian kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar onwards until its fall. The beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is often dated to 605 BC; and so the defeat of Babylon in BC 538 roughly 70 years later would mean that Darius was Cyrus, and this was when the Jews were intended to return. But Cyrus failed to be the intended Messiah figure and the Jews generally preferred the soft life in Babylon rather than the restoration of Zion. And so there had to be the prophecy of Daniel 9 to provide another path forward.

The parallel vision in Dan. 7 is clear and specific that the four beasts "are four kings [*melek*- individual human beings] which shall arise out of the earth" (Dan. 7:17). The "kingdoms" of Dan. 2 translate a word that can as well mean "kings" or better "reigns". This interpretation didn't come about because the Jews refused to return and establish the Kingdom of God, precluding the fulfilment of the prophecies about them destroying Babylon and Persia in order to reestablish God's Kingdom. The image vision doesn't specifically mention that the feet had ten toes, whereas the fourth beast specifically has ten horns. Possibly the ten toes aren't mentioned because the initial possible scenario was within Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty, and the simple point was that fourth generation after him would be very weak and divided, but with elements of the strength of the third generation in it.

Matthew Henry notes: "Nebuchadnezzar was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now behold a *great image* is set before him in a dream". He was being shown that all his worship of images was effectively a worship of himself. And so it can be with all religion; we can think we are doing God service when in reality we are merely using it as a channel for worshipping ourselves. The only other time we encounter the sequence of gold, silver, brass and iron in Daniel is when we read that the idols of the Babylonians were made of these very metals (Dan. 5:4,23), as are the idols of the latter day Babylon (Rev. 18:12). The image reflected back to Nebuchadnezzar how he saw himself.

And whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and its aspect was awesome- The "brightness" of the entire image is the word used in Daniel of the glory of Babylon; "the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and brightness" (Dan. 4:36), and again of the brightness of the last king of Babylon being changed (Dan. 5:6,9). Again, the natural primary application is to Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty. "Stood before you" is a little detail added to show that the entire edifice was an "image" of Nebuchadnezzar.

"Brightness" was associated with the cherubim, symbols of God's glory, which were to return from Babylon to Judah (Ez. 1:4,27,28); "brightness" was to be a feature of God's restored Kingdom in Judah (Is. 59:9; 60:3,19; 62:1). It is very much the language of theophany (Ps. 18:12; Hab. 3:4) and the return of Christ (2 Thess. 2:8), and therefore the impression is given that this is a fake Kingdom of God, an anti-Christ, a system which appeared as the true when it was the false. As noted often so far in this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar was playing God. Daniel concludes with a picture of how the brightness of God's people shall be eternal, as opposed to the fading brightness of the image (Dan. 12:3).

"Stood before you" implies 'rose up before you'. It is the same word used of how God raises up kings (2:21), "another kingdom shall *arise* after you" (2:39), "the God of Heaven will *set up* a Kingdom" (2:44). The king was being enabled to see himself from outside himself. It is used eight times in Daniel 3 to describe how Nebuchadnezzar defied this revelation by 'setting up' another image, purely of gold, as if to say that his kingdom would in fact be eternal; he refused to accept that others would 'arise' after him.

The face of the image is emphasized in Dan. 2:31. The AV reads "His brightness was excellent", but the Chaldee word translated "brightness" is the same word translated "face" in describing how the face of the ruler of Babylon was 'changed' as the sequence of empires had its fulfilment (Dan. 4:36; 5:6,9,10). The entity represented by the entire image is focused upon the face of the man heading it up. That face was notable and awesome, just as the fourth beast entity was "strong exceedingly" (Dan. 7:7,19 s.w. "excellent"). The entire image stood "before you", i.e. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:31). The Hebrew idea of *q'bel* suggests that the image stood there opposite Nebuchadnezzar 'on his behalf', as a reflection of himself. The image is of course a person; the entity represented by it in its complete form is a reflection of a person, modelled after the king of Babylon. This all suggests that the entity which the image represents will be a personification of someone. That individual would be the caliph or prince which governs it, to whom the entity swears loyalty. And the Islamists insist that loyalty be sworn to their caliph, who in turn is seen as the incarnation of the [false] prophet Mohammed. It is this individual who is the antiChrist of the last days. The appearance of the image of the man was "terrible" (Dan. 2:31), it struck fear into the heart of the viewers. And this is the effect of the Islamic extremists on those beholding them. But we can expect more emphasis to be given to their leader, with greater prominence accorded to loyalty to him and an aura of fearfulness emanating from him. The same word translated "terrible" is used of how all nations "trembled and feared" before Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:19), and of how uniquely and unsurpassedly "terrible" was the fourth beast (Dan. 7:7,19) whose leader is an embodiment of it. The Chaldee word *resh* used for the "head" of the image is also translated 'the sum'. The head, the man whose face was on the image, was the sum of the image, he was the embodiment of it in a person.

The head was of "fine gold", and the equivalent Hebrew words are found in Gen. 2:12, where we read that "the gold of that land was good ['fine']". Which land? "Havilah", according to Gen. 2:11. Perhaps the leader of the entity will therefore be from Havilah. But there are various options in seeking to identify this area. Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on Genesis opt for a location in the Caucasus mountains- and many of the Islamic fighters are from there, especially from Chechnya. Other arguments would place it in Yemen or Saudi Arabia, which is where much of the financial and logistical support for the Islamic extremism is currently coming from, seeing they too are Sunni Moslems. Another line of enquiry is suggested by the way that "fine gold" is used to describe what was used in Yahweh's temple (2 Chron. 3:5,8; Lam. 4:1). And where did Solomon get that from? Solomon constructed the finer details of the temple from materials prepared by his father David (1 Chron. 22:14). And David received that fine gold as a present from Tou, king of Hamath (1 Chron. 18:9,10). Hamath is in Syria. Perhaps Syria is another possible source of origin for the head of the Islamic image. The true Christ will be "more precious than fine gold" (Is. 13:12); He will thus stand in opposition at the last day to the head of "fine gold" which heads up the latter day Islamic state. The manifestation of God in Christ is presented in visual form in Daniel 10:6 "His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude". This vision has outline similarities with the image of a man explained in Daniel 2. The two 'men' will face off against each other in the last days; and Jesus wins. That, in the end, is the simple message of all prophecy, especially the book of Revelation. The "head" of the image uses the same equivalent Hebrew word *rosh* as we find in the Ezekiel 38 description of ten nations being lead against Israel by a *rosh*, a leader, a prince, what the Arabs would call a caliph. Again and again, we find a specific figure being identified as the leader of the latter day invaders. The interpretation that Nebuchadnezzar was a "king of kings" (Dan. 2:37) was surely understood by him to mean that he was in some sense king over the other kings which featured in the image. Perhaps God graciously inserted this element in order to preserve Daniel's life before the king. But it will come true in the final erection of the image upon earth, in that the component nations of the image will be headed up by an individual who is effectively a Nebuchadnezzar-like figure for them all, Babylon personified in a single man.

2:32 *As for this image, its head-* Literally, the *rosh*, the great leader, of the image, the same *rosh* spoken of in Ez. 38 as leading a latter day invasion of Israel. The image is of a man; a latter day Nebuchadnezzar. For he was the head of gold.

We note that the value of the metals decreases with distance from the head of gold. Dreams reveal our subconscious thoughts and value systems; Nebuchadnezzar saw himself as most important, and as he speculated about the future, those furthest from him in time seemed less important and valuable. But that illusion was shattered by the idea of the Jewish Messiah, the little stone, destroying the image and becoming an eternal mountain on earth. We need to learn the lesson, valuing the Kingdom perspective far above our immediate prospects. It's worthy of note that the other empires, especially Medo-Persia and Rome, had far greater dominion and extent than Babylon ever had- both geographically and culturally. And yet from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective, they were inferior and insignificant simply because they were far away from him in time. The dream was in a sense *his* dream, which is

why the empires are described as “inferior” to him; this is how it was from his perspective. But the interpretation was from God, and the twist in the tail is that all these kingdoms of men are to become as nothing before the Kingdom of the God of Israel to be established on earth.

The increasing inferiority of the metals refers to how the power of the king / emperor decreased. Nebuchadnezzar was absolute, whereas as Daniel's history itself shows, the Medo-Persian kings couldn't even change their own laws and were bound by their courtiers. The Greek rulers over the land / *eretz* were weaker still, because the power of Alexander the great was shared between his four generals, who often controlled him. And the Romans delegated power to local governors, rather than the Caesar himself dominating the land of Palestine from Rome. This serves to demonstrate that the primary intention of the vision was to present a series of kings, rather than kingdoms, which would arise after Nebuchadnezzar, climaxing in the re-establishment of Israel's Kingdom. But that potential was not realized, and so it was delayed and the fulfilment extended.

Was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass- The metals decrease in value. And there is progressive disunity; from one head, to two arms, two thighs, two legs, and then very divided feet. The Persian empire was more extensive than Babylon; the degeneration was perhaps in Nebuchadnezzar's own mind. And the image represented kings or kingdoms who dominated the *eretz* promised to Abraham. How extensive their dominion was elsewhere isn't therefore germane to the vision. It could be argued therefore that Babylon had the tightest control over the land; and the powers which followed had less control and allowed more autonomy. This declining value of the metals has its best fit interpretation in the initial fulfilment that was possible in Nebuchadnezzar and his immediate dynasty. The other interpretations fail to maximize on this obvious feature. The sequence of metals (gold, silver, brass and iron) is found again in Dan. 5:4,23 in describing the materials used by the Babylonian kings for their idols. It's as if they wanted to show that actually all the metals of the image were comprehended within their empire- and they would last for ever. This again suggests that the most natural, immediate fulfilment of the image was in Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty.

Dan 2:33 *Its legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay-* The legs of iron more comfortably represent the latter part of the Grecian monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt, the former governed by the family of the Seleucidae, from Seleucus, the latter by that of the Lagidae, from Ptolemaeus Lagus . The idea that the two legs represent Eastern and Western Rome [centered in Constantinople and Rome] is problematic, in that these areas were not part of the land promised to Abraham. The image prophecy speaks specifically of kingdoms reigning over “the earth”, the land of Israel. Turkey [Constantinople] and Italy [Rome] were not part of that land. And they will have their revival in the last days in the form of the feet and ten toes- split between two groups, two entities which between them dominate the land promised to Abraham. As explained on :43 and :1, the prophecy had a number of potential fulfilments; one of which was that the Messiah figure could have re-established Israel's Kingdom during the time of the Greeks, or in the immediate aftermath of the conflict between the kings of the north and south described in Dan. 11. These two kings, the two sections of the Greek empire which affected Israel, were matched by the two legs of the image.

The feet of clay stood on the ground, but Babylon was built on clay. This is why the city was built primarily with mud-bricks made from clay, as there was not much stone nearby. The image is therefore presented as having feet of clay which were part of the clay beneath them. It was grounded on the earth. The significance of Babylon being built on clay, and the image standing therefore upon clay, is that clay is a symbol for Israel (Is. 64:8; Jer. 18:6). The Jeremiah 18 reference is significant in that God says that Israel are as clay and He will break them in pieces because they didn't respond to His appeals. The very same image is used of the destruction of the feet of clay in Daniel 2. The clay is specifically "potter's clay" (Dan. 2:41). And that is really the key to the interpretation, because Jeremiah 18 speaks of Israel as the clay in the hands of the Divine potter.

2:34 *You saw until-* The original here is quite complex; the GNB does well with "While you were looking at it...", and this forges the connection with Nebuchadnezzar's sudden fall as he looked at great Babylon which he had built, in pride and surety that it would stand for ever (Dan. 4:29-31). This was a primary fulfilment of the image being toppled; it was evidence even during the period contemporary with Daniel that the image prophecy would come true. And his humiliation in Dan. 4 need never have happened had he accepted the teaching of the image of Dan. 2 as God's word to him.

A stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces-

The image was an idol, clearly made with human hands. It is in contrast to this stone made without hands. Initially, the reference is to Nebuchadnezzar subconsciously worshipping himself. Literally, "a stone was cut out which was not in hands". The idea is that it was not thrown by hands but had its own energy and moved at its own impetus, or thrown by an unseen hand. The same unseen Divine hand that was to write upon the wall later. This would speak of the potential possible for the exiles to have been filled with the Spirit in order to overthrow the great mountain of Babylon. The grinding to powder uses the same word as in Is. 41:15: "you shall thresh the mountains [the one great mountain, of Babylon] and beat them small and will make the hills like chaff. You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, and the whirlwind will scatter them". This clearly connects with the destruction of the image in Dan. 2. But the Jews preferred to flunk the challenge and potential. The stone first hits the feet, breaks them, and then breaks the rest of the image. The ten toes may have had an initial possible fulfilment in the Jewish exiles slaying the ten sons of Haman, recorded in such detail in Esther 9. Quite possibly, with Mordecai the Jew and Esther the Jewish queen effectively governing Persia, the little stone could have become the mountain of God's Kingdom. But the Jews failed to live up to that potential.

The 'breaking in pieces' of the colossus is described using the same word as is used about how Israel will break in pieces their latter day enemies (Is. 41:15; Mic. 4:13). Mic. 4:11,12 predict that the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem in order that they may be threshed there. It is Babylon who will be threshed in the last day (Jer. 51:33), so we can understand these collected together nations as all under the control of Babylon. Which is what the image requires, because it was what Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon effectively saw as it were in the mirror, it was him, with his face. This again shows that the best fit initial application of the entire image is to Babylon headed up by Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews refused to be God's threshing instruments, and so Babylon was not threshed at this time in this intended way. And so the longer term applications unfolded, as the kaleidoscope was again turned to

present another possible picture. We note that unbelieving Israel are described as chaff (Is. 5:24; 33:11; Jer. 23:28; Hos. 13:3; Zeph. 2:2)

These words are quoted specifically about the final judgment of the Lord Jesus in Lk. 20:18: "Everyone who falls upon that stone will be broken in pieces; but upon whomsoever it falls, it will grind him to powder". Although this doesn't preclude other earlier potential applications. The Lord at His return will do what Israel ought to have done earlier. Just as the suffering servant was initially intended to be Israel, but was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus who was the true, ultimate Israel. The Lord Jesus surely alluded to this in saying that His resurrection would be a rebuilding of the temple "without hands" (Mk. 14:58). It could be that He perceived the possibility of the smiting of the image as being fulfilled in His resurrection. Thus the vision had several potential fulfilments which were not realized. This would explain the gap in fulfilment between the end of the iron leg domination of Israel and their land, and the latter day existence of the ten toes / horns. This apparent awkwardness in the symbology can be explained by Israel not being in their land from then until our last days; but it can also be understood in terms of a reworked fulfilment, after the earlier possible fulfilments were disallowed by Israel's lack of response. The breaking in pieces of the feet appears to be separate to the breaking in pieces of the rest of the metals ["then...", :35]. This could speak of two stages of judgment at the Lord's return.

But as explained on :1, the initial, potential fulfilment was in the remnant of Judah who "broke lose" (GNB) from the mountain of Israel in Babylon, and who could have broken up the hotchpotch of nations then dominating the land, and re-established the Kingdom.

2:35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors-

We note the inverse order of the metals, repeated in :45, possibly speaking of the order of their destruction. The point is laboured in :44 that the stone "will crush all these kingdoms". They all have to exist in some form together. The four beasts of Dan. 7:11,12 likewise have their dominion taken away but their lives are prolonged for a time. They are all in existence together. Any continuous historical interpretation has to struggle to offer a snug fit interpretation of this. The point is stressed that the metals are "broken to pieces *together*" by the little stone. The image was not just 'an' image, but a together, united image, "one" image (:31). The different metals were united together in one form and person, as a conscious imitation of Nebuchadnezzar. The best fit interpretation is that the image refers to Nebuchadnezzar and his immediate dynasty.

"To pieces... like the chaff" suggests a breaking up into fine parts. Combining the visual images of Daniel 2 with those of the beasts in Daniel 7, we see a progressive sense of breakup. Babylon was headed by one king, Medo-Persia is presented as a divided kingdom, split between the two arms of the Medes and Persians; then the third Kingdom is likened to a leopard with four heads, referring to the four states that came after Alexander the Great. The fourth empire was divided into two legs (in Daniel 2), and in Daniel 7, it has ten horns, who have conflicts with each other. These are the equivalent of the ten toes, which don't mix with each other. Then, the entire image is ground to pieces and becomes like tiny pieces of chaff. And the ultimate unity of God's Kingdom on earth is then established. We see in society generally, and especially in the territory of the land promised to Abraham, a progressive breaking up. And this will continue, until it is confirmed by the Lord's return breaking into even smaller pieces.

And the wind carried them away, so that no place was found for them-

The Aramaic word for "place" is used in :39 "And after you", 'in your place'. Nebuchadnezzar too was not to have any "place". The various metals were all left with no "place"; but this is the very word repeatedly used in the Aramaic section of Ezra to describe the "place" of the temple (Ezra 5:15 "the house of God built in its place"; Ezra 6:3,5,7). The focus of the image is therefore upon Jerusalem and the temple mount. We note too that an unhewn stone is an altar stone (Ex. 20:25); again the hint is that the stone becomes an altar, grows to be a temple, a Kingdom... and then fills the earth. The mountain of Yahweh's house will thus be established, as Isaiah had prophesied.

The stone was taken from one mountain and became another mountain. As Is. 2:2 foresaw, "the mountain of Yahweh's house shall be established on the top of the [other, pre-existing] mountains". Elsewhere in Daniel, the mountain is defined specifically as Jerusalem: "Your city Jerusalem, even Your holy mountain" (Dan. 9:16). The Babylonian kingdom could have been overthrown by the exiles as a stone cut out from that mountain, as Haggai and Zechariah envisioned; establishing themselves there as an independent kingdom and then using the instability at the end of the Babylonian empire and start of the Persian empire to overthrow the Babylonian - Persian empires. And re-establish God's Kingdom.

The idea is that there was no evidence for their existence in the place where they had once stood so proudly. And that is the end of man and all his power, wealth, possessions, career, family, science and achievement. Ultimately, it will disappear without a trace. Nobody and nothing will be remembered eternally for its greatness, erudition or achievement. All will be subsumed beneath God's Kingdom. This phrase is quoted in Rev. 20:11, where the "heavens and earth" at the time of the Lord's coming are likewise carried away and no place found for them. This means that the "heavens and earth" in view at the end of Revelation is the colossus of Daniel 2, the image represents the system which shall dominate the land promised to Abraham in the last days. Here conclusively we see that the main thrust of the prophecy is not some continuous historical account of world history, but rather a depiction of the latter day entity which will dominate the *eretz* / land promised to Abraham at the time of the Lord's return. The prophecy insists that the image stands complete when it is struck.

And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth- This is the picture of the "whole earth" / *eretz* / land of Israel being filled with God's Kingdom. This is the time of Is. 2:2,3; Hab. 2:14 and other Kingdom prophecies about the mountain of Yahweh being established on the temple mount and growing from there, not least Is. 11:8,9 which speaks of the earth / land being filled with Yahweh's glory at the time when His Kingdom, His "holy mountain", is established. But the rock / stone is laid by Yahweh in Zion, as a cornerstone upon which the returned exiles would build His temple (Is. 28:16,17). The LXX, quoted in the New Testament, speaks of this stone as a person ("He who believes in *Him...*"), and the NT applies it to the Lord Jesus. He is the rock / stone rejected by the builders etc. of Ps. 118:22. The stone from the mountain comes to the plain and destroys the image, and becomes a great mountain centered on and beginning from that point. The prophecy is about Babylon's dominion over God's land and specifically Jerusalem; it is as it were upon Jerusalem that the image stands, and the stone hits the image at that point. Zech. 3:8-10 is very clear about the connection between Messiah and the stone which is to be laid in Zion, the temple mount: "I will bring forth My servant, the Branch. For, behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes: behold, I will engrave its engraving", says Yahweh of Armies, 'and I will

remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day', says Yahweh of Armies, 'every man will invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree'". The stone / rock is Messiah, the seven eyes which are the engraving may refer to the seven letters in the Hebrew "Holiness to Yahweh" which was inscribed upon the High Priestly mitre, and leads in the Messianic Kingdom when every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree.

The "great mountain" of God's Kingdom fills the whole earth, but the mountain initially begins at one point on the planet. Elsewhere in Daniel, the mountain is defined specifically as Jerusalem: "Your city Jerusalem, even Your holy mountain" (Dan. 9:16). The toes are therefore specifically dominating Jerusalem at the initial point of impact of the stone upon the land. And this is what we would expect from an Islamist confederacy dominating the land of Israel- Jerusalem is the key issue for them. And we know from Zechariah 14 that "the city shall be taken".

I suggest that the primary interpretation refers to the remnant of Judah, the mountain of God's Kingdom, which returned to the temple in Jerusalem at the time when it was dominated by a brief coalition of peoples sent there by the Babylonians, some strong and some weak. Being cut out without [human] hands means that it was of God; and Ezra and Nehemiah continually speak of how it was the hand *of God* which enabled the restoration. "The mountain" so often refers to the Kingdom of God in Israel ruled by a Davidic king, and particularly to the temple mount (Dt. 33:19; Ps. 30:17; 48:1; 78:54; Is. 2:2,3; 11:9; 25:6-10; 40:9; 56:7; 57:7,13; 65:11,25; 66:20; Jer. 31:23; Ez. 20:40; Zech. 8:3 etc.). The restoration prophecies are full of pictures of the restored Zion at the time of the restoration as a huge mountain dominating the *eretz*. The mountain of Babylon was to be burnt and replaced with the mountain of Yahweh's restored Kingdom (Jer. 51:25; Zech. 4:7). It was the returned remnant who were to destroy this mountain (Is. 41:15,16 "You will thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and will make the hills like chaff. You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away"); they were to be the little stone. Having spoken of Babylon as a mountain to be destroyed, we then read that it was a little stone which was to bring Babylon down (Jer. 51:25,63 "Behold, I am against you, destroying mountain... I will make you a burnt mountain... when you have made an end of reading this book, that you shall bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: and you shall say, Thus shall Babylon sink"). Restored Jerusalem was to become the stone (Zech. 12:3 "I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples"). That stone was to as it were grow, stone by stone, as the walls and temple were rebuilt (Hag. 2:15). This is the significance of the enigmatic little stone which was to bring about the restoration of the Kingdom at the time of Zech. 3:9; 4:7,10 ("the stone that I have set before Joshua... Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you are a plain; and he will bring out the capstone [cp. the stone] with shouts of 'Grace, grace, to it!')". I have suggested that the command to rebuild the temple according to the specifications of Ez. 40-48 was a conditional prophecy of what the exiles could and ought to have achieved. The scenario there is all about a mountain (Ez. 40:2; 43:12). This is why Daniel prayed for the restoration of the mountain of Yahweh (Dan. 9:20)- i.e. for the vision of the mountain in Dan. 2 to come true in his time. But this was disallowed by the refusal of the exiles to follow the path of the Spirit, and all these prophecies of the mountain being established have been rescheduled and reapplied to the Lord's return (Rev. 21:10). Judah were not the little stone; the prophecy is to come true in the stone of the Lord Jesus, cut out without hands by God through the virgin birth. We are so familiar with this application that we can overlook the initially intended potential application to the Judah of Daniel's day.

Note that the stone was cut out of a mountain, but after hitting the image, it becomes a mountain, filling the whole earth. This second mountain is interpreted as the Kingdom of God coming on earth. Biblically, mountains represent people. The equivalent in Daniel 7 is that the kingdoms of the world are given to "*the people* of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:27). The first mountain likewise, therefore, refers to people. Out of the mountain of humanity, or perhaps the mountain of the Hebrew people (Ex. 15:17; Ps. 48:1; Is. 2:2 "the mountain of Yahweh's house / family / people will be exalted"), the Lord Jesus as the stone was cut out without human hands, born through the virgin birth. But the people of God will finally all become like Him. He as the stone becomes them, the mountain. We will finally manifest the Lord Jesus in totality, eternally. And if I am correct in understanding "the mountain" as specifically referring to God's people Israel, then the second mountain, the Kingdom of God on earth, is in fact the eternal and glorious re-establishment of the Kingdom of God as it was in the form of Israel. And this is indeed Bible teaching elsewhere (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:7 and see more evidence in my *Bible Basics* chapter 5).

Dan 2:36 *This is the dream; and we will tell its interpretation before the king-* Again Daniel speaks of how "we" will give the interpretation. He was not only trying to get a good deal for his friends. He clearly saw that although he was the front man, the answer was given as a result of their prayers and he was intensely aware of this. He considered those who pray for something to be part and parcel of the fulfilment, and worthy of reward for the fulfilment. A great encouragement to those who pray but are not apparently in the front line of action. The "we" reflects how Daniel was eager to save his three friends. He had asked them for their prayers, and therefore although the answer was given specifically to him, he felt that it was effectively given to them all. Daniel has expressed in 2:23 that God "has now made known to *me* what *we* desired of You; for You have made known to *us* the king's matter". This is the unity which prayer develops. It could be that the friends came with Daniel, and that this incident is what brought about the situation in Dan. 1:20,21, where Daniel and his friends are found far superior than others in the matter of interpreting dreams.

And yet there is another possibility. Daniel has emphasized how the words he is speaking are not from himself, but from God, who has given the interpretation through Daniel. The "we" could therefore refer to God and Daniel, reflecting the closeness Daniel felt to God.

Dan 2:37 *You, O king, are a king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory-* The dream of Daniel 2 ascribes to Nebuchadnezzar "the Kingdom, power, strength and glory" (Dan. 2:37), but this is exactly the language of *God's* kingdom. The emphasis of passages like 1 Chron. 29:11 is that *Yours* is the Kingdom, power, strength and glory (as in Ps. 145:11; Mt. 6:13). Nebuchadnezzar is thus presented as an anti-Christ and the Kingdoms of men as a fake imitation of *God's* Kingdom. By saying that God had given Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, Daniel was bravely undercutting Nebuchadnezzar's idea that he had attained it by his gods and by his own strength. Until the time of Nebuchadnezzar's father, Babylon had been beneath Assyria. Babylon at this point, very early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, was not so widely powerful. But it was powerful over Israel, and that was the point and focus of the prophecy. And the proportions of the image are appropriate to the length of domination over Israel.

The head of gold specifically represented Nebuchadnezzar, whose empire ended 23 years later. He was ruler of the neo-Babylonian empire; "Babylon" as an empire

had been around a long time before him. But the Medo-Persian empire did not come into the ascendancy until many years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. And Babylon and Media co-existed for some time. Contrary to the diagrams of the image with clear cut off points between the empires, Persia became the dominant regional power before Babylon fell. This is an example of where the four empires approach doesn't fit as snugly as the idea of Babylonian kings. The subsequent kings or kingdoms were to be "inferior" to Babylon, and that fits best with the idea of the Babylonian kings after Nebuchadnezzar, and not with the four empires theory. The best 'snug fit' of the prophecy to interpretation would be if after three generations or kings from Nebuchadnezzar, the little stone of Israel destroyed their Gentile dominators and established God's Kingdom on earth, the mountain of Yahweh's house expanding ever outwards from Jerusalem. This would have been at the end of the 70 years prophesied for their exile. And Haggai and Zechariah definitely speak of the destruction of the mountain of Babylon by the exiles, and the subsequent re-establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

Nebuchadnezzar was not the first king of Babylon; but he was the "head" / rosh of Gentile dominion over the land when Israel had been "removed" (cp. Jer. 15:4; 24:9; 29:18). The kingdoms all existed before the next one and overlapped with each other, becoming absorbed into the next one, But what is in view is their domination of the land and people of God and Jerusalem specifically, that was to become the great mountain. This fits most snugly with the dream being about the immediate dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar.

The dream deeply worried him and arose from his concern about what would happen to him. His murder of the wise men betrays his insecurity regarding an internal putsch, and he clearly worried about external factors taking over his empire. The statue was 'him', with his face, but reflected his own fear that he had feet of clay and that he was deeply divided within himself.

Dan 2:38 *Wherever the children of men dwell, the animals of the field and the birds of the sky has He given into your hand, and has made you to rule over them all: you are the head of gold-* The parallel vision of Nebuchadnezzar as a great tree in Dan. 4 states that the tree was in sight of "all the earth". Darius wrote to all the earth about the greatness of Daniel's God. But certainly not to New Zealand... All attempts to interpret the "earth" or sphere of domination as "the known world" or "world empires" have to fail here. "The known world" of course depends where on the planet you are standing! Clearly "the earth" is not planet earth, but a more local territory- and the land promised to Abraham is the obvious and Biblical answer. The allusion is to the Jeremiah passages which speak of Nebuchadnezzar as having been placed over the Jews and their land; they were given 'into his hand'. This confirms our thinking that the image is specifically about kings and kingdoms who dominate God's people and their land.

The allusion is clearly to Jer. 27:5-7: "I have made the earth [land- of Israel], the men and the animals that are on the surface of the earth / land, by My great power and by My outstretched arm; and I give it to whom it seems right to Me. Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the animals of the field also have I given him to serve him. All the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land come". This prophecy foresaw Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty lasting another 2 generations. This would fit the idea of the image referring to his immediate dynasty; although it seems the image added another phase or two to this schema. "The time of [judgment of] his own land" was clearly variable. The same is found in Is. 14:22 where God says that

He will "cut off from Babylon name and remnant and son and grandchild". And yet he himself failed to remain humble to the God of Israel, made an image entirely of gold in rebellion against the image prophecy, and was made like an animal rather than continuing to rule over the animals (Dan. 4:29,30). He like Adam was set up as ruler over the land and animals, but failed. He should have accepted that the image of Dan. 2 was himself, for it was common to represent a dynasty as an image of that nature. But he wanted it to be all about himself personally.

The animals and birds were even under Babylon's control, according to this; although as Babylon was the great first beast of Dan. 7, these lesser animals likely refer to the peoples of the land / *eretz* promised to Abraham. If Babylon reigned over "wherever the children of men dwell" it is clear that the "earth" and "children of men" have a limited, local definition; for Babylon didn't reign over all the earth. But it is the beasts and birds of the sky who later are prophesied as feasting upon Babylon (Rev. 19:17). This is the equivalent of the horns on the beast hating the whore of Babylon who rides it (Rev. 17:16); the destruction of the Babylon system will ultimately be more by Moslem infighting than direct bolts of destruction from God. Indeed, this was historically God's preferred method of destroying Israel's invaders in Old Testament times. The head or *rosh* of gold strictly referred to Nebuchadnezzar personally rather than the kingdom of Babylon; as explained earlier, the prophecy had a potential fulfilment in a series of kings who would arise, culminating in the restoration of Israel's kingdom under Messiah. But this fulfilment was deferred until the last days, when the image shall stand complete, headed up by an individual, a *rosh*, "the king of the north" of Dan. 11, the same *rosh* who leads the confederacy of ten nations against the Lord Jesus in Ez. 38.

The language here recalls what happened to Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 5:21; he was driven from "the children of men" instead of reigning over them, and became like the animals and birds he was intended to reign over. The idea would be that he had been "given" by God such dominion, but it was taken away from him even during his lifetime. This was an attempt to get him to realize that indeed his kingdom would pass from him to another, he was not immortal; but he was given a wonderful preview of this whilst he was still alive, so that he would repent and accept the import of this vision. We marvel at how God tries to save even people like him and Pharaoh, whom we would likely consider not worth even approaching with the Gospel of God's Kingdom.

"You are the head of gold" surely suggests that the king saw his own face in the head of gold. The whole image was him; but he had feet of clay, was top heavy, and was only standing upright by some other power- the God of Israel. Just as he was represented by the entire tree in Dan. 4:8 with all the animals beneath it (Dan. 4:9, just as in Dan. 2:39)- and the whole tree was chopped down, just as the whole image was shattered.

The prisms of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal found at Nineveh portrayed the kings as statues of themselves, made "out of silver, gold and shining copper". Clearly Nebuchadnezzar had in mind to do the same. And he does so in Daniel 3. But Daniel was bravely showing him that he had feet of clay and would be destroyed- unless he humbled himself. The dream was indeed the thoughts of the king's own head. And yet he found the image of himself terrifying. It was dead and lifeless as it stood, and being top heavy, was likely to fall at any moment.

Such images made of precious metals, with gold on the head, were typical of large idols. There are multiple descriptions of them in inscriptions. Idols made of gold or silver were often in human form just like the image seen, as confirmed in Ps.

115:4-8: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands; they have mouths, but they don't speak, they have eyes, but they don't see. They have ears, but they don't hear, they have noses, but they don't smell. They have hands, but they don't feel; they have feet, but they don't walk, neither do they speak through their throat. Those who make them will be like them; yes, everyone who trusts in them. Israel, trust in Yahweh!". We note the reference to the same metals in Dan. 5:23: "the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone". Yet this idol was headed up by the face of Nebuchadnezzar. And he repeats the idea by then creating an image purely of gold, as if to say that he as the head of gold would last for ever- in contrast to the Daniel 2 image. Nebuchadnezzar was being presented with the fact that he had set himself up as an idol. But he had feet of clay and the passage of time would reveal his folly and replacement by God's eternal King [the stone] and Kingdom [the mountain]. For Nebuchadnezzar was effectively worshipping himself. Daniel was so brave to give the interpretation- for the connection between Nebuchadnezzar and the image was clear.

Dan 2:39 *After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you; and then a third kingdom of brass, which shall rule over all the land-* The second kingdom is almost glossed over, which would be appropriate if the reference is to Media, rather than Medo-Persia. We should not assume that there are no other possibilities apart from the sequence Babylon- Medo-Persia- Greece- Rome. Each kingdom is to reign over the earth / land of Israel. The second and third kingdoms could refer to Media and Persia; and the fourth kingdom to the Greeks, split into the two parts of the empire which affected Israel- the kings of the north and south of Daniel 11, i.e. the Syrian [Seleucid] part of the Greek empire and the Egyptian [Ptolemaic] part of it. These potential possibilities are because God's purpose is relatively open ended; the Messiah and the restoration of Israel's Kingdom could have come at any point in the sequence, and the ideal initial scenario was that there would be a sequence of kings [not kingdoms] after Nebuchadnezzar which would climax in the Kingdom of God and Messiah's coming. All these potential fulfilments were disallowed by Israel's lack of repentance. The next kingdom was to be "inferior"; but Persia was greater than Babylon in territory and other ways. The inferiority may have been in that their rulership over the Jews was not as powerful as that of the Babylonians, even allowing the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem. However, the Chaldee for "inferior" is identical to the word used for "land" in this same verse. The idea is better that this second kingdom is a kingdom [a king having dominion over] the land [promised to Abraham]. The third kingdom rules over "all the land", perhaps paralleling the idea of the second kingdom being king over the land / *eretz*. Perhaps the idea was that the third kingdom would rule over all the territory promised to Abraham; from the Euphrates to the Nile. This would have been true of the Persian and Greek empires but not strictly of Babylon nor of Media. The Babylonians didn't rule the area of Arabia eastward from the Euphrates, but only the fertile crescent; whereas the Persians did. This would make the second kingdom Media, and the Persians the third with the Greeks as the legs of iron, the two legs representing the kings of north and south as explained in Dan. 11. But this is only in the continuous historical fulfilment, which is not that significant compared to the intended latter day fulfilment, when the entire image stands complete, to be destroyed by the Lord's return.

We also observe that the book of Daniel itself provides some history. There are four kings specifically named in Daniel: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian. This must be significant. It presents a sequence of three kingdoms: Babylon (Dan. 1-5; 7:1, 8:1), Media (Dan. 6:1; 9:1) and Persia (Dan. 6:29;

10:1). This sequence is presented after Dan. 2 (in Dan. 6:1,29), and also after the similar vision of the beasts in Dan. 7 (in Dan. 8:1; 9:1; 10:1). It is always preferable to match Bible prophecy against the history presented and contained within the Bible itself, rather than having to totally depend upon access to extra-Biblical history. The LXX has the chapters of Daniel in a slightly different order, but more clearly following this sequence of Babylon-Media-Persia: 1–4 about Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon; 7–8 about Belshazzar of Babylon; 5 about the end of Belshazzar's reign; 6,9 about Darius the Mede; 10–12 about the first year of Cyrus of Persia. A prophet was shown to be true if his predictions came true; therefore prophets had to have prophecies which fulfilled in some form in their lifetime. Daniel met this admirably. The sequence of empires would then be Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece. The divided state of the toes would then represent the confused situation after the death of Alexander the Great, and the two legs would represent the two halves of the Greek empire. In this case, the stone could have destroyed the image and established God's Kingdom in their time. The real possibility of fulfilment at the time of the Greeks would explain why the visions of Daniel are written in Aramaic, the language of the Greeks, and not Hebrew. It was primarily relevant for their time. It has been argued that Aramaic would not have been spoken in Babylon at Daniel's time, so this makes it all the more amazing. I have no problem in believing God could inspire Daniel to record visions in a language he didn't personally understand. The potential Messiah at the time may have been Judas Maccabaeus in his struggle against the Greek Antiochus IV Epiphanes. But he too failed to be the Messiah figure. But this didn't happen, even though the post exilic prophets [Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi] all definitely present this possibility, of the coming of Messiah and re-establishment of the Kingdom of God. But that scenario was then readjusted to the possibility of the sequence being Babylon-Media Persia-Greece-Rome. But that also didn't work out; Messiah didn't come because the required preconditions weren't met. And so there are other scenarios possible, expanded upon by the transference of the metals of the image to the various beasts of Daniel 7, which are then developed further into other scenarios in Revelation.

In the Antiochus context, it could be argued that the accounts of the behaviour of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius all mention things which Antiochus Epiphanes did: Despoiling and blaspheming the temple (1:2), threatening Jews with death (2:12-13), erecting idols (3:1), suffering from madness (4:30), blaspheming the Jewish religion (5:2), prohibiting Jewish religious practices and usurping Divine prerogatives (6:8-10). In this case we could then understand the image of Dan. 2, which was of Nebuchadnezzar, coming true in the person of Antiochus. And he could have been the one felled by the stone, had the Jews been willing.

The kingdom was to "arise", to 'stand up', to 'begin to exist'. The sudden existence of other kingdoms doesn't fit history, unless we interpret the dominion of the empires as being specifically Jerusalem or God's people or land. And yet the initial immediate possibility was that the metals were indeed literal "kings" who would follow Nebuchadnezzar, culminating in the appearance of a Messiah figure, the destruction of Babylon and the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. Just as spoken of in Haggai and Zechariah. This has the obvious advantage of Nebuchadnezzar heading up the image, as if the entire image is Babylon. If he is the head, then he has some relation to the rest of the image- it is logically his body politic, his dynasty of the next three or so generations. This makes more natural sense of the reference to "kings", even though the term can legitimately be understood as 'kingdoms'. If solely 'kingdoms' or empires were primarily in view, then a different word would have been used to "kings". And

there were other kings of Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar; the 'four empires' view requires that Medo-Persia came immediately after Nebuchadnezzar. He personally was the head of gold, not the empire of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's successors were progressively inferior to him. This alone makes sense of the decreasing values of the metals in the image. And there was no very clear break between Babylon and Medo-Persia as required by the traditional view. Likewise there was still a Babylonian kingdom under the Greeks [Seleucids], paying lip service loyalty to the Seleucids. The little stone cut out without human hand is the very phrase used of the destruction of Antiochus Epiphanes, who "shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand" (Dan. 8:25). Clearly there was a possible potential fulfilment of the Dan. 2 prophecy at his time. But again, it didn't happen and the prophecy was again reapplied and reinterpreted.

But the potential initial fulfilment didn't happen. The later possible fulfilments, and the final fulfilment in the last days, are all not ideal fits to the initial prophecy. We have to accept that the essence of the prophecy and not the details was fulfilled, with aspects of the initial prophecy being reworked and reapplied to the later potential fulfilments so that there is not a 'best fit' between the fulfilment and the original detail. This can be seen in so many other prophecies, especially those of the potentials possible for the return of the exiles and their re-establishment of God's Kingdom under a Messiah figure.

Dan 2:40 *The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, because iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things; and as iron that crushes all these, shall it break in pieces and crush-* This was not the general attitude of the Romans to the earth / land of Israel, although it has some relevance to the Greeks under Antiochus (see on :39). Such a cruel destruction of the land looks ahead to some future, last day fulfilment, when the image stands complete upon the land promised to Abraham. "Crush" is the equivalent of the Hebrew *raah*, "evil"; this system was to be the embodiment of the evil determined against God's people, which is how "evil" is usually used in the prophets. The fourth kingdom, like the fourth beast of Dan. 7, is to break in pieces those on the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham. But in turn, the little stone will "break in pieces and destroy" the fourth kingdom along with the entire image, represented by how the bones of Daniel's persecutors were broken to pieces[s.w.] by the lions. The connection demonstrates that the judgments paid out by the latter day abusers of God's people will in turn be given to them at the Lord's return. They will be judged by the Lord as they judged. This is a major theme of Revelation, which describes how the judgments upon the land poured out by the latter day beast are in turn meted out to the beast system in the same territory. This is all foreseen here in Daniel; those who break in pieces the land are to be broken in pieces.

John Drake has some interesting comments here: "If you take the time to look at the history of the middle east you will find that the empires that succeeded Greece and the division into the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires was not Rome but the Parthians, then the Sassanids and then Islam. It was Islam that overthrew the Eastern Roman Empire in Byzantium. Rome never fulfilled the requirements of Daniel 7:23 and Dan 2:40 in crushing breaking and trampling all the others. Rome was able to conquer less than 1/3 of the Seleucid Empire (have a look at history). The Roman Empire does not qualify as the Empire of Iron in Nebuchadnezzar's dream because it did not successfully conquer and crush Babylon, Persia and Greece. It left Babylon untouched, could not conquer Persia, and its own culture was subservient to Greek culture and language. Rome did not crush any of other three empires. On the other

hand Islam was "different from all the other kingdoms" Dan 7:23. It has one culture (Islam), a different language (Arabic and Farsi in Iran) and one religion. The other empires had multiple gods, cultures and language, as did Rome.

The divided nature of Islam is very evident in the Sunni and Shia factions of Islam and fits well with the iron legs and the divided nature of the feet. They are one in purpose – the expansion of Islam to rule the world together with the destruction of Israel. The fourth beast of Daniel is the same beast that John sees in Revelation. It is made up of components of the first three beasts. It like a lion (Babylon), looked like a bear (Medes and Persians) and looked like a leopard (Greece). This surely indicates that the beast must be identified with the same geographical areas as those in Daniel and that was Mesopotamia. Bear in mind also that the vision of Dan. 2 was given to Nebuchadnezzar, not Daniel and not Israel. It was about Babylon and kingdoms that would arise in Mesopotamia.

The mountains upon which the harlot of Revelation sits represent seven kings. Five are fallen. One is and one is yet to come. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece fell before the time of John. The one that existed at the time of John was Rome and one was to come. The one that came was Islam and later the Ottoman Empire. Muslims worldwide and particularly Turkey now seek to revive the caliphate and this I believe is the eighth head of the beast represents the 7 previous empires and it will have dominion over the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece as represented by the leopard, bear and the lion".

The language used about the iron is exactly that used of the effect of the little stone: "Iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things; and as iron that crushes all these, shall it break in pieces and crush", GNB "shatter and crush all the earlier empires" (:40); "It shall crush to powder and consume all these kingdoms... the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold" (:44,45). Note the repetition of "all these [kingdoms]". What are we to make of this obvious connection? The iron legs could have destroyed all the previous empires or kings, but they didn't; because the little stone does this, and also breaks the iron and crushes it to powder. Here is where the popular idea that the legs = Rome is hardly a snug fit interpretation. Because in what sense did Rome crush Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was represented by the head of gold? And why is it that the little stone does to the iron and all other metals what the iron was supposed to have done to them? We are surely forced to accept the idea of possible, potential fulfilments. And the iron, whatever it represents, didn't achieve what it could have done. Or we could see irony here in the connection between the destruction caused by the iron, and that caused by the little stone. As if to say that the little stone *actually* does what the iron wanted to do or claimed to do.

The possibility of fulfilment at the time of the Greeks is specifically taught in the vision of Dan. 8, which is interpreted for us as referring to the Greeks and how the empire would be split between various "horns". One of them would be a "king of fierce appearance" who would persecute God's people and then be destroyed by the coming of Messiah- described in the very language of Dan. 2:44 about the stone without human hand: "he shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand" (Dan. 8:25). These things, Daniel is told, are specifically about "the latter time... it concerns the appointed time of the end... the vision concerns the time of the end" (Dan. 8:17,19). But this "end" was envisaged as the Messianic destruction of the aggressive Greek horn, Antiochus Epiphanes. But

that didn't happen. Not because prophecy failed, but because God's people failed to rise up their potential. And prophecy almost has to be like this, a conversation, a dialogue, between God and man, taking into account human freewill. For otherwise, the existence of prophecy [in the sense of prediction] would mean God's dominance of human freewill to make things work out as He predicted. Even the predictions concerning the Lord Jesus were of a potential nature- for He had freewill, and as we see in Gethsemane, was capable of disobedience and not going the Father's way. He did, and so the prophecies were in fact fulfilled in Him. But their fulfilment in Him was not totally certain, in that He had freewill and the possibility of failure and disobedience.

The two legs in their Greek application would refer to the kings of the north and south, the kingdoms of the Seleucidae and Lagidae, in Syria, and Egypt. We have their history recorded in detail in Dan. 11. The ten toes would then refer to the confused reigns that immediately followed Alexander. And Daniel 11 explains those weaknesses in detail.

The legs of iron are repeated in the vision of Daniel's fourth beast with ten horns. The fulfilment requires that there should have ten kings reigning either simultaneously or consecutively; three of them must be overthrown by an eleventh king, who is far greater than the other kings. This 11th king is to be cruel and blasphemous against the Jewish people, and will be destroyed by the coming of Messiah and direct conflict with Him. These requirements [except destruction by Messiah] simply don't fit the situation at the end of the Roman empire, unless we cherry pick the history. But it does fit the Greek empire, with the 11th cruel king clearly referring to Antiochus Epiphanes. And the vision of Daniel 8 is absolutely clear about this. Daniel 8 is a clear prophecy, with specific interpretation relating to Greece attached to it, which is much neglected by those who simply repeat the hackneyed interpretations of Daniel 2 and 7. Antiochus is clearly the "little horn" of Daniel 8, but this is the same little horn which arises from the fourth beast in Dan. 7. Consider the similarities: Dan. 7:8 = Dan. 8:23; Dan. 7:20 = Dan. 8:9; Dan. 7:21,25 = Dan. 8:10; Dan. 7:25 = Dan. 8:11,25; Dan. 7:25 changing times and seasons = Dan. 8:11,12, and 1 Macc. 1:44-51 records how Antiochus forced the Jews to stop offering the daily sacrifice and Jewish feasts, and desecrated the altar with pigs' blood. The period in which the daily sacrifices were stopped is described as 2300 mornings and evenings (Dan. 8:13,14), that is 1150 days when the twice daily [morning and evening] sacrifices were stopped. This is the exact period between when Antiochus began forbidding the daily sacrifices in Autumn of BC167 to the day of his death in the spring of BC163. There is no other very compelling fulfilment of the 2300 mornings and evenings. Indeed we could argue that on some days, there were more daily offerings made, because of the feasts etc. And that would make 2300 evening-morning sacrifices come to about 1260 days, the figure elsewhere used for the period of domination by the fourth beast / little horn. Antiochus would be destroyed "without hand" (Dan. 8:25), the same language of the image being destroyed without human hand. Thus the fourth beast from which the horns come, i.e. the legs of iron, is clearly interpreted in Dan. 8 as Greece. Antiochus Epiphanes came from the northern half of the Greek empire i.e. the Seleucids. He displaced three Seleucid rulers: Heliodorus [driven out], Antiochus son of Seleucus [murdered] and Demetrius, whom he usurped. The other seven horns would then match the seven Seleucid kings: (1) Seleucus Nicator (312-280); (2) Antiochus I, Soter (279-261); (3) Antiochus II, Theos (260-246); (4) Seleucus II, Callinicus (245-226); (5) Seleucus III, Ceraunus (225-223); (6) Antiochus III, the Great (222-187); (7) Seleucus IV, Philopator (186-176). These ten

horns of the beast are then the ten toes of the image, which are strangely described as being mixed / married with the seed of men; and indeed the weakness and strife amongst the Seleucid rulers was because they intermarried with the local population and were not pure Greeks.

So Antiochus Epiphanes was a fairly good, snug fit fulfilment of the 'little horn' of Daniel 7 and 8, the 'desolator' of Daniel 9, and the 'king of the north' of Dan. 11.21-45. The problem of course is how Antiochus and the final rulers of the Greek empire were destroyed by Messiah's coming. It could be argued that there is a gap between the toes / horns being developed, and the image being hit by the Jewish Messiah. Just as there is a gap in the fulfilment of the Lord's Olivet prophecy, jumping from the destruction of the temple in AD70 to His coming in the last days. Yet Daniel 11 outlines the conflict between the two halves of the Greek empire, and goes on in Daniel 12 to say that "Michael shall stand up" and destroy the king of the north, and then there will be the resurrection and eternal reward of the faithful Jews. This didn't happen. Nor was Antiochus Epiphanes destroyed by the Lord's coming, even though Daniel 8 is at pains to stress that this will be "the time of the end". Not just the general future, "the last days", but the specific "time of the end". I suggest that only the concept of conditional prophecy can explain this. A Messiah could have come at the end of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty and the Jews could have destroyed Babylon / Persia, the great mountain would have become a plain before Zerubbabel, and re-established God's Kingdom, replete with the Messianic temple of Ez. 40-48. But as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi lament, they failed to live up to this potential. And so another potential was revealed; a Messiah could have arisen at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8), destroyed the invasion of "the king of the north" and saved God's people, leading to the resurrection and re-establishment of the Kingdom (Dan. 11 and Dan. 12). But this too didn't happen. Likewise there are differences between Dan. 7 and Dan. 8 regarding the number of horns; thus the little horn of Dan. 8 does not uproot three horns as in Dan. 7. The little horn of Dan. 7:8 arises amongst three other horns already there, whilst the little horn of Dan. 8:9 arises from one of four horns. These may simply be different takes on the same situation, giving different aspects; or they may reflect various potential possible scenarios. The 2300 morning-evenings [i.e. 1150 days] of Dan. 8 differ from the 1260 days of Dan. 7; but that may be because we are being given the information that of the 1260 days persecution, 1150 days would involve the stopping of the daily sacrifices. Or perhaps the time periods were and are open to varying fulfilments in accordance with human freewill factors. Clearest of all, Dan. 8 envisages three empires before the coming of Messiah and final conflict with him at "the time of the end". Dan. 7 and Dan. 2 envisage four such empires. The language of the little horn from the fourth beast in Dan. 7:25 is applied to the little horn of the Greek empire, the third empire, in Dan. 8:13,14. We have here a kaleidoscope of images- because the three empire scenario could have worked out. But it didn't, because no Messiah figure arose, Israel were not obedient to their potential mission. And so the possibilities merged into a four empire scenario. And so even in the potential 'Antiochus' fulfilment, we see nuances of different possible potential fulfilments. The strong possibility [potentially] of fulfilment at the time of the Greeks is surely reflected by the fact this is the only part of the Old Testament written in Aramaic and not Hebrew. But all this failed, in that Judas Maccabeus was not a Messiah as God required. Just as Saul, Solomon, Hezekiah and others were set up as potential Messiahs but failed. And so the more familiar scenario became possible- that the metals of the image and their associated beasts refer to the nations who dominated Israel in their land, with the legs of iron / fourth beast representing

Rome. Indeed the Lord uses language of the fourth beast from Daniel and applies it to AD70; the "abomination of desolation" (Mt. 24:15) and the "son of man coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mt. 24:30). His language of Himself as the falling stone in Mt. 21:44 surely alluded to Dan. 2:44,45. And yet Paul also quotes the same material about a future situation to his time, the second coming, when "that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4,5). Clearly the prophecies have flexible fulfilment.

This is what leads to the impression that whilst Israel were out of their land, there was a great hiatus until the situation of the last days, when a 10 horned beast entity will again briefly dominate the land. The beast entity of Daniel 7 is developed further in the beast visions of Revelation, where it is shown as incorporating all the elements of the previous beasts. And will be destroyed by the return of the Lord Jesus from Heaven, to establish God's Kingdom permanently on earth. But the latter day horns which are "from" the beast are hard to interpret if we see the beast as Rome. The fit is not very snug. But this is typical of how so many prophecies are reapplied and reinterpreted- because the initial intended fulfilment was precluded by human lack of response.

If the fourth beast is Greece, the belly and thighs of brass are the Persians, the third beast like a leopard, the ram with two unequal horns of Dan. 8. The "dominion given" to it (Dan. 7:6) clearly matches the language of God's giving dominion to Cyrus (Is. 41:1-4). The silver breast and arms then refers to the Medes, matching the bear with three ribs in its mouth (Dan. 7), the first and shorter horn on the ram of Dan. 8. Another possible sequence is Babylon- MedoPersia- Greece- The Seleucids- The divided state after the Seleucids.

The Roman application is always difficult in demonstrating that the ten horns arise out of the fourth beast of Rome. The relationship between the little horn and the three horns it uproots defies legitimate interpretation within the Roman context. And their 1260 days domination is impossible to persuasively demonstrate. Suggestions about the "temporal power of the papacy" all came to an end in the 19th century- and the Lord didn't return then. Likewise the "little horn" is an individual, not a kingdom. Attempts to apply it to "the pope" seem difficult because the obvious question is "Which pope?". Daniel's consternation at the radically different nature of the fourth beast also doesn't fit the Roman empire, which was not so totally different to the empires which preceded it. We note that the Romans didn't "crush and break" the previous three kingdoms (Dan. 2:40 "will crush and break all the others")- but Greece did. Antiochus is a snug fit with the descriptions of the little horn abuser, and subdued three other horns—Heliodorus, Demetrius Soter and the junior Antiochus. There's no compelling figure in Roman history that matches this. The seven "heads" of the fourth beast are hard to interpret because it depends which Roman emperors are chosen to fit them. Those pushing the "Roman" view tend to just cherry pick the history, naming seven emperors but ignoring the others. Indeed Rome had no king at the time it took over from Greece, being a republic until 27 BC. Nor did Rome take over the areas of eastern Greece. It's just not true that 'Greece ruled over all the known world and then their territory was taken over by Rome'. The Greeks dominated Persia, Media, India and Babylon, whereas the Roman empire never took over all that vast territory. These territories turned into independent states rather than being conquered by Rome. The Greek approach means that any revived fourth empire should be looked for from the

area of the Seleucid empire, the middle east, rather than from Europe where Rome was dominant.

Dan 2:41 *Then you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, that shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, because you saw the iron mixed with miry clay-* The coming of Christ is described in Is. 41:25 as: "I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come; from the rising of the sun, one who calls on My name; and he shall come on princes as on mortar, and as the potter treads clay". This connects with the "potters' clay" here. And Is. 41 was potentially about the restoration from Babylon. The "princes" are surely some of the ten kings represented by the ten toes (Dan. 2:44). Note that Israel's latter day invader is described as one "from the north"; this person will be an imitation of Christ, the ultimate One from the north. His coming will be as "the rising of the sun" (Mal. 4:2), just as that of the antichrist will be. The coming of Christ upon princes who are as clay therefore connects directly with the language of Daniel 2. Habakkuk 2:6 speaks of the latter day Babylonian antichrist figure as one who "lades himself with thick clay", to be destroyed by the Lord's coming and the Kingdom of God, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Hab. 2:14). The "clay" would then refer to the same more lowly components of the feet part of iron and clay.

However it is perhaps wrong to imagine bits of iron mixed with clay. It has been commented: "Ancient iron production was by subjecting the ore to intense heat and afterwards driving out the clay by beating. When the latter was done imperfectly the result was "slag" in which iron and clay was mixed". The idea is that the situation was brittle and not strong, even if it appeared strong as iron visually. This will be of great comfort to those persecuted by the ten toe / ten horn system; powerful as it will seem, it is actually very brittle and prone to sudden destruction.

The point is emphasized here and in :43 that the clay was not baked into earthenware but was muddy, soft, so weak and unable therefore to make the image stand. It was an incredibly weak foundation. The fragility of the two feet after the two iron legs is demonstrated for us in Daniel 11, describing all the tensions between the kings of the north and south- the two halves of the Greek empire, the north [Seleucids based in Syria] and the south [Ptolemies, based in Egypt]. The Greek kingdom was divided into satrapies, or provinces, governed by the Diadochi, Alexander's generals, bodyguards, governors and friends. Fighting among the Diadochi would fulfil the divided situation of the image's feet. But the language of Dan. 11 has many connections with how that section of prophecy continues in Dan. 12. The language of "the time of the end", an abomination that makes desolate, the purifying of God's people etc. occurs throughout it, including the time clearly relevant to the conflicts between the Seleucids and Ptolemies (e.g. "At the end of years... he shall come on at the end of the times, even of years... the end shall be at the time appointed... the latter time... the time of the end... until the indignation be accomplished" (Dan. 11:6,13,27,29,35,36). And this is all picked up in Dan. 12, applying it to the time of resurrection and final judgment. Clearly "the time of the end" could have been at the end of the Greek empire, just as Dan. 8 clearly states. Up until Dan. 11:39, there is a clear fulfilment of all the details in the history of the interactions between the kings of the north and south. From Dan. 11:40, there is no fulfilment. Antiochus didn't meet his end "between the sea the beautiful holy mountain". I suggest therefore that this was the potential possible for fulfilment, resulting in the king of the north taking Jerusalem and being destroyed by the Lord's coming and the resurrection of the dead. And that didn't happen, although the essence of it will come true in the final latter day

fulfilment through a different "king of the north". The reason was that God's people were not sufficiently faithful. And so Dan. 11:14 explains that the vision was "not established": "the children of the violent among your people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision; but they shall fall". The Lord says that "the abomination that makes desolate" spoken of by Daniel must come at some point after His words in the first century: "they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate" (Dan. 11:31). But the initial application of those words was to the time of the wars between the kings of north and south during the Greek empire. He reinterpreted and reapplied the prophecy in another context. Likewise the predictions concerning Antiochus in Dan. 8:25 are clearly applied to the events associated with the coming of the Messiah in Dan. 9:27 to stop the desecration of the temple mount. But that didn't happen- at that time. We note Daniel 8 ends with the comment that Daniel didn't understand that prophecy. That's understandable, because the references to the Greeks would have been very foreign to him, and extended the Divine program far beyond the 70 years' exile which he correctly understood to have been the precursor to the Kingdom's re-establishment. But as was explained to him, the program was delayed. And in fact, it was delayed even further, beyond the Greeks and Romans, until our last days.

Dan 2:42 *As the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken*- If the two legs correspond to the two parts of the Greek empire which were relevant to Israel, this divided kingdom would refer to the dismemberment of Alexander's empire. The ten toes of the image correspond to the ten horns on the beast, one of which was far stronger than the others, and uprooted some of the weaker ones. "Broken" is the same idea in the feet and the whole image being "broken to pieces" by the Lord's return. The idea may be that some elements of the final stage of the colossus are already broken in judgment, by each other. The breaking in pieces of the former kingdoms by some of the later kingdoms, as explained in Dan. 8 and Dan. 11, was really a foretaste of the final judgment upon them all. The same word is used of how Cyrus of Persia would break in pieces Babylon (Is. 45:2). Isaiah 45 seems to be saying that it was God's intention that Cyrus would break Babylon in pieces, convert to Him and be Israel's salvation. Just as it was His intention to convert Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh. But this didn't happen, and so the prophecy was delayed in fulfilment until our last days. Revelation likewise presents the scenario of the warring factions of the last days destroying or judging each other, before the final destruction of them all by the Lord's coming.

Dan 2:43 *Whereas you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men*- "Mingle themselves" is used of intermarriage at the time when the Kingdom could have been re-established (Ezra 9:2). If the two legs represent the Syrian and Egyptian sides of the Greek empire, then we see here a picture of the breakup of that situation; and Dan. 11:6,17 predicts the intermarriage between the Seleucids and Ptolemies which would not succeed and which would lead to its destruction. The GNB has it right: "This means that the rulers of that empire will try to unite their families by intermarriage, but they will not be able to, any more than iron can mix with clay". Antiochus Theos, king of the North [Syria], married both Laodice and Berenice, daughters of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of the South [Egypt]. Antiochus Magnus, king of the North [Syria], gave his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes, king of the south [Egypt]; but these marriages failed to achieve unity and only led to more disunity. Daniel 11 at various points describes the ending of the Greek kingdom in language appropriate to the Lord's return and the destruction of the image in Dan. 2 (Dan. 11:22,36,37). As noted on :1, the image prophecy had various

potential fulfilments, and one of them was in the coming of a Messianic figure at the end of the Greek kings to re-establish God's Kingdom. But that too didn't happen, and the fulfilment was delayed.

The prophecy may also have had a potential fulfilment in the situation around AD70. The metals represent kings; the Caesars were partly strong and partly weak in the lead up to AD70, with three emperors in the year AD69 alone (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius). The Lord could have come in AD70 and established the Kingdom; but His coming to do so was delayed because of Israel's lack of repentance.

But they shall not cling to one another, even as iron does not mingle with clay- Who, then, are these nations who were represented by the feet partly of iron and partly of clay? Some will be strong, others weak. "Then you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, that shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, because you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. As the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. Whereas you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cling to one another, even as iron does not mingle with clay" (Dan. 2:41-43). One only has to look at the various groups currently fighting in the Middle East to see how deeply divided is the Islamist group.

The situation could actually lead to a fragmentation of the established territories in the Middle East into groups of smaller states, all united under the *Al-Sham* concept and a desire to drive Jews out of Israel. The same is true for Iraq and other Muslim states bordering Israel. Writing on the *Al Jazeera* website in May 2013, Murtaza Hussain wrote a penetrating article "Iraq, Syria and the death of the modern Middle East". The following sounds exactly like the ten toes of Daniel's image, formed out of larger powers but now weak and yet united against Israel:

"The countries of Syria and Iraq, formerly unified Arab states formed after the defeat of their former Ottoman rulers, exist today only in name. In their place what appears most likely to come into existence - after the bloodshed subsides - are small, ethnically and religiously homogenous statelets: weak and easily manipulated, where their progenitors at their peaks were robustly independent powers".

We of course are reading the Bible through translation. But take a closer look at the original Hebrew and Chaldee translated "they shall *mingle* themselves" (Dan. 2:43). They were to be a mingled people- and that's exactly who the nations of '*Al Sham*' are. The original word translated 'mingle' is *arab*. One easy way to check that is to use an online concordance to poke under the surface of Dan. 2:43. And you will see it- Strong's number H6151. *Arab*. Surely there is a reference here to the Arab peoples!

The 'feet and toes' section of the image is proportionally not a very long part of the body. The domination of Israel by this group will not be for long- perhaps the three and a half year period which occurs in several latter day prophecies.

Dan 2:44 *In the days of those kings-* "In the lifetime of those kings" suggests that the primary interpretation is of kings who will rule over God's land within their normal life spans. "Those kings" more naturally refers to the entire image than to the feet and toes. The phrase is parallel to the stone breaking in pieces "all these kingdoms" represented in the image. This suggests the kings / kingdoms all exist within the same lifetime and will be destroyed by the coming of the stone. The "stone" could have come and the Kingdom of God been established during the

lifetimes of the kings of the image, if we interpret the metals as primarily referring to the kings who would rule over Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's own lifetime saw this progression of kings, so we again have the history provided within the book of Daniel. But the Jews didn't want to destroy the kingdoms of men; they didn't even want to all return to Jerusalem when encouraged by Cyrus. And so the [to us] more familiar extended interpretation came into play. But the further we get from the initial intended fulfilment, the less snug is the fit of the interpretation to the prophecy. The full existence of the image at the time it is hit by the stone is an example of this not so snug fit. If the image represents the Babylonian kings / reigns following Nebuchadnezzar, then the image as a whole represents the Babylonian empire, to be destroyed by the little stone of the exiles. The exiles didn't live up to this potential, and so all the later possible interpretations struggle with fitting this requirement of the image standing complete and being destroyed together.

"The days of these kings" suggests they will all be in power at the same time and not consecutively. The "these kings" could refer to the Seleucids [king of the north] and Ptolemies [king of the south]; they were the part of the image on which the stone fell (Dan. 2:34). The kings may refer to the ten toes; but it could equally refer to the situation when the image stands complete in the last days. And we would again see that the primary intention of the prophecy was to describe a sequence of individual kings, rather than kingdoms, which would follow Nebuchadnezzar and be brought to an end by the re-establishment of Judah's mountain or kingdom.

Shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people; it shall crush to powder and consume all these kingdoms- The location of God's Kingdom is therefore going to be in the same arena as earthly political kingdoms, here on this earth. There is no reference therefore to any kingdom of God in heaven, nor any spiritual kingdom in human hearts. We note that the feet of the image are already divided into small parts, as iron and clay; the Lord's judgment only confirms their own situation by breaking them into pieces. Parts of the feet are already 'broken [to pieces]' [s.w. "crush to powder"] when the Lord's return hits them (:42); they have already experienced judgment.

The grinding to powder of the nations dominating Israel could have true in the time of the restoration, according to Hag. 2:7: "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory". That never happened because the Jews didn't respond to the potential, as Haggai laments. Another restoration prophecy in Is. 60:17 uniquely repeats the sequence of gold-silver-brass-iron: "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron". The initial allusion is to how the restored temple would replace the brass, iron, wood and stones of Solomon's destroyed temple with something far grander. And that is the initial possible fulfilment of the image in Daniel 2. A new image would be established, again with gold-silver-brass-iron. It would be a temple but in the form of a man, that would spread throughout the land promised to Abraham. A glorious man who is also a temple clearly speaks of Messiah.

And it shall stand forever- This is the same word used of how the entire image "stood" (:31), and of how Nebuchadnezzar blasphemously set or stood up another image all of gold, representing himself (Dan. 3:1,2,3,5,7,12,14,18), as if the image he saw would not have its fulfilment, but he would last for ever. The entire image therefore represents the kingdoms of men which are to become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). The same word is used throughout Dan. 7

concerning how the various beasts all 'stand', as if on their legs as men, but are brought down to nothing.

Dan 2:45 As you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall happen hereafter: and the dream is certain, and its interpretation sure-

The gold in the image represented Nebuchadnezzar personally. But Daniel was so very brave to give the interpretation- that the gold would be crushed and blown away (Dan. 2:45). Indeed the entire image would be destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar would not last for ever. His worst fears, which led to his dream, were justified. Daniel surely risked death by telling him this; and for all time is a great example of speaking God's word even when we know we risk our own lives, at least our social lives, and relationships. Nebuchadnezzar was known [as were other kings] for executing messengers who brought bad news. Yet he was deeply impressed that Daniel knew what he had dreamed, and rewarded him for that. His subsequent making an image entirely of gold reflects his subsequent reflection and deep dislike of the interpretation. Later, Daniel is fearful to tell Nebuchadnezzar an interpretation which means the king's downfall; indeed he was visibly distressed by the prospect of having to do so, going into a panic attack: "The king answered, Belteshazzar, don't let the dream, or the interpretation, trouble you. Belteshazzar answered, My lord, the dream is to the side of those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries" (Dan. 4:19). Possibly he had lost some of his youthful faith and bravery by this point.

Note the order of the metals differs slightly from :32,33. Here the order is iron, brass, clay, silver, gold. This may reflect yet another possible potential fulfilment. We note the clay is out of sequence, placed in the middle- as if to show that the weakness of the clay, the earth of which man is made, was right at the core of the whole colossus. The strong, expensive metals were all the same shown to be centred around clay.

The things of God, of Heaven, the things done by Him, are those "not made with hands" (Job 34:20; Lam. 4:6; 2 Cor. 5:1; Heb. 9:24). "Stone" is also "rock", and there are so many connections between the rock and Messiah, the Lord Jesus. The connection between God and a rock cannot be doubted. The figure speaks of God's manifestation through His Messiah figure. This could have happened at various points in the various potential possible fulfilments of the prophecy.

The stone is taken from one mountain but then becomes another mountain. Mountains represent kingdoms. "The mountain of humanity" is not a Biblical figure. The initial application was to the exiles being miraculously taken out of the condemned mountain of Babylon, returning to their land and developing into God's re-established, eternal Kingdom. The parallel to the stone hitting the image is the final form of the beast system being destroyed, and the Kingdom being given to Israel: "judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom... the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:22,27). "The saints" initially refer to Israel, God's people; or possibly to the Angels who oversee Israel, who are thereby "the people of the saints" (Dt. 33:2; Zech. 14:5; Ps. 89:5-7 and consider how within Daniel, Michael is specifically called the Angel who stands for Israel in Dan. 9:21; 12:1). It is the people of Israel who were persecuted by the beast, who "shall wear down the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half

a time" (Dan. 7:25). Again we marvel at Daniel's bravery, as a Jew, in speaking these things publically.

Rom. 3:16 speaks in the Greek of 'a dashing to pieces' of the wicked, perhaps an allusion to how the stone of Messiah's second coming would dash the kingdoms of men to pieces at His return (Dan. 2:45; Rev. 2:27). But sinners are going now in way of such destruction. Damnation begins now- in the way of life people chose to live.

The stone was cut out of a mountain and in turn becomes a mountain which fills the whole *eretz*, the territory promised to Abraham, where all the elements of the image had once dominated. This of itself suggests that the most natural interpretation of the metals refers to nations located within that territory- including Babylon, Media and Persia. We are so familiar with the interpretation which includes Greece and Rome that we can overlook this. Those four kings, not kingdoms, could have arisen and then been broken by the fragment of the mountain which comes into the territory and then becomes a mountain. I suggest that the primary interpretation refers to the remnant of Judah, the mountain of God's Kingdom, which returned to the temple in Jerusalem at the time when it was dominated by a brief coalition of peoples sent there by the Babylonians, some strong and some weak. Being cut out without [human] hands means that it was of God; and Ezra and Nehemiah continually speak of how it was the hand *of God* which enabled the restoration. "The mountain" so often refers to the Kingdom of God in Israel ruled by a Davidic king, and particularly to the temple mount (Dt. 33:19; Ps. 30:17; 48:1; 78:54; Is. 2:2,3; 11:9; 25:6-10; 40:9; 56:7; 57:7,13; 65:11,25; 66:20; Jer. 31:23; Ez. 20:40; Zech. 8:3 etc.). The restoration prophecies are full of pictures of the restored Zion at the time of the restoration as a huge mountain dominating the *eretz*. The mountain of Babylon was to be burnt and replaced with the mountain of Yahweh's restored Kingdom (Jer. 51:25; Zech. 4:7). It was the returned remnant who were to destroy this mountain (Is. 41:15); they were to be the little stone. Having spoken of Babylon as a mountain to be destroyed, we then read that it was a little stone which was to bring Babylon down (Jer. 51:25,63). Daniel knew these prophecies, and surely perceived this. He was extremely brave to come out with all this to the king, as a Jew under threat of being killed.

We recall Moses speaking of God's relationship to Israel as "the Rock who became your father" (Dt. 32:18). They were quarried from the rock, which is a common symbol for God, and not humanity generally. The exiles are urged in Is. 51 to listen to / obey the word of restoration, and to accept they had been hewn and quarried out [as a stone] to be used for the restoration. But they refused to "listen" and ignored their having been hewn out from Abraham: "Listen to Me, you that want to be saved, you that come to Me for help. Think of the rock from which you came, the quarry from which you were cut. Think of your ancestor, Abraham, and of Sarah, from whom you are descended. When I called Abraham, he was childless, but I blessed him and gave him children; I made his descendants numerous. I will show compassion to Jerusalem, to all who live in her ruins. Though her land is a desert, I will make it a garden, like the garden I planted in Eden". But they refused to "listen to Me", and did not act as those hewn from Abraham (Is. 63:16; Jn. 8:40). So they were not the stone they could have been. Restored Jerusalem was to become the stone (Zech. 12:3). That stone was to as it were grow, stone by stone, as the walls and temple were rebuilt (Hag. 2:15). This is the significance of the enigmatic little stone which was to bring about the restoration of the Kingdom at the time of Zech. 3:9; 4:7,10. I have suggested that the command to rebuild the temple according to the specifications of Ez. 40-48 was a conditional prophecy of what the exiles could and ought to have achieved. The scenario there is all about a mountain (Ez. 40:2; 43:12).

This is why Daniel prayed for the restoration of the mountain of Yahweh (Dan. 9:20)- i.e. for the vision of the mountain in Dan. 2 to come true in his time. But this was disallowed by the refusal of the exiles to follow the path of the Spirit, and all these prophecies of the mountain being established have been rescheduled and reapplied to the Lord's return (Rev. 21:10). Judah were not the little stone; the prophecy is to come true in the stone of the Lord Jesus, cut out without hands by God through the virgin birth. We are so familiar with this application that we can overlook the initially intended potential application to the Judah of Daniel's day.

Note that the stone was cut out of a mountain, but after hitting the image, it becomes a mountain, filling the whole earth. This second mountain is interpreted as the Kingdom of God coming on earth. Biblically, mountains represent people. The equivalent in Daniel 7 is that the kingdoms of the world are given to "*the people of the saints of the Most High*" (Dan. 7:27). The first mountain likewise, therefore, refers to people. Out of the mountain of humanity, or perhaps the mountain of the Hebrew people (Ex. 15:17; Ps. 48:1; Is. 2:2 "the mountain of Yahweh's house / family / people will be exalted"), the Lord Jesus as the stone was cut out without human hands, born through the virgin birth. But the people of God will finally all become like Him. He as the stone becomes them, the mountain. We will finally manifest the Lord Jesus in totality, eternally. And if I am correct in understanding "the mountain" as specifically referring to God's people Israel, then the second mountain, the Kingdom of God on earth, is in fact the eternal and glorious re-establishment of the Kingdom of God as it was in the form of Israel. And this is indeed Bible teaching elsewhere (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:7 and see more evidence in my *Bible Basics* chapter 5).

Dan 2:46 *Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an offering and sweet incense to him-* This involuntary falling down of Nebuchadnezzar was in fact a fulfilment of the prophecy, that ultimately he would fall before Israel's God. For surely he saw in the head of gold his own face. The image was in that sense his body. Daniel's Babylonian name, Belteshazzar, could have meant something like "Protect his life" or if Akkadian Balat-sarri-ussur, "Protect the life of the king". And here he was prophesying the fall of the king. Nebuchadnezzar surely reflected upon how he had collapsed at Daniel's feet... because in Dan. 3 he makes an image entirely of gold and forces everyone to bow before it. This was surely his way of hitting back at Daniel and the friends. Possibly Daniel foresaw this and resigned from his post, hence he is not found in Dan. 3. Again we marvel at Daniel's bravery in speaking forth God's word, surely guessing the consequences as he saw Nebuchadnezzar doing what that man had surely never done- groveling prostrate on the floor before one of his junior servants. As he watched the king before him, Daniel was surely thinking, correctly, "This isn't going to end well for me". Even though it was a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies of the prostration of foreign rulers before the Jewish exiles (Is. 45:14; 49:7,23; 60:14). Those prophecies were all of the restored Kingdom- again we comment, that it could have happened then. Had the exiles risen up as required as the little stone, or if Nebuchadnezzar had remained humble. As noted on Dan. 3:1, this was the humility and repentance of a moment. Nebuchadnezzar tried to demonstrate through his golden image that this dream would not come true. He was then humbled again in Dan. 4. We too have moments of humility, before God's word or circumstances brought into our lives, and then our pride so often returns. The offering and incense were typically offered to a god or idol and not to a man (Ezra 6:10), but the king recognized the intense degree to which God was manifest in Daniel through Daniel's revelation of God's word. We too

in our witness are the manifestation of God and His Son to men in a very intense identification. All people see of the Father and Son are what they see of us.

Dan 2:47 *The king responded to Daniel and said, Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you have been able to reveal this secret-* As noted on :46, there was a very intense association and identification between God and His servant Daniel who manifested Him through the preaching of His word. Daniel was likely expecting to die for having come out with this interpretation, which went so directly against the king's pride and obvious desire to endure for ever. Nebuchadnezzar's recognition that Yahweh was "Lord of kings" was effectively a recognition of Yahweh as his lord; although as we will see on Dan. 3:1, he failed to maintain this intensity of devotion. The "kings" he had in view were the kings of the vision; another indication that the primary potential fulfilment of it was in a series of kings rather than kingdoms which would terminate in the re-establishment of Israel's Kingdom as the eternal Kingdom of God. Inscriptions have been found using these very words about Marduk (Merodach), the idol of Nebuchadnezzar. For him to now apply these words to Yahweh was effectively a renunciation of Marduk. It's so sad that Nebuchadnezzar failed to maintain his commitment; and this is a disappointing feature of our lives, moments of devotion and realization, followed by a slump back into pride and the old and familiar patterns of thinking. Only the Spirit will empower us not to be like this.

However, I would suggest that these words imply that the king was simply amazed that Daniel had been able to recall his dream and reveal the mystery: "since you have been able to reveal this secret". He was more impressed with this, than with the content of the dream. We read 13 times in Dan. 2 of the "interpretation". Dreams were thought to be dangerous if you didn't have the interpretation to them; and Daniel demonstrated to the king that he was a legitimate dream interpreter by being able to tell the king his dream. Yet according to his behaviour in Dan. 3, the king came to strongly object to the interpretation itself. The job of a dream interpreter was to dispel or remove the evil consequences of such a dream by magic. But Daniel offers none of this. And that is significant. He was so brave to pass no comment as to how the apparent catastrophe could be altered. Nebuchadnezzar's humility at this point was perhaps all that was required to avert his personal destruction which was clearly implied. But he didn't retain his humility of that moment, just as we often don't. We thereby note Daniel's courage in stating God's word to the king, knowing the king wouldn't like it- and he didn't. Dream interpretation always involved a suggested course of action or magic to avoid the ill omen or consequence of the interpreted dream. Daniel offers no such remedy. And he was the braver for all the same telling the meaning of the dream. The king makes no comment about his predicted future loss of power, nor the evident failure of his gods and their servants to predict his future. Isaiah is full of criticisms of Babylon's gods, especially their inability to predict the future; Is. 41:23 is one of many: "Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods". The king at this point fails to engage with this. All those polemics of Isaiah against Babylon's gods surely allude to Daniel's powerful and correct prediction of Babylon's future, on behalf of Yahweh.

Dan 2:48 *Then the king made Daniel great, and gave him many great gifts, and made him to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon-* Comparing with :49, we sense that Daniel was exalted even higher than rulership over the province; he was in the king's gate, one of his close

personal advisers. The word of 'making a great man' is used of how Nebuchadnezzar had been made a great man (Dan. 4:11,20,22), made by God a ruler. It is a classic piece of human psychology that now Nebuchadnezzar wants to do to another what he perceived had been done to him by God's grace. The Biblical record throughout has the ring of psychological and internal credibility in a way in which the uninspired histories of the time simply do not. We note that the "wise men" were effectively the political governors too. Religion and politics were totally connected in Babylon; for Daniel and his friends to be made governors, to be given political power when they had a different religion, was a radical thing for the king to do. And it set them up for the later conflicts we read of in Daniel. Like all of us, they were in an impossible situation. Daniel later rejected all such reward for telling dreams, but I will suggest on :49 that at this point, Daniel's motivation for accepting it and getting his Jewish friends into power was because he entertained the possibility that all Babylon might be brought to the true God. We too should set our sights high in our preaching work, not content with mere 'witnessing' for the sake of relieving our conscience, with no great hopes for conversions. The enduring legacy of Daniel is reflected in the fact that centuries later, it was magi, "wise men" from the east, who came to worship the infant Jesus, realizing that his birth was the fulfilment of some of Daniel's prophecies.

Dan 2:49 *Daniel requested of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel was in the gate of the king-* Daniel clearly did this for the sake of ensuring a good deal for the Jews there, and perhaps also in line with the Divine intention that Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon repent and come to the true God. Just as Isaiah 45 seems to envisage the possibility of Cyrus king of Persia becoming Israel's saviour after coming personally to Israel's God. There was likewise an attempt to convert even Pharaoh. These ancient monarchs would have seemed to us not worth wasting effort with; but God did try. And we likewise should consider nobody as just not worth the effort when it comes to our work of witness.

In Ez. 14:14, Ezekiel [already in exile] mentions Noah, Daniel and Job as well known righteous men who saved others. The prophecy in chapter 14 was in the sixth year of Jehoiachin's exile (Ez. 8:1) and before the capture of Jerusalem five years later (Ez. 14:21). Daniel went into exile in the third year of Jehoiakim's 11-year reign (Dan. 1:1), which was followed three months later by the beginning of Jehoiachin's exile (2 Kings 23:34). This would mean that Ezekiel mentions Daniel after Daniel had been in Babylon for 14 years. His example as a young man soon became legendary amongst the exiles; although the book of Daniel doesn't mention this.

DANIEL CHAPTER 3

Dan 3:1 *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits, and its breadth six cubits-*

The LXX adds a time note, "In his eighteenth year", suggesting this was done just after he had conquered Jerusalem. Dan. 4:22 LXX adds: "Your works were seen, how you ravaged the house of the living God pertaining to the sins of the sanctified people". The chief deity of Babylon was Marduk who was considered to be the "god of gold". Herodotus described the image of Marduk as a golden statue seated upon a golden throne before a golden table and a golden altar. Pliny also notes that the robes of Marduk's priests were interlaced with gold.

The statue seems out of proportion of a man, as the height is so much greater than the width. But we could deduce from this that the human figure was therefore presented seated on a throne. Nebuchadnezzar was presenting himself as the eternally enthroned ruler. The 60 cubits breadth figure recalls the size of the temple, as also recorded in Chaldee in Ezra 6:3: "Let the house be builded, the height thereof threescore cubits, and the "breadth" thereof threescore cubits". We get the impression from this that Nebuchadnezzar was purposefully trying to subvert Yahweh worship, and his proclamation was surely intended to expose the Jews. For all other pagans felt free to worship other gods in a situation like this. Only the Jews were exclusive about whom they worshipped.

To be made of gold, the statue was either hollow, or made of wood with gold plating. Both options reflect the hollowness of Nebuchadnezzar. Six is the number of man [man was created on the sixth day]. The dimensions reflect how Babylon used a sexagesimal system [counting based around sixes] rather than a decimal one [based around tens]. The figure 666 in Rev. 13 therefore points us to a figure who epitomizes Babylon. The breadth is out of proportion to its height [human beings are usually about 5 or 6 times their breadth, but here the proportion is 1:10]- like the kingdoms and glory of men it symbolized, it was fragile and unstable, and easily toppled. He was attempting to deconstruct the image made of various metals, insisting that he as the head of gold would in fact be eternal and not followed by other kingdoms. What he did therefore reveals his humility before Daniel in Dan. 2 as just the passing humility of a desperate moment. We too have seen this in our own lives; humility before God and His people is soon replaced by a return to visions of our own strength. This image becomes the prototype for "the image of the beast" to be established in the last days by a latter day Nebuchadnezzar (Rev. 13:14,15; 14:9,11). Those of the last days who are victorious over the beast and his image are therefore represented by the three friends (Rev. 15:2). They are to be no mere Sunday School story for us, but real and actual prototypes of us all in the last days.

He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon- This is the same word used of how the entire image "stood" (:31), and of how Nebuchadnezzar blasphemously set or stood up another image all of gold, representing himself (Dan. 3:1,2,3,5,7,12,14,18), as if the image he saw would not have its fulfilment, but he would last for ever. The entire image therefore represents the kingdoms of men which are to become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). The same word is used throughout Dan. 7 concerning how the various beasts all 'stand', as if on their legs as men, but are brought down to nothing. The apocryphal book of Judith claims Nebuchadnezzar at this time attempted "to destroy all the gods of the land, so that all nations should worship Nebuchadnezzar only, and all their tongue and tribes should call upon him as god" (Judith 3:8).

"Set up" is same word used of how God would set up or "make arise" another kingdom after Nebuchadnezzar, and finally "set up" His eternal Kingdom (Dan. 2:39,44). Nebuchadnezzar clearly wanted to show that he didn't believe this. He didn't want the Jews nor anyone else to use the Dan. 2 image dream as encouragement to overthrow him. No fewer than eight times is the word used of the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up (Dan. 3:1,2,3,5,7,12,14,18). And it is used of how Babylon would be removed "and shall not arise" (Jer. 51:64) because they had stood up or arose against Yahweh (Jer. 51:1 s.w.). This was part of the oracle which Jeremiah had given Seraiah to pronounce in Babylon, and surely news of it had reached Nebuchadnezzar's ears. Setting up or making to arise his own image was his vain answer to it.

There are clear similarities with the making of the tower of Babel, also on a "plain" in Babylon (Gen. 11:1,2). The connection shows that Nebuchadnezzar's image was likewise a brazen defiance of Yahweh. As the peoples of "the whole earth" were gathered in the plain Gen. 11:1, so the peoples of all the earth / land were gathered together to the image in the plain, quite possibly the same plain (:2).

Dan 3:2 *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up-* "Rulers of the provinces", implying a gathering of the leaders of the entire empire. This was how insistent Nebuchadnezzar was to demonstrate on a huge scale that he as the head of gold would in fact be immortal; his idea was that he would not be destroyed nor cede power to another empire, as the vision of Dan. 2 required. He would be the entire image; and he wished to make that point to all levels of society. For "governors" LXX gives 'chiefs of the nationalities', as if Nebuchadnezzar was gathering together representatives of all ethnic groups, and thereby proclaiming himself worthy of their praise. Clearly he was presenting himself as Yahweh. The idea of "dedication" definitely has a religious connotation (Num. 7:10,84,88; 2 Chron. 7:9; Ps. 30:1). He was setting himself up as a god, to be worshipped. This is why every time when the golden image is mentioned, the king is mentioned with it (Dan. 3:13,5,7,10,12,14,15,18). Repeatedly we are told in these verses that it is Nebuchadnezzar who made or set up the image. He is so emphasized. "Nebuchadnezzar" occurs in verses 1,2 (2X),3 (2X),5,7,9,13,14,16,19,24,26,28 – 15 times; and "the king" in verses 1,2 (2X),3,5,7,9 (2X) ,10,12,13,16,17,18,22,24 (3X),28,30 – 21 times. It was all about him. He assembled representatives from throughout the empire and basically demanded them to take an oath of loyalty to him. This could well reflect his paranoia about losing power or disloyalty, as discussed on Dan. 2 in considering why he was suspicious of the wise men and so eager to kill them. The Babylonian Chronicle records various rebellions against Nebuchadnezzar. Clay tablets have been uncovered which record the execution of people for disloyalty and attempted insurrection. All this fear of losing power reflects his lack of acceptance of the Divine plan- to remove him and all men from power, and replace them with His eternal kingdom. There is no mention of any priests nor sacrifice at this event; which strengthens the impression that it was a demonstration of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar personally, who saw himself as the epitome of his own gods.

Jer. 51:59-64 records how Zedekiah king of Judah was summoned to Babylon, presumably to declare or demonstrate his loyalty to Babylon. He went there along with Seraiah, who was commanded to read out a condemnation of Babylon by Jeremiah and then throw it into the Euphrates. Quite possibly Nebuchadnezzar was aware of this, and was now seeking to ensure that the Jews were actually loyal to him: "The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah... when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign... Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come on Babylon... Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When you come to Babylon, then see that you read all these words, and say, Yahweh, You have spoken concerning this place to cut it off, that none shall dwell therein, neither man nor animal, but that it shall be desolate forever. It shall be, when you have made an end of reading this book, that you shall bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: and you shall say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring on her". In Jer. 28, just a year or so after Zedekiah's visit to Babylon, Hananiah gave his false prophecy that the Jewish exiles would return from Babylon within 2 years. This must have seemed credible,

and it was credible because of the evident weaknesses within Babylon. And these scared Nebuchadnezzar.

Dan 3:3 *Then the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up-* This gathering together of people from throughout the empire would have taken time; and so the three friends had plenty of opportunity to plan their course of action. Their devotion was therefore not the zeal of a moment, but a consciously planned willingness to lay down their lives for the one true God. The fact they alone of all the Jews did so makes their bravery the more significant; for it is hard to live on a high level of dedication when our brethren consider it unnecessary and foolhardy. The same had happened over the matter of refusing the king's meat.

Dan 3:4 *Then the herald called aloud, To you it is commanded, peoples, nations, and languages-* The assembled crowd were told to bow down to it whatever nation or language they were from. The idea was that the local rulers of the provinces from throughout the empire may have been local men; and that perhaps there was to be a moment of bowing down observed throughout the empire. This was not merely a local event in the province of Babylon. The idea of a herald calling out a call to worship to all "peoples, nations and languages" is similar to the heralding of the Gospel of the true Kingdom of God to all peoples. Nebuchadnezzar was a fake God, an imitation Christ, a prototype of the latter day antiChrist.

Dan 3:5 *That whenever you hear-* "Whenever" suggests the call to worship was not just a one time event; to build a huge image for just one usage would not be justifiable. There was to be a period of regular worship of this image, perhaps throughout the empire.

The sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up- This combination of instruments suggest that the music was associated with religious ritual. The latter day demand to worship the image of the beast will likewise be a specifically religious matter, and it will be consciously designed to deconstruct the claims of the God of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar had fallen down and worshipped Daniel (s.w.) in Dan. 2:46; now he commands everyone to fall down and worship himself. He was perhaps now angry with Daniel because of the interpretation given. "Fall down" is 'to serve'. The phrase 'serve and worship' occurs repeatedly (:5,6,7,10,15) and clearly alludes to the command not to serve and worship idols (Ex. 20:4-6; Dt. 5:8-10). The young men were aware of the acute conflict between Nebuchadnezzar's command and that of God, hence they reply "Our God *whom we serve* is able to deliver us" (:17). The king recognized this when he says they were "servants of the Most High God [who therefore refused to] serve or worship any god except their own" (:26,28). He recognized that his god was pitted against theirs, and their God had one. He had various options open to him at this point [he could have written off what happened as a trick, as the Jews did concerning the empty tomb of Jesus], but commendably he chose the humblest option.

Dan 3:6 *And whoever doesn't fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace-* Remains of such a furnace have been found in

the plain of Dura; it was a kind of 'Gehenna', a burning place for rubbish, and again Nebuchadnezzar is set up as an anti-God, an anti-Christ, playing God, assuming the power of condemnation for not worshipping him. However, it has also been noted that in Babylon, death by burning was uncommon at the time. Although in their mythology, "fire was used in Persia to test the truth of a religion and its followers, as in Zoroaster's walk through fire". And so Nebuchadnezzar's theology was turned against itself, for the friends came through the fire unharmed and thereby vindicated their God. It seems this was a specially built furnace- the heat and fire of which reflected Nebuchadnezzar's internal anger. He was furious with the implications of the Dan. 2 vision. And again we note the bravery of Daniel in telling him the interpretation, knowing this would be his likely reaction. It also points up how his humility before Daniel was the humility of a moment. And his gratitude and respect were because Daniel knew his dream, rather than because of the interpretation. The interpretation was in fact obvious... and I have suggested that the king knew the dream and had not in fact forgotten it at all.

Burning with fire so far in the Bible has always been for sexual matters- Tamar's presumed prostitution in Gen. 38:24; for prostitution (Lev. 21:9) and incest (Lev. 20:14). Nebuchadnezzar was apparently considering that any worship of any other god was the vilest perversion. And he is alluding to how his god Marduk supposedly burnt his enemies in fire. In Dt. 4:20, 1 Kings 8:51 and Jer. 11:4, Egypt is metaphorically an "iron blast furnace". Perhaps this connection was perceived by the friends, and the Divine deliverance from Egypt encouraged them to believe they could likewise be saved from this literal furnace. Faith is so often based upon such reasoning from Biblical precedent. In this faith comes by hearing the word of God, and we find indeed that whatever was written before was that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. And in turn, the friends became representative of all God's people. For the prophets of the time spoke of how all Israel in exile were to be "tested you in the furnace of adversity" (Is. 48:10), seeing that His anger is presented as a smelting process to refine His people (Ez. 22:18,20,22). Likewise Is. 31:9, in which Yahweh's "fire is in Zion" and His "furnace is in Jerusalem". Yahweh's anger is a "smelter."

Dan 3:7 *Therefore at that time, when all the peoples-* LXX "all the nations". The impression is given of Nebuchadnezzar seeking to preside over an imitation Kingdom of God, comprised of peoples from all nations; his proclamation to worship his statue, presenting himself as the eternal Kingdom, then would become a parody of the proclamation of the good news of the true Kingdom to "all the nations". We note here how "all the nations" means 'representative people from all nations', and this is how we are to understand the language of preaching to "all nations", and "all nations" coming before the judgment seat.

Heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up- The record of their obedience to the commandment exactly matches the record of the commandment. This kind of total obedience to "the image of the beast" is to be seen in the last days too. The AV correctly excludes the last instrument, the "dulcimer" (AV; NEV "pipe") of :5, or bagpipe. It could be argued that they could have used the fact the bagpipe ["dulcimer"] didn't sound as an excuse not to fall down and worship. But, as we should, they didn't make excuses. They did the right and transparent thing in their conscience, despite possible opportunity to rationalize it. Likewise when the king

enquires whether their failure to bow down was on purpose... he was giving them a get out, which they refused.

Dan 3:8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and brought accusation against the Jews- The Chaldeans were the supposed interpreters of dreams, bitter and jealous that they had been unable to interpret the dream of Dan. 2. Instead of being grateful to their Jewish saviours, as often happens when we do good to others, they wanted to spite them. They wanted to support the king's position that in fact the interpretation of the image had in fact been faulty, because the head of gold was going to last for ever.

We note the strong similarities between the friends being "cast" into the fiery furnace, and Daniel being "cast" into the den of lions. In both cases they had disobeyed an edict from the king that demanded false worship. In both cases they are reported to the king by jealous contemporaries and "accused" (Dan. 3:8; 6:25). In both cases, an Angel saves them (Dan. 3:28; 6:23). Those who try to harm them are harmed in that same way [death by lions / fire]. Both kings (Nebuchadnezzar and Darius) rise in alarm (Dan. 3:24; 6:20), approach the place of destruction (Dan. 3:26; 6:21), address the Jews by their names, and then use the same term to describe them: "servants of the Most High God" (Dan. 3:26) and "servant of the living God" (Dan. 6:21). The kings both command the Jews who had survived death to then come out and approach them. We naturally enquire why there are these parallels. It could be that Daniel had somehow saved himself from having to stand up for his faith in the events of Daniel 3, for Daniel's absence from the story is strange. But he was made to fellowship the sufferings of his friends in a remarkable way.

Dan 3:9 They answered Nebuchadnezzar the king, O king, live for ever- This was no formal greeting; the message of the all gold image was that the head of gold (Nebuchadnezzar) would last for ever. And they supported this.

Dan 3:10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image- The recorded Biblical history of the restoration often records how the rulers made decrees. Those decrees were considered to be effectively the word of a divine being, unable to be altered, and absolutely certain. But the record shows the tension between the word of the true God, and that of men. The changing of those decrees, or issuing decrees which superseded them, all indicates that their claim to being the Divine word was simply untrue.

Dan 3:11 And whoever doesn't fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace- This is a similar idea to how the beast of the last days is to be destroyed and his "body destroyed and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11). Clearly, what the beast seeks to do to God's people shall be done to it. This is why the series of judgments recorded in Revelation are so similar, e.g. the seals and vials. The idea is that what the latter day abusers do to God's people is done to them; they are punished with their own judgments.

Dan 3:12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not respected you. They don't serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up- The bitterness of the Chaldeans or magicians / dream interpreters is again

apparent. The three Jews had been placed over Babylon as reward for interpreting the dreams which the Chaldeans had been unable to interpret, and so these failed men were jealous and bitter. "Have not respected you" is a three word phrase used again in the accusation against Daniel in Dan. 6:13: "That Daniel, who is of the captives of Judah, doesn't respect you, O king, nor the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day". It seems that he went through the very same experience in essence. Perhaps he sought to discreetly and tactfully get himself out of the situation; but maybe he later regretted it, and so the hand of providence enabled him to pass through the same situation in essence in the events of Dan. 6.

Dan 3:13 *Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king-* "Rage" is only once used elsewhere, again in a restoration context, regarding the rage of God at Judah's disobedience and unfaithfulness to Him (Ezra 5:12). Nebuchadnezzar was again playing God, as if obedience to *him* was critical, and he had the right to judge as God. The original word for "fury" is likewise used of God's fury against Judah at the hands of the Babylonians (Is. 51:17; Dan. 9:16).

Dan 3:14 *Nebuchadnezzar said to them, Is it on purpose, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don't serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?-* "Is it on purpose?" supports the suggestion on :28 that the friends purposefully made some sign of worship of their God instead of bowing to the image. Presumably the other Jews, and perhaps Daniel, had been tacitly allowed by the king to be absent; but these three were "on purpose" making a point, and that was what so irritated the king. We can debate the extent to which we too should 'make a point' regarding our separation from the world, or act like the other Jews and possibly Daniel did at this time. The case of John the Baptist rebuking Herod for his marriage would be another analogous situation to consider. And we should entertain the possibility that Daniel at this point was weaker in faith than his friends, and symbolically went along with it all. And yet when the decree was given forbidding prayer, Daniel like the friends, and doubtless inspired by their example, chose to 'make a point' by opening his windows and praying towards Jerusalem in full view of his critics. We see here how faithful examples do inspire others to act likewise, at later points in their lives.

Dan 3:15 *Now if you are ready whenever you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if you don't worship, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?-* The list of musical instruments is repeated four times (:5,7,10,15). It's hard to understand why there is this emphasis, but one suggestion is that all those instruments being played at the same time would not have produced a pleasant symphony of sound but rather a cacophony of confused noise. Possibly the instruments were chosen as representative of all the ethnicities gathered to swear loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. He had declared Israel's God as "God of gods" in Dan. 2:47, but he assumed now that he was more powerful than any god, including Yahweh, and no god could save a person from the fiery furnace. The Babylonians worshipped fire, and Nebuchadnezzar is arguing that the God of Israel was no match for the gods of fire. The king's anger was doubtless because he had promoted these Jews, despite this being an affront to Babylonian culture and religion; and now they had apparently betrayed his trust. He

therefore gave them a second chance, because he maybe didn't want to destroy them immediately, despite his anger.

Dan 3:16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter-* The idea is that they weren't interested in the offer of a second chance; it had taken time to gather together the leaders of the empire, and they had in that period made their minds up and would not flinch from the possible consequences. "In this matter" may stress the "this". They would be obedient in any other matter but not this. Just as we are to obedient to all we're asked to do, so long as it doesn't conflict our conscience to the Lord. "We have no need / we aren't careful to answer you" reflects how utterly confident they were of their position, holding it without any internal wranglings of conscience nor interpretation.

They say there is no need to reply; because the reasons were obvious. The king knew the answer in his heart. They were servants of Yahweh, and that is an exclusive relationship. The Lord likewise was silent before Pilate. He gave no answers, yet thereby witnessed a good confession, Paul says. The Lord likewise declined to give specific answers in Jn. 18:21; He tells the disciples that they know where He is going and the way there, even though they were claiming not to know those things (Jn. 14:4). Or Jn. 7:28: "Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, You both know me, and you know whence I am: and I am not come of myself". When they had lifted up the Lord in crucifixion, "then shall you know that I am he" (Jn. 8:28). But they denied that knowledge. Peter made the point that "you already know" the word of the Gospel (Acts 10:37). "As you yourselves know", he adds in Acts 2:22. And in his letters he argues that "you, my friends, already know this..." (2 Pet. 1:12; 3:17). "As you know..." is a phrase that occurs over 20 times in Paul's letters. As Peter put it, he was bringing to their minds what they already passively knew (2 Pet. 1:12). And there are other examples. The point is that men know the truth of God in their consciences, and saying 'yes' to the Gospel is really just accepting what we subconsciously know is the Truth. For God has set eternity in human hearts. Our witness of the Gospel needs to bear this in mind. It is only human pride that leads to men claiming they don't agree with or understand our message.

Dan 3:17 *If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king-* The essence of their faith was that "God is able", whether or not He chose to exercise His power in the matter at that time in that way. And they would still serve a God who doesn't always do what He is able to do, and what we would wish Him to do in the immediacy of the moments of trial. Their words are cited back to them by the king in :29 when he recognizes that indeed, their God "is able to deliver" in a way no other deity could.

The friends speak of two deliverances- from the furnace, and from the king. "One of the goals of burning is the absolute annihilation of a person; not only is their body destroyed, but as smoke they cannot enter and rest in the netherworld". In *The Epic of Gilgamesh* Gilgamesh asks, "Did you see the man who was burnt to death?". Enkidu replies that he did not, because the spirits of those burned with fire are not in the netherworld. The friends are surely saying that their God will in fact "save" them. Even if they are not saved from the hand of the king.

The two deliverances however can be read as them saying that God will deliver them from the furnace, in that He will resurrect them. And He can deliver them from the king in that He might also save them immediately from death in that furnace. Whether or not God saved them ultimately, or whether or not He saved them from the

furnace, they would still serve Him in this life. And that is a powerful challenge. Even if we are not to be saved ultimately, we still love and serve God now.

Dan 3:18 *But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up-* Even if God doesn't 'come through' as we expect and believe, all the same, we are to live by His principles and serve Him alone. Even if He slays us, we are to trust in Him (Job 13:15). "Though the fig tree doesn't flourish, nor fruit be in the vines" (Hab. 3:17), if the promised blessings for obedience don't come through, still we are to rejoice in Him. The worship of the image was more than a merely symbolic gesture; it was somehow connected with serving the king's gods. He obviously thought that the version of history suggested by Israel's God in chapter 2 was going to be overthrown by the power of his gods, who would make him, the golden head, have an eternal kingdom. So to worship the image was to accept servitude to the king's gods.

God's forgiveness and salvation can never be presumed upon; even if we are genuinely repentant. For the wages of sin has always been death (Rom. 6:23); we as sinners have no right to life. This is a theme stamped right across the Old Testament. Consider: "You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). "Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the courts. It may be that Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Am. 5:15). "Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious... Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him?" (Joel 2:13,14). "Let them turn each one from his evil way... Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we might not perish?" (Jonah 3:8,9). Possibly we could add Esther 4:14 to this list: "Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?". This is why Daniel's friends can reason: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods" (Dan. 3:17,18). They believed in Yahweh's salvation, but were quite prepared not to receive it. They knew that His ability to dramatically save them at that moment was not at all certain of fulfilment for them. The same words "is able" and "save" are used by Darius in Dan. 6:21 when he again expresses a doubt as to whether God is able to save in this case: "Was the God whom you served so regularly able to deliver you from the lions?". Against all this we must balance the fact that those in Christ have been given the "right" to be God's children (Jn. 1:12). But the bold confidence we have in the Lord Jesus must somehow never fail to be nuanced by an awareness of our total unworthiness and inability to presume upon God's forgiveness.

Dan 3:19 *Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and his face changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego-* This could mean that his face was filled with rage. But to change face toward someone means to change attitudes. This king had promoted these men on the basis of their part in obtaining the interpretation of the dream in Dan. 2. And the king appears to have liked them; but all that changes now. His respect for them turns to burning anger. The friends didn't fear his fury, and the restored Judah collectively are urged not to fear the fury [s.w.] of their oppressor but rejoice that God will enable the restoration of Israel's Kingdom (Is. 51:13). The friends are set up as the pattern for all God's people.

Therefore he commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated- LXX "until it should burn to the uttermost". Fire burning to the

uttermost is the picture of Divine wrath in judgment. Again, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as setting himself up as God, feeling that he alone was responsible for human condemnation, instead of continuing to be humbled by the vision of Dan. 2. There was no way of measuring how much a furnace had been heated before, nor of accurately multiplying that by seven. So we can assume this is an example of numbers being used in a non-literal sense; although the allusion may be to the Babylonian belief in seven gods and seven planets. Again, the king would be saying that the faithful three were to experience the full wrath of the Babylonian gods. The incident therefore reveals the triumph of Yahweh over all their false gods, which would explain the king's proclamation concerning the supremacy of Israel's God.

His rage and fury increased from :13, and this was reflected in the raging furnace with its greatly increased heat. As God saved them from that, thus He saved them from the intense fury of the king.

Dan 3:20 *He commanded mighty men who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to throw them into the burning fiery furnace-* The dragon, symbol of the latter day entity persecuting God's people, is to be bound and thrown to condemnation (Rev. 20:2). What was done to God's people is to be done to them, which explains the similarities between the seals [what was done to God's people] and vials [poured out upon their persecutors] in Revelation. See on :22.

Dan 3:21 *Then these men were bound in their trousers, their tunics, and their mantles, and their other garments, and were thrown into the midst of the burning fiery furnace-* Perhaps the function of the text's stress upon their clothing was because it was untouched by the fire, and this was in reality the most convincing proof of their deliverance (:27).

Dan 3:22 *Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent-* LXX "Forasmuch as the king's word prevailed". The prevailing of the king's word could suggest that there was some opposition generally to the idea. This is the background for the comment in :28 that the friends "changed the king's word" (AV). The king's word was pitted against God's word, and God's word prevailed.

And the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego- We noted on :20 that what was done, or intended to be done, to God's people is what happens to their abusers. This is a major theme in the prophets, and will be the basis for the nature of the Divine judgments upon the latter day beast.

Dan 3:23 *These three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace-* Like us at times, they were *in* the fire but not consumed by it, not even their clothes; recalling the burning bush unconsumed. We have here a primary fulfilment of Is. 43:2: "If you go through fire, you shall not be burned; the flame shall not burn you". This is in the context of a prophecy of how the Jews could have been restored from Babylon, and the Kingdom of God re-established as Israel's kingdom, replete with a Messiah figure. But the Jews generally preferred to remain in Babylon; what happened to the friends could have developed into a total restoration of Israel. But the potential prophecy didn't come true because of Israel's indolence, and so the ultimate fulfilment has been delayed until our last days.

Dan 3:24 *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste-* LXX

"And Nabuchodonosor heard them singing praises". The LXX includes the prayer of praise of Azarias. We recall how the prison keeper heard the praises sung by Paul and Silas. To praise God in the face of suffering and death is surely the ultimate reflection of faith in Him and loving trust in Him. Perhaps their example inspired Paul and Silas, just as faithful examples may inspire later believers to act likewise.

He spoke and said to his counsellors, Didn't we throw three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered the king, True, O king- "We throw" shows the king's total identity with the men who had actually throw the friends into the furnace. But those men had been slain by the flames.

Dan 3:25 *He answered, Look, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are unharmed; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods-* This was an Angel, and not the Lord Jesus personally; see on :28. The LXX gives *aggelos*, "Angel". I have noted several times on this chapter that the Babylonian belief in the god of fire was being deconstructed; and "Son of the gods" could in fact be a reference to Iz-bar ["bar" = "son"], the god of fire. In this case, the allusion would reflect how in fact the god of fire was under Divine control and rendered powerless to destroy the Jews. The persecution of the Jewish men here in Dan. 3 is very similar to the account of Daniel likewise being dobbed in by jealous courtiers, and thrown to the lions- and likewise being delivered, and the king pronouncing blessing upon Israel's God (Dan. 6). The parallel to this "son of the gods" who appears in the place of intended death is there an Angel; and :28 describes this being as an Angel. It was not the Lord Jesus.

Dan 3:26 *Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace: he spoke and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the midst of the fire-*

"Abednego" means 'servant of Nego', the fire god. The irony is that the king recognizes that in actuality, this man is a servant of the most High God- not Nego. The renaming hasn't worked, nor has it broken Abednego's relationship with his own God.

This coming out of fire is the historical pattern for the statement that "Your people shall be delivered" (Dan. 12:1); again, the friends are set up as the pattern for God's people of the latter day tribulation. "The most high God" is quite an admission from Nebuchadnezzar. He is recognizing that whether or not his gods really existed, without doubt the God of Israel was the highest. It was God's intention that this man should indeed come to recognize that He is the most high (Dan. 4:17). But again, Nebuchadnezzar's appreciation of this was only momentary, for he needs to be taught this reality again by his illness and humiliation. When we are brought to such deep spiritual realizations, we must pray earnestly that we continue in them and not experience them as merely passing moments.

Dan 3:27 *The satraps, the deputies, and the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, that the fire had no power on their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed, neither were their clothes changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them-* Sulphur or pitch was likely used to heat the furnace, which would have left a very strong smell on the clothing of anyone who came near the furnace [including the king]. As they had been "gathered together" to the image, now they were "gathered together" to see these men. Perhaps the function of the text's

stress upon their clothing in :21 was because it was untouched by the fire, and this was in reality the most convincing proof of their deliverance. The Babylonians worshipped the gods of fire, and so the stress that the fire had no power was effectively revealing the bankruptcy of their entire belief system. That no "smell of fire" was upon them would then speak of their total disassociation with the Babylonian religious system. Again, the friends are held up as our pattern for faith in Heb. 11:34- by faith they quenched the violence of fire.

Dan 3:28 *Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel-* This shows Nebuchadnezzar recognizing that an Angel had been physically sent to Daniel and his friends in the fiery furnace. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10. The Lord Jesus was not an Angel, as Heb. 1 demonstrates at length; the one like a son of the gods was therefore an Angel and not the Lord Jesus personally, who wasn't then in existence.

And delivered His servants who trusted in Him, these who have set aside the king's command, and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God- LXX "Changed the king's word", just as Daniel did to him (Dan. 2:21). This repetition of situation was surely in order to get Nebuchadnezzar to repent; we marvel that God made such efforts to convert this man, as He did with Pharaoh, when we would likely have considered such a person just not worth the effort in trying with. It would seem that the friends went beyond simply not bowing down to the image, but instead yielded their bodies to Yahweh and made some act of homage towards Him, perhaps like Daniel later, praying toward Jerusalem rather than falling before the image. They did this on purpose (:14), to make a point. "Set aside" can also mean "to despise", as the Peshitta renders it. The king is therefore accepting that his word had been despised, and Yahweh's word had prevailed. He reaches an impressive point of humility, although as we learn in Dan. 4, he didn't remain at that level but returned to pride. Just as we too so often experience humility as only a passing condition, in time of crisis, when it ought to remain a permanent characteristic.

The same word for "change" [NEV "set aside"] is found in :27, where their coats were not "changed" by the fire. Likewise because they "yielded their bodies" to Yahweh, the fire "had no power on their bodies" (:27). As ever in Daniel, we see the theme of total contrast and conflict between the believer and the world. Rom. 6 surely alludes here in saying that we are to yield our bodies to God as His servants and not to the flesh. Those brave men are every man in Christ.

Isaiah 43 is a mockery of Babylon's gods, and urges all God's people to pass through the fire, knowing God is with them (Is. 43:2; Ps. 66:12). All the exiles, indeed all God's people, are to in essence pass through that the friends did. And be delivered. The whole incident in Dan. 3, especially references to fire, is full of connection with the prophecies of later Isaiah. This part of Daniel is written in Aramaic, a form of Hebrew mixed with Greek. Perhaps it was translated especially for the Jews suffering under Antiochus. He built a statue of and an altar for Zeus Olympios in the Jewish temple, and forced the Jews to worship it. They are being encouraged to resist, through the distribution of Daniel's prophecy in their common language. Significantly, there were eight copies of Daniel found in the Qumran discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was a book much in demand.

Dan 3:29 *Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything evil against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a compost heap; because there is no other god who is able to deliver after this sort-* The Babylonian gods were not saviours; Nebuchadnezzar here recognizes that the God of Israel is essentially a saviour, and we see that supremely articulated in His work through His Son Jesus, Yah's salvation. The same word for "able" is later used to Nebuchadnezzar in warning him that God is "able" to abase him if he continues in pride (Dan. 4:37). We marvel at God's continued and constant efforts to convert the king; He taught Nebuchadnezzar that He was indeed "able" to do all things; and then goes on to warn him that He therefore is "able" to abase him, if he continues in pride.

Dan 3:30 *Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon-* LXX adds: "And gave them authority to rule over all the Jews who were in his kingdom". The ministers for Jewish affairs were themselves Jews.

DANIEL CHAPTER 4

Dan 4:1 *Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all the peoples, nations, and languages, who dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you-*

We could perhaps note a wider ranging humility in these words than in Dan. 3:4 which addresses all "peoples, nations, and languages"; now the phrase "in all the earth" is added. Likewise "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego" (Dan. 3:28) is extended to "I blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured the one who lives for ever" (Dan. 4:34,35). The God of the captives becomes "the most high", and he is to be praised "for ever", i.e. even after Nebuchadnezzar's time. Progressive humility and desire to give God ever wider glory are all part of spiritual growth.

Here we have "all the earth" defined as the area governed by Babylon, and not the entire planet. This assists in our interpretation of the dominions of Dan. 2. Clearly Europe and any area beyond the Middle East is not in view. This proclamation is that made after his humiliation. His response to that humbling was to spread the good news of God's Kingdom, rather than his own, to every aspect of humanity which he could reach. We too have been given the great commission to do likewise, and we obey it in the humility which comes from having been convicted of our sin and pride.

Nebuchadnezzar's multi-lingual preaching of the greatness of God's Kingdom "to all nations" can easily be read unappreciated. But it must have been quite something, involving translating the Gospel of the Kingdom of God into many languages; and it incorporated a very humble expression of his own failures, a recognition of his foolish pride and lack of repentance. And maybe this is exactly why he was the one used by God to make the widest and greatest Old Testament witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Dan 4:2 *It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked toward me-* The content of Gospel preaching is the message of God's Kingdom and His Son. But it is also a reflection of our personal experience of how "God has worked toward me". This is what gives our message credibility. The 'signs and wonders', a phrase used of miracles, refer to the psychological and spiritual miracle worked upon Nebuchadnezzar, a man otherwise specifically condemned to eternal destruction for what he did to Yahweh's temple and people.

Dan 4:3 *How great are His signs! How mighty are His wonders!*- These miraculous signs and wonders surely refer to how "God has worked toward me" (:2), for they have no other referent. The way God tirelessly works to humble us and lead us to accept *His* Kingdom and renounce our own is nothing short of major, dramatic psychological miracle.

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation- Nebuchadnezzar had rejected the teaching of the previous revelation to him in Dan. 2:44, that God's kingdom alone is everlasting, and will not pass to another. He had built an image of gold, as if to say that he the head of gold would in fact last eternally. And now he realizes how wrong he had been. It's interesting to compare Nebuchadnezzar's doxologies at the end of Dan. 2, in Dan. 3 and now in Dan. 4:3. He seems to be growing in his appreciation of the eternity of God's Kingdom. Indeed he appears to be quoting Ps. 145:13: "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations". Humility before God's sovereignty is a major theme in Daniel; and Belshazzar is condemned for not learning the lesson of humility from his ancestors: "You, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this" (Dan. 5:22). The implication is that his ancestor or father did learn the lesson, but he didn't.

Dan 4:4 *I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace*- "Flourishing" is the language of a tree, which he will be likened to in the vision he now saw. Again he shows humility by recognizing the truth of the Divine vision concerning him.

Dan 4:5 *I saw a dream which made me afraid; and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me*- This is the language of his earlier experience in Dan. 2:1,29. Circumstances repeat in our lives. If he had humbly accepted the Divine word to him in that first dream, he wouldn't have needed this further dream and humiliation. The way situations and feelings repeat in our lives is therefore a great encouragement that man is not alone, abandoned in this world; instead we are sure that God is working with us, to humble us that we might be exalted in due time.

Dan 4:6 *Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might explain to me the interpretation of the dream*- As noted on :5, this was just what he had done in Dan. 2. He ought to have guessed that the outcome would be similarly bad for his pride, and the message of God's Kingdom would again prevail over him.

Dan 4:7 *Then came in the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers; and I told the dream before them; but they did not explain to me its interpretation*- Again, as noted on :5 and :6, the situation in Dan. 2 was repeating. He ought to have learnt the lesson then, but he didn't; and he failed his second chance too, with the dream of the tree, but it seems he learnt his lesson finally and became one of the most remarkable converts to the things of the Kingdom. Surely both the magicians and the king himself knew what the dream meant. The interpretation was obvious. Daniel is again to be commended for his bravery in stating the obvious to the king- that which nobody else dared say. And we will find ourselves in similar life situations. Daniel doesn't offer any interpretation of the tree's central position in the earth; its great height, nor the fact that there was "food for all" on it. He knew that the king

knew what this meant. It was so obvious. Indeed there was virtually no interpretation necessary...

Dan 4:8 *But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar-* Nebuchadnezzar ought to have perceived the inability of his magicians to interpret dreams; he ought to have gone to Daniel first rather than "at the last". But he learnt his lesson right at the end, although requiring a terrible humiliation. Daniel being called "at the last" may well have been because he had moved himself away from all the great promotions he had been given, and eagerly slipped into the twilight, out of the deep conflicts between his conscience for Yahweh and the requirements of the Babylonian court life. We too at times need to reverse the effects of promotion in secular life, that we might be separate for our God.

According to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and I told the dream before him, saying- Nebuchadnezzar proclaims Yahweh as the supreme God. So he may here be admitting his own foolishness in having Bel as his god, and perhaps we are to read in an ellipsis: "In whom [as I mistakenly thought was] the spirit of the holy gods". For he goes on to make it clear that Daniel's God is the greatest.

Dan 4:9 *Belteshazzar, master of the magicians-* As noted on :8, Daniel had perhaps distanced himself from the magicians, or had been demoted. And so the king is accepting that Daniel was far greater than them all.

Because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you- This is the language used of Joseph in a similar situation (Gen. 41:38). Not only did situations recur within the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, but between the lives of Joseph and Daniel. Daniel would have been encouraged that he was not treading a unique path, but that the same loving Divine hand was at work according to a broadly similar pattern.

And no secret troubles you, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation- The book of Daniel goes on to record that Daniel was indeed troubled by some secrets and visions which he never understood precisely. It's as if Daniel's humility was such that he wished this to be recorded.

Dan 4:10 *Thus were the visions of my head on my bed: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth-* In Dan. 4:10, Nebuchadnezzar sees himself as a tree that is felled. God was again trying to get Nebuchadnezzar to see the truth of the image prophecy of Daniel 2. For a tree was seen as symbolic of a man. "Trees have toe-like roots, arm-like branches and stand upright from root to crown, between earth and heaven". This confirms that the initial application of the image with Nebuchadnezzar's face was to Nebuchadnezzar himself and his immediate dynasty.

A tree represents a kingdom, e.g. Assyria (Ez. 31:1-18) or the Kingdom of God (Mt. 13:31,32). Nebuchadnezzar as a person was intimately associated with his kingdom, hence he transformed himself from being the head of gold to being the entire image in the statue which he made. It is a human tendency to so identify ourselves with our kingdom, be it our career, family or firm we founded... that we cannot extricate ourselves to stand alone before God. And Nebuchadnezzar needed immense humiliation before he made that separation. Being "in the midst of the earth" may be a reference to his capture of Jerusalem, as the central point of the *eretz* promised to Abraham. This was his deepest sin, and what he was wrongly glorified

for. It was the seed of Abraham who were to grow into God's Kingdom "in the midst of the earth" (Gen. 48:16), and not the people of Babylon.

And its height was great- The king of Babylon is pictured as having done this specifically in connection with his intention to conquer Jerusalem: "You said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north" (Is. 14:13). As noted above, it was Nebuchadnezzar's prideful attitude against Israel and Jerusalem in particular which was at the root of his sin.

Dan 4:11 *The tree grew, and was strong, and its height reached to the sky, and its sight to the end of all the earth-* "The earth" is clearly not the entire planet. The way it was seen throughout the empire referred to how Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself personally and was looked towards by all; it alludes to how he had built the image of himself in Dan. 3. He "reached to the sky" in terms of his pride and playing God. The growth of the tree refers to the growth in the king's pride; he said "in his heart" that he would grow as high as heaven (Is. 14:13).

Dan 4:12 *The leaves of it were beautiful, and its fruit much, and in it was food for all: the animals of the field had their shadow under it, and the birds of the sky lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it-* This is the language of God's Kingdom (Ez. 17:23; Mt. 13:32,33). His kingdom had been a fake kingdom of God. This repeats the language of Dan. 2:37,38, which in turn alludes to Adam: "the God of heaven has given beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all... have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Gen 1:26). The one who was given the animals to rule over becomes an animal. We will comment later that Nebuchadnezzar is a man, created to be as Adam. But he acts like an animal and so he is made like an animal, in order that he might become "the man" God intended. "And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox" (Dan. 4:32) recalls "you shall eat the plants of the field" (Gen. 3:18). We note that Adam's eating the "plants of the field" brings him closer to the animals to whom God gave "every green plant" (Gen. 1:30) for food. This is exactly what we see with Nebuchadnezzar. He was a man but was given an animal's heart (Dan. 7:3); like Adam, instead of ruling over the animals he became like one. "His spirit was hardened that he dealt proudly" (Dan. 5:20 R.V.), he was confirmed in the mind he chose to have. And yet like Adam he was given the path to restoration. The account of Nebuchadnezzar's glory returning to him is similar to the description of man's final end in Ps. 8:5-9: "You crowned him with glory and honour. You make him ruler over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet: all sheep and cattle, yes, and the animals of the field, the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas. Yahweh our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!". "The son of man" is referenced in Dan. 7, and he appears as having dominion over the four wild animals that appear. This is surely not without reference to what we learn in Dan. 4- that the king was to pass through the experience of Adam, at his creation, his fall and future restoration.

Dan 4:13 *I saw in the visions of my head on my bed, and behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from Heaven-* The watcher even a holy one [one Angel, not two] had already been revealed to Nebuchadnezzar when he observed the Angel with the

friends in the fiery furnace. He almost didn't need Daniel to explain it all. God was constantly working with him to help him, nudge by nudge, come to fully accept Him.

The Angels are 'watchers' in the sense that they 'watch over' God's word to perform it in practice; God would 'watch over' His words of condemnation of Babylon to fulfil them, and likewise 'watch over' His word of restoration toward Judah (Jer. 31:28; 44:27 etc.). See on Dan. 9:14. Nebuchadnezzar appreciated that Daniel had the spirit of the "holy ones", and yet he saw a "holy one" come from Heaven. He thereby was being taught that Daniel was in league with God and the court of Heaven, and the Angels were able to fulfil the prophetic words Daniel was uttering. See on 2 Sam. 23:1-3.

Dan 4:14 He cried aloud, and said thus: Cut down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit: let the animals get away from under it, and the birds from its branches-

"He cried aloud" means really 'mightily', as in Dan. 3:4. Nebuchadnezzar is recognizing that just as he had cried aloud for all men to worship him, so now God had called loudly for his own demise.

This is a command to the animals and birds, rather than just a prediction of the disintegration of the Babylonian empire. We can infer that the intention was that Nebuchadnezzar preached this message, bringing about the demise of his own empire, inviting the tributary peoples [especially Judah] to leave the empire and regain their freedom. But Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't do so. Perhaps if he had done so, then the restoration of Judah could have begun.

The imagery of cutting down a tree has been used about what Nebuchadnezzar had done to Assyria. God used him to "lop the boughs with terrifying power; the tallest trees will be cut down, and the lofty will be brought low" (Is. 11:33). The same language of Nebuchadnezzar cutting down a tree is used of what he did to Egypt in Ez. 31:2-14. What Nebuchadnezzar had done to others was to be done to him. This experience is all part of what it means to be made human as God intends. To have humanity, to feel for others and empathize with them.

Dan 4:15 Nevertheless leave the stump of its roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of the sky: and let his portion be with the animals in the grass of the earth- The stump of the roots was therefore representative of Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom; for it was he personally who had his portion with the animals. Iron and brass were metals in the image of Dan. 2 which were to come after Nebuchadnezzar. He was to be cut down, and bound by the fact that other kings were to arise after him and take away his dominion. The vision of Dan. 2 was indeed going to come true, much as he had struggled against it through building the state of gold in Dan. 3.

The idea of a stump and roots remaining is surely that the tree will have a sprout from it and grow again. The words for root and stump are found in Is. 11:1, where the Jewish Messiah is the shoot that grows from the root and stump. This is the language of Zerubbabel. I suggest that there is a hint here that Nebuchadnezzar's repentance could have led to the Messiah figure appearing. But Zerubbabel and other related options failed at that time. As discussed on Dan. 2, the kaleidoscope of images had to be turned again, to come up with another fulfilment.

Dan 4:16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let an animal's heart be given to him-

We have to make the connection with Dan. 7:4 "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I saw until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand on two feet as a man; and a man's heart was given to it". This is the equivalent of the head of gold in Dan. 2, which we are specifically told was Nebuchadnezzar, "you, O King"... Not Babylon generally. For Nebuchadnezzar was only king at the end of Babylonian dominance, in fact only over the neo-Babylonian empire. So this lion with a changed heart is Nebuchadnezzar. Whatever political, historical fulfillments we wish to see in Dan. 7:4, we must surely accept that primarily it refers to Nebuchadnezzar personally. Dan. 7 doesn't describe him doing anything aggressive, unlike the other beasts mentioned. His claws grew like eagles'; and he frequently depicted himself as a winged lion. The bricks of the great Babylon be built had lions on them to symbolize himself. So there is a double heart transplant operation here. Again we see that God can give man another heart, as He did to Saul, and as He can do today through the work of the Holy Spirit on human hearts. He was a proud man, given an animal's heart and then given a human heart, as he became man as God intended. Humbled before God, abased and living in hope of eternal restoration by God's grace.

Man is but as the beasts that perish in his death (Ps. 49:20). Nebuchadnezzar had the idea that he was somehow divine, that he as the head of gold would in fact continue and never give way to others- hence his deconstruction of the Dan. 2 image by his own image of total gold in Dan. 3. But he had to be made to realize that he was not divine, he was human, and human nature is animal nature. The Father works with us likewise for decades to help us realize these same truths, so that we might fully grasp the good news of His Kingdom and eternity. For many it may take the loss of strength and faculty that comes with old age before they finally realize this.

And let seven times pass over him- The closer one looks, the more conditional prophecies and Divine statements there are. The statement that Nebuchadnezzar would be humiliated for seven times *could* have been changed by his repentance (cp. :27-29). "Seven times" may not have to be seven years; the number seven is so often symbolic. The idea could be that a significant, defined period would pass over him so that he might thereby be perfected, literally 'seven-ed'. Israel too were to suffer "seven times" of judgment for their sins (Lev. 26:18,21,24,28), seventy sevens (Jer. 29:10), and Nebuchadnezzar had played his part in bringing them about. He was now to realize how he had treated God's people, suffering the same essential judgments he had poured out- not simply as a 'measure for measure' judgment for the sake of it, but in order to elicit in him repentance.

Dan 4:17 *The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the judgment decision by the word of the holy ones-* Although this "sentence" had been 'decreed' by the watching Angels, it was open to negotiation. For Daniel urges Nebuchadnezzar to repent and show grace, with the implication that the terrible decree for him might not have to necessarily come into reality. This is surely the force of the "therefore..." (:27). Nebuchadnezzar was told that the destruction of his power was a "matter by the decree of the watchers [i.e. Angels, the eyes of the Lord], and the demand by the word of the holy ones" (Dan. 4:17). The Chaldee words translated "matter, "decree" and "demand" are all legal terms, implying a legal answer / response, "a judicial decision" as Strong defines "the demand". The book of Daniel often records the kings issuing decrees; but they are nothing compared to the decrees of Heaven. Something came before the court of Heaven- presumably the matter in question was Nebuchadnezzar's

pride and his position on the Jews. Daniel's advice in 4:27 to shew mercy to the poor may be a reference to what the King should've been doing to the Jews- perhaps by enabling their return to their land. And a 'judicial decision' was made and "a watcher and a Holy One came down from Heaven" to operationalize it (Dan. 4:13). If this is the extent of Angelic attention to the heart of a Gentile king- how much more earnestly are they debating the states of our hearts and our actions, and issuing decrees for action accordingly?

Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation was "by the demand of the word of the holy ones". Was it that the Angels had noticed this man's awful pride, reported it to God Himself in the court of Heaven, and then been empowered to carry out his demise? The same context reminds us that God does according to *His* will in the army of Heaven (Dan. 4:35). And yet His purpose is to some extent moulded by them. And we are led to ask, how much influence do *we* His beloved children have upon His actual purpose? In the context of Daniel, one observes that a "herald" cried aloud to peoples of all nations and languages, and bid them worship the Babylonian image, on pain of being cast into a fiery furnace (Dan. 3:4 ff.). And yet in Rev. 14:6, an Angel cries to all nations and languages, warning them that if they *do* worship the image, they will be cast into the lake of fire. The Angels had observed Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance and defiance, and many centuries later they will work out their way of parodying it in their future proclamation. The point is, they have the power to work out their way of operation in accordance with their perceptions and understandings; in this we see the "freedom of the spirit" which is now and shall be ever accorded to Yahweh's *elohim*.

To the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will- The Divine intention at this time was that all the Babylonian empire would come to accept the truth of the message of the Kingdom as explained in the image of Daniel 2. The interpretation is that "till *you* know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom He will". Yet Nebuchadnezzar is made representative of "the living"; he is every man. Dan. 2:30 uses "the living" for all men; Daniel says he is not wiser "more than any living". See on :34. Nebuchadnezzar uses the same word in saying in response that he honours Yahweh who "lives" for ever (:34). The idea surely is that "the living" are to realize that they will not "live" for ever, but God will. Nebuchadnezzar came to this realization "at the end of the days" (:34). Whilst that refers initially to the days of his humiliation, it clearly has hints of the last day. It is at that day that man shall be humbled and see himself as he is; but the challenge is to live like that now.

And sets up over it the most abased of men- Everyone would have known the strange abasement of Nebuchadnezzar. The fact he was restored to his throne, rather than being deposed during his incapacity, was therefore an amazing and most unusual object lesson- before exaltation over God's Kingdom there must come humility and abasement. The Lord seems to allude to this in teaching that he who abases himself the most shall be exalted the highest in God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:4; Lk. 14:11). The Lord clearly had Himself in view, and Phil. 2 confirms this- He was the most abased, that He might be the most highly exalted.

The Angel required that Nebuchadnezzar be "abased" (have humility) and Daniel advises Nebuchadnezzar to show righteousness and mercy. These are related to humility. We find the same three ideas together in Micah: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:8). This suggests that Nebuchadnezzar is indeed every man, every mortal, "the living". This is the same idea

as in 1 Cor. 1:28 which surely alludes here and makes Nebuchadnezzar as every man. The 'base things' are what God uses. For man to be abased is to become man as God intends.

Dan 4:18 *This dream I, king Nebuchadnezzar, have seen; and you, Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in you-* 1 Cor. 1:21 may allude here: "the world by wisdom knows not God". This is no mere ancient history; the principles apply in all ages and situations. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that his "wise men", whose supposed wisdom was intimately connected with their pagan religious beliefs, were powerless. He tacitly admits that they don't possess the spirit of the gods which they claimed to. Remember that the text we are reading was part of the proclamation made by Nebuchadnezzar after his humiliation.

"But you are able" contrasts with his earlier words to Daniel: "Are you able [to interpret my dream]?" (Dan. 2:26). We are being presented with the gradual spiritual development of the king. We wonder why he didn't immediately ask for Daniel's interpretation; and we suspect it was because he knew anyway what the interpretation was, and he knew Daniel knew...

Dan 4:19 *Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was stricken mute for a while, and his thoughts troubled him. The king answered, Belteshazzar, don't let the dream, or the interpretation, trouble you. Belteshazzar answered, My lord, the dream is to the side of those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries-* This is the classic encouragement to all of us when we fear to speak forth God's word, scared of how our audience will receive it. This verse is still part of the proclamation made by Nebuchadnezzar throughout his realm, he wished to show everyone what had transpired. The fact he didn't have Daniel immediately slain is to his credit; Daniel was fearful because he knew just how proud Nebuchadnezzar was, and how the king had railed against Daniel's interpretation of the Dan. 2 dream by building an image of gold, subverting the idea that the head of gold was to pass away. He was likely encouraged by the Biblical examples of young Joseph and Samuel speaking forth God's word to men whom they knew would not welcome their message. The haters and adversaries of Nebuchadnezzar were symbolized by the brass and iron which bound the stump; the metals of the Dan. 2 image which were to supercede Nebuchadnezzar.

The gold in the image represented Nebuchadnezzar personally. But Daniel was so very brave to give the interpretation- that the gold would be crushed and blown away (Dan. 2:45). Indeed the entire image would be destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar would not last for ever. His worst fears, which led to his dream, were justified. Daniel surely risked death by telling him this; and for all time is a great example of speaking God's word even when we know we risk our own lives, at least our social lives, and relationships. Nebuchadnezzar was known [as were other kings] for executing messengers who brought bad news. Yet he was deeply impressed that Daniel knew what he had dreamed, and rewarded him for that. His subsequent making an image entirely of gold reflects his subsequent reflection and deep dislike of the interpretation. Later, Daniel is fearful to tell Nebuchadnezzar an interpretation which means the king's downfall; indeed he was visibly distressed by the prospect of having to do so, going into a panic attack: "The king answered, Belteshazzar, don't let the dream, or the interpretation, trouble you. Belteshazzar answered, My lord, the dream

is to the side of those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries" (Dan. 4:19). Possibly he had lost some of his youthful faith and bravery by this point.

However, we should consider the alternative translation: "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!" (ESV). Just as Daniel urged the king to repent and show grace to the poor [perhaps specifically the Jews], so that his kingdom and life would be extended; so here, Daniel seems to see the possibility that the dream need not come true for Nebuchadnezzar, but could be reapplied by God to his enemies. Here we see the open nature of these prophecies; which is what makes it too simplistic and inappropriate to insist upon them having only one intended meaning and fulfilment.

Dan 4:20 *The tree that you saw, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached to the sky, and its view to all the earth-* "Which grew" translates the same Hebrew term translated "made [Daniel] a great man" (Dan. 2:48). Daniel had eased himself out of that exaltation; whenever he was exalted, he seems to have slipped out of the limelight, for the next time he's needed, he has to be searched for. But Nebuchadnezzar hadn't yet learnt that true greatness is not in this life. "Height" is the same word used in Dan. 5:20 for how his heart was "lifted up"; as noted on :22, it was the state of his heart which was of such critical importance to God. And therefore the king uses it in :37 to say that now he extols or lifts up the one true God- rather than himself. To repent of pride is very difficult, and Nebuchadnezzar sets a great example- although it was only achieved by grace alone, and repeated Divine efforts and a huge abasement.

Dan 4:21 *Whose leaves were beautiful, and its fruit much, and in it was food for all; under which the animals of the field lived, and under whose branches the birds of the sky had their habitation-* The similarities with imagery of God's Kingdom are clear (Mt. 13:31,32). On one level, Babylon was a pseudo kingdom of God with Nebuchadnezzar as a fake God and Messiah. But the similarities perhaps also point to how that if Nebuchadnezzar had repented and his people accepted his testimony about God's Kingdom, his kingdom could have become part of the revived kingdom of God in Israel. The submission of all animal life to Nebuchadnezzar is after the pattern of Adam in Eden; and his pride led him to a fall after the pattern of Adam.

Dan 4:22 *It is you, O king, that has grown and become strong; for your greatness is grown, and reaches to the sky, and your dominion to the end of the earth-* "Strong" is the word for "hard"; it is used again in Dan. 5:20 "his mind was hardened in pride". This prophecy about the king is therefore specifically about his heart; this is the essential nature and indicator of a person before God. Nebuchadnezzar's empire was largely inherited, and even Babylon was glorious when he came to the throne; he rebuilt parts of it and made cosmetic improvements. So the astounding growth depicted here refers more to the growth of his own glory within his own proud mind. "It is you" focuses the interpretation upon Nebuchadnezzar as a person, but clearly the language of :20,21 is about his kingdom. He was his kingdom, just as the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus is within or amongst people; *He* is the One in view, the king is so identified with His Kingdom (Lk. 17:21).

Dan. 4:22 LXX adds: "Your works were seen, how you ravaged the house of the living God pertaining to the sins of the sanctified people". See on Dan. 3:1.

Dan 4:23 *Whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from Heaven*

and saying, Cut down the tree, and destroy it; nevertheless leave the stump of its roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of the sky: and let his portion be with the animals of the field, until seven times pass over him- See on Jer. 23:18,22. "And destroy it" is added here; in contrast with how God's Kingdom shall never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44). Nebuchadnezzar had tried to deconstruct that image by making an entire image of gold. And yet the leaving of the stump in the earth showed that he could still have hope of life even after that.

Dan 4:24 *This is the interpretation, O king, and it is the decree of the Most High, which has come on my lord the king-* This contrasts with :17 "the decree of the watchers"; the one and only Most High God is to be accepted rather than the king's vague idea of Divine "Watchers". Again we see the Father's patient efforts to spiritually educate this proud man whom we would likely not have bothered preaching to. "Which *has* come" reflects on one hand the prophetic perfect, that God's word is as good as done once spoken. And yet there is also a gap between the proclamation and the fulfilment, during which men like Nebuchadnezzar could repent and change the outcome of that apparently totally certain Divine word. We see these two movements or strands so clearly in this case of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's appeal for him to repent. Indeed he was given 12 months to repent and change the outcome.

Dan 4:25 *That you shall be driven from men, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass as oxen, and shall be wet with the dew of the sky, and seven times shall pass over you; until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will-* The king was initially like a tree with all the animals of the field beneath him, and now he was to be made like one of them. Every sin is in some form an essential replication of that of Adam and Eve. They passed through the same. Nebuchadnezzar's conversion to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God involved recognizing that man is but as the beasts which perish, mortal and not immortal. Only when he recognized that he didn't have a kingdom, was he given the kingdom again. Similar language is used of God's efforts to get Pharaoh to "know" Him (Ex. 7:5,17; 8:10; 9:29). We marvel at God's great efforts with men whom we would rather assume were not worth trying with. "Until you know that the Most High rules..." shows that there was a condition set upon the ending of this humiliation. And yet a time period of "seven times" was also mandated. But that time period was therefore also flexible, for the duration depended upon the king's humility or otherwise.

Dan 4:26 *Whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree; your kingdom shall be sure to you, after that you shall have known that the Heavens do rule-* We are guided in understanding the meaning of the stump by Job 14:7, which seems to be saying that a tree whose stump is left at least has the hope of sprouting again, which Job understood as meaning resurrection. Tree stumps are not usually bound with brass and iron; such bonds would not stop the tree sprouting again. The point is that the root was not removed. I suggest that Nebuchadnezzar was being taught that his earthly kingdom would indeed end and the kingdoms of brass and iron would play a part in that, as taught by the Dan. 2 image vision. But if he redefined *his* kingdom as the Kingdom of God, which is eternal, then his kingdom, which would be

God's Kingdom when the kingdoms of this world become those of God (Rev. 11:15), would indeed be eternal. And there is every reason to think that Nebuchadnezzar was finally converted to this good news of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is only "made sure" to anyone by resigning our own kingdoms and making God's Kingdom ours.

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if there may be a lengthening of your prosperity-

The job of a magician or dream interpreter was not just to interpret the dream, but to then suggest rituals or sacrifices which would negate the negative parts of the dream. Daniel had been schooled in all this and excelled in knowledge of Babylonian magic rituals. But he speaks the truth, unpopular as it is- that the only reversal of this is through the king's personal humility and repentance.

And yet Daniel does give Nebuchadnezzar some specifics as to how to reverse the curses. "Righteousness" is literally 'almsgiving'. But how can any act of righteousness or generosity to the poor somehow buy forgiveness? Possibly the idea is that sin is a debt. We are forgiven that debt by God, and our response is naturally to forgive others their debts to us. And to show grace to others as God showed to us. The Lord's parable of the forgiven debtors is clear about this. So although almsgiving and generosity to the poor cannot of themselves buy our forgiveness, it is also so that the man who has experienced forgiveness by grace will show that generosity of grace to others. The grace of all this is that Nebuchadnezzar refuses to repent and do what he can to put right his sins against Judah and the temple. He is punished, yet repents in that abasement. And is accepted. And yet Babylon was to be destroyed for desecrating the temple: "Gather the shields: the Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for His device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of His temple" (Jer. 50:28). But this was deferred, and didn't happen to Nebuchadnezzar. Because he repented and humbled himself.

The prophecy about his humiliation need not have come true if he had repented; just as the statement that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days didn't come true because of the Ninevites' repentance. But like us, Nebuchadnezzar had to be an empirical learner, rather than humbling himself before the word of God and just obeying it. The "righteousness" and "mercy to the poor" may have specifically referred to his allowing the restoration of God's Kingdom in the form of the kingdom of Judah. "Righteousness" is a favourite theme of Isaiah's prophecies of the restoration (Is. 45:8; 54:14; 56:1; 63:1 etc.). "Mercy to the poor" is the word used of how God would "favour" Zion at the restoration (Ps. 102:13,14; Is. 30:19). "The poor" is literally 'the afflicted ones', a term used of Judah afflicted by the Babylonians (Ezra 8:21; Is. 60:14; Lam. 5:11).

"Break off" is a term used of removing the yoke upon captive Judah (Ps. 136:24; Lam. 5:8; Ez. 19:12); and "sins" may be an intensive plural for his one great sin, which was the holding of Judah in captivity. All this could be reversed by Nebuchadnezzar repenting of his pride, handing his kingdom over to Yahweh, and allowing the Jews to return and re-establish the Kingdom of God in Judah.

The allusion is surely to Dt. 17:20, which uses the equivalent Hebrew word to speak of how if the chosen king was obedient to God's word and had a humbled heart, he would "lengthen / prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children". Had Nebuchadnezzar humbled his heart, then his kingdom would have been prolonged and his children would have continued his dynasty. The language of the image in Dan. 2

need not have come true. Again we see the open, flexible nature of Bible prophecy. Like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:27), Solomon could have prolonged his days as king over Israel if he walked in the ways of David (1 Kings 3:14), which we are specifically told he did not. Seeing Solomon reigned 40 years, this promise of prolonged days surely implied supernaturally prolonged life, beyond usual human lifespans. Indeed the term is used of how the Lord Jesus "prolonged his days" eternally (Is. 53:10). Hence Solomon twice uses the word to speak of how wise rulers could prolong their reigns (Prov. 28:2,16). He surely has himself in view; but failed to realize this potential. Indeed he cynically uses the word in Ecc. 7:15; 8:12 in claiming that it is the wicked and not the obedient who have their days prolonged.

Dan 4:28 *All this came on the king Nebuchadnezzar*- This is tantamount to saying that he did not accept Daniel's plea for his repentance in :27.

Dan 4:29 *At the end of twelve months he was walking in the royal palace of Babylon*- So often, God makes a statement of judgment, but there is a gap between the statement and the fulfilment. We all are located within that gap until we die. But there are specific matters over which we may be given a period of time to repent of. Nebuchadnezzar was given twelve months. And he didn't. But there was a plan D for him still, involving serious humiliation. And it seems he responded to that. We have such things going on in our lives, although they are seen clearer in the lives of others. We think of the Lord giving the apostate "space to repent" which they declined (Rev. 2:21).

Dan 4:30 *The king spoke and said*- These words may well have been simply his innermost thoughts. But as the Lord makes clear, the thoughts of the heart are read by God as our words. He apparently said or thought these things whilst viewing the city, so he would have been on a rooftop, the place of solace and meditation (cp. 2 Sam. 11:2).

Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?- Nebuchadnezzar realized after his humbling that one of his reasons for pride had been due to him not realizing the extent to which the "great Babylon which (he) had built" and the Kingdom he had gained were in fact the total result of the work of the Angels; "He does according to His will in the army of Heaven (the Angels), and among the inhabitants of the earth" (:35). The bricks of ancient Babylon all have Nebuchadnezzar's name on them. Pride in our own homes, or our kingdoms no matter how small or great in secular terms, can be the same essential sin. A sense of God's kingdom majesty and power is essential if we are to avoid this temptation to glorify our own power and apparent kingdom majesty. And much of that apparent majesty is anyway in our own eyes only, as it was for Nebuchadnezzar; for Babylon was already great when he became king, and all he did was to rebuild parts of it and make cosmetic improvements.

An inscription from the period of Nebuchadnezzar records him saying: "I have made Babylon, the holy city, the glory of the great gods, more prominent than before, and have promoted its rebuilding. I have caused the sanctuaries of gods and goddesses to lighten up like the day. No king among all the kings has ever created, no earlier king has ever built, what I have magnificently built for Marduk. I have furthered to the utmost the equipment of Esagila (the great temple of Marduk), and the renovation of Babylon more than had ever been done before". His building of Babylon was

therefore directly related to his continued idolatry and rejection of Yahweh, despite all he had been shown and taught earlier.

Dan 4:31 *While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken-*

The 'falling' of the voice from Heaven surely connects with the Angels 'coming down from heaven' (:23 "Whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from Heaven and saying, Cut down the tree..."). The Angels and the word are connected. God's word is operationalized by the Angels who watch over its fulfilment 'coming down' from the court of Heaven to fulfil it, given the fulfilment of preconditions here on earth. In this case, the precondition was Nebuchadnezzar's failure to repent after a 12 month period.

See on 2 Pet. 2:10. I suggested on :30 that his statement may have been simply in his own heart, but it was counted as being a word in his mouth by the God who considers thoughts to be words. His word and the Divine word are here contrasted.

The kingdom has departed from you- The same word is used of how the Dan. 2 image vision meant that God "removed" (s.w. "departed") kings, including Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:21; 7:12). He ought to have continued believing in that Divine word; but he had to be brought to accept it through this deep humiliation, when he could have avoided that by simply accepting God's word as it is. And it's the same for us. This is why attitude to God's word, rather than simply reading it, is so critically important in human life. It is why acceptance that the Bible is the inspired word of God has such endless implications in human life. We note however the flexibility of interpretation. The kingdom "has departed". But by the end of the chapter, it was restored. According to Dan. 2:21, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was to be removed. And it was, for "seven times", until he repented and then he claims that again "I was established in my kingdom, and excellent greatness was added to me" (:36). The tree of Nebuchadnezzar was cut down but the stump was left, with the hope of rising again. The same figure is used in Is. 6:11-13 of how the stump of the cut down tree of Judah could still sprout after the exile: "The holy seed is its stump". Although he could speak of future resurrection at the last day, surely the idea was that the apparently inevitable removal of Nebuchadnezzar, according to Dan. 2:21, could in fact be ameliorated, delayed or even reversed. For even he had freewill, and the prophecy of his destruction didn't have to come true for him. His comment that God "sets up over it the most abased of men" (:17) may mean that he considered that he had been abased and had now been exalted to rule over God's kingdom. We are left wondering what exactly was Nebuchadnezzar's status before God at this time. The unclarity is surely because there were potentials which Nebuchadnezzar could have achieved, but didn't completely.

Dan 4:32 *And you shall be driven from men; and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field; you shall be made to eat grass as oxen-*

All beasts of the field had been given to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:5,6; Dan. 2:37,38), and he as the tree provided food for them. But he is now made as a beast of the field. He is made to feel how his subjects felt. His kingship was thus taken from him. But this is also part of our humanization, our being made 'men' as God intended- being made to feel how we have made others feel. But a lion [as Nebuchadnezzar is presented in Dan. 7:3] eating like an ox is absolutely the language of the Kingdom prophecies in Is. 11:7; 65:25 ["the lion shall eat straw like the ox"]. His conversion was a foretaste of Kingdom living. And we could also consider that there is a hint here that the Kingdom of God in some form could have been re-established at that

time. We noted above that this is the significance of the king being left with stump and root, out of which a sprig could shoot forth- the language of Messiah, and also in Is. 11.

The AV translates this as if it was the "men" who would make him eat grass. In this case, we have implied humiliation at the hands of his own courtiers, rather than simply an illness. This seems confirmed by Dan. 5:20, which speaks of his glory being taken from him.

And seven times shall pass over you; until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will- "Times" in Daniel can mean a year, but in other places, simply a period of time. It could have been seven days, months or some other period. Nebuchadnezzar had been taught that God rules over the kingdoms of men and would in due course subsume them into His Kingdom. He had momentarily accepted that at the end of Dan. 2. But that understanding of the Gospel of the Kingdom was but theoretical and transient. He had to be taught the personal truth of it by humiliation. But that could have been avoidable had he accepted God's word through Daniel in his heart.

Dan 4:33 *The same hour was the thing fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and ate grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of the sky, until his hair was grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws-* This could have been the medical condition known as *insania zoanthropica*, but it seems more likely that it was a uniquely designed punishment with the aim in view of eliciting his repentance. The dew was "from heaven", as if to point out that God was in all this, seeking to bring Nebuchadnezzar unto Himself. Or we could have here a case of lycanthropy, "in which the sufferer retains his consciousness in other respects, but imagines himself to be changed into some animal and acts... in conformity to that persuasion". The description of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation is surely framed in the language of the story of Ahiqar, which was popular at the time. "It is the tale of a wise man of the court who is framed by a treacherous nephew for treason against his king and is forced to hide in a pit. After a period of time, he is needed again by the kingdom and so is sought by the king. Ahiqar recounts that when the king opens the "prison", "I ascended and came and fell before the king; the hair of my head had grown down on my shoulders, and my nails were grown long like an eagle's". The message to the king was that "You're going to become like Ahiqar in the famous story". And so it happened.

The description of Nebuchadnezzar here exactly fits the appearance of Enkidu, in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Enkidu was transformed from a "man of nature" into "a man of culture". Nebuchadnezzar surely knew this story, and the point was made that the true civilized man or "man of culture" is one humbled before the one true God. That is the true and only ultimate culture. Nebuchadnezzar as the apex of "culture" was shown to have been but a "man of nature", a wild cave man.

Dan 4:34 *At the end of the days-* The "seven times". "Times" need not refer to years, it could be literal days or any period.

I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven- This is the language of prayerful repentance. He lifts his eyes to heaven because he recognizes "the God of heaven" (:37) as opposed to the various idols of Babylon which were located in temples on earth.

And my understanding returned to me- The only true understanding is that we are as beasts and God's Kingdom is over all. It "returned to me" in that he returned to the

humility before God which he had momentarily had after the Dan. 2 image vision and after Daniel's explanation of his latest dream 12 months previously. Nebuchadnezzar had earlier recognized that Daniel was the one with "understanding" (Dan. 1:4,17; 2:21; 5:12 s.w.). It's as if he was saying that he had once accepted Daniel's "understanding", which was God's understanding- that he was only the head of gold, and his kingdom would pass away and ultimately be subsumed within God's Kingdom. And now he again accepted that, his earlier humility and "understanding" of a moment returned to him permanently. "Understanding" or 'knowledge' is the same word used in :32 for how he had to be humbled until he 'knew' that the Most High rules. Now he did 'know' or 'understand' that. But he says this understanding returned to him. Again we see how we may perceive things very clearly at one point, but pride and the passage of life can cloud them to the point that we have to re-learn them. The art of the spiritual life is to live with that knowledge and let the word abide in us. Nebuchadnezzar's 'knowledge' was not only of God's abiding eternity, but also of what it means to be human. For surely his humiliation and rising again is referred to in Dan. 7:4, where he is presented as a lion which "was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it". He, the proud man, the man who stamped lions on the bricks used to build "this great Babylon", had to become an animal in order to be transformed from an animal into a man as God intended. Being humbled is in fact to become a man, humanity as we are intended to be. He was the lion who became a man. To truly show yourself a man, to be the humanity that God intended, is to be humbled before your God; and not to preen yourself as if you are a lion. Is. 57:15 seems strangely relevant to him: "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite'". Nebuchadnezzar started as a man, but was made as an animal, so that he might become "a human" again, but man as God intended: "Let his mind be changed from that of a human, and let the mind of an animal be given to him" (:16). But Dan. 7 presents Nebuchadnezzar before his conversion as an animal; a lion with eagles' wings. The 'human mind' he then had was in fact that of an animal. Those wings are plucked and he is given a man's heart- he is transformed from an animal to a man; a true man. The first beast of Dan. 7 was "lifted up from the ground" so it could stand on two feet as a man. No longer a four footed lion.

Nebuchadnezzar in his days of madness would have been similar to a middle aged man in a psychiatric ward, sectioned and identifying as an animal, with wild frightened eyes and a diagnosis well beyond any human cure through therapy or medication. Yet the power of the Holy Spirit is such that in this case, such a person had a spiritual awareness deep within them. And when this was responded to, God did the greatest psychological miracle of the Old Testament. He healed that tormented mind, and made that man the world's most powerful ruler. And despite the man's awful sins and blasphemy, God sanctified and eternally saved him. We have for all time a parade example of how God can psychologically transform a person and save them. Human psychology and psychiatry never totally cured anyone. At best a few symptoms were partially relieved. No psychotropic medication, no course of therapy, can radically transform. Only God's Spirit can. And here we have the parade example.

And I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation- Now finally he accepts the truth of the image vision of Dan. 2:44. If he

had accepted it more deeply and from the heart at the time, he wouldn't have needed to be so humiliated in order to learn its truth on a personal level. We too need to convert our Sunday School Christianity, or our previous acceptance of the Gospel of God's Kingdom, into deep personal reality. If we won't do so, still proudly seeking to build up our own kingdoms, then we too shall be humbled in a desperate Divine attempt to help us accept the truth of His Kingdom so that we might enjoy it eternally.

Dan 4:35 *All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing*- This is not to say that God doesn't value the human person. Nebuchadnezzar had proudly reflected that all the peoples of the "earth" which he knew were under his control. But that, he now realized, was nothing.

And He does according to His will in the army of heaven- The apparently invincible Babylonian army, through which Nebuchadnezzar had attained his empire, were nothing compared to the Angelic army of Yahweh of hosts.

And among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or ask Him, What are You doing?- Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold had been an attempt to stay God's hand, to stop him as the head of gold being deposed and taken over by others. Now he more deeply accepted the truth which he had briefly perceived after Daniel had explained it to him in Dan. 2. The same word for "stay" is used of how the stone "smote" the image and ground all of it to powder, including Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (Dan. 2:34,35).

All Nebuchadnezzar's statements are in fact repeating God's words from already existent Bible texts. Surely more happened here than meets the eye; Daniel maybe spoke to him in far more detail than is recorded. "All the inhabitants of the earth are considered nothing" is Is. 40:17 ("All the nation are like nothing before him; they are regarded as worthless and less than nothing by him"); "according to His will, he does with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth" is Ps. 115:3 ("Our God is in heaven; whatever He pleases, He does" and Ps. 135:6 "Whatever pleases Yahweh He does, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all the depths"); "There is no one who strikes His hand and says to Him, 'What have you done?'" is Job 9:12 ("Who can say to [God], 'What are you doing?'" and Job 42:2 "I know that You can do everything; no purpose of Yours can be thwarted").

Dan 4:36 *At the same time my understanding returned to me*- See on :34.

And the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and brightness returned to me; and my officials and my lords sought to me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent greatness was added to me- His kingdom was returned or restored to him. The message was that he was an example to the Jews. Their kingdom likewise could be restored, in line with the restoration prophecies. But like Nebuchadnezzar, they had to repent and be humbled.

There is no historical evidence that Nebuchadnezzar in his final years became even greater and more glorious than when he proudly strutted the rooftop admiring great Babylon which he had built. Having committed his kingdom and glory to God's Kingdom and glory, it would read rather strangely if in fact he then regained all his secular glory. I suggest that he is now reframing his understanding of glory and majesty. The glory we have, and which he had, was to be with the Lord God, on the side of His Kingdom and prophetic program. The AV offers: "And for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me". The idea would be that instead of secular glory, he had the glory of knowing God in truth. The return of "my understanding", which as noted on :34 referred to his understanding of God's ways, is paralleled with the return of his glory. But his glory was in that he now knew God in

the sense of having relationship with him. There is a strong appropriacy of Jer. 9:23,24 to Nebuchadnezzar: "Thus says Yahweh, Don't let the mighty man glory in his might, don't let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he has understanding, and knows Me, that I am Yahweh who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says Yahweh". The "excellent greatness" that he felt had been added to him was therefore in reference to God's grace, rather than any reference to secular things. The original seems to mean "the pre-eminent, ultimate" greatness; and he now realized that the ultimate exaltation was to walk humbly with your God and have the hope of the Kingdom.

Dan 4:37 *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven; for all His works are truth, and His ways justice; and those who walk in pride He is able to abase-* "Extol" is literally 'to lift up', the same word used of how previously he had lifted himself up rather than God (see on :20). He openly accepts his pride and appropriate abasement. His acceptance of Yahweh as the ultimate King, rather than himself or his previous god Bel, was effectively a resignation of his own kingship and kingdom to Yahweh. He finally learns the truth God tried to teach him through the three friends, when they stated that their God "was able" to deliver. And Nebuchadnezzar at that time, for a moment, recognized that no god was 'able to save' like Israel's God. Now he recognizes that this same God is "able to abase". For Him to be "able to save" He has to be "able to abase" because it is only, as Peter puts it, by being humbled beneath His mighty hand that we can be exalted in due time. Like Nebuchadnezzar, we are taught these things and learn them and accept them for a moment; but often have to be painfully re-taught them so that they become a permanent fixture in our personalities. And thus the word becomes flesh in us, as it was supremely in the Lord.

And so the Nebuchadnezzar who abused God's people [just read Lamentations], desecrated the temple, blasphemously tried to upend the vision of Daniel 2 by making an image of himself all of gold... will, it seems to me, finally be saved. We marvel at God's grace to save literally anyone- if they humble themselves. In contrast, it was pride which led to the Jews and their leadership and kings being condemned as they proudly refused all Jeremiah's multiple entreaties to them. And their abuser Nebuchadnezzar did humble himself and presumably will therefore be saved in the end. He had exalted and abased people at will: "Whom he would he set up, and whom he would he abased" (Dan. 5:19). He "became proud, stubborn, and cruel" (GNB). But he concludes his witness to the world by saying that in fact it is God who 'sets up' those who have been abased. And he is the parade example. He had been taught in Dan. 2 that God sets up, and he himself had exalted the abased Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But until now he never really 'got it'.

DANIEL CHAPTER 5

Dan 5:1 *Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand-* Belshazzar was the effective king of Babylon whilst Nabonidus was in north Africa. Belshazzar means "Bel Protect the King", and he clearly believed that Bel would protect Babylon even with the Medes approaching- and he believed this to the extent of recklessly feasting with the Medes outside the gates. Again, we find the historical accounts in Daniel to be deconstructions of the

supposed power of the Babylonian gods, who are revealed as powerless before Yahweh's purpose; just as the dream of Dan. 2 had depicted. The feast was likely an annual religious festival, and Cyrus / Darius planned the attack at precisely that time. Again, we see the victory as being a victory specifically against the guardian gods of Babylon. The destruction of Babylon whilst feasting was specifically foretold (Is. 21:4,5; Jer. 50:24; 51:39,57).

Quite possibly this feast was to celebrate his coronation. The usage of the temple vessels may even have been an intentional mocking of Jeremiah's prophecy that these would return to Zion after 70 years. He was exalting his gods over Yahweh.

Dan 5:2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels-

"While he tasted..." is really 'under the power of [the wine]'. It refers to the command given by the king in Dan. 3:10, 29; 4:6; 6:26. The wine is commanding him, rather than he being in command. Yet still he is condemned for the behaviour arising from it, because even drunken behaviour was seen by God in this case as a fair reflection of the true state of his heart.

This was a conscious act of blasphemy. The God of Israel had foretold in Dan. 2 that Babylon would be taken over by another empire; and Jeremiah had made it clear in the previous generation that although Babylon would take Jerusalem, Babylon would also fall to her enemies (Jer. 50:28 etc.). Belshazzar seems to have been aware of this, and with enemy armies outside the gates, he trusts in his god to preserve him and mocks Yahweh. He was turning the table of Yahweh into the table of Bel and the gods supposed to preserve Babylon. In essence we commit the same sin if we turn the Lord's table into our table, in glorification of our own religion and worldview.

Which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink from them- The miserable critics point out that Belshazzar's father was the usurper Nabuna'id [Nabonidus]. But "father" simply means 'ancestor' in practice, and could refer to Nebuchadnezzar as his grandfather (as in Gen. 28:13; 32:9), which he could have been, if Nabuna'id had Belshazzar through one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters. Indeed this would appear a likely and logical way for Nabuna'id to enforce his claim to the throne and establish his dynasty. That Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar is confirmed by Jer. 17:27: "All the nations shall serve him (Nebuchadnezzar) and his son, and his son's son until the very time of his land come". But father-son relationships were presented at the time in a far less specific sense than the terms are used today.

Drinking from the temple vessels was an act of blasphemy that warranted death, according to the law of his father / ancestor Nebuchadnezzar: "Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins" (Dan. 3:29). His praising "the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone" (Dan. 5:4) clearly alludes to all the metals in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Dan. 2 which were to be destroyed. Babylon fell because of their attitude to the temple: "Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for His device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of His temple" (Jer. 50:28).

Nebuchadnezzar had desecrated the temple but it seems he was forgiven and humbled himself before Yahweh. Belshazzar didn't continue that spirit but continued

to desecrate the temple through his blasphemous use of the temple vessels. And this clearly enough triggered his destruction, and that of Babylon.

Dan 5:3 *Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of God's house which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, drank from them-* "The temple of God's house" means not generally 'the temple' ["God's house"] but specifically the holy and most holy place. There would not have been many "golden vessels" there; just those used for pouring out the blood on the day of atonement. They would therefore have passed these vessels between them all, as they all drank from them (:23), rather like a mock communion service. It was very deep blasphemy. It seems that the golden candlestick from the holy place was also present (:5). They were pretending that their table of drunken revelry was the most holy place of the Jerusalem temple.

Dan 5:4 *They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone-* They were imitating the worship of Yahweh (see on :3), and replacing Him with their gods. The golden vessels were now seen as part of the paraphernalia of the worship of their golden gods. Gold, silver, brass, iron and a little stone all feature in the vision of Dan. 2. In Dan. 3, Nebuchadnezzar tried to say that the vision was wrong and he as the golden head was going to be the entire image. So here, they were saying that their gods of those same metals were the true gods and that the image was really just a composite of their gods, with the king of Babylon as the eternal head of it.

We note the changed order of the metals in :23: "the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone". Silver is placed before gold because the Babylonian empire has effectively been replaced by the Medes, the silver. These metals are all those of the image in Dan. 2, the implication being that the image was also an idol, and all those metals were to pass away. Although they were acting as if they wouldn't ever pass and those metals were under their control. They failed to learn from Nebuchadnezzar's history of making a golden image of himself to try to deny that those other metals would ever take over from him.

The Nabonidus Chronicle, in its entry for Nabonidus' 17th (and final) year describes the transfer of gods into the city of Babylon in order to by all means protect them from the onslaught of the Medo-Persians. The Chronicle records how afterwards, Cyrus ordered these gods to be returned to their home cities: "From the month of Kislimu to the month of Addaru, the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had made come down to Babylon... returned to their sacred cities."

Dan 5:5 *In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote opposite the lampstand-* This candlestick may have been the one taken from the holy place of the Jerusalem temple; as noted on :3, they were pretending that their table of drunken revelry was the most holy place of the Jerusalem temple.

On the plaster of the wall of the king's palace- Literally, "the chalk"; and this was exactly how the palace walls unearthed in Nineveh appear to have been constructed.

And the king saw the part of the hand that wrote- "The palm". I will suggest on :8 that the hand covered the writing, and only Daniel could as it were make the Angelic hand move to reveal it (:24). This would explain the confusion between the palm and the fingers which wrote.

Dan 5:6 *Then the king's appearance changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; the joints of his thighs were loosened, and his knees struck one against another-* This is the picture of a man facing Divine judgment. We should all be there; the wonder is

that for us, as Paul explains in Romans, we are there, but then saved from it by grace through Christ. And it is the picture of the middle eastern world, and indeed the whole planet, on the eve of Divine judgment (Lk. 21:25 "men's hearts failing them for fear...").

We have a powerful word picture of the king. The cameraman of Divine inspiration is zoomed in upon him. His colour changed, his thoughts visibly troubled him; his limbs gave way ['his loins were untied'] and his knees knocked together (Dan. 5:6 RSV). Literally, 'the knots of his loins were loosened / untied'. This is quite typical human reaction to extreme fear, experienced e.g. when men come under fire for the first time. I suggest the loosening of his loins meant that his bowels opened. He was reduced to a pathetic figure, he who had just been drunkenly blaspheming Yahweh's temple vessels. But the very same word for loosening / untying is found a few verses later, where Daniel is presented as the one who can untie knots, although the term is usually translated to the effect "solve problems" (Dan. 5:12,16). The irony is that the king's knots have already been untied... and by Daniel's God. The king calls for Daniel and says to him "I have heard that you can... solve problems (untie / loosen knots)". Continence of the bowel, bladder and anus is controlled by the sphincter muscle. It is like a knot which closes off our urine and stool. The Greek word 'sphincter' means literally a knot. These things are a clear fulfilment of Is. 45:1 RSV: "Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed". This is incidental confirmation that Cyrus and "Darius" [unknown to secular history] were the same person. The opening of the city gates and the opening of the king of Babylon's bowels stand related. There is then an obvious irony in the way that the king, whose bowels have already been untied by his fear of the Divine word, then asks Daniel to open / untie the knot for him. But it has already happened. As so often, man subconsciously knows the truth of God's word even before it is explained to him. Just as Nebuchadnezzar surely understood the dream of himself as a tree that was to be cut down. The interpretation was obvious to him, surely, even before Daniel stated the obvious to him.

Dan 5:7 *The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whoever shall read this writing, and show me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom-* It was the job description of the wise men to interpret such things; to offer them huge reward for doing their job indicates not only the king's desperation, but also the tacit recognition that usually they could not really accurately interpret such things. History was of course repeating, for this was the very scene of Dan. 2, when the image vision was interpreted as meaning that Babylon too must pass over to others. Belshazzar should have perceived the similarities, and called for Daniel immediately. Again we note the similarities with Joseph (Gen. 41:42), who would have been a great role model for Daniel. We too will find such role models in the Bible as we face our various life experiences. We note too the similarities with the situation in Dan. 2. Belshazzar demands the writing be both read and interpreted. It's possible that only the king saw what was written ["the king saw the hand that was writing"]; :8 notes that the wise men could neither read nor interpret the writing. Likewise Daniel both recalled and interpreted the vision of Dan. 2, and it seems the same is repeated here. He first read the writing (:25) and then interpreted it (:26). Again, circumstances repeat.

Dan 5:8 *Then came in all the king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor reveal to the king the interpretation-* As noted on :7, this is a conscious repetition of the scene in Dan. 2. But Belshazzar failed to respond appropriately. Perhaps they couldn't read the writing because the Angelic hand was covering it, and only Daniel had the power to remove that hand (:24). They could not read the writing perhaps because they couldn't see it. It was only the king who saw the Angelic hand and what was written. Only Daniel knew and saw the writing. Indeed it could be understood that the king here is seeing a dream, as in Dan. 2; and as with Nebuchadnezzar, his dream is but his own premonitions of his own inevitable fall.

Dan 5:9 *Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his appearance was changed, and his lords were perplexed-* Lk. 21:25 appears to allude here. The king was on the eve of God's judgment, and he knew it. Why be so worried about what could have been shrugged off as an optical illusion? He was after all quite drunk. We see in this matter evidence enough that even the most hardened blasphemers have a conscience, somewhere deep down. This should encourage us to never consider anyone not worth witnessing to. There is a gap in every heart and psyche which only the gospel of God's Kingdom can satisfy. We were wired that way. The description is that of Nebuchadnezzar when he realized that the three Jewish friends were being preserved in the fire by an Angel (Dan. 3:24), and of Nebuchadnezzar when he saw the revelation of his own downfall (Dan. 4:5). The historical incidents in Daniel all share such points of commonality, to demonstrate the same Divine hand in the affairs of men. He works according to a similar imprint and hallmark. And that continues to this day. It is why we can look back upon our lives and see that they make sense. "Appearance" is the same original word translated "brightness"; Nebuchadnezzar's appearance was likewise changed but he repented, and it changed back to how it previously was (Dan. 4:36). But Belshazzar would not repent. He failed to learn from history. The same word is used of the bright appearance of the image in Dan. 2:31, which was to be changed and brought to nothing. Time and again, we see the basic truth of that image revealed in the immediate history of those times.

Dan 5:10 *Now the queen because of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: the queen spoke and said, O king, live forever; don't let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your appearance be changed-* This may refer to the king's mother, the queen mother, hence she is mentioned separately to his wives in :2,3. As noted on :2, this would then refer to Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, who would therefore have remembered Daniel's interpretations.

Dan 5:11 *There is a man in your kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him. The king Nebuchadnezzar your father, the king, I say, your father, made him master of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers-* The history of Daniel and his interpretations was therefore well known, although Belshazzar had put it out of his mind, even though he knew Daniel and employed him as one of his workers (Dan. 8:1,27 "In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, even to me, I Daniel... I Daniel, fainted, and was sick for some days; then I rose up, and did the king's business"). We too can put inconvenient truth far from our minds instead of recalling it to mind and being humbled by it unto repentance. We note her laboured emphasis of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was his ancestor, which may have been counted on the basis that she was a daughter or granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar. She was aware of

Nebuchadnezzar's repentance and perhaps hoped that Belshazzar would likewise humble himself.

Dan 5:12 *Because an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, the interpreting of dreams, and revealing of strange messages, solving of problems and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation-* Daniel was still working for Belshazzar and was therefore known (Dan. 8:1,27). The way he is spoken of as being somewhat distant and unknown therefore suggests he had been ousted from the ranks of the dream interpreters, or had removed himself from them, and was working for the king in a different capacity. We too may need to remove ourselves from situations where we are in a conflict of conscience, even if it means a loss of power and kudos. "Solving of problems" is literally 'untying of knots', see on :6.

Dan 5:13 *Then was Daniel brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, Are you that Daniel, who are of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judah?-*

Possibly the palm of God's hand was over the inscription until Daniel arrived. And when he arrived the palm was withdrawn. "Brought in before the king" is yet another connection with the Joseph story. Time and again, Daniel was nudged to see the similarities, so that he might act like faithful Joseph.

We must remember that Belshazzar knew Daniel and employed him (Dan. 8:1,27). "Are you that Daniel...?" doesn't have to mean that Belshazzar didn't know or recognize him; it is similar to Saul enquiring who David was after the victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17:55,56), and David enquiring who Bathsheba was, when she was his next door neighbour and wife of his loyal friend Uriah (2 Sam. 11:3). To enquire who someone was must be read as a Semitic literary device, and not literally. The idea was in all these examples: 'I want you to do something for me and serve me as I ask you'.

Dan 5:14 *I have heard of you, that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you-* The wise men all claimed that they could interpret dreams because they possessed "the spirit of the gods". But their failure meant that they were charlatans, or that in fact the gods of Babylon whom they were so strongly trusting in that evening were not in fact the true God. God so often leads men to situations where they are forced to jettison their myths and favoured beliefs, and accept His truth. But in the final analysis, Belshazzar still would not do this.

Dan 5:15 *Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and tell me its interpretation; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing-* As noted on :14, this was a tacit admission that the gods were not in fact in touch with Belshazzar and his courtiers. But as explained on :1 and :2, they were desperately trusting those gods to deliver them from the armies outside the city walls. God was nudging Belshazzar towards total repentance, but he resisted, although accepting the theoretical truth of Daniel's interpretation.

Dan 5:16 *But I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations, and dissolve problems; now if you can read the writing, and tell me its interpretation, you shall be*

clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom- As noted on :17, that kingdom was about to fall. All such rewards would be only for a few more hours at the most. Perhaps the "third ruler" meant being one of the three rulers of Dan. 2:49, who had once been comprised of Daniel's friends. It's as if the king was promising to return the Jews to the places from which they had been deposed. But such symbolic repentance was too little and too late now.

Dan 5:17 Then Daniel answered before the king, Let your gifts be to yourself, and give your rewards to another- Unlike the queen mother, Daniel noticeably doesn't address the king with the customary "O king, live for ever". He does use this term to Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (Dan. 6:21). But in this case, he knew and believed Belshazzar's day to die had come. He had been so nervous in telling Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the cut down tree; here he exudes confidence from the vision of God's word, even just a few words, which he saw inscribed on the wall, illuminated for all to see by the candlestick. We too can have every boldness and confidence in knowing the ultimate future of man's glory, according to God's word.

This was said not only because Daniel didn't want to again be in a position where his conscience to God would be hopelessly compromised. He knew from Dan. 2 and from the writing on the wall that the kingdom of Belshazzar was about to fall. To be made third ruler in that kingdom for just a few more moments was not what anyone wanted. Daniel would have been aware of Is. 13:15, which in the context of the fall of Babylon had warned: "he that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword". As it happened, the honours were forced upon Daniel, but God recognized that this was not Daniel's will. We too may find ourselves promoted to situations we would rather not be in, and God understands that. It is for us like Daniel to seek to remove ourselves from those situations as best we can.

Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king, and tell him the interpretation- The difference between reading and interpreting it would suggest that the writing was in an alphabet unknown to the king; perhaps it was in Hebrew. Perhaps the lack of vowel points made it impossible to read and understand; or quite likely the king was illiterate, as most monarchs were in those times.

Dan 5:18 As for you, O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty- To call Yahweh the most high was in direct criticism of the mockery of Yahweh and glorification of the Babylonian gods which had been going on. Daniel could well have been executed for this, but like Joseph and Samuel before him, he spoke forth God's truth as he had done in Dan. 2 and Dan. 4.

We note that Nebuchadnezzar is repeatedly called the father of Belshazzar (:22 especially). This wasn't strictly the case. But I suggested on Dan. 2 that the image prophecy had an initial possible fulfilment in the immediate dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar, ending in Belshazzar. This would explain why Belshazzar is described as the "son" of Nebuchadnezzar when he was a descendant but not his literal son. "Son" can legitimately be used of any descendant. We also note the opinion of several scholars that "Belshazzar" was Nebuchadnezzar's son Evil Merodach.

Dan 5:19 And because of the greatness that He gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he killed, and whom he

would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down- This is all the language of Yahweh Himself. But these possibilities were all given to Nebuchadnezzar by God. He had such power in order to make him later reflect that indeed, such Divine possibilities could only have been given him by God. Our experiences of exaltation are used likewise. We may reflect: 'How could I have ever... passed that exam, held that job down, done that or this'. The experiences are given so that we may realize that it was all of God, and be humbled; but if we fail to make that realization, then we end up proud and playing God. Nebuchadnezzar had raised up and abused / put down people; he had this same experience, and from his abasing he was lifted up. How we treat others is so often how God treats us. It is therefore imperative to forgive and seek to save others especially those who sin against us. For we too sin against others and against God...

Dan 5:20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he became proud, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was from God. Here too, the psychological attitudes of Nebuchadnezzar were confirmed by God. The spirit of God works in this way, confirming our spirit. Which is why our spirit, our mind, our deepest inner heart, is so significant. For God confirms us in it. Pride is a hardening of the spirit or the heart / mind. "They took his glory from him" would confirm what we suggested on Dan. 4:32, that Nebuchadnezzar's own courtiers robbed him of his glory rather than nursing him through a psychological illness.

Dan 5:21 And he was driven from men, and his heart was made like an animal's, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of the sky; until he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and that He sets up over it whomsoever He will- The humiliation was "until" he recognized the truth of the Dan. 2 image vision. The implication is that he did 'know' or learn this. He was converted, in the end. But the prophecy of Dan. 4 had been that he would be in this humbled situation for a period of "seven times". We noted there that "times" is undefined; it could have referred to seven days, periods of time, weeks or years. In this sense God's time periods are open ended and capable of redefinition. And of course Nebuchadnezzar didn't have to repent; repentance had to be from the heart, of his choice. The "seven times" prophecy regarding Nebuchadnezzar could have been falsified by his refusal to repent, and we will see something similar in later time periods in Daniel regarding Israel's repentance, especially in the prophecy of the sevens in Dan. 9. This is how we can have a sense of excitement with God as we read His words and consider the open ended possibilities which stretch before us.

Dan 5:22 You, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this- We are intended to learn from the experiences of others, both contemporary with us and as recorded in the Bible. As noted on Mt. 21:32, the Jews of the Lord's day were held guilty for not repenting when they saw the example of prostitutes and tax collectors repenting. We may not be humbled ourselves as Nebuchadnezzar was, but if we see others humbled, then we are expected to take the lesson and humble ourselves. The experiences of those around us are therefore not random, but brought into our lives by God so that we might learn from them. And we are held responsible for our response to them. This has very far reaching practical consequence, and gives an urgency and significance to social life of an altogether different dimension to what

most experience. We note that Daniel scolds the king for his arrogance, and seems fearless in pronouncing his fall and almost laughing off the offer of being 'third ruler' in an empire that was literally about to fall. This contrasts with his nervousness to tell the same kind of message to Nebuchadnezzar. It is the kind of confidence he had as a young man explaining the Daniel 2 image to Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps this is an example of the ebb and flow of faith and confidence in every believer. Or it could be that Daniel was so persuaded of the truth of the message that he fearlessly states that truth, knowing the empire was literally about to fall.

Dan 5:23 *But have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which don't see, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified-* Realizing the basic truths about our nature, that we are not our own, that our fragile breath is in God's hands, with nothing inherently immortal within us, and that our ways are "His" in that they are known to Him... will lead us to humility and repentance. All true theology must have its issue in practice. "The God, in whose hand your breath (spirit) is" was language which pointed to how the same Angelic hand had written on the wall.

Dan 5:24 *Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed-* I have explained on :5 and :8 that the hand wrote the words and then the palm of that Angelic hand covered the words. Only Daniel had the power to remove that Angelic hand. Note that this was an inscription, hence the earlier mention of the writing being on the plaster; and the idea of an inscription is that it is for public view. It was inscribed on the wall next to the candlestick, so it was as it were illuminated. It's hard to see what other significance there is in the mention of the candlestick. Surely the idea was that the courtiers and all present should have accepted the message and surrendered to the Medes and Persians they knew were besieging them. Just as Zedekiah should have surrendered to the Babylonians besieging him. But they failed to learn the lesson from the circumstances repeating their own history, and likewise pride stopped them from repenting and surrendering. And so their city fell and their king likewise fell.

Dan 5:25 *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN-* This could be rendered: "There is counted a mina, a shekel, and two half minas"; for justification of the translation, see R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* p. 135. "Mene" is the word used for counting or numbering. This has more obvious connection with the interpretation of the words given in :26-28. The mina would then refer to Nebuchadnezzar, the shekel (a 60th part of a mina) to Belshazzar, who was found of little weight or account; and the two half minas would then refer to the Medes and Persians. Indeed the word "upharsin" in Aramaic sounds like "and the Persians". The repetition of the word "mene", "numbered", is another connection with the dream which Joseph interpreted for another king; it was stated twice because the fulfilment was so certain and would begin fulfilment immediately (Gen. 41:32). As noted on :26-28, the original text carries the implication that these things were immediately happening. But Belshazzar only theoretically accepted that, by still trying to promote Daniel within his already ended kingdom.

Some texts read just one "mene", and there is only one "mene" referred to in the interpretation in :26. The words refer to weights- a minah (60 shekels), a tsel or one shekel, and upharsin, two half shekel pieces, referring initially to the Medes and

Persians. This makes a total of 62 shekels- the age of Darius when he took the kingdom (:31).

The explanation of the handwriting on the wall is initially hard for readers to understand, because it is unclear whether the words are being read or interpreted. When we read that "Peres" means that the kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians, we are surely not to understand that that is what the word "Peres" means as a word. That surely is the interpretation. My suggestion is that the handwriting consisted of the nine letters mn'tqlprs, which can be read as three words of three consonant letters each. Daniel gives three interpretations of each word. Depending which vowels are placed in each word, different words [vocalizations] can be formed with different meanings. And this is the key to how Daniel arrives at the interpretations. He doesn't so much as give an interpretation, as with previous visions; he simply reads the writing. The words formed are themselves the message.

On the simplest level of meaning, the words are simply weights used in a balance or scale. We could vocalize them as in most English versions, 'mina, shekel, half-mina'. But if we vocalize as 'menah, teqal, peras' we have words which speak of God's evaluation: 'he has reckoned, he has weighed, he has assessed'. But if we vocalize as 'menah, tiqqal, paras', we have God's actions of judgment in response to His evaluation: 'he has paid out, you are too light, Persia!'. These three levels of interpretation all allude to scales and weights as a metaphor for God's judgment; to 'pay out' is the language of the balances and transaction. It is a legitimate alternative translation to "it is finished" (AV). This is made explicit in :27: "You are weighed in the balances and found wanting". A weight of 62 was required to equal the weights of a mina [60 shekels], a shekel and two half shekels. And that weight was Darius / Cyrus at 62 years old. "Many Babylonian weight-stones with a value of a mina, a shekel or a half-mina are now housed in archeological museums, some of them inscribed in Aramaic with the very words of our passage: mene, teqel, or peres". The idea of Divine judgment as scales was commonly understood; there are Egyptian paintings of souls being weighed in scales after death, in order to determine where and how they will spend the afterlife. And the prophets speak of the nations being weighed in the balances and not coming to much. Note that God weighs even pagan unbelievers in this detailed way.

It has been demonstrated that the date of the fall of Babylon comes immediately after the annual morning rising of the constellation Libra, which in Akkadian was called zibanitu, 'the scales'. The magicians of Babylon were well versed in the interpretation of the zodiac and stars. But they missed the obvious connection, because they couldn't read the writing on the wall. Yet again they are demonstrated as useless and the whole incident even pokes fun at them. And of course, the point is made that it is not the stars nor Libra that weigh nations, people and kings in the balances- it is the God of Heaven. This is a classic example of deconstruction.

The difficulty of the wise men in reading the text may simply have been that it was written in Hebrew with no breaks between the three words; and they didn't know which vowel points to add between the consonants, in order to vocalize it and read it aloud. Or perhaps only the king saw the hand that wrote; and quite likely he was illiterate.

Dan 5:26 *This is the interpretation of it: MENE; God has numbered your kingdom, and brought it to an end-*

In the interpretation of each of the weights, Daniel makes a word play, based around the similarity [paronomasia] with other words. In this case to the verb *menah*,

to count or number. The kingdom was 'paid out', the language of the counting house and scales; NEV "brought it to an end".

As noted on :28, the original suggests that it has now imminently been ended, although Belshazzar's response in elevating Daniel reflects how he only accepted the truth of these words on a theoretical and not a personal level. Numbering is a figure for the final judgment (Job 31:4), the final taking of account; but the essence of judgment day is right now, before the God who weighs and numbers actions and lives as they happen.

The number of days of the Babylonian kingdom was therefore related to the behaviour of the king. Nebuchadnezzar could have lengthened the days of his "tranquility" by cutting off his sins, or perhaps he could have altogether avoided judgment by doing so. He didn't, and so his kingdom was removed, but was restored because he repented. Likewise, Belshazzar is criticized for not learning this lesson. The numbering of his days had it seems been cut short because of his acts of drunken blasphemy with the vessels of Yahweh's temple.

I suggested on Dan. 2 that the metals that followed Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold, could refer to the rulers / kings who followed him. The image was him and his dynasty, in the initial possible application. We may have something of that here. Mene, the 60 shekels, would have been Nebuchadnezzar. If indeed the text reads "Mene, mene" then there was a reference also to his immediate successors, Evil-Merodach and Neriglissar. Possibly the extra "mene" was inserted to develop the correspondence with the four kings schema of Dan. 2. Tekel or tsekel, the one shekel, would have been the next ruler Labashi-Marduk; and uparsin, the two halves, would then have referred to the joint rule [co-regency] of Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

Dan 5:27 *TEKEL; you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting*- "Tekel" is the Hebrew "shekel", a weight. But in the interpretation of each of the weights, Daniel makes a word play, based around the similarity [paronomasia] with other words. In this case to the verb *tegal*, to measure, or, 'to make light', in the sense that a weight on a balance can make the weight on the other side of the balance 'light'. And so he reaches the interpretation that Belshazzar is 'light', he has been weighted and made light and thus "found wanting". We must take away the lesson that we are not to be found 'light' before God; we recall that the Hebrew idea of *kabod*, "glory", means literally 'weight'. We are to abound in the "weightier matters of the law" and not be the light, surface level chaff of this world that shall be blown away at judgment day. As noted on :26 and :28, the original implies that this was the situation at that moment. There was no desperate plea from Belshazzar for mercy, no statement of repentance, but rather he continued with life as it had been by elevating Daniel within his already ended kingdom. And this is a cameo of so much human response before God's word. The final judgment of men is likened to a weighing in the balances (Job 31:4,6), but the essence of judgment is going on right now in this life. "We make the answer now".

Dan 5:28 *PERES; your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians*-

The interpretation makes use of a double word play, in that 'Peres' sounds like the word for 'Persians' and also the verb *peras*, to divide. Uparsin, meaning 'two', would hint at there being two definitions of 'Peres'; one is that your kingdom has been broken up, and the second meaning was that it had been given to Media and Persia.

The original implies that this is imminently happening. But by elevating Daniel to third ruler in the kingdom, Belshazzar showed that he only theoretically

acknowledged this truth, just as some terminally ill people deny the realities right up to the end. And so it is with us all; we have a tendency to think that God's urgent word is not true quite as stated, although on another level we may genuinely accept the truth of it. The division of the kingdom could refer to it being given to both Medes and Persians, but 'division' may more carry the sense of dividing it out, to others, just as required by the image vision of Dan. 2. We note that division is judgment; so often the enemies of Israel were judged by being divided against themselves. Those who make the Lord's house divided are effectively working out their own judgment / condemnation. The division of the kingdom perhaps also alludes to the divided state of the kingdoms of men presented in the image of Dan. 2.

Dan 5:29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom- This response was surprising in that to give such bad news would typically have warranted immediate execution. Belshazzar humbled himself and tried to return Daniel to the three senior rulers, who had once been comprised of his Jewish friends (Dan. 2:49). But Belshazzar's humility and apparent repentance was too little and too late. To accept the truth of God's word is not of itself enough. The way he proclaimed Daniel to a third ruler in his kingdom was of itself a tacit reflection of his inability to accept that his kingdom had been ended and given to the Medes (:28). The gold chain, purple clothing which was the insignia of the kingdom and proclamation was all so bizarre to Daniel, who knew that at that moment, the kingdom was ended. All our exaltation in this life is similarly inappropriate and meaningless. For the end of all things is at hand, and the judge stands before the door. Or we could have here an example of how like Nebuchadnezzar, a man can accept the truth of God's word for him, but not personalize it. Hence the Angel insisting: "To you it is spoken". And this stands as a global challenge for all time- to personalize God's word, far beyond merely accepting that it is true and Divinely inspired. The chain of gold put on the reluctant Daniel would have encouraged him that he was indeed going through the experience of Joseph, and would personally be saved. See on :13.

Dan 5:30 In that night Belshazzar the king of the Chaldees was slain- It is hard to know whether this was by his courtiers, or as a result of the Medes entering Babylon. There may indeed be a gap of some years between the death of Belshazzar and Darius taking the kingdom (:31). Such gaps in history are found at other points in the Biblical narrative. We think of how in 1 Kings 14, Ahijah states to Jeroboam's wife that Abijah would die, Jeroboam's dynasty would be overthrown, and Israel's kingdom ended. These things appear to all happen at the same time, when there were significant time periods between them. However, I have noted on :25-28 that the idea is that these things happened immediately, at that moment; and this leads me to support the traditional view that immediately, that night, the Medes took Babylon. This is also the implication of Jeremiah's prophecies, that in the night of her feasting, Babylon would fall. H.P. Mansfield gives relevant support for this: "Xenophon (*Cyrop.* 7:5) is quoted as stating: "But Cyrus, when he heard that there was to be such a feast in Babylon in which all the Babylonians would feast and revel through the whole night, on that night, as soon as it began to grow dark, taking many men, opened the dams into the river (i.e. he opened the dykes which had been made by Semiramis and her successors to confine the waters of the Euphrates to one channel), and allowed them to again flood the country, so that he could enter Babylon beneath its

walls in the channel of the river". He quotes the address of Cyrus to his army: "Now let us go up against them. Many of them are asleep; many of them are intoxicated; and all of them are unfit for battle". Herodotus (Book 1:19) states: "it was a day of festivity among them; and whilst the citizens were engaged in dance and merriment, Babylon was for the first time, thus taken". Isaiah predicted that the gates of brass would no longer provide a defence, and that the "bars of iron would be cut asunder" (Is. 45:2). Herodotus states that these brazen gates were situated along the banks of the river, but at the time of the attack, some of them had been left open, probably by some within the city who had come to terms with the Persians". But against this we must balance Dan. 6:28: "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian". Another option is that "the vassal king whom Daniel calls Darius the Mede was Gobryas (or Gubaru), who led the army of Cyrus to Babylon".

Dan 5:31 *Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old*- "Darius the Mede" may be another name for Cyrus (so D.J. Wiseman), Cambyses the son of Cyrus (so Boutflower) or Gubaru, whom Cyrus appointed as governor of Babylon immediately the city fell (Whitcomb and several other prominent commentators, although this runs into difficulty at Dan. 9:1). "Darius" may well be a title [meaning 'subduer'] rather than a name. The Medes took Babylon by diverting the flow of the Euphrates and entering the city along the river bed; this is the historical basis for the imagery of the drying up of the Euphrates in the last days, so that Babylon falls (Rev. 16:15,16). The "kings of the east" of the last days therefore correspond to the hordes of various Arabian mercenaries who were used by the Medes as soldiers. We can already see the development of such groups in the Middle East today. See on :25 for the significance of the age 62.

If Darius was indeed Cyrus (see on :30), we recall that Isaiah's prophecies about him set him up as a potential Messiah figure. He could have been an initial fulfilment of the stone of Dan. 2, hitting the image on the feet of the end of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty. Which [see on Dan. 2] was the initial possible fulfilment of the image. His kingdom could have morphed into a re-establishment of God's Kingdom in Judah. Indeed he urged the exiles to return and do this. But both Cyrus and the Jews failed in this, and so the kaleidoscope turned again, and other possible pictures of fulfilment came into view.

I suggested above that the mention of 62 connects with the number of shekels implied in mene [60 shekels], tsel [1 shekel] and upharsin, two half shekels [1 shekel]. But the Rabbis calculate that the moment Darius took the kingdom was 62 years after Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jeconiah into captivity: "They were exiled in the days of Jehoiachin in the seventh year counting from the conquest of Jehoiakim, which is eight years after the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. There remained to Nebuchadnezzar's reign thirty-seven years, for he reigned forty-five years, and twenty-three of Evil-merodach's and the two years of Belshazzar that passed, totaling sixty-two". If that is legitimate, we marvel again at the hand of God in human history. Who would have known when Darius was born, a helpless baby, that God had this destiny mapped out for him?

DANIEL CHAPTER 6

Dan 6:1 *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, who should be throughout the whole kingdom*- These 120 satraps were

symbolized by the 120 lion statues along Babylon's main procession street. The destruction of their representatives by lions is another inversion of Babylonian power and values which is common in Daniel. Herodotus records that "Darius" ['restrainer'] was a title for the king, an appellative like 'Pharaoh', rather than a personal name. This may therefore be a different 'Darius' to that of Dan. 5:31. It could well be that the Darius of Dan. 6 was in fact Cyrus the Persian (see on :28). This would then fit the historical interpretation of Dan. 7:5, which requires a Mede to be in power before the elevation of Cyrus. The book of Esther records 127 satraps at that time, so 120 at this time sounds right. However, the 120 could have been over the newly conquered province of Babylon.

Dan 6:2 *And over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one; so that these satraps might give account to them, and that the king should have no loss-* We note that Daniel had turned down the offer of becoming third in the kingdom under Darius (Dan. 5:16). But what he rejected he has now been given. The elevation of Daniel would have been because it was known that he had bravely prophesied the victory of the Medes over Babylon. He was well known for this, hence his elevation; but this means that the Babylonians also would have known Daniel's position about them, and he would have been in a similar position to Jeremiah, who likewise was within the besieged city [of Jerusalem in his case] and prophesied the victory of the enemy. These similarities between human lives all serve to give us encouragement and warning, as well as demonstrating that all is indeed under Divine control and we are not at the mercy of random event.

Dan 6:3 *Then Daniel was promoted above the presidents and the satraps, because an excellently wise spirit was in him-* This spirit perceived within him was that of God (Dan. 4:8,9; 5:11,14). His wisdom of spirit is elsewhere associated with his interpretation of Divine dreams; perhaps the promotion was because of this, as it was every other time he was promoted. His interpretations had of course predicted the Medo Persian victory against Babylon, and yet they also demanded their fall. Perhaps it was because of his words against Babylon that he was promoted. But it may equally have been because of his general wisdom and integrity. He was promoted several times, and each time he seems to slip out of the limelight, either by his own will or because he was manipulated out of the position. To be in any position of power within those empires would've involved him in conflicts of conscience to his God. We too at times need to allow ourselves to slip away from the limelight and situation provided by promotion of whatever kind.

And the king thought to set him over the whole kingdom- This could refer to the province of Babylon. But just as Joseph had the promotion to a similar position over all Egypt, perhaps Daniel's integrity and evident connection with Yahweh made the king desire to give him practical responsibility for the entire empire.

Dan 6:4 *Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find occasion against Daniel regarding the things of the kingdom; but they could find no case nor fault, because he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him-* The content of the Gospel is "the things [of] the kingdom" (Acts 1:3; 8:12; 19:8). The kingdoms of the world at Daniel's time are set up as fake kingdoms of God, with their leaders as an imitation Christ, an antiChrist. As ever, jealousy motivated all personal criticism of Daniel. It would have been an unpleasant experience for him, living as a foreigner amongst jealous men seeking his downfall, and all the time not wanting the exalted position anyway.

Dan 6:5 *Then these men said, We shall not find any occasion against Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God-* This has remarkable implications about Daniel's absolute integrity, for which all God's servants should be known in their secular lives. Worship of other gods was allowed in the empire, but religion was seen as a part time affair and your loyalty to your god was not an exclusive relationship. You could also be loyal to other gods, and for certain periods you could be totally devoted to another god, e.g. if it was the day of worship of the local god, you worshipped that god on that day. And that is the essence of the test of our faith in this multivalent world. Our faith and devotion is exclusively to the one God, and it is not a part time hobby level matter.

Dan 6:6 *Then these presidents and satraps assembled together to the king, and said to him, King Darius, live forever-* All the monarchs had the idea that they were immortal and expected this to be recognized- hence the address "live forever". Nebuchadnezzar had sought to demonstrate this by making the statue of gold completely, when he was but the head of gold according to the image of Dan. 2. We note however that Daniel, despite his sensitive conscience toward his God, still goes along with this form of address (:21), even though he of all people knew from his own prophecies that the kings were far from immortal and would all come to their end.

Dan 6:7 *All the presidents of the kingdom-* This was untrue, because Daniel was one of them. The king ought to have perceived that this was a set up.

The deputies and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors, have consulted together in order to establish a royal statute, and to make an enforced decree, that whoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, except of you, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions- Darius knew full well that Daniel would be praying to his God. For Daniel prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem in full view of everyone, "as he did previously" (:10). It was therefore known to all that Daniel did this. Darius knew that Daniel had contact with his God and had made prophecies through God's Spirit (see on :3). Darius presumably went along with the suggestion because he was fearful of minorities rebelling against him, and such periodic tests of loyalty were common. This was what Nebuchadnezzar had done with his golden image. But Darius didn't learn the lesson from that.

Dan 6:8 *Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which doesn't alter-* It was only by tradition that it didn't alter. The king was all powerful. The only thing required to change it was his humility, but as we note on :9, his pride was too great. The courtiers seemed to have guessed that when it came to killing Daniel for praying to Yahweh, the king was likely to want to change; and so they remind him that this law cannot be changed. The only reason Darius would have agreed to this was because of the appeal to his pride- that he was divine, and a divine being didn't change his principles.

Dan 6:9 *Therefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree-* As noted on :7, Darius knew full well that Daniel was in the habit of openly praying to his God, and I suggested on :7 that the king surely knew that Daniel was being set up. And yet Darius clearly respected Daniel, which was why he had promoted him, and on account of which he was so distressed when he realized that Daniel had to die. Why

then did he sign the decree? A theme of Daniel is the almost unbelievable power of human pride. The king's better judgment was overridden by his pride, and his wish to go along with his flatterers in believing the myth of his times- that he as king was in fact Divine and immortal. This had been the undoing of Belshazzar, and it had almost been the undoing of Nebuchadnezzar. We see therefore the power of human pride and what happens if we succumb to flattery and the human tendency to play God. Our better judgment and spiritual side is flattened beneath the weight of it. Darius acts in accordance with how the other monarchs in the book of Daniel are presented- they could have repented and were given the chance to, they theoretically accepted the truth of God's prophetic word and personally respected Daniel; but their pride stopped them from accepting the basic truth of the image of Dan. 2, that they too would pass, they were not eternal, were men and not God, and needed to accept the reality of God's Kingdom and resign their own kingdoms.

In the same way as they could have repented, they could also have restored captive Judah to their land, and thus helped re-establish the Kingdom of God in Israel. Cyrus is presented by name in Isaiah as a Messiah-like figure who could have orchestrated this, by destroying Babylon and empowering Jewry to return. If the Darius in this chapter was indeed Cyrus as suggested on :1 and :28, then we see how far he failed to realize what was potentially possible. He gave the decree to allow Judah to return in the first year of his reign (Ezra 1:1); but now he seems to have faltered and become consumed with pride so that he didn't live up to his potential; and Judah likewise failed to grasp the Divinely presented opportunities, with the majority of them preferring to remain in captivity.

Dan 6:10 When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he still went into his house (now his windows in his room were open toward Jerusalem) and he knelt on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did previously-

The three times of the day connected with when the morning burnt-offering was offered, when the 'evening' burnt offering was offered; and then sunset. This continues the major Biblical theme that prayer is our equivalent to sacrifice. It is a giving to God, of time, of mental focus, of trust.

The statement that his windows were open may not require us to imagine that he opened the windows. They were open windows i.e. without lattice work (cp. "closed windows" with lattice work in Ez. 40:16). It was easy to see into them because there was no window nor anything blocking the view inside. Prayer towards the temple was in time of confession of sin and need for God's forgiveness and salvation, as we see in Jonah: "Then I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple". There was no religious or legal obligation for Daniel to pray like this, just as there was no obligation for him to refuse the king's food in Dan. 1. He risked his life for his personal conscience, which was likely a conscience not shared by the rest of his Jewish brethren; even though his prayer to Jerusalem in time of exile was surely begging for their salvation. He had the spirit of the Lord Jesus as He died for Israel, misunderstood and even hated by them. He had no group support psychologically nor spiritually; this issue of prayer was totally personal to him. He was making a point; he could have taken the essence of the Lord's future teaching that in prayer we should close the door of our inner room and pray unseen by others (Mt. 6:6). He could easily have justified private prayer at this time. The strength and depth of his personal conscience at this time was so strong; he must have been so very close to the Father as he knelt in prayer at this time. "As he did previously" points up how

important is daily spiritual habit. It was and is worth dying for. He was known for retiring to his upper room three times / day to pray to his God. Everybody knew that was the rhythm of his life, now matter how busy things were in the office... He was surely inspired by David's example, although again we note that example is not Divine law: "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17). A verse like that can be used to build a personal conscience, but not to argue for a Divine law about praying three times / day.

He prayed toward Jerusalem with reference to how Solomon had said that Israel in their sin and captivity would pray toward the temple (1 Kings 8:33,35,38,44,48). Daniel was deeply aware of the sin of Judah and felt it as being his own sin; his prayer in Dan. 9 is full of such identification with Israel's sins. He felt that duty towards his weak and sinful brethren as stronger than his own fear of a miserable death. He saw this as a Divine command which although not explicitly expressed as a command, is effectively a commandment because it is so strongly implied as necessary for us. This incident is surely the basis of Acts 5:29: "We ought to obey God rather than men". Many Jews surely consoled themselves that prayer is a private matter, and wouldn't have advertised their prayers, certainly not by opening their windows and praying on their knees in full view of religious informers. But Daniel was willing to die for the sake of how important he felt prayer to be. And he challenges us all in this, we who so often are guilty of praying when overtired, or spending ou time on petty things until we have no time left to pray. Our time budget needs to give prayer serious priority, at whatever loss- even of life itself, according to Daniel's example. To pray regularly three times / day, perhaps as David did at dawn, noon and unset (Ps. 55:17 cp. Acts 10:9) required no small discipline. He had a demanding job and life situation, just as David did. His requirement for time to pray regularly was therefore advertised to his contemporaries; it was no secret. This is such a challenge to those in demanding careers; it is no more the done thing to take time out to pray than it was for Daniel, living as he did in an environment where leadership was connected to religion, and he was clearly out of step with the surrounding religious views.

Solomon's prayer, to which Daniel is alluding, required prayer to be made specifically toward the temple in Jerusalem. But that temple lay in ruins. Daniel's prayer toward it therefore reflected his understanding that God's presence doesn't dwell in temples made with hands. "That is true" (literally "the thing is true", as AV) is the very term used of the truth of Daniel's prophetic revelations (Dan. 7:16- remember that the visions of Daniel 7 were given before this time, see Dan. 7:1). If this "Darius" is indeed Cyrus, then we note that in his third year, Daniel received another vision, "and the thing was true" (Dan. 10:1). But Darius would not humble himself before the truths of God and change his perceived truth, just as we and many others struggle to.

Dan 6:11 *Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God-* "Assembled" means more 'to throng'. The petition and supplication (the idea is of "grace") was surely for the revival of Judah's fortunes with the re-establishment of God's Kingdom in Israel, and the fulfilment of the prophecies of the restoration. But Daniel knew that due to Judah's weakness, this would have to be by grace, and thanks to the intercession of a righteous remnant represented by himself. This was for Daniel more important than his personal death. "Before his God" suggests that the presence of God was just as much there in a room in Babylon as it was in Zion.

Dan 6:12 *Then they came near, and spoke before the king concerning the king's decree: Haven't you signed a decree, that every man who shall make petition to any*

god or man within thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered, That is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which doesn't alter- Now was the moment when the king could say: 'Yes I did, but I was wrong, I am not going to have Daniel killed. Mock me as you will, assume that I cannot actually be divine because I am now changing my position, but change it I will'. And he doesn't do that. His pride was too great, although at one and the same time, as the text often implies, he had a level of faith and spirituality. But human pride is so strong.

Dan 6:13 *Then they responded and said to the king, That Daniel, who is of the captives of Judah, doesn't respect you, O king, nor the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day-* "That Daniel" indicates how they despised him. This is the extreme power of human jealousy. "Doesn't respect you" was just what the courtiers had eagerly told Nebuchadnezzar when the three friends refused to bow to his image in Dan. 3. Darius ought to have learnt from Divine history and perceived that he was being set up for a major fall. But he refused to join the dots, just as we do, because his pride made him act illogically in spiritual terms.

They mention that Daniel is a Jew- and refer to him by his Hebrew name and not his Babylonian name. They surely did this because the idea of the decree had been to guard against rebellion and disloyalty from ethnic minorities within Babylon who were seeking to rebel against the king. And Daniel's interpretation of the dreams in Daniel 2 and 4, along with the words of the other Hebrew prophets, clearly showed that the Hope of Israel was the ending of all human empires [including that of Persia] and the establishment of Israel as God's Kingdom upon their ruins. Daniel was already under suspicion; and this act of disloyalty confirmed that.

We note the strong similarities between the friends being "cast" into the fiery furnace, and Daniel being "cast" into the den of lions. In both cases they had disobeyed an edict from the king that demanded false worship. In both cases they are reported to the king by jealous contemporaries and "accused" (Dan. 3:8; 6:25). In both cases, an Angel saves them (Dan. 3:28; 6:23). Those who try to harm them are harmed in that same way [death by lions / fire]. Both kings (Nebuchadnezzar and Darius) rise in alarm (Dan. 3:24; 6:20), approach the place of destruction (Dan. 3:26; 6:21), address the Jews by their names, and then use the same term to describe them: "servants of the Most High God" (Dan. 3:26) and "servant of the living God" (Dan. 6:21). The kings both command the Jews who had survived death to then come out and approach them. We naturally enquire why there are these parallels. It could be that Daniel had somehow saved himself from having to stand up for his faith in the events of Daniel 3, for Daniel's absence from the story is strange. But he was made to fellowship the sufferings of his friends in a remarkable way.

Dan 6:14 *Then the king, when he heard these words, was very displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to save him; and he struggled until the going down of the sun to save him-* AV "displeased with himself". The apparently omnipotent king is again demonstrated to be easily manipulated. He is driven to asking or hoping that Israel's God will save Daniel (:17), seeing his power and his gods cannot. And this is a theme of Daniel; that apparent power is not really power, and all such structures have feet of clay as shown in the image of Dan. 2. He presumably kept quiet and internal how displeased he was. For the courtiers wouldn't have wished to provoke his displeasure. His admiration for Daniel and his struggling to save Daniel were all internal and well hidden. Otherwise we are left with the case of his courtiers forcing him to do what

displeased him. And that just wasn't what courtiers did. His struggle within himself [he "set his heart on Daniel to deliver him"] that night was largely with himself, with his own understanding and projection of himself as a god who always made infallible decisions which therefore could never be changed nor somehow have exceptions added to them. He struggled with his own pride, and how he would look to his courtiers. This struggle or 'labouring' may perhaps have involved consultations with legal experts, but more likely it refers to the internal struggle within him against his own pride. And the fact he didn't command Daniel's release shows that he lost it; his pride was stronger than his humility and displeasure with himself ("sore displeased with himself", AV).

In Ezra 4, Artaxerxes issues a decree to cease the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In Ezra 7 king Artaxerxes issues a decree to begin restoring and building Jerusalem. But the laws of the Medes and Persians were unchangeable (Esther 1:19; Dan. 6:14-16). So we see here how Darius could have changed the fate of Daniel- only his pride stopped him. For to lose face and admit "I was wrong, just too hasty in my words" is so hard for man.

Dan 6:15 *Then these men assembled together to the king, and said to the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no decree nor statute which the king establishes may be changed-* "These men" had the upper hand over the king, but only because they knew that his pride was such that he could not retract the law. The same happened when Herod refused to retract his oath and had John the Baptist murdered. This is the power of human pride; it can bring down the most powerful person.

Dan 6:16 *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions-* Being cast to the lions and preserved may therefore be used in 2 Tim. 4:17 and 1 Pet. 5:8 in a figurative sense, encouraging us to see ourselves as in Daniel's shoes and likewise preserved.

Now the king spoke and said to Daniel, Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you- Service to God is here paralleled with prayer. Those who lament their apparent inability to do much physical service should remember this. Prayer is no less a service to God. I have suggested that Darius did on one level believe, but his pride squashed his spirituality. We see his more spiritual side expressed here, weak though it was; he believed that God would deliver Daniel. We note too that Darius knew full well that Daniel prayed / served his God "continually". His signing of the decree was therefore done in the full knowledge that it would affect Daniel. I don't think he was simply an elderly man who was fooled and manipulated by his courtiers. Rather was he like us, knowing truth on one level, and yet allowing his pride on the other hand to lead him to decisions of a moment which he would later bitterly regret. This seems to me the more likely and imaginable understanding of why he signed the decree. By admitting that Daniel's God could save Daniel whereas the king could not, Darius was tacitly accepting that he was not God, and his acceptance of prayer solely to himself was therefore wrong. But as with Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar initially, his repentance didn't go far enough. His apparently solid faith that God would deliver Daniel contrasts with his query in :20. Again we see repeated a feature of all the monarchs in the book of Daniel- they displayed spirituality, faith and humility for moments, but like us, found it hard to maintain their intensity.

Dan 6:17 *A stone was brought, and laid on the mouth of the den; and the king sealed*

it with his own signet ring, and with the signet ring of his lords; so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel-

"Sealed" or 'closed' is the word used of God closing or sealing the mouths of the lions (:22). The king's apparent power to seal or close was in fact irrelevant, and totally overridden by what God did. We have here another similarity with Joseph, who was thrown into a cistern (Gen.37:24), which typically had a stone placed over it (Gen. 29:3; Lam. 3:53).

The situation has evident similarities with the sealing of the Lord's tomb (Mt. 27:66), after Pilate like Darius before him allowed his pride to override his better judgment. It could be that Darius wanted his lords and himself to take total responsibility, and believed that God would deliver Daniel (:16) and their collective power and authority would thereby be declared as null and void. But by doing so we could also understand that even at the very end, he still lacked the required humility to disassociate himself from the execution.

As explained on :10, Daniel had risked his life to pray for Judah and confess their sins because he felt so identified with them. Being placed in a grave to die was a response to that; for he was suffering the punishment upon Judah, who were figuratively "cut off in the dungeon" with a stone barring their escape (Lam. 3:53). In this again we see a pointer forward to the Lord Jesus, whose death and burial was likewise an act of identity with His people.

Dan 6:18 *Then the king went to his palace, and spent the night fasting; no musical instruments were brought before him: and his sleep fled from him-* The Aramaic word for "palace" can also mean 'temple'. We again meet the theme of the Babylonian religious system being trounced and declared powerless. The lack of sleep recalls the parallel situation in Esther 6:1; circumstances repeat in history, because it is the same Divine hand at work. It is our wisdom to perceive this, and to conclude that man is never alone, never in an unprecedented situation. This is the purpose of Biblical history. The king's fasting was presumably in order to beg God to deliver Daniel. If he had humbled himself, then he could simply have released Daniel. We see here how things so often turn out; he had a lower level of spirituality because he wouldn't take the highest level, which was to simply release Daniel as Pilate could have released the Lord. But the point is, he did fast to God, and even through his own weakness, God urged him closer to Himself. We marvel at God's patience and desire to work with all men, even the proud, to bring them to Himself.

The Aramaic for "musical instruments" is obscure and could also mean 'dancing girls' or concubines. His sleep fleeing from him is what happened to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1). But there is no vision- for Darius knows the essence of the message of the Dan. 2 vision, that Yahweh rules in the kingdoms of men.

The narrative at this point expresses the lack of action by all involved. The king doesn't even sleep, he doesn't even 'do' that; he has no entertainment; the accusers and Daniel do nothing, and the lions do nothing. Daniel is apparently silent throughout until the morning light comes and the ordeal is over. In the midst of all this human inaction, God's silent action is paramount.

Dan 6:19 *Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in urgency to the den of lions-* Again we see the conscience of the king at work. He was not disinterested. See on :18. "In urgency" recalls Nebuchadnezzar responding "in haste" to the suffering of the three friends (Dan. 3:24).

Dan 6:20 *When he came near to the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice;*

the king spoke and said to Daniel: Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?- His apparently solid faith that God would deliver Daniel in :16 contrasts with this query. Again we see repeated a feature of all the monarchs in the book of Daniel- they displayed spirituality, faith and humility for moments, but like us, found it hard to maintain their intensity. "The living God" is a term used to differentiate the one true God from the idols (Acts 14:15; 1 Thess. 1:9). We see here the progress in his thinking. His night of fasting to Daniel's God led him to believe that the one "living God" was Daniel's God and not his idols. We would likely have given up in disgust with Darius, after he sacrificed Daniel's life for the sake of his proud agreement to play God. But God worked with him, and brought about this undoubted spiritual progress in the man.

This is the only time a Gentile calls Yahweh "the living God". We could well read this within the background context of King Nebuchadnezzar turning to Yahweh. We wonder to what extent Darius too became a believer in Yahweh. For "the living God" is a phrase usually used in the context of declaring all other gods as dead and lifeless (Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; 2 Kings 19:4; Jer. 10:10).

"Whom you serve continually" alludes to Daniel's praying continually, three times / day, and continuing doing so on pain of death. Prayer is service. This is a comfort for all who are incapacitated. They can serve- in prayer. Prayer is a form of serving God.

We note the characterization of the king as emotional. He is "deeply distressed" (:15), unable to sleep, and calls to Daniel with a "lamentable" voice, LXX "with wailing" (:20), and is then "exceedingly glad" at Daniel's deliverance (:23). Daniel is presented as without emotion and just calm and secure in his faith. Such emotion was not seen as appropriate for a king; the gods, whom the kings were supposed to represent, had no emotion. Hence a king's decree was not to be changed because he was eternal and infallible, like the gods. The presentation of the king as emotional points up the irony of the situation.

The "den of lions" was full of wild angry destructive beasts. And "den of lions" may have been just a technical term for the pit, possibly other wild animals were there too. The connection is clear with the visions of wild beasts in the next chapter; and Daniel, representing God's people, lives at peace amongst them and is saved from them. Thus Dan. 6 is the preface to Dan. 7. Lions got into a pit by being lured into it and then trapped; thus lions are hunted by using a pit (Ez. 19:4,8), and dens / pits are used to trap and subdue wild animals (Ps 7:16; 9:16; 35:7,8, 57:7; 2 Sam. 23:20; 1 Chron. 11:22). The lions had been trapped already. They were not free agents. And Daniel moved at peace amongst them, their mouths closed to him by the Angel.

And there is a deconstruction going on here. In the Akkadian poem *Ludlul bel nemeqi*, the hero of the story loses his high status at court because of malicious plotting by other courtiers, is thrown to the lions but Marduk rescues him "from the pit". The king clearly knew the story, and wonders whether Daniel's God can actually do what Marduk supposedly did in mythology. And He does. This poem was very well known. It has been found on over 50 cuneiform tablets from the time from throughout the region. It was apparently used as a standard text in educating the elite classes. Everyone knew the story. And thereby Marduk was deconstructed. The one true God controlled the wild animals, preserving His people from them, and using them to destroy the enemies of His people when the sun arises and a new day dawns [cp. the Lord's coming]. And that is the simple message of the vision of the next chapter. So many reliefs have been unearthed presenting the kings of the time as glorious hunters of lions, triumphing over them. Especially from the North Palace of

Nineveh, depicting king Assurbanipal. But again all this is deconstructed. The king Darius fears the lions and is powerless over them, as are his courtiers. But Daniel and his God have power over lions and triumph over them. The North Palace in Nineveh had reliefs, currently in the British Museum, showing the king playing with lions he had tamed and conquered. They had apparently been drugged. The idea was to show how the king was supreme over the king of wild beasts. But it was the king Darius who was fearful of the power of the lions, and it was God's man Daniel who walked at ease amongst lions. Lions appear so frequently on the reliefs uncovered from palaces of the time. The lion was a symbol of kingship. But the Most High was in control of the lions, not king Darius. He controlled kingship, as the image of Dan. 2 had made clear. And His man Daniel was effectively the king. The reliefs portray the king as always winning against the lions. Dan. 6 shows the king as it were overpowered, both by his own courtiers and his fear of the lions. And Judah's God alone triumphant through Daniel, the quiet, calm, humble believer in Him. The seals of the kings usually included lion imagery. Again we see the irony. Darius sealed the stone over the den of lions with his lion imagery on the seal. But he was powerless over those lions. Kings are found depicted as shutting the mouths of lions by their great supposed strength, given from their gods. But clearly it was God and not the king who shut the mouths of these lions. Kings kept lions as a symbol of their power. The lions in the pit were the king's lions. But he had no actual power over them; rather did he fear their power. We see yet again that the Daniel story is about a war between the gods- and Yahweh the one true God, the God whom the Babylonians had apparently humiliated by taking His temple vessels into the house of their god. But God wins. That is likewise the simple summary of the book of Revelation.

Dan 6:21 *Then Daniel said to the king, O king, live forever-* The LXX reflects the ambivalence of the terms used: "O King, I am alive!". But I suggested on :6 that despite his sensitive conscience, knowing that all these kings would be deposed, Daniel went along with this form of address. We too have to make decisions as to whether we shall 'go along' with incorrect ideas and behaviour, or make a point, as Mordecai did by not bowing to Haman. Sometimes Daniel did make a point, e.g. regarding eating meat offered to idols; on this point, which didn't directly concern him personally, he didn't. See on :26. It could also be that Daniel used the term "O king, live forever" but understood it in his own way, namely that he wished that the king would repent and thereby live forever in God's eternal kingdom.

Dan 6:22 *My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths-*

Darius had closed the mouth of the pit (:17) but Daniel understands that Yahweh had closed the mouths of the lions. The lions were the king's personal beasts, for kings always had their own lions. True to the theme of Daniel, the king and all his power is under the hand of the one true God. Likewise in Dan. 4:10-12 Nebuchadnezzar is likened to a tree beneath which the wild animals live. But that tree is in fact the symbol of God's Kingdom. The wild animals would take over Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, as we see in Dan. 7. But in reality they were all beneath God and His rulership and dominion. Nebuchadnezzar himself is changed from being the tree to being just another wild animal. The kings of the time are presented on reliefs as hunters and tamers of lions and other wild animals. But clearly it is God who is the lion tamer and not the king, who is pathetically powerless over them. The putting to death of the most ferocious beast by the "Son of man" in Dan. 7:11,12 is what kings were supposed to do- slaying dragons etc. But it is God who does this, ultimately

through His Son. And the greatest king is presented as merely a beast to be conquered by God.

Here we have another parallel with the situation in Dan. 3 with Daniel's friends. Their persecutors were likewise slain by the flame intended for them; the king came to their place of intended suffering and spoke; justified and praised them and their God etc. We see this kind of thing in our lives; we pass through situations so similar to those of our brethren, and our experiences are also intended as a template for our future brethren (2 Cor. 1:4). This is one helpful window onto the meaning of suffering in the lives of believers. The shutting of the mouth of the pit by men is contrasted with the Angel shutting the mouths of the lions. Daniel's faith in this would have been developed by his knowledge of what had happened to the three friends in the furnace. This is how friendship and fellowship in Christ should work in our days- the experiences and deliverances of others become our pattern and inspiration. See on :23. It was Daniel's faith which stopped the mouth of lions (Heb. 11:33); but he says that it was God who shut them. We see here how faith makes us as it were workers together with God; what we believe in, He does, to the point that therefore we, as it were, do it. This is the level of intimacy possible between God and faithful man.

And they have not destroyed me; because before Him innocence was found in me; and also before you, O king, have I done nothing wrong- The original words develop a word play. The lions did not harm Daniel because he had done no harm to the king: "They did not harm me [because] to you I have done no harm". Daniel insists that disobedience to the king was not in fact harming the king; he protests his innocence. The Lord's innocence was likewise the basis of His 'resurrection' (Acts 2:24). Perhaps Daniel inspired Paul, who wrote of how he too was delivered from lions (2 Tim. 4:17) and who likewise claimed to be innocent before God and man (Acts 24:16). Daniel was no mere Sunday School or Synagogue story for him, and neither should it be for us; we are to see ourselves in Daniel and be inspired to act in faith likewise.

One part of our message is of the Kingdom of God; we should be living witnesses to the current rulership of God over our lives, and thereby we testify with credibility and integrity to the future establishment of that Kingdom on earth at the Lord's return. If we are living the eternal life, the Kingdom life, then we are in ourselves advertisements for the good news of the Kingdom. Daniel is an example of this. The Aramaic verb *habal* occurs several times in Daniel, and between them we build up a picture of how Daniel was a living witness to the Kingdom. The word means to hurt / destroy. We find that the Kingdom of Babylon was to be cut down and destroyed; whereas the Kingdom of God was to never be destroyed (Dan. 4:23; 2:44). The mouths of the lions were closed so that they did not "hurt" [s.w. 'destroy'] Daniel (Dan. 6:22); and because of this, Darius praises God, saying that His Kingdom would never be 'destroyed' (Dan. 6:26). Daniel was not destroyed; and thus Darius came to believe that God's Kingdom would not be destroyed. Because Daniel was set up as a living part and foretaste of that Kingdom. To a far greater extent, "the Kingdom of God" is a title given to the Lord Jesus- because He in His mortal life was the essence of that Kingdom, the embodiment of the Kingdom life.

"Done nothing wrong" is literally "done no harm". It is the word used of how the lions did no harm to Daniel (:23). The king's power to "harm" Daniel is again overridden and he is shown to be powerless. Just as the king had closed the den but God closed the mouths of the lions (:17). The apparently unchangeable nature of Medo Persian laws is overridden by God's law and word.

Dan 6:23 *Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of*

harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God- Again we see a similarity with the deliverance of Daniel's friends from the furnace, upon whom no smell or trace of fire was even found. See on :22.

Dan 6:24 *The king commanded, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions mauled them, and broke all their bones in pieces, before they came to the bottom of the den-* "Accused" is literally 'slandered'. A sober warning to slanderers. This breaking in pieces connects with the image prophecy, where the little stone crushes to pieces the kingdoms of men. The historical incidents in the book of Daniel were all evidences that the larger Divine program would just as surely come to fulfilment. Such punishment of men with the very experience they intended to inflict upon others is in accordance with God's law (Dt. 19:11-13,19; 24:16), and the whole scene is presented as analogous to the destruction of the rebels in the wilderness (Num. 16:32). Perhaps Darius had been made aware of God's law through the preaching of Daniel; to have agreed to destroy Daniel because of his pride therefore makes his failure all the more serious. And God's continued grace and patience with him all the more wonderful.

The method of destruction here appears to fulfil Nebuchadnezzar's penalty for blasphemy against Yahweh: "[they] shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses [families] laid in ruins" (Dan. 3:29). The king ordered the deaths of all these people immediately, without any due legal process, exercising his right to override the legal process. He likewise could have used his sovereign power to deliver Daniel. The destruction of the families of the guilty was usually only done in cases of insurrection or treason. The king considered that actually these men were plotting his overthrow- whereas they had tried to make Daniel out as guilty of this. Perhaps they wanted Daniel dead in order to advance their own plans for overthrowing the king. This kind of irony is so true to real life- the one who is actually doing good and preventing treason is the one falsely convicted of treason.

Dan 6:25 *Then king Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages, who dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you-* This copied Nebuchadnezzar in making a multi-lingual declaration of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all peoples. That the king had power to unilaterally do this further indicates that he was not as weak and manipulated as some like to make out. He was proud and powerful, that was the problem. His power to do this suggests further that this "Darius" was not "Darius the Mede" who would not have had such wide authority.

Dan 6:26 *I make a decree, that in all the dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed-* Perhaps the king is alluding to how he was usually addressed "O King, live forever"; and he now recognizes that he is not in fact Divine, and only Daniel's God lives for ever. See on :21. He is accepting the truth of the image of Dan. 2. He was clearly aware of passages like Dan. 2:44, but had previously resisted the implications of the message. Now he accepted it and preached it to all peoples. The similar vision of the four beasts was given before this incident (Dan. 7:1), and the king likely was aware of the same teaching expressed there- that God's Kingdom alone would be eternal, and would triumph over his empire.

And His dominion shall remain to the end- This could simply mean 'eternally'. But perhaps this passage is behind Paul's explanation of how the Lord Jesus delivers the Kingdom to God the Father at "the end" (1 Cor. 15:24-26). This is very much the language of the image vision of Daniel 2, and of the proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar

in Dan. 4:3,34. Clearly Daniel's earlier history and dream interpretations were known. And these may have led to the accusation of treason against him.

Dan 6:27 *He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, He who has delivered Daniel*- Darius here displays quite some humility; for it was he who had struggled and failed to deliver and rescue Daniel (Dan. 6:14). The emphasis is on how "He", God, delivers and rescues when man cannot. This suggests that Darius realized that Daniel's deliverance was only one of many ongoing miracles and activities of God in "heaven and in earth" at that time. He recognized the wider hand of God in human affairs. Darius is here using the words of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:3); perhaps he was trying to make a similar repentance, inspired by the example of a previous monarch who had likewise encountered Daniel. The examples of repentance we see and read of in others are intended to inspire us to repentance (see on Mt. 21:31,32).

From the power of the lions- Darius may also have in view how Daniel's enemies were as a den of lions to him, which is how the figure is used in Ez. 22:25.

Dan 6:28 *So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian*- The identity of Darius is problematic; this could be a way of saying "Darius, who was Cyrus the Persian". But Darius is specifically called a Mede, although perhaps this is a way of saying that he now called himself a Persian. Thus we could render with D.J. Wiseman "Darius, even (namely, or i.e.) the reign of Cyrus the Persian". "Such a use of the appositional or explicative Hebrew waw construction has long been recognized in 1 Chron. 5:26 ("So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria even the spirit of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria"). We note Dan. 11:1 LXX "The first year of Cyrus". It is a sociological and political miracle that a man could serve under at least four kings, remaining in 'power' even when political power changed from Babylon to Media to Persia: Nebuchadnezzar, [and possibly Evil-merodach], Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. It is a testament to Daniel's integrity and also his lack of strong political allegiance to any of them- for otherwise the successor power would have destroyed him along with the rest of the previous empire.

DANIEL CHAPTER 7

The four metals of the image of Daniel 2, followed as they were by the feet and ten toes part of iron and clay, are matched by the four beasts of Daniel 7, culminating in the beast with ten horns, which is also destroyed by the second coming of Christ. It is emphasized that Nebuchadnezzar 'saw' the image, or literally, he had a vision of it (Dan. 2:26,31,34,41,43,45). The same word is used in Daniel 7 of how now *Daniel* 'saw' or 'had a vision of' the four beasts (Dan. 7:1,2,4,6,7,9,11,13,21). The Daniel 7 vision or 'seeing' was perhaps from God's perspective, Heaven's view of the same realities which Nebuchadnezzar saw from an earthly perspective. There are many verbal similarities, as well as the general outline similarity between the four kingdoms. Thus the intention of the Daniel 2 image was to show how God 'sets up kings' who 'rise up' (Dan. 2:21,31,39), and the same word is used of how both the lion and the bear are 'set up' or 'raised up' (Dan. 7:4,5); indeed, all four beasts "are four kings which shall arise out of the earth" (Dan. 7:17). The kingdoms of Daniel 2 reigned over the earth, and that clearly refers to the *eretz* promised to Abraham, Israel, rather than the entire planet. Daniel 7 makes the point that these kings or kingdoms will arise out of that same 'earth' which they later dominate. Clearly we are not to

look for any identification of the beasts or kings from outside the land promised to Abraham.

The ten horns likewise represent “ten kings” which shall “arise” (Dan. 7:24); and although it is not stated specifically, we are to assume that they arise also out of the same area, the “earth” / land. We should therefore be looking for a group of four kings / kingdoms, out of which arise ten kings / kingdoms; and out of them arises one “little horn” in particular. Revelation’s take on the beasts adds more detail- there are also seven heads, a false prophet acting as publicity agent for the beast, a whore riding the beast, sitting on seven hills / kings. The four beasts / kings are initially in conflict, striving with each other upon the sea, and arising from that comes the fourth beast entity, the composite beast including elements of all the previous ones. And from that there arises the ten horns and one little horn. We should not, however, think of these situations as having to be chronological developments, i.e. first the four, then the fourth beast, then the ten horns, then the little horn. It may work out like that, but not necessarily. The precise details need not concern us ahead of time; the picture is of a series of leaders and powers involved in the domination of the land promised to Abraham. The fact is, the beasts will all exist together in the last days, just as the metals of the image will. These various entities will “arise” from the land. And this is what we see happening already- in the last few years there has been what is called the Arabic, and particularly Sunni, *sahwa*, ‘awakening’. Powers and kings have risen up out of the scrubland and desert of the *eretz*, united in their hatred of Israel, but bitterly divided against each other.

We are for sure in the stage of the winds / *ruach* / Angel controlled nations ‘striving’ with each other- the *eretz* is full of conflict as never before, not just between Israel and her neighbours, but between those neighbours. There are currently four non-Jewish nations within the *eretz*- Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. But they exist just on paper as lines on the map; there are other significant entities within the area, e.g. Kurdistan, the Islamic State, Gaza, parts of Egypt and Turkey [depending how one defines the northern border of Israel], parts of Saudi Arabia [depending how the eastern border is defined]. In total they make ten kingdoms, but the number ten may not be literal. We would then be awaiting for the “little horn” to arise- a charismatic, antiChrist leader, or perhaps another very small entity. For the horn is called the *little* horn, and yet it is the most powerful in the very last days. However, the Hebrew and Aramaic words translated “little” can mean ‘short’ in terms of time as well as size. The idea may be that it lasts a very short time indeed, maybe literally days or hours in the very last day, and is the human representative of the beast / horns who personally challenges the Lord Jesus and is destroyed by the brightness of His coming.

The Origins of the Beasts

The empires of Daniel 2 dominate the earth. The Hebrew *eretz* can refer either to the entire planet, or to the land- the land promised to Abraham, the land of Israel, from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt. The dominion of the four beasts is therefore over the same area. Daniel saw the beasts arising out of the great sea. This could be a reference to the laver, which is also called a ‘sea’ (1 Kings 7:23-26,39). This was a huge circular bowl for washing which was set upon 12 bronze oxen, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. They were arranged in four groups of three, facing north, south, east and west, in imitation of the camp of Israel in the wilderness. The beasts therefore arise out of the territory promised to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Rev. 17:15 interprets waters or seas as “peoples”. The beasts therefore arise out of the peoples who are to be found in the land of the 12 tribes of Israel. The interpretation is confirmed by the words of the Angel in Dan. 7:17, who says that the

four beasts who arise out of the sea are four king[dom]s which "shall arise out of the earth / land".

Another possibility regarding the "great sea" is that it refers to the area of Babylon's dominion. The vision of Daniel 7 clearly parallels that of Daniel 2, which was intended to explain what would happen after the Babylonians. The arena of the "great sea" was to be dominated by other kingdoms apart from Babylon. In confirmation of this, we find the word *rab* ["great"] used about the greatness of Babylon ("great Babylon", Dan. 4:30; Joel 2:2,11). But *rab* is also translated "master" (Dan. 1:3), "lord", "captain", "chief" (Dan. 2:10,14,48), "master" (Dan. 4:19; 5:11). We could understand the "great sea" as the sea of nations ruled over by the master, the lord of the sea, the king of Babylon- and Daniel is seeing this vision in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon (Dan. 7:1). As in the Daniel 2 vision, Daniel is explaining that the leadership of Babylon will not last, other kingdoms will arise to also dominate the sea of nations which was then under Babylon's sole control. This again pushes us towards understanding the entire vision as specifically concerning the area over which Babylon had dominion, and not the whole planet.

7:21 Let's not get caught up with the idea that Israel shall survive and defeat the invaders in her own strength. The beast must dominate Israel. Jerusalem will be taken. Dan. 7:7,21 speaks of how the beast made war with the saints and prevailed against them- Israel- *until* the Ancient of days came; in Dan. 7:23 he devours the whole land [as a beast] and shall tread it down. The beast of Revelation is so powerful in the earth / land that "the world" wondered at it and at the whore riding it (Rev. 13:3; 17:6,7), feeling unable to make war with it. This of itself requires the demise and degrading of America, Europe and the West generally. Dan. 11:41,45 are likewise clear about the latter day King of the North: "He shall also come into the glorious land... He shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him".

Dan. 7:21,22 speak of how the "saints" will be persecuted by the beast, and then "the saints" will 'possess the Kingdom'. The "saints" are Israel, the same Hebrew word is used in Ex. 19:5 to describe them as a holy or saintly nation, a nation of saints, sanctified ones. If we understand the Kingdom as primarily the land promised to Abraham's seed for them to 'possess', then this makes sense. That land will be dominated and trodden down by the beast, and then the remnant of Abraham's seed will triumphantly possess it eternally; and that mountain, or Kingdom, will then grow to fill the whole planet.

The little horn devours, treads down and breaks in pieces "the earth" (Dan. 7:23); that has little meaning if applied to the whole planet. The context speaks of destruction and persecution of "the saints", God's people in His land. The reference is surely to the specific land of Israel.

Controlling Angels

The four beasts are "diverse from one another" (Dan. 7:3), just as the four metals of the image of Daniel 2 do not naturally bond with each other. The four beasts are controlled by four spirits in Heaven who 'strive' with each other (Dan. 7:2). God makes His Angels spirits (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7). Each of those kings or empires had a representative Angel in Heaven. It's not that the Angels themselves strive with each other, they are all obedient to God (see my *The Real Devil* chapter 2 <http://www.realdevil.info/2-1.htm>) but they play out before the court of Heaven the situation on earth. Later in Daniel we find Angels likewise representative of kings and kingdoms (Dan. 10:13,20). The comfort is that God is aware of all that happens on earth, and in fact He orchestrates it. The situation on earth is therefore not ultimately

spinning out of control. My point in this context is that the four beasts strive with each other and do not naturally bond with each other. This is the same situation as we find in the feet and toes made part of iron, part of clay, mixed with each other but not cleaving to each other. Just as the image stands erect in the last days in order for it to be destroyed, so the sequence of beasts which we have in Daniel 7 are not simply a historical outline of a sequence of empires. Each of them exists in some form in the last days, and are united together in their brief domination of the earth / land promised to Abraham. The first three beasts stand 'before' the fourth one, the original meaning 'in the presence of', rather than previously in chronological terms (Dan. 7:7). The fourth beast has its body destroyed, although the other beasts are also present there and have their lives prolonged "for a season" (Dan. 7:11,12). The historical interpretation of the beasts is not irrelevant, however. The final entity dominating Israel will incorporate aspects of all the previous systems which have dominated the land promised to Abraham.

The Fourth Beast

The fourth beast with the ten horns equates with the legs or iron and ten toes of the image of Daniel 2. This entity will be in existence at the time of Christ's return, because it is to be destroyed by His coming. And we have that same picture in Revelation. Historically, the legs of iron represent Rome, but the beast is not a historical entity, it exists in the last days. So although there are parallels and outline similarities between the metals of the image and the beasts, this is not to say that they are all one and the same. The final beast has elements of all the previous beasts, it is a composite entity including all the elements of the previous systems which have dominated the land and people of Israel. Just as the image stands complete in the last days, so the final beast stands complete. The whore sits on many waters, representing various languages and peoples; and yet she sits upon the beast (Rev. 17:1,3,15). The latter day beast is therefore not one nation but an amalgam of peoples.

As the entire image was "terrible" (Dan. 2:31), so the fourth beast system is described with the same word (Dan. 7:7). As the image appeared "excellent" (Dan. 2:31), so the strength of the fourth beast was 'excellent' (s.w. Dan. 7:7). Dan. 7:7 emphasizes that this final beast is altogether more aggressive than any previous beast / dominator of the land: "Dreadful, terrible, strong exceedingly... it was different from all the beasts that were before it". The original word translated "dreadful" suggests whoever sees it slinks away in fear- its strength and advantage over others is "exceeding". This is the same awe we find in Rev. 13, where the world looks on at the beast, marvelling at this entity and feeling that nobody can even begin to make war with him. This speaks of an entity that is more aggressive and fear-inspiring than the aggressive Babylonians, Assyrians or abusive Nazis. It implies too the eclipse of the West as the dominant world power block and power broker. The current IS may develop into an entity which fits this bill- a reign of terror involving cutting off children's heads and parading their actions on videos, live crucifixion of any who don't agree with them, but with a stranglehold advantage over any critics... The same radical difference between this final beast and all previous ones is brought out by the way in which John, after all he had earlier seen, was in shock at the way the beast drank the blood of the saints, i.e. the people of God, Israel in their land (Rev. 17:6). The whole world likewise is in shock horror at this beast (Rev. 13:3; 17:8). The entity currently known as the IS hasn't yet struck so much fear into everyone, but the time is surely coming. Dan. 12:1 puts it this way: "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was" for God's people, and they will be saved from it by the standing up of Jesus for His people, the resurrection of the dead and the destruction of the "king of

the north". The "time of Jacob's trouble" from which he shall be saved (Jer. 30:7) must be understood in the context of how the phrase "time of trouble" is used in the Bible to describe times of Israel's invasion and suffering at the hands of their neighbours (Is. 33:2; Jer. 2:27,28; 8:15; 11:12,14; 14:8,19; Ez. 7:7). "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was" therefore suggests a time of abuse of Israel such as has never been seen. And this includes the Nazi holocaust, the death camps of Europe, the Babylonian and Assyrian atrocities... It's purely wishful thinking to hope that the IDF and Israel's military technology will stave this off. It will not. Jerusalem is to be taken and the women raped (Zech. 14:2). The beast is to dominate the earth / land of Israel.

The "iron teeth" of the beast (Dan. 7:7) can be connected with the way that "Damascus" tore the Israelites with teeth of iron (Am. 1:3). Damascus is a key player in the future Islamic state which is to be established in the land promised to Abraham. There will be an element of the historical Syrians in the entity which finally dominates Israel. And we can clearly see that in the IS. The same figure of a beast with huge teeth closing in upon Israel is to be found in Joel 1:6, describing the Babylonian and / or Assyrian invasion of the land. Teeth like lions are also mentioned in the picture of men with long hair arising like aggressive locusts out of the earth / land to torture to death those who live there for five months (Rev. 9:4-8). This very much sounds like the long haired jihadist fighters of the IS briefly dominating the land at the end. But they are part of the beast system, which includes this element of teeth because it is a composite figure including all elements of Israel's persecutors.

The beast will "devour" the land (Dan. 7:7), just as the historical Babylon 'devoured' Jerusalem with fire (Jer. 30:16; Lam. 4:11; Ez. 15:5; 19:12; 23:25; Hos. 8:14; Am. 1:4; 2:5) and the Assyrians devoured the land (Jer. 50:17; Hos. 11:6; 13:8; Joel 1:4,19,20; 2:3,5,25). All these verses use the same word translated 'devour' in Dan. 7:7. Clearly enough, the 'devouring' of the fourth beast is a summation of all previous 'devourings' of God's land and people. Even in Old Testament times, this idea of a singular beast embodying all Israel's enemies was not unknown. For Ez. 34:28 looked forward to the day when "Neither shall the beast of the land devour them [any more]". Mal. 3:11 likewise speaks of how "the devourer" will be rebuked by God when finally Israel respond to the Elijah prophet (Mal. 3:1). This again suggests that the final devouring of Israel will be whilst the Elijah prophet is making an ongoing appeal for their repentance and acceptance of Jesus. Once they do so, the devourer is rebuked and Jesus returns to His desperately repentant people.

The beast stamps on others (Dan. 7:7); the same word is used for how Egypt did this to God's people and others within the land promised to Abraham (Ez. 32:2). Although Egypt doesn't figure in the sequence of metals in the image of Daniel 2, the beast incorporates aspects of all Israel's previous dominators- and they include Egypt. We can therefore expect the beast entity to include features of Nazi, Catholic and other historical persecutors of God's people, even though those entities weren't part of the Daniel 2 image. This is why the historical interpretations of 666 and the beast which apply them to Nero's Rome and various Catholic persecutions are not *per se* incorrect. They were true for their time. But the final persecuting entity will include them all within what it is and what it does.

The Remnant

It is specifically stated that the beast "stamped the remnant" after it had torn and destroyed the land. This could refer to the remnant or "rest" of the beasts (7:12 s.w.). But it may mean that as a result of all the persecution and destruction of the majority of Jews in the land, the surviving remnant of God's people is stamped underfoot, or

subjected to despite. The very same metaphor is used of how the city of God will be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled". Those "times" may well refer to the period of 1260 days, three and a half years, spoken of in the prophecies of the tribulation. This trodden down and abused remnant are those who will finally repent and accept Jesus. There are prophecies of how this "remnant" (same word translated "residue" in Dan. 7:7 AV) will finally repent (Is. 10:20-22; 28:5). Is. 11:11,16 speaks of the latter day gathering of this "remnant" from areas throughout the land promised to Abraham- as if there will be a literal taking captive of the surviving Jews left in the land, scattering them throughout the 'land' promised to Abraham. The chronology fits well- the beast briefly dominates the land, the majority of Jews living there are killed, a remnant remains, who are stamped underfoot whilst Jerusalem likewise is trodden underfoot, and this leads to their repentance and therefore the return of the Lord Jesus to save them from the IS. It's worth noting that the word "remnant" is used repeatedly of the remnant of Judah who were in captivity in Babylon at Daniel's time and the remnant of them who returned to the land. This would've been how his first audience naturally understood the term- referring to Jewish people who had been taken out of their land by their neighbours (Ezra 3:8; 4:3,7,9; 6:16; Neh. 10:28; 11:1,20; Esther 9:16 "the remnant of the Jews that were in the king's provinces").

Then shall come to pass the word of Zech. 12:8: "He that is feeble among them [s.w. Dan. 11:41 about how many in the land of Israel will be overthrown or made feeble] in that day shall be as David". The suggested allusion is to David overcoming the Palestinian Goliath, who all else feared to make war with as he spoke his blasphemy against God and Israel- exactly the language of Rev. 13:4-8.

The Beasts all Exist Together

There is a clear parallel between the four winds which strove with each other upon the sea, and the four beasts who came up out of the sea. The impression is that these beasts all exist at the same time, and their conflict with each other leads to the final appearance of a beast which represents all of them; and this entity dominates the earth / land promised to Abraham, and God's people upon it. The appearance of this entity will therefore be brought about by massive conflict within the land promised to Abraham- and this is what we are seeing before our eyes. The only uniting issue between the powers in that area is a common hatred of Israel and desire to take Jerusalem. This will be the basis of the final beast arising. We can perhaps look to the development of four distinct power groups within the land promised to Abraham, giving rise to ten 'kings' or leaders, the horns of the beast, the ten toes of the image. The period of conflict between those groups could be very brief. We need not, therefore, think that the Lord's coming isn't near because we can't currently identify those four entities or ten leaders. What we are seeing before our eyes is the winds blowing on the sea, striving between the peoples of the land / earth promised to Abraham, leaving millions dead and the entire region in bitter division. And this, according to Daniel 7, will give rise to the emergence of the final entity of abuse, probably an Islamic State, likely on the pattern of the entity now known as the Islamic State.

The beast of Revelation 13 has elements of all the other beasts. And so does the fourth beast of Daniel 7. It had iron teeth and brass nails (Dan. 7:19), alluding to the brass of the third kingdom and the iron of the fourth kingdom. It had "eyes of a man" and a human eye on its horn, (Dan. 7:8,20), just as the first beast, the lion, had a human heart and stood up like a man (Dan. 7:4). The bear, the second beast, had three ribs in its mouth, representing its conquest of three other powers; the fourth beast

features a little horn which conquers three other horns (Dan. 7:8). The bear also 'devoured much flesh' (Dan. 7:5); the fourth beast 'devours' the land (Dan. 7:7). The third beast, the leopard, had four heads (Dan. 7:6), rather like the fourth beast also has ten horns; and Revelation 13 explains that these are later located on seven heads. The fourth beast of Daniel 7 is therefore a composite beast; the other beasts merge into an entity which includes all of them, even though they still exist separately- for in the final Divine judgment, the fourth beast entity is destroyed, but the beasts have their dominion taken away although their lives are "prolonged for a season and time" (Dan. 7:12). This may mean that the final entity is destroyed, but the individual components of it continue to exist "for a season and time". The only other reference in Daniel to a period being "prolonged" is when the same word is used in Dan. 4:27 regarding the possibility of the king of the kingdom prolonging his life by repentance; it could be that the delay or prolonging is in order they repent. This may also explain why the first beast, representing Babylon, is pictured as having a man's heart being given to it after its wings [power] are cropped. The historical king of Babylon had a beast's heart (Dan. 4:16), but his understanding [a human heart] returned to him on his repentance (Dan. 4:34). So this feature of the first beast may be a hint at a repentance after the pattern of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4.

The Revival of all the Beasts

On one hand, the metals of the image in Daniel 2, and the sequence of beasts which parallel them in Daniel 7, speak of a series of kingdoms in history which dominated Israel. And yet on the other hand, they must all exist in the last days, under the headship of a latter day Babylon. I suggest this will be fulfilled by the latter day entity which dominates Israel including elements of all the previous empires which dominated Israel. The other prophecies in Daniel contain more detail about these various empires in their historical fulfilment. Elements of those prophecies will therefore also have some application in a latter day sense; various characteristics of those empires will be seen in the final entity which dominates Israel. It will be not only Assyria *redivivus* but also Persia, Greece and Rome *redivivus*. This kind of thing is seen elsewhere in the Scriptures- for often Israel's enemies are described in terms of their previous oppressors, especially Egypt. Take Is. 52:4: "My people went down into Egypt to live there, and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause". It was the Egyptians who oppressed Israel in Egypt, but they are here called the Assyrian- because at Isaiah's time, the Assyrians were the threat to Judah, but they are cast by Isaiah in terms of the Egyptians of previous centuries.

Daniel 7 depicts the various metals of the image as various beasts. The final beast of the last days incorporates all the elements of the previous beasts. But her head will be Babylon, replete with a latter day Nebuchadnezzar. Note that the first three of the empires of Daniel's image had Babylon as their capital. It is appropriate that the latter day revival of the image and beast has Babylon likewise as its capital. It surely cannot be accidental that in Babylon today, "the ancient temple of Ishtar has been rebricked, replastered and whitewashed... carved into the bricks are reliefs of oxen and a mythical beast called the mushrishu, with the head of a serpent, body of a fish, front legs of a lion, and back legs of an eagle" (*Chattanooga New Free Press*, April 5, 1987). Latter day Babylon chooses to identify itself as an amalgam of beasts!

The various beasts and metals must all be in existence at the time of Christ's return in order for him to destroy them by his coming. The little stone hits the image on its ten toes- corresponding to the ten horns of the fourth beast of Dan. 7. The ten horns must in a sense be in existence at the time of Christ's coming. But so also is the fourth beast, corresponding to the legs of iron- because it is at the coming of Christ

that “the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame” (Dan. 7:11). Likewise at this same time, “the rest of the beasts... had their dominion taken away” (Dan. 7:12). The other beasts, corresponding to the earlier metals in the image, are ‘alive’ at the coming of Christ. Just as the image stands complete, so all the beasts are alive in order to receive judgment. The horns are presented as part of the fourth beast; their destruction is part and parcel of the fourth beast’s destruction.

Daniel sees the four beasts (corresponding with the four metals of the image of Daniel 2) all come up *together* after the waves of the sea are troubled (Dan. 7:3), connecting with the Lord's description of the last day powers around Israel in the same way (Lk. 21:25). The fact they all come up together shows that he was not only seeing a continuous historic vision. The way he sees the beast representing Babylon come up when historical Babylon at the time of the vision had already 'come up' shows it was not a historical description of those powers. The beasts all exist again in the last day, just as all the metals of the image exist together in order to be destroyed together by the Lord’s return. Yet the 'traditional' interpretation of the beasts as depicting the various empires which dominated Israel in the past still holds true; the point is, the final beast incorporates elements of all those powers which once dominated Israel. It is in this sense that the whole image of Dan. 2 stands complete in the last days; the latter day Nebuchadnezzar has beneath him all the elements of Israel's previous persecutors.

Dan. 7:19 describes the fourth beast as having the iron and brass metals of the image of Dan. 2 in it. The fourth beast had feet and teeth, we are specifically told. The lion, representing the head of gold, had feet (Dan. 7:4); the bear, representing the breast of silver, had powerful teeth. The fourth beast has “claws of brass”, but brass referred to the *third* empire in the sequence of empires in the parallel Daniel 2. The point being, that the fourth beast has elements of the previous beasts in it. And likewise, the final entity which dominates Israel at the time of the Lord’s return in glory will have within it elements of all the previous dominators. Thus the fourth beast had all the characteristics of the other beasts. By it being destroyed through its ten horns being smitten by Christ's return, it is as if the image of Dan.2 is standing erect and complete in the last days, being hit on the ten toes (cp. the ten horns of the beast) by Christ's return.

Various Possible Outcomes

The four beasts are described as “diverse” from each other (Dan. 7:3). The Aramaic word translated “diverse” is used 21 times, and every time it distinctly means to be changed from one state to another. It is used about ‘altering’ a king’s word (Ezra 6:11; Dan. 3:28), the face of a man being ‘changed’ from one appearance to another (Dan. 3:19; 5:6). The idea is not simply that there were four beasts which were different from each other; it’s surely axiomatic that four different beasts are going to be different from each other. The beasts of Daniel 7 are clearly related to the metals of the image in Daniel 2; but this is not to say that the same thing is being said simply through different symbolism. That would be relatively pointless. There is an extension of the ideas and a modification of the way in which the final end [the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth] will be achieved. I have suggested in the appendix that Daniel’s prophecies were conditional; a sequence of four kings could have arisen after Nebuchadnezzar, culminating in the establishment of the Kingdom on earth. Daniel’s long life spanned the 70 years captivity of Judah and the reign of at least four kings; the prophets repeatedly state that the intention of that captivity was that the captives

might “know that I am Yahweh”; the experience was to be God’s pleading with His people to repent (Ez. 20:36). Daniel wrote his visions for others to read, indeed it is specifically mentioned that he spoke out loud the Daniel 7 vision (Dan. 7:1). The visions were part of that pleading with the captives to accept God’s perspective and join in on the side of His Kingdom. But Israel, as a whole, would not. Most of them preferred the soft life in Babylon and did not return at the time of the restoration. They would not “know Yahweh” nor did they repent- instead, as Ezekiel 18 makes clear, they blamed their captivity upon the sins of their fathers being visited upon them by an unjust God. Because of this lack of response, the possible outworking of the visions changed.

The passing of power from Babylon to the Medes could have continued according to the Daniel 2 vision; four kings could have arisen (note they are called ‘kings’ and not ‘kingdoms’ in Dan. 7:17), and the Kingdom of God would have been established at the end of the 70 years captivity. But there were delays because of the Jews’ lack of response. Hence Daniel’s sorrow and shock throughout the book as he saw the final outworking being delayed. Therefore the fact the beasts are ‘changed’ or ‘altered’ is seamlessly in context with this idea of delayed and recalculated outcomes of the prophecies. This would explain why the further visions of the beasts in Daniel 8 suggests that in the time of the third kingdom [the Greeks], a charismatic leader would arise [clearly having Antiochus Epiphanes in view] who would be destroyed by the coming of God’s Son and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. But that scenario also didn’t work out, and Antiochus Epiphanes became a prototype of the final antichrist, requiring a gap between that part of the prophecy and the last days. Perhaps this is why Daniel’s first vision in Daniel 7 is of the first three beasts, and then “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast” (Dan. 7:7)- as if the vision of the first three beasts was separate to that of the fourth beast. Likewise at the end of Daniel 11, the king of the north is clearly Antiochus Epiphanes throughout the chapter; but 11:40- 12:5 clearly envisages him standing up against “Michael” and being destroyed at the time of the resurrection of the dead. This didn’t happen, and so there arose a hiatus in fulfillment. This is not to say that God’s word is falsified; rather is it proved ultimately true in a way which takes on board human freewill. For otherwise, the very existence of God’s prophetic word would be deterministic of human behavior to an extent that human freewill is taken away by the very existence of the Divine word.

It’s noteworthy that the vision of Daniel 7 is presented as seven separate visions, each introduced by the rubric “I saw” (7:2,4,6,7,9,11,13). Revelation is an expansion upon Daniel’s visions, and there we find seven visions which are in turn subdivided into seven visions and some of those subdivisions even are subdivided into seven visions. Admittedly, these can be defined in various ways, but some of the more obvious ones are: 7 visions:

- 1) Revelation 4 - 8:1
- 2) Revelation 8:2 - 11
- 3) Revelation 12 - 14
- 4) Revelation 15, 16
- 5) Revelation 17, 18
- 6) Revelation 19
- 7) Revelation 20

The seven visions of conflict explaining the Establishment of God’s Kingdom between Rev. 11:15-13:8:

1. The woman with child: the birth of Jesus, 12:1-2
2. The great red dragon: the enemy of Peace, 12:3-6
3. The war in heaven: the Cross, 12:7-12
4. The dragon, the woman, and her children: the struggle of God's people, 12:13-17
5. The seven-headed beast from the sea: the power of Rome, 13:1-4
6. The war against the saints: persecutions, 13:5-10
7. The beast and his mark: corruption of the emperor and the dragon's agents, 13:11-18

Then there are the Seven Visions of Mt. Zion, Rev. 14:1-20; the Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God, Rev. 15:1-16:21; the Seven Visions of the Fall of Babylon, Rev. 17:1-19:10; the Seven Visions of Recompense, Rev. 19:11-21:5.

The point is that the outline scenario of Daniel 7 is repeated in more detail in Revelation. But the primary reference remains the same- a prediction of a final time of trouble within the land promised to Abraham, which will come to term in the return of Christ to earth to establish His Kingdom upon the ruins of Israel's enemies.

The Four Beasts and the Cherubim

It's apparent that the four beasts are full of allusion to the cherubim vision seen by Ezekiel- also whilst in captivity in Babylon, just as Daniel was. The cherubim were likewise four separate living creatures [beasts] which somehow were also one. The four beasts of Daniel 7 become comprehended in the fourth beast and in the one composite beast of Revelation 13, which includes all elements of the previous beasts within it. Note that the Hebrew / Aramaic for "beast" means literally a living one- the living creature of the cherubim vision. The cherubim featured the faces of lion, ox, man and eagle (Ez. 1:10), and lion, ox and eagle feature in the descriptions of the four beasts; the 'man' element is found in that the lion has the heart of a man, and the little horn of the fourth beast has the eyes of a man. The first living creature has wings which are lifted up from the earth (Dan. 7:4)- which is precisely the language of the cherubim wings being lifted up from the earth in Ez. 1:19,21; 10:16,19. As the first beast is made to stand on its feet (Dan. 7:4), so the cherubim caused Ezekiel to stand on his feet (Ez. 2:2; 3:24). The second creature had a "side" which was "lifted up" (Dan. 7:5), as the cherubim likewise had 'sides' which were 'lifted up' (Ez. 1:8,20). The third beast had four wings as each of the living creatures / cherubim did (Dan. 7:6; Ez. 1:23). The first and fourth beasts / living creatures have feet (Dan. 7:4,7) as the cherubim do (Ez. 1:7). The description of how these living creatures / beasts will be judged by the Lord Jesus includes language also used in Ezekiel's cherubim visions- One seated upon a throne, wheels of burning fire (Dan. 7:9).

Ezekiel's vision was surely well known to Daniel. The connection is surely that throughout the course of human history, especially the course of Gentile domination of the land of Israel, the glory of God shone through it all, it was all going according to His purpose; and the various beasts were in fact manipulated by the living creatures of the Angel cherubim. Daniel 7 says this in different terms by opening with the statement that the four spirits / Angels of Heaven were responsible for the uprising of the four beasts (Dan. 7:2,3). Events were not just taking their course, with everything spinning out of control; but rather, God through the Angels was powerfully in control. And His glory shone through the apparent cruelty, shame and randomness of the events that appeared to be happening to His land and people.

The great comfort is that these four beasts are reflected in Hos. 13:7,8, where God threatens that *He* will be to Israel like a lion, a leopard, a bear and a wild beast. All these beasts are significant because of what they do to Israel; that is the territory

and arena of their domination. But they are all acting as it were on God's behalf, like the four beasts of the cherubim. There is no radical evil, evil out of control in the cosmos, with God's people at risk from being dominated by it. God is completely in control, and even the terrible things done to Israel by the beasts are under His total control. People get hung up on evil- death, cancer, loss of loved ones, the cruelty of man and the complexities of how that affects us. The challenge of faith is to see that all these things "work together for good" for those who love God, and our eternal salvation is the final outcome.

Who is the Beast?

If we are looking for a power or ideology within the land promised to Abraham which focuses upon the destruction of Israel, then we do not have far to look. Islam explicitly encourages Moslems to attack Israel and force Jews to either convert to Israel or be killed: Consider these passages from the Hadith: "You will fight against the Jews and you will kill them until even a stone would say: Come here, Muslim, there is a Jew (hiding himself behind me); kill him" (Book 41.6981). Book 19.4366 likewise: "I will expel the Jews and Christians from Arabia and will not leave any but Muslim". The 'Arabia' here is often interpreted as the Arabian Peninsula, but that was probably not in Mohammed's perceptual geography. By 'Arabia' he meant 'the lands where the Arabs live', and that area includes Israel, inhabited as it is by several million Palestinian Arabs.

The Eclipse of the West

However we interpret the fourth beast and its horns, the point has to be accepted that it is radically different to any entity or empire which has ever dominated the earth / land of Israel before. It was "terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong... it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it" (Dan. 7:7). It is this same beast which led John in Revelation to be staggered and amazed. For such an entity to dominate Israel in the last days, the current geopolitical situation must change. The West will be powerless to stop it. The historical support of Israel by the West, and their continual involvement on the ground in the Middle East to avert catastrophe and protect their interests there... will end. This could be because of their financial collapse, or an oil / energy stranglehold over them, or the uprise of domestic forces allied with Islam which leave them powerless to get involved; or maybe they genuinely turn against Israel.

Or perhaps the beast entity is in possession of military technology, just as Goliath was, which leads to the sense that nobody can make war with this beast: "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4). And if 'all' that is required for peace is to let these guys have their way with Israel... well, that will be a price which will seem cheap compared to the unleashing of nuclear, germ, chemical or some other kind of technology against the West. "Who is like unto the beast?" suggests that it is felt that nobody is comparable with the beast in order to make war with it; there is a superiority of military ability which is perceived which results in recognizing that this entity cannot be challenged. The language is very much of David and Goliath. The current dependency of Israel upon military technology to maintain the upper edge over their enemies must therefore come to an end. All those scenarios are well on the way to development. Nuclear technology is already in the hands of Iran, and can spread easily to irresponsible hands. It would also be typical of Russian foreign policy to spite the West by arming the West's enemies with such technology. Without the West as the power broker in the Middle East, such an entity will surely arise. The release of the restrained horsemen on the banks of the Euphrates may refer to this restraining influence being removed (Rev. 9,16). The growth of the IS shows

the potential for it, if nothing else. So the very prediction of such an entity arising in the land promised to Abraham has some radical implications for the West.

Judah's invasion by the Babylonians is clearly a type of the latter day invasion by the Islamic entity or state. The Biblical record emphasizes Judah's sense of betrayal, in that her lovers and friends [i.e. other nations] had not come to her aid as they had promised and as she had hoped (Lamentations is full of such language). This has its counterpart today, in that Israel depends upon the West to be the power broker deflecting any major strike against them by the Islamic powers around them. But that factor will be removed, the promises and undertakings will not come true- because the Biblical picture is of a huge state in power over Israel without opposition.

The Horns on the Beast

The ten horns represent ten kings- the reference may be to individual leaders rather than to nations (Dan. 7:24). They arise out of the head of the beast, maybe implying they share the same overall ideology or thinking. That ideology would be that of hatred of Israel and a common desire to destroy her- which rather suggests Islam. That is the only appropriate ideology within the earth / land promised to Abraham which could be the candidate for the fulfilment of this prophetic requirement.

The overall picture presented by the descriptions of the horns is of conflict with each other, whilst at the same time dominating the earth / land of Israel. The little horn 'subdues' [to abase / humiliate / degrade] three of the horns, and according to Rev. 17:16, the ten horns hate the whore, the individual riding the beast entity, and bitterly destroy and burn her. And the fortunes of the entire entity ebb and flow- one of the wounds has a deadly wound but revives, the beast itself has a deadly wound from a sword but revives (Rev. 13:3,12,14), the beast was, is not and yet is (Rev. 17:8), and we are beginning to see this ebb and flow of the fortunes of the entity developing in the land / earth. This is precisely the picture that has more recently unfolded in the land promised to Abraham- a series of increasingly powerful and aggressive leaders and powers, morphing together *from the perspective of Israel and God's people* into a system of abuse such as has never been seen and never will be. And yet from another viewpoint, they are bitterly divided against themselves.

The tendency is to want to clearly identify each of the ten toes / ten horns of the fourth beasts, the wings of the lion, the three ribs in the mouth of the second beast, the four wings and four heads of the third beast, the three horns who are plucked up by the little horn of the fourth beast, and then in Revelation we have seven heads found on the beast, as well as the ten horns, who in Revelation "hate the whore" and burn her; and the whore who rides the beast sits on seven hills or kings. Each of these attributes [toes, horns, wings, heads] refer to kings / kingdoms. Looking at the scenarios through half closed eyes, as it were, not sweating the details, we have the impression of a latter day entity dominating the earth / land promised to Abraham, which is comprised of a bewildering array of smaller powers and charismatic leaders who are often pitted against each other. This is exactly the position we see developing in that geographical area. We don't need to interpret the fine details ahead of time- that is not how prophecy functions. When it all happens, then it will be clear. What we are seeing is the general picture developing- an array of aggressive powers, some strong and some weak, broadly grouped into four groups, matching the four beasts who will exist in the last days. They are all united around a desire to dominate Israel. It's not hard to imagine how they will destroy each other, which is God's preferred method of judging His people's enemies.

The Little Horn

The changing of times and laws by the antichrist figure of Dan. 7:25 sounds like the

radical Islamist desire to impose the Islamic calendar and *sharia* law in the land promised to Abraham, which they see as their caliphate; and for sure, if Israel becomes part of an Islamic state, then the keeping of the Jewish calendar will be outlawed. The implementation of *sharia* law and changing legal structures to reflect it, is a major theme in their program. It's clear that the three and a half year domination of Jerusalem and changing of the Jewish law and calendar had an initial fulfilment in the abuses of Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple. There was a three and a half year period from the edict of Antiochus in June 168 BC to the rededication of the temple in December 165 BC. The little horn of Daniel 8 comes out of the Greek kingdom, but the horn of Daniel 7 out of the fourth kingdom. I suggest that this is because the prophecy could have been fulfilled totally at the time of Antiochus- Messiah could have come and destroyed him. But the various required preconditions weren't met, and so there was another possibility of it coming true out of the Roman kingdom [another possibility is that the four beasts and metals refer to Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece rather than Babylon-Medo Persia-Greece-Rome]. Revelation uses the same imagery to describe the antiChrist of the last days, who will incorporate some elements of the previous historical fulfillments of the little horn in men like Antiochus Epiphanes.

Dan. 7:1 *In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon-* This was about 10 years before the fall of Babylon. As with all Bible prophecy, there was a short term initial fulfilment which guaranteed that the larger picture would likewise finally come true. We discussed on Dan. 2 how the initial possible fulfilment of the image was in the immediate Babylonian dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar. But Nebuchadnezzar's descendants failed to have his final humility before the things of God's Kingdom, as Dan. 5 makes clear to Belshazzar. And so now the kaleidoscope turns, and the elements align to produce another possible picture- that after Babylon arises another empire. Thus Dan. 7:1 locates the vision at the beginning of the reign of Belshazzar, who is presented in Dan. 5 as the last king of Babylon. Dan. 8 shows how yet another sequence was possible, with the Kingdom of God being established at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Daniel had a dream on his bed: then he wrote the dream and told the conclusion of the matters- The entire vision of the beasts of Daniel 7 is summed up in Dan. 7:1: "the *rosh* of the words" (AV "sum of the matter"). And the *rosh* surely refers to the individual of Ezekiel 38:2 who will lead the latter day armies against Israel. The whole system of beasts is summed up in an individual *rosh* or leader, just as the metals of the image in Daniel 2 are in the form of a man with the face of Nebuchadnezzar. The little horn of Daniel 7 is actually called "the beast": "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

Dan 7:2 *Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my dream and, behold, the four winds of Heaven broke forth upon the great sea-* This again is a deconstruction of Babylon's religion; the Enuma Elish describes the god of Babylon, Bel (or Marduk) using four winds to destroy sea monsters and become god of gods. This narrative is subverted so that Yahweh is to be recognized as God of all gods.

Nebuchadnezzar 'saw' the image, or literally, he had a vision of it (Dan. 2:26,31,34,41,43,45). The same word is used in Daniel 7 of how now *Daniel* 'saw' or 'had a vision of' the four beasts (Dan. 7:1,2,4,6,7,9,11,13,21). The Daniel 7 vision or 'seeing' was perhaps from God's perspective, Heaven's view of the same realities

which Nebuchadnezzar saw from an earthly perspective. There are many verbal similarities, as well as the general outline similarity between the four kingdoms. Thus the intention of the Daniel 2 image was to show how God 'sets up kings' who 'rise up' (Dan. 2:21,31,39), and the same word is used of how both the lion and the bear are 'set up' or 'raised up' (Dan. 7:4,5); indeed, all four beasts "are four kings which shall arise out of the earth" (Dan. 7:17).

Quite simply, God is behind all these beasts. They are raised up and destroyed by Him. He is in control, no matter how scary they appear. This is why all four of the beasts are alluded to in Hos. 13:7,8, a passage which alludes to all of them- lion, leopard, bear and general "beast": "I became like a lion to them, like a leopard beside the road I will lurk. I will meet them like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will rip apart their heart's enclosure. And I will devour them there like a lion, as a beast of the field would mangle them".

The situation here clearly alludes to that at creation. Darkness covered the deep, and the wind / Spirit of God swept over the waters- resulting in creation (Gen. 1:2). Daniel at night in the darkness sees the same thing. And out of this work of the wind / Spirit, there arise beasts (Gen. 1:20,21,24,25,28,30; 2:7,19,20) just as there do throughout Daniel 7. Man was given dominion over the things thus created (Gen. 1:26-28), and in Dan. 7 the "son of man" ends up having "dominion" over the beasts that have arisen. The simple takeaway is that God is over the arising of the beasts. Despite the wickedness and freewill decisions of evil men, God is the creator of it all. And all those beasts, kings and empires arose in order to judge Israel for their sins. As the prophets repeatedly teach, this was all of God. Scary and powerful as those entities were, they were created by God, made to arise from the water covered land / earth, just like the natural beasts of the field had arisen. God is repeatedly presented as the creator of "evil" in the context of the judgment of His people (Is. 45:5-7). All this is why I don't vote and take a laid back approach to human politics, as we see God raising and deposing leaders and empires.

Dan 7:3 *Four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another*- This again is a subversion of the entire narrative of Babylon, for the walls of the Ishtar Gate were decorated with identical great beasts, who were said to defend Babylon. They would all come to their end before Israel's God. The nations represented by the beasts come from the *earth*, the *eretz* or land promised to Abraham (:17). The imagery of the sea may therefore simply be because there is a deconstruction going on- as explained on :2, the god of Babylon was supposed to have dominated the monsters of the sea in order to become the supreme god.

Wild beasts were the threatened punishment upon Israel for their sin. So we are to expect the dominion of these beasts to be over the land and people of Israel. And this is what the metals of the image of Dan. 2 speak of likewise- dominion over the earth / land of Israel. Indeed, the ancient world often spoke of the arising of beasts as punishment for breaking a covenant (evidence provided in G.W. Buchanan, *The Book of Daniel* p. 167). And Israel had broken covenant; and these were the judgments to come upon them. The point is, the dominion of these beasts was to be over Israel; that is the focus of the vision, not Europe nor the rest of the planet.

Daniel saw this vision at the very end of the Babylonian empire, in the reign of Belshazzar (:1), whom Dan. 5 presents as the last king of Babylon. But he sees the beasts, including the first beast [which is clearly based upon historical Babylon] arising from the sea. Yet Babylon had already arisen at the time of the vision, and was waning in power. This underlines the fact that the essential fulfilment of this vision is

in the last days, for all the beasts exist together then just as all the metals in the image exist, to be broken by the Lord's return. Whatever historical fulfillments there were, the vision speaks of entities arising in the very last days to abuse God's people and be destroyed by the coming of His Son.

The four beasts are "diverse from one another" (Dan. 7:3), just as the four metals of the image of Daniel 2 do not naturally bond with each other. The four beasts are controlled by four spirits in Heaven who 'strive' with each other (Dan. 7:2). God makes His Angels spirits (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7). Each of those kings or empires had a representative Angel in Heaven. It's not that the Angels themselves strive with each other, they are all obedient to God (see my *The Real Devil* chapter 2 <http://www.realdevil.info/2-1.htm>) but they play out before the court of Heaven the situation on earth. Later in Daniel we find Angels likewise representative of kings and kingdoms (Dan. 10:13,20). The comfort is that God is aware of all that happens on earth, and in fact He orchestrates it. The situation on earth is therefore not ultimately spinning out of control. My point in this context is that the four beasts strive with each other and do not naturally bond with each other. This is the same situation as we find in the feet and toes made part of iron, part of clay, mixed with each other but not cleaving to each other. Just as the image stands erect in the last days in order for it to be destroyed, so the sequence of beasts which we have in Daniel 7 are not simply a historical outline of a sequence of empires. Each of them exists in some form in the last days, and are united together in their brief domination of the earth / land promised to Abraham. The first three beasts stand 'before' the fourth one, the original meaning 'in the presence of', rather than previously in chronological terms (Dan. 7:7). The fourth beast has its body destroyed, although the other beasts are also present there and have their lives prolonged "for a season" (Dan. 7:11,12). The historical interpretation of the beasts is not irrelevant, however. The final entity dominating Israel will incorporate aspects of all the previous systems which have dominated the land promised to Abraham.

Daniel sees the four beasts (having similarities with the four metals of the image of Daniel 2) all come up *together* after the waves of the sea are troubled (Dan. 7:3), connecting with the Lord's description of the last day powers around Israel in the same way (Lk. 21:25).

The four beasts are described as "diverse" from each other (Dan. 7:3). The Aramaic word translated "diverse" is used 21 times, and every time it distinctly means to be changed from one state to another. It is used about 'altering' a king's word (Ezra 6:11; Dan. 3:28), the face of a man being 'changed' from one appearance to another (Dan. 3:19; 5:6). The idea is not simply that there were four beasts which were different from each other; it's surely axiomatic that four different beasts are going to be different from each other. The beasts of Daniel 7 are clearly related to the metals of the image in Daniel 2; but this is not to say that the same thing is being said simply through different symbolism. That would be relatively pointless. There is an extension of the ideas and a modification of the way in which the final end [the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth] will be achieved.

Whilst the beasts of Dan. 7 and the metals of Dan. 2 are related, there are significant differences. There is not a one for one alignment between the two visions; that would be rather pointless. The vision of the metals in Dan. 2 doesn't precisely map out onto the beasts of Dan. 7. In Dan. 2, all four kingdoms are utterly destroyed simultaneously by the stone (Dan. 2:35,45). But in the vision of the four beasts, only the fourth beast is killed; the first three beasts have their empire / dominion taken

away but themselves continue to live (Dan. 7:12). Dan. 2 stresses the weak and mixed nature of the final kingdom (Dan. 2:40-43). But Dan. 7 emphasises a progression of kings [horns] within the fourth kingdom and describes one particularly terrifying king. The fourth kingdom is observed by Daniel to be radically different to all the others (Dan. 7:7,8,19-25). The Dan. 2 image has no mention of ten entities or kings at the end, nor of anyone equivalent to the "little horn". If the idea was that these beasts arose one after the other, surely this would have been stated. Without that clarification we are surely left to assume that they arose together at the same time.

Likewise, the sequence of Dan. 8 [Medo-Persia, Greece, Little horn, Kingdom of God] is shorter than that of Dan. 7 [four beasts starting with Babylon, horns, little horn, Kingdom of God]. Which in turn is shorter than the sequence of Dan. 2, which has four empires starting with Babylon and then a weak entity of iron mixed with clay, leading to the Kingdom of God. The focus of Dan. 7 is largely upon the fourth beast and little horn, whereas Dan. 2 doesn't give this emphasis. The two feet are mentioned in Dan. 2 but not ten toes. In the initial possible application to Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty, there was no feature of "ten" at the end of it. Just the coregency of Nabonidus and Belshazzar, the two feet. But in the later re-interpretation, we are left to deduce that the ten toes could be the ten horns of the fourth beast in Dan. 7. Although the weakness of the feet in Dan. 2 is not a theme found in the parallel in Dan. 7; there was a reinterpretation and extension of the 'ten toes' in Dan. 7.

It could even be argued that although the empires of Dan. 7 do have some similarities with the kings and empires of Dan. 2, the Dan. 7 beasts are totally different entities which shall exist specifically and only in the last days, at the moment when the Lord comes and establishes God's Kingdom. The four beasts apparently arise together, at the same time (Dan. 7:3); the entire vision of Dan. 7 would then be solely about the situation in the very last days before God's Kingdom is established on earth. Whereas the entities in Dan. 2 arise one after the other. And that is the whole purpose of that vision. We learn in Dan. 7:7 that the fourth beast stamps upon "the residue", i.e. the others, the other three beasts, who are therefore existing at the same time as the fourth beast. Those entities do not destroy or succeed one another, like the kingdoms do in Dan 2; but are trampled on by the fourth beast. "The residue", i.e. 'the rest' of the beasts, again feature in :12: "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time". These statements are stubborn problems for any continuous historical interpretation of the beasts. The fourth beast is presented in Revelation as an entity that specifically arises and exists in the very last days. It is not an entity that historically existed for centuries in some form. This approach certainly solves other stubborn problems which arise if we insist on seeing the entities of Dan. 7 as merely parallel to those in the image of Dan. 2. Dan. 7:17 states clearly that "These great animals, which are four, are four kings, who shall arise out of the land". Clearly this is at some time future to when Daniel had this vision (:1), decades after the vision of Dan. 2. The first beast was yet to arise. But if this is paralleled with the "head of gold" then this becomes problematic. For Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon had already arisen, Nebuchadnezzar was long dead and Babylon was about to fall. So it seems also legitimate to take an entirely latter day view of the beasts, incorporating as they do elements of the previous entities that had dominated Israel seen in Dan. 2. This obviates all the difficulties in trying to force history into compliance with these prophecies, as we see in the vain attempts to find 10 horns on the Roman empire. All this would explain why Daniel was so grieved that he didn't understand the vision of Dan. 7; whereas he had been given the interpretation of that of Dan. 2. He clearly saw the events of Dan.

7 as different to those of Dan. 2, which he apparently did understand. For "understanding" had been given unto him of the Dan. 2 vision. This approach however is just one possible turn of the kaleidoscope; for the relevance to Greece and Antiochus is too exact to deny. But when this didn't lead to the re-establishment of God's Kingdom, thanks to the arrogant, legalistic, unspiritual nationalism of God's people, then the kaleidoscope turned again. And quite possibly this totally latter day interpretation comes into view. These aren't all just possible interpretations; they are possibilities that really could have brought about the establishment of God's Kingdom. One after another, the human factors failed. Cyrus wasn't the Messiah he could have been, neither was Zerubbabel, neither was Judas Maccabeus. And Israel crucified Jesus their Messiah when He came. But still God's final saving purpose will succeed, even if it takes more time. "For at the time of the end shall be the vision" (Dan. 8:17) would suggest that the things of the little horn etc. have their main fulfilment at the very end, before the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, and not in any other time historically.

I suggest these differences of interpretation reflect the different scenarios that were possible. Just as in our lives, there have been so many possible scenarios. Our failure to take the path we were meant to didn't mean the end of our relationship with God. It meant that one possible set of potential futures didn't happen. Both on the level of individuals and geopolitics, we see God striving by all means to make something work, inexorably leading towards His final plan of salvation in His Kingdom.

There is so much repetition of behaviour and patterns of behaviour and judgment in the book of Daniel. Thus Belshazzar's behaviour in desecrating the things of Yahweh's temple was to be repeated in that of the little horn. That doesn't make the little horn Belshazzar. And so it would be in line with this if the entities of Dan. 7 are not the same as those of Dan. 2, but they followed the patterns seen experienced with those entities.

7:4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings-

We have noted on Dan. 6 how the king's lions were tamed and under Yahweh's total control, and His man walked fearlessly with them. Now we find that the first of the beasts is a lion. The connection is clear- that somehow God's true people will be ultimately preserved. The bas reliefs show that the kings of Babylon and Assyria claimed to have hunted and killed wild animals before their coronations. In Dan. 7, we see God ultimately overcoming the wild animals and then being enthroned over the world for ever.

The initial reference is to Nebuchadnezzar, who is described as an eagle during his madness (Dan. 4:30). We note the LXX of Dan. 4:30 "My hairs became like an eagle's wings and my nails like a lion". In his humiliation, it's as if his eagle's wings were clipped and he was left just with the claws of an eagle.

Both lion and eagle are symbols of Babylon (Jer. 49:19-22 cp. Lam. 4:19; Hos. 8:1; Hab. 1:8). They are also associated with Islam; Ali, Mohammad's son in law, is called "The lion of God, always victorious". The plucking of the wings could refer to Nebuchadnezzar's loss of power. Jer. 49:19-22 specifically calls Nebuchadnezzar the lion, and his soldiers the eagles. The primary potential fulfilment of the vision was in matching the four metals of Daniel 2, which spoke primarily of four *kings* rather than kingdoms which were to arise. A lion with eagles' wings would have appeared like a sphinx, a monster assumed to be a demonic being. The point is that all that was considered demonic and radically evil was all the same under Divine control and

manipulation; there is no radical evil in creation. This is why the New Testament uses the language of demons when describing the Lord's miracles, which clearly showed that whether or not demons actually exist, they are of no power compared to God.

I saw until its wings were plucked- Maybe a reference to the mental illness of Nebuchadnezzar, or the decline of the empire after his death. I have suggested several times on Dan. 2-6 that the various monarchs had the opportunity to repent and restore the Jews, and to resign their own kingdoms under the Kingdom of God they were allowing to be re-established in the form of the kingdom of Judah. But they all failed in this. The lifting up of the plucked lion would therefore refer to how after Nebuchadnezzar's final repentance, the kingdom could have been lifted up and glorified. Whether or not Nebuchadnezzar maintained his repentance to the end of his days we don't know, but his kingdom and successors didn't. And so their kingdom likewise had to fall.

The plucking of the wings could refer to how Lydia, Media, and Persia cast off Babylonian rule and appointed their own kings. Or maybe to how after Nebuchadnezzar, there was no farther extension of the Babylonian empire under the subsequent, weaker, rulers.

And it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand on two feet as a man; and a man's heart was given to it-

"It was lifted up" just as the bear "was raised up" (:5) and "dominion was given" to the leopard (:6). True to the message of Dan. 2, human power and prowess is all ultimately given by God. Although there is no specific definition of the power lifting up, raising up and giving dominion, it is clearly God. His is the higher hand in human life, over and above human freewill. And this mighty hand is willing to work in our lives through the Spirit, if we are open to it. The first three beasts are all natural animals that have something added to it which doesn't belong by nature. The lion and leopard have wings, the bear was strangely raised up on one side. This simple observation reflects again the higher hand of God in human life, over and above the natural.

LXX "stood on human feet"; the feet were changed from paws to human feet. We should note that Daniel was likewise raised to his feet as a sign that his self abasement had been acceptable with God (Dan. 8:18 "he took hold of me, raised me to my feet"). So it was with Nebuchadnezzar. His repentance and humiliation made him man as God intended. A psychological miracle was performed upon that man. Having the mind of a man is what God seeks from all men, and will finally be achieved in all those who are in His Kingdom: "Let the nations know that they are men" (Ps. 9:21).

Nebuchadnezzar started as a man, but was made as an animal, so that he might become "a human" again, but man as God intended: "Let his mind be changed from that of a human, and let the mind of an animal be given to him" (Dan. 4:16). But Dan. 7 presents Nebuchadnezzar before his conversion as an animal; a lion with eagles' wings. The 'human mind' he then had was in fact that of an animal. Those wings are plucked and he is given a man's heart- he is transformed from an animal to a man; a true man. The first beast of Dan. 7 was "lifted up from the ground" so it could stand on two feet as a man. No longer a four footed lion.

Nebuchadnezzar in his days of madness would have been similar to a middle aged man in a psychiatric ward, sectioned and identifying as an animal, with wild frightened eyes and a diagnosis well beyond any human cure through therapy or medication. Yet the power of the Holy Spirit is such that in this case, such a person had a spiritual awareness deep within them. And when this was responded to, God did the greatest psychological miracle of the Old Testament. He healed that tormented

mind, and made that man the world's most powerful ruler. And despite the man's awful sins and blasphemy, God sanctified and eternally saved him. We have for all time a parade example of how God can psychologically transform a person and save them. Human psychology and psychiatry never totally cured anyone. At best a few symptoms were partially relieved. No psychotropic medication, no course of therapy, can radically transform. Only God's Spirit can. And here we have the parade example.

The lifting up from the earth / ground may simply mean that this beast becomes like a man. The first beast, representing Babylon, had "the heart of a man". It was the embodiment of an individual person- Nebuchadnezzar. The latter day Babylon likewise will be centred around a person- the antiChrist figure of the last days, who in turn will profess to be the incarnation or embodiment of the false prophet Mohammed. What happened here is the reverse of what happened to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:16,33). It could be that we have here a potential prophecy, of what could have happened after Nebuchadnezzar's repentance after his years of mental illness, living as a beast. The beasts are represented as having human features because like the metals of the image, the primary possibility of the prophecies was that Nebuchadnezzar would be followed by a series of kings rather than kingdoms, which would climax in the revelation of Messiah and the re-establishment of the Kingdom. That didn't happen, but it was the potential, which Judah's spiritual indolence disallowed.

Nebuchadnezzar in his madness became as a beast- with a body like a beast, hair like an eagle, and nails like those of a beast (Dan. 4:33). This language is all used about the beasts in the later prophetic parts of Daniel's prophecy. They had features of eagles (Dan. 7:4), bodies of beasts (Dan. 7:11), and remarkable nails or claws (Dan. 7:19). Nebuchadnezzar became like such a beast because the latter day beast would be the embodiment of him, just as the image of Daniel 2 had the face of Nebuchadnezzar and was in the form of a man. The beast is epitomized by a man- "the number of the beast...is the number of a man" (Rev. 13:18).

Note that Nebuchadnezzar personally was the head of gold, and so we can understand this first beast as Nebuchadnezzar or at least, Babylon at his specific time. It is Nebuchadnezzar who is described as an eagle (Dt. 28:49-53; Lam. 4:19; Ez. 17:1-5,11-14; Hab. 1:6-8) and lion in his attack upon Judah (Is. 5:25-30; Jer. 4:6,7,13; 25:9,38; 49:19,22; 50:17,44).

Dan 7:5 *Behold, another beast, a second, like a bear; and it was raised up on one side-* "On one side" could refer to how Cyrus arose on the borders of Chaldea, and in this way the bear positioned itself to attack the lion [Babylon]. But probably better is GNB "like a bear standing on its hind legs", making it have an element of Nebuchadnezzar, who likewise we have just read stood on his feet like a man rather than as an animal (:4). The original could mean "half crouching", or standing on its hind legs, ready to pounce in attack. The historical application could be to the Medes arising and then the Persians, hence it appears to have two sides to it.

And three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth: and they said thus to it, Arise, devour much flesh- "Arise" is a command to the beast to stand up as a man, on two feet; to perhaps repent and become fully human as Nebuchadnezzar did (see on :4). Whether it does arise as commanded isn't recorded. Just as we will not read whether the first three beasts are destroyed or not; we are only told that the fourth beast is destroyed, whilst the others have their lives prolonged for an undefined period. As noted on :4, these beasts are all epitomized in a man, the latter day antiChrist figure who is based upon Nebuchadnezzar. The "three ribs", the remnant of other beasts

devoured by this beast, encourage it to stand up as a man and devour even more flesh; to do to others, as had been done to them. The three ribs could refer to the conquering of Lydia, Egypt and Babylon by Medo-Persia; or to the three great Assyrian cities of Nineveh, Calah, and Resen which they sacked. But it's hard to understand how their remnants encouraged Medo-Persia to devour others. The relevance to Lydia, Egypt and Babylon was therefore but a primary fulfilment; the vision, like that of Daniel 2, speaks primarily of the last days, in the same way as the entire image of Dan. 2 [the basis of Dan. 7] stands complete in the last days. Or the three ribs may refer to Nebuchadnezzar, his son and his son's son, the three generations that ruled Babylon according to Jer. 27:7.

Jer. 51:27-29 describes how God stirs up four nations against Babylon. One was Media, the other three were the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz. These were all taken over by Media. Jer. 51:11 and Is. 13:17 speak of how God "stirred up" the Medes against Babylon, and Is. 21:2 commands Media to besiege Babylon. This Divine stirring up and command is referred to in this "Arise, Devour much flesh". The beast is in the process of eating- it has ribs in its mouth and is being commanded to eat. This would refer to the Medes about to devour Babylon. For this vision is in the first year of Belshazzar (:1), and he only reigned for three years before being overthrown by Darius the Mede. And yet if we turn the kaleidoscope and see a latter day application, all these beasts are to devour God's people and land. These four beasts are reflected in Hos. 13:7,8, where God threatens that *He* will be to Israel like a lion, a leopard, a bear and a wild beast. Israel's enemies are often likened to such wild animals. All these beasts are significant because of what they do to Israel; that is the territory and arena of their domination in the image of Daniel 2.

We can also translate as it having three ribs between its teeth. These would connect with the idea of three horn kings who would pass away which we will meet later. The three Medo Persian kings we are told of in the Bible are Cyrus, Ahasuerus and Darius. This has the advantage of an interpretation which requires only a knowledge of Biblical history.

The clear initial reference of the little horn to Antiochus Epiphanes [especially when we connect it with the little horn of Daniel 8] means that one possible sequence was Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece. "The order of Medes and Persians as the second and third kingdoms is supported by the sequence of kings in Daniel 6 and by their pairing in Dan 5:28. Furthermore, in Dan 8:3, the two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia, with the latter appearing afterwards and larger".

Dan 7:6 After this I saw, and behold, another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it-

Daniel sees one vision in :1-6 of four beasts arising but only three of which he describes. He then sees another night vision, beginning in :7, of the fourth beast. Why? In Dan. 8 we are presented with a scenario whereby the Kingdom of God could have been established in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, at the end the Greek empire. That possibility didn't happen. And so the kaleidoscope turned and the possibility of a fourth entity became the next potential reality. That is why there are two visions here. In the first, there are four beasts but only three are described, the vision ending with the third beast of Greece. But then in the second vision, from :7 onwards, we have a vision specifically of the fourth beast, its' horns and little horn.

The four wings may refer to the four winds, one for each of the "four corners of the earth" (Ps. 104:3; Zech. 2:6). Cyrus described himself as "king of the four corners of the earth... Sin, the light of heaven... gave into my hands the four corners of the

earth". The four heads would then be the four kings of Persia we are informed of in Dan. 11:2 ["there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth..."]: Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes.

The four heads could suggest a looking to expand in all directions. The historical application would be to the kingdom which succeeded Babylon. But I have explained that just as the image of Dan. 2 stands complete in the last days, so all the beasts likewise exist on the eve of the Lord's return (:12). They can refer to different aspects of the latter day entity which dominates the land promised to Abraham. The fact Daniel saw them successively arise is on one level just the furniture of the vision, and doesn't have to mean that there will be a chronological sequence of entities in the last days. There will be an element of four wings and heads in this particular manifestation of the latter day beast.

Historically, the leopard could refer to the lightning speed of the Persian troops, if the bear is understood as Media. The four heads / wings would then refer to the first four Persian kings, from Cyrus to Xerxes. Or it could refer to the lightning speed of the Greek ascendancy to power in the region under Alexander the great and his four generals, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip, and Antigonus; who may each be represented by the four wings and heads. Unless the generals are represented by the heads, and the wings speak of the four divisions of the Greek empire: Greece, Western Asia, Egypt, and Persia / India. The problem with all these historical interpretations is that they fail to meet the required criteria- that the vision of the beasts, like that of the image in Dan. 2, concern domination of the *eretz* promised to Abraham and not areas far outside of it such as Greece and India. The similarities are at best vague, and the main fulfilment will become clear in the latter domination of the *eretz* by an entity which includes all these previous elements. It should also be remembered that in Rev. 17:13, horns represent kings, and heads represent mountains or kingdoms. Whether the four heads can represent Persian kings or parts of the Greek empire is therefore questionable, especially as the Greek conquests were not established as kingdoms under a king. The decorum of the symbolism requires that the wings and the heads are different in their meaning; four wings would suggest two pairs of wings. It may simply be allusive to the double winged beasts which were the classic symbols of Babylon and Assyria, as if to say that there were elements of their abuse of Israel in this beast.

"Dominion was given unto it" would clearly refer to the lightning speed of Alexander's victories, within a few years conquering from Greece to India, defeating 600,000 Persians with only 30,000 men etc.

Dan 7:7 *After this I saw in the night visions, and, behold, a fourth beast, awesome and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces-* This is what the little stone of Dan. 2:34,45 does. This entity tries to execute judgment which only God should, and which He will do in the return of His Son to earth. This playing God is a significant factor in the judgment of these latter day entities.

The beast will "devour" the land (Dan. 7:7), just as the historical Babylon 'devoured' Jerusalem with fire (Jer. 30:16; Lam. 4:11; Ez. 15:5; 19:12; 23:25; Hos. 8:14; Am. 1:4; 2:5) and the Assyrians devoured the land (Jer. 50:17; Hos. 11:6; 13:8; Joel 1:4,19,20; 2:3,5,25). All these verses use the same word translated 'devour' in Dan. 7:7. Clearly enough, the 'devouring' of the fourth beast is a summation of all previous 'devourings' of God's land and people. Even in Old Testament times, this idea of a singular beast embodying all Israel's enemies was not unknown. For Ez.

34:28 looked forward to the day when "Neither shall the beast of the land devour them [any more]". Mal. 3:11 likewise speaks of how "the devourer" will be rebuked by God when finally Israel respond to the Elijah prophet (Mal. 3:1). This again suggests that the final devouring of Israel will be whilst the Elijah prophet is making an ongoing appeal for their repentance and acceptance of Jesus. Once they do so, the devourer is rebuked and Jesus returns to His desperately repentant people.

The beast stamps on others (Dan. 7:7); the same word is used for how Egypt did this to God's people and others within the land promised to Abraham (Ez. 32:2). Although Egypt doesn't figure in the sequence of metals in the image of Daniel 2, the beast incorporates aspects of all Israel's previous dominators- and they include Egypt. We can therefore expect the beast entity to include features of Nazi, Catholic and other historical persecutors of God's people, even though those entities weren't part of the Daniel 2 image. This is why the historical interpretations of 666 and the beast which apply them to Nero's Rome and various Catholic persecutions are not *per se* incorrect. They were true for their time. But the final persecuting entity will include them all within what it is and what it does.

And stamped the residue with its feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that preceded it; and it had ten horns- This beast was a composite beast, including the elements of the former beasts. It would have appeared very similar to Marduk, god of Babylon. Just as the image of Daniel 2 stands complete in the last days, headed up by a latter day Nebuchadnezzar, so this final beast is Babylon revived.

The difference between devouring and then stamping the rest with its feet could suggest that this entity was not content merely with conquering, but destroyed [stamped upon] the rest which it could not conquer. This is hard to fit to any particular historical entity, but it complements the general impression we get of the latter day entity conquering the *eretz* of Israel and then causing destruction to the surrounding peoples. Such a scenario can easily be imagined given the current nature of things in the Middle East. The stamped bits of beast, as it were, would then correspond with the brief final part of the Dan. 2 image, a mixture of metal mixed with clay. That is how the Middle East will end up, and the Lord's return will be in judgment upon that final phase of the Dan. 2 image and the mess left by the fourth beast.

The little horn in Dan. 8 is clearly Antiochus Epiphanes in its initial application. This leads us to see the fourth beast as Greece. The ten horns in this case would refer to the ten successors of Alexander on the throne of Antioch: (1) Alexander the Great, 336–323; (2) Alexander Aegus, 323–312; (3) Seleucus I, 312–280; (4) Antiochus I, 280–261; (5) Antiochus II, 261–246; (6) Seleucus II, 246–226; (7) Seleucus III, 226–223; (8) Antiochus III, 223–187; (9) Seleucus IV, 187–175; (10) Antiochus IV Epiphanes, 175–16 ; taken from Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book Of Daniel*, p. 214.

Dan 7:8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one-

The little horn came up or 'arose' just as all the beasts arose from the sea (:3) as a result of the winds of heaven blowing on the sea. The simple takeaway is that these monstrous entities were all caused to arise by God. This is the great theme of Daniel, that human political power is given and taken away by God. All is under His control; there is no radical evil out there in the world of human geopolitics. This arising / lifting / coming up of the little horn is the antithesis of how God makes the horn of His people and Messiah to arise, e.g. "He has lifted up a horn for His people" (Ps. 148:14); "I will cause a horn to sprout for the house of Israel" (Ez. 29:21); and in Zion

"I will cause a horn to sprout for David" (Ps 132:17; also Ps. 89:19-21). The little horn has "fellows" (:20), just as the Lord does (Heb. 1:9; Zech. 3:8). Likewise we wonder as to the meaning of the worst horn being "little". Possibly the connection is with the Lord coming from "little" Bethlehem (Mic. 5:1), and the little one becoming a thousand (Is. 60:22). Whilst the stone of Dan. 2:34 is not specifically called a "little stone" we can infer that we are supposed to see it as a small stone, which turns into a huge ever growing mountain. Again we are thus led to see this horn as a fake Christ. All the horns represent men, kings, but the little horn has "eyes like the eyes of a man". Why mention this, unless the idea is that he is a fake replica of the "son of man" figure we also meet in this vision.

The little horn has points of connection with Nebuchadnezzar. His eyes are notable, just as Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes to heaven. His mouth likewise spoke great things (:8), mocking the God of Israel in how he spoke to the three friends and to the Jews besieged in Jerusalem. The little horn has an especially arrogant look; the same word is used of the "sight" or look of Nebuchadnezzar in his arrogance, as a tree whose "sight" was visible to all the earth (Dan. 4:19,20). Nebuchadnezzar persecuted the saints [Judah in their land, and also the three friends] and tried to change God's times and laws (:25), as seen in his attempt to build a gold statue that changed God's statue of Dan. 2. We also see this in the fact that God's law required Him to be worshipped exclusively yet Nebuchadnezzar sought to change that. The little horn is therefore cast as a Nebuchadnezzar redivivus. "The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (:21) clearly alludes to what Nebuchadnezzar did to Judah and Jerusalem. This is the sense in which the entire image of Dan. 2 is Nebuchadnezzar, headed up by him as the head of gold, and standing complete in the last days. The language of the little horn in Dan. 8:10 recalls that used of Nebuchadnezzar in Is. 14:13 "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God".

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, this appears to speak of an individual who arises, the antiChrist, who deposes others in order to establish himself as the personal epitome of the fourth beast, which in turn is the composite of all the beasts. It is this individual who faces off against the real Christ at His second coming and is judged by His appearance on earth (:9). The horn / king was "little", and the original may mean one who has been diminished. The one made little arises or 'comes up' to be the greatest, an imitation Christ. It could be that this individual has been humiliated in some previous conflict, but now arises again. This could be associated with the way the beast received a deadly wound but was healed (Rev. 13:3,12).

Before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things- The plucking up of three horns (= kings, Dan. 7:24; 8:20; Rev. 17:12) by such a dominant individual is hard to conclusively prove as having been historically fulfilled. It has a latter day application which is yet to become clear. This individual king is as it were the personification of the beast. He arises in the last days and will be alive at the time of the Lord's return. This simply doesn't fit a Pope being given three states in Italy. The horns are kings, not kingdoms. Mountains or kingdoms are heads not horns (Rev. 17:9). The destruction of the little horn simply cannot refer to the supposed "loss of temporal power of the papacy" in 1870. This individual is destroyed by the Lord's return and not some generations previously. And he is destroyed by the Lord's return, not some European individual of bygone centuries. Nor is it reasonable to claim that the uprooting of three horns was done by the Papacy in the destruction of the Heruli, Vandals and Ostrogoths in the sixth century. What great, acute persecution of "the

saints" happened after that? In any case, the Ostrogoths and the Vandals were defeated by Belisarius, a general in the army of Justinian, emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Heruli were destroyed by the Lombards in 493 AD. The Lombards were Arians and not Catholic, indeed they were enemies of the papacy.

The little horn of Dan. 8:9 pushes in three directions. Possibly this matches the little horn of Dan. 7:8 uprooting three horns. "A mouth speaking great things" fits well with Antiochus Epiphanes, who "spoke with great arrogance" (1 Macc. 1:24). The three kings he uprooted would then be King Artaxias of Armenia, Ptolemy VI Philometor and Ptolemy VII Euergetes, all of whom Antiochus defeated one after the other (in 169, 168 and 166, respectively). Or they could refer to the Selucid kings whom Antiochus Epiphanes uprooted: Seleucus IV and his sons Demetrius and Antiochus.

And yet although the little horns do the same things, there are differences between the "little horn" scenarios, comparing Daniel 7 and Daniel 8. In Dan. 7 the little horn arises from the fourth beast and is among the 10 horns which are part of that beast. In Dan. 8, the goat first has one horn, which is then broken and replaced by four horns (Dan. 8:5,7). And the little horn arises from one of them. The four horns are clearly the four kingdoms that arose out of Alexander the Great, whereas the horns in Dan. 7 are clearly individual kings or rulers. Yet again, we have different possible scenarios within God's ultimate unstoppable purpose of establishing His Kingdom on earth.

Dan 7:9 I saw until thrones were placed, and One who was the ancient of days sat: his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames, and its wheels burning fire-

"Were placed" is correct. "Set" or "cast down" misses the allusion to how cushions for great men were laid, not "set", but "cast down" for the great man to sit upon.

The language is that of the cherubim vision of Ez. 1. Remember that Ezekiel and Daniel were in Babylon as exiles around the same time. We note the wheels of fire; and the living creatures which are part of the cherubim. Above them there is the equivalent of this "ancient of days" figure: "and on the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man on it above" (Ez. 1:26). The idea may be that the beasts of Dan. 7 are in fact to be incorporated into the cherubim vision. The four beasts of Dan. 7 are different to each other and in conflict, but the four beasts of Ezekiel's cherubim are identical and all under God's control. That was God's perspective on the apparently random time and tide of human empires. There is no radical evil, and these entities are in fact all under Divine control and will be moved and controlled to ultimately achieve His glory. But the vision of Ez. 1 was specifically to encourage the exiles in Babylon of their possible future. The cherubim were potentially hovering over them in Babylon and they could have returned to Zion with the cherubim above them, as it were, to judge all their oppressors. They precluded that possible future at the time by their refusal to repent and accept the prophetic message. But ultimately the cherubim vision of the Kingdom of God would come true when the scenario of Dan. 7 was worked out. Daniel perceived the idea of God prolonging and delaying the final restoration, in that in Daniel 9 he begs that God will not in fact delay; for the visions of Dan. 7 and Dan. 8 all spoke of a delay in the restoration compared to his time. He was heard in that an Angel was caused to fly swiftly,

implying a speeding up of the Angelic processes; but still the delay remained in place because despite that, Israel refused to adequately repent.

There is an abrupt change from the earthly realities of :8, which are recorded in prose, to this poetic [in Aramaic] description of the Divine throne and judgment. This abrupt change is intentional; to get the point over, that the situation on earth is going to be dramatically, suddenly changed by the Lord's return. The thrones were "placed" or as AV "cast down". The kings and kingdoms of men are to be destroyed by the Lord's coming, just as the little stone destroys all the metals. The kingdoms of men become those of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 11:15). The ambiguity between 'placing / imposing' and 'throwing down' is because the placing of God's throne is upon the casting down of human thrones. The "thrones" plural may be an intensive plural referring to the one great throne, sat on by "Him" singular (:10). Or the plural may be because it is the thousands of *elohim*, the judged and persecuted people of God, who now as it were sit on the Lord's behalf to judge their persecutors.

Dan 7:10 *A fiery stream came forth from before Him-* The original for "stream" is only elsewhere used about "the river", Euphrates. Now the forces represented by that river are to be judged. But the equivalent Hebrew idea is repeatedly used for how the nations were to flow as a river to Jerusalem (Is. 2:2; 60:5; Jer. 31:12; Mic. 4:1). The harder side of God strangely attracts. As the judgments flow out of Zion, so the peoples flow towards it. When God's judgments are in the earth / land, its inhabitants come to learn righteousness (Is. 26:9).

Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him- These are not myriads standing before Him to receive judgment, but the myriads of the seed of Abraham who now as it were sit with Him in judgment upon their persecutors. 'Standing before' is being used as a parallel to 'ministering'.

The judgment was set, and the books were opened- The Lord Jesus returns to earth with the Angels. They play a part in the final judgment. The placing of thrones (:9) and the sitting of the judgment is likely metaphor, part of the idea of the thrones / kingdoms of the world being subsumed beneath God's throne / Kingdom. I discussed on :9 that the "Him" may refer to the Lord Jesus personally, but it could be that the plural "thrones" mean that God's people now sit in judgment upon their persecutors, with their representative Angels now physically with them.

Dan 7:11 *I saw at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; I saw even until the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire-* The destruction of the beast is spoken of immediately after introducing the little horn. That horn or leader is presented as the personification of the beast, the whole evil system of its day and previous generations all represented in one person. Thus the words of the horn call forth the beast's destruction; it will be the ultimate case of being condemned for the sake of words (Mt. 12:37), and the Lord applies that principle as warning to us all. The language suggests that it was the words of the horn which led to the beast's destruction. There will be teaching and claims made by the horn which are the most blasphemous ever; there was something dramatically noteworthy about them.

"The voice" is literally 'the sound', as if the words reached Heaven itself and human words triggered such a huge judgment response. So sensitive is God to our words. The implication of this verse could be that the primary reason for the judgment of the fourth beast was its arrogant and blasphemous words. We see for all time the

importance of words and language. By our words men shall be judged and condemned.

There is a repeated theme of pride being the reason for the fall of the kings / empires. The ram "did as he pleased and grew arrogant" (Dan. 8:4), in turn "the goat grew more and more arrogant" (Dan. 8:8). In Dan. 8:25 The little horn "will be proud of himself", "the little horn bragging and boasting" (Dan. 7:11), "it had eyes and a mouth and was boasting proudly" (Dan. 7:20).

It is common for interpreters to see the beasts of Revelation as a continuation of the fourth beast of Daniel. But again there are differences- as the kaleidoscope turns and presents another picture, similar but still different. Thus Daniel's fourth beast is slain and destroyed (Dan. 7:11), whereas the beast of Revelation is slain and revived (Rev. 13:3,12,14). Daniel's beast is slain and given to the fire, whereas that of Revelation is thrown alive into the fire (Rev. 19:20).

Dan 7:12 *As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time-* Just as all the metals of the image exist together when the little stone [Messiah] comes to earth and destroys them, so all the beasts likewise exist together at the time of His coming. The taking away of all human dominion surely speaks of their being subsumed beneath God's eternal kingdom. But their lives bring prolonged for a period, a season [a period until a Jewish feast?] and a time [a year?], may be in order to give them the chance of repentance. The original word for "Prolonged" only occurs elsewhere in Dan. 4:27, where Daniel urges Nebuchadnezzar to repent so that there might be a lengthening or prolonging of his life. This connection should serve to guide us in interpreting this prolongation of their personal lives after their political destruction; it will be in order to help these terrible abusers of God's people to repent. Such is God's earnest desire to bring all men unto repentance, and we should share in that Spirit today. See on :5. God's desire for human repentance is so huge. This means that all our attempts to preach repentance and to personally repent will have His huge blessing and presence.

The "dominion" will be taken away in the sense that these entities have no dominion over God's people. Ez. 34:25 will then come true, when Israel accept the new covenant: "I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause dangerous animals to cease out of the land".

As discussed above, the metals of the image of Dan. 2 do not map well onto the beasts and vision of Dan. 7. The entities of Dan. 2 are all destroyed at the same time. Those of Dan. 7 are not destroyed apart from the fourth beast. Those of Dan. 2 are introduced in succession but exist simultaneously. The fate of the first three beasts isn't clear. Perhaps because of an open ended element to God's purpose with them, in one or more possible iterations of it. Perhaps some element of repentance is factored in; or some weighting is given to the fact they were merely instruments of judgment upon Judah, used in God's hands. But the glorious end is similar- the unhewn rock hits the image and becomes an eternal mountain (Dan. 2), the son of man comes in judgment in the clouds of heaven to avenge His people (Dan. 7).

"A season and a time" could simply mean 'until a specific predetermined point in time' rather than refer to any particular time period. See on :25 for discussion of how these terms don't necessarily mean a year and are open ended. Because that is the nature of prophecy. "The time" of :11 is ultimately the point when the Lord returns and establishes God's Kingdom: "for the time had come, and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom" (Dan. 7:22 NJPS).

Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of the sky One like a son of man, and he came up to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him-

One option for this human like figure is that it refers initially to Michael, the Angel prince who stands for Israel. This is why this figure is interpreted later in the vision as the "saints", Israel, God's people; it is to them that the kingdom / dominion is given, whereas here it is given to the Son of Man. But they are represented in Michael (Dan. 12:1), and Angels in Daniel are described as being in human form. But as the kaleidoscope of the various possible interpretations turns [fulfilment in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, in AD70 and then in the last days], it becomes clearer that this element of the vision, this "Son of Man", is the Lord Jesus. This "One like a Son of Man" is the equivalent of the little stone of Dan. 2- but I showed there that the stone represents both God's revived people and also the Lord Jesus personally. It's the same with the Son of Man. And that would be why the first beast alludes to Nebuchadnezzar, who was made fully human [a "son of man"] by his repentance and subsequent exaltation.

"The sons of men" is a common term for humanity in general. The son of man is therefore an appropriate title for the essence of humanity, man in his essence. And it speaks ultimately of the Lord Jesus. Those who bring the "son of man" [Jesus] before the "ancient of days" [God] are surely the Angels. They received Him out of the sight of the disciples in Acts 1 and as it were introduced Him to Heaven. This 'coming of the Son of Man' is clearly understood as the second coming (Mt. 24:27,30,37,39 etc.). Just as at His ascension, the Lord was introduced to the Father and in the court of Heaven, given all dominion; so at His second coming He is likewise given from God the moment and authority to now take this dominion unto Himself in actual terms on earth.

Dan 7:14 There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed-

Verses 13 and 14 could apply to both the Lord's ascension, and to His return at the last day. I suggest the ambivalence of the interpretation is because the Lord's ascension after His resurrection could indeed have led to His re-establishment of God's Kingdom on earth soon afterwards. That didn't happen, as Israel refused to repent and the Gospel wasn't taken to all the world. And so the kaleidoscope turned again, and all this became capable of fulfilment at the Lord's return in the last day. This is why the book of Revelation uses the language and images of Daniel in such a way that it applies them both to the situation in AD70 and to that of the last day. Because the Lord could indeed have re-established the Kingdom in AD70. The little horn, which was clearly Antiochus Epiphanes historically, is thus reapplied by Revelation to some latter day entity who will exist just before the Lord's return.

There was "given him..." compares with how the Kingdom is given to the saints of the Most High (:27). The triumph of the "Son of Man" is shared with His people. This is an Old Testament foretaste of what it means to be "in Christ". "All the peoples, nations, and languages" is the very term used of the subjects of the kingdoms of men within the empires of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (Dan. 3:4,7,29,33; 5:19; 6:26). The saints of the most high become as the supreme emperor was in the kingdoms of men- they the despised, persecuted Jewish exiles, refugees and asylum seekers. A similar

inversion awaits this world. This is the equivalent of the little stone becoming God's eternal Kingdom on earth in Dan. 2:44. The purpose of the Kingdom becoming God's is so that people from all nations, languages etc. should serve Him. It is not merely a taking power for the sake of it. The language here is therefore at the basis of the great commission, to even now make this same appeal to all nations. The Kingdom of God is a case of now but not yet. We proclaim it worldwide right now, in the spirit in which it shall be proclaimed at the Lord's return. Because the Kingdom is to spread world-wide, we should therefore spread the Good News of this coming Kingdom world-wide. In prospect- and no more than that, let it be noted- the Kingdom has been established in that the Lord Jesus Christ has all power in Heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18). This is the language of Dan. 7:14 concerning the future Kingdom. The believer must live the Kingdom life now, as far as possible (Rom. 13:12,13). At the establishment of the Kingdom, we will be spreading the Gospel throughout this planet. In this life too we should live in the spirit of the Kingdom in this regard.

The great commission of Mt. 28 has evident reference to Dan. 7:14, where the Son of Man is given authority and power over all *so that* people of all nations, races and languages should serve Him. We must remind ourselves that out of the 5,000 or so languages in the world, the vast majority have no true Christian representatives; and only about half of them have the Bible in their own language. And as of the year 2001, only 12% of the world have English as a first or second language. We have a long way to go in fulfilling this. Either that, or the scope of God's acceptance of men from all these languages and nations over time and over space today is far wider than we as a community have thought. However, I personally am driven instead to understand that the Truth of Christ must be taken into literally all the world by our community in these last days. Rev. 5:9 presents us with the picture of men and women redeemed from *every* kindred [tribe / clan], tongue [*glossa*- language], people [a group of people not necessarily of the same ethnicity] and nation [*ethnos*- ethnic group, lit. 'those of the same customs']. This means that, e.g., not only redeemed 'Yugoslavs' will stand before the throne in the end; but Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrans, Bosnians...every ethnic group, with every custom, will have representatives who will have believed the Truth and been saved.

Dan 7:15 *As for me Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me-*

In Dan. 6, Daniel had been calm and at peace in the den of lions / wild animals. And had been preserved. Now he reacts to the terrifying vision. But his reaction was particularly concerning the fourth beast and little horn; and it is a reaction of grief and concern, I suggest more because of what he sensed they were going to do to God's people. This is the acme of spiritual maturity- to be deeply grieved for God's people. It was this which in essence led the Lord to endure the cross.

Daniel has so far been portrayed as the 'go to' person for dream interpretation (see Dan. 2:25-45; 4:19-27; 5:18-28). Now he has a dream and like the kings before him, was terribly worried about it and desperate for the interpretation. Life goes like this. We are made to realize how others' in our lives felt. We who were able and qualified in one area are made to understand how the unable and unqualified feel in that same area. All part of the education of the Spirit and God's way of teaching us. We tend to feel our experiences are unique but in fact they are in essence within a type of experience shared with others.

Daniel was not merely relaying a Divine message. He was deeply concerned at the content. As the Psalmist was "pricked in my reins", so the grief of Daniel for his people was deeply internal; this was no passing feeling of 'Oh what a pity it is that

more won't hear the Truth'. He was grieved in the midst of his body. He had hoped for the restoration of the Kingdom of God in his lifetime; and now he feared that in fact it would be terribly delayed to well beyond his time. And he grieved for that. Even after he was given the interpretation, his spirit remained grieved (:28). So the grief was not because he didn't have the interpretation, but essentially because he figured that Israel's kingdom was not to be restored during his lifetime, and his people must yet suffer the more.

Dan 7:16 *I came near to one of those who stood by-* Presumably an Angel. He was given the vision surrounded by Angels standing by him. In :10 we read of myriads of Angels and their charges 'standing by'; Daniel was as it were transported forward in time to the day of the Lord's coming back to earth.

And asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things- We see here the basic principle, that God's truth is revealed to those who wish to know it. It is not immediately apparent; hence the Lord used parables so that those who wanted a quick obvious message wouldn't find it. But those who asked Him for the interpretation received it. This is why some find the Bible hard to understand- exactly because they do not truly seek to understand it, nor can they humble themselves to recognize that without Divine help, we cannot of itself properly understand the Divine words we read or hear.

Dan 7:17 *These great animals, which are four, are four kings, who shall arise out of the land-* They dominated the land / *eretz* from which they arose. Their provenance was from the *eretz*. They are to be understood as powers which arise from within the territory of the land promised to Abraham, and come to dominate it. This makes many of the continuous historical interpretations of the beasts at best primary fulfillments. The major fulfilment is yet to come, and the situation within the *eretz* now helps us see that this can realistically happen soon. We note the beasts were "four kings" rather than 'kingdoms'. This would look ahead to four such rulers arising in the last days. Perhaps there was a potential fulfilment in three or four kings arising after Nebuchadnezzar, climaxing in the re-establishment of Israel's Kingdom; and Daniel lived through the reigns of that many monarchs. But due to lack of repentance, that scenario didn't happen. The final fulfilment is therefore in the last days. Seeing all the beasts exist together at the time of the end (:12), we need not think that there must be a chronological sequence of four leaders who arise. They are aspects of the same entity, viewed from different angles. The fact Daniel has to describe them in chronological order and saw them perhaps one after another doesn't mean that they have a chronological fulfilment. This is the tendency of Greek, linear thinking. But here we are reading Hebrew apocalyptic, which places little stress upon linear chronology.

Dan 7:18 *But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever-* Daniel would have understood these "saints" as God's people, Israel, who would be the ones persecuted in the last days by the beast system (:25). "Come inherit the Kingdom prepared for you" perhaps alludes here. The same term is used of how Darius "took the kingdom" (Dan. 5:31). Maybe even there, "the kingdom" refers to the kingdom of Israel. Because the prophetic theme in Daniel is that the various metals and beasts had dominion over the kingdom of Judah and the land promised to Abraham, and this was to be surrendered to Messiah at His appearing. Eternal possession naturally alludes to the promises to Abraham, that his

seed would inherit the *eretz* for ever (Gen. 17:8; 22:17,18). That *eretz* was "the kingdom" they would eternally inherit.

"The saints of the Most High" may refer to the Angels; "the people of the saints of the Most High" (:27) would then refer to the believers, who had had guardian Angels. "The Most High" is actually plural; it could be a plural of majesty, or the most high ones would be the Angel. The term is likewise plural in :22,25,27. It would be Israel's guardian angels in view in Dan. 8:24 where "he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people". This is how closely connected the Angels are to their charges. In the court of heaven, they are as it were destroyed as they act out or reflect there the situation upon earth. Dan. 7:24,25 likewise: "another king shall arise... and he shall wear down the saints of the Most High". But the parallel is clear with :14, where the heavenly "one like a son of man" is given the everlasting kingdom. He is corporately "the saints". This could refer to the Angel Michael whom we read later in Daniel represents God's people (Dan. 12:1). As we will see in Dan. 10, the conflicts and issues on earth are played out before the throne of God by representative Angels. But there is also an obvious application to the believers "in Christ" in the latter day context; and to a similar Messiah like figure in the more immediate context of an application to Antiochus Epiphanes. In that context, the "saints" would have been the faithful Israelites at the time of the Maccabean revolt. But even they were a minority and too focused on immediate nationalism than the things of the Kingdom of God.

Dan 7:19 *Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was so different from all of them, exceedingly terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails of brass; which devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet-* The brass claws weren't mentioned in the initial description. Iron and brass were metals within the image of Dan. 2. The idea is that this beast is a composite of all the previous beasts, just as the image as a whole is a composite of all the different metals which were within it. "The residue" is literally 'the remnant' and is used of the remnant of Judah who had survived the Babylonian invasion (Ezra 6:16 "the rest of the children of the captivity"; Esther 9:16; Is. 10:20-22; 11:11,16; 28:5). But the more immediate reference in the context is to the "rest" or remnant of the previous beasts (:12 s.w.). The fourth beast tramples those who remain of the other beasts and those who remain of the Jews, and parts of them (the iron and brass) as it were stick to this fourth beast, becoming part of it. This produces the brief element of the image upon which the Lord returns- a weak mixture of clay and iron shards which has been trampled down. For breaking in pieces and trampling would be the only way to actually produce such a situation. We can expect an absolute bloodbath in the *eretz* promised to Abraham, and the scene for that is now set.

Dan 7:20 *And concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before whom three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke great things, whose appearance was more aggressive than its fellows-* This horn can be understood as Antiochus Epiphanes, and also Vespasian in AD70 (see on :24). The prophecies had various primary fulfillments over time, each of which pointed forward to the major fulfilment which is yet to come, where the latter day horn will have all the features of its previous historical incarnations. The great and blasphemous things spoken by this horn would be associated with the changing of Divine times and seasons by the same horn which we read of later.

Dan 7:21 *I saw, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against*

them- "The saints" can refer to both natural and spiritual Israel; natural Israel will be trampled along with many adherents to the earlier beasts (see on :19). The same word is used of Angels; those who represent God's people in the court of Heaven. The original translated "war" more carries the sense of "battle" than an ongoing war; the reference may be to the "battle" of Armageddon (Zech. 14:3 s.w.). This is the basis of Rev. 11:7; 12:17 and Rev. 13:7, where the beast makes war and prevails against God's people; but by doing so the beast effectively makes war against the Lamb, the returned Lord Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:19).

Here and in :22,25 the "saints" are spoken of as being destroyed and hurt by the little horn. In the sense they refer to the Jews, this judgment was because of their sins. But that is not mentioned, although in Dan. 8:12 the little horn judges the Jews "because of transgression". The perspective is very much that of final salvation. The saints or holy ones in :21,22,25 can also be seen as the Angels. Entities on earth can conquer them in the sense that the representative Angels of the saints, be they Israel or Christian believers, play out the scenes on earth before the throne of Heaven.

GNB gives: "While I was looking, that horn made war on God's people and conquered them". Daniel's desire to understand was answered by being shown something new. He saw the little horn conquering God's people. But this presupposes that Daniel saw "God's people" in the vision. For the little horn makes war with them. The only element of the vision which matches "God's people" is the picture in :10 of millions of people awaiting judgment. Those crowds of people are the only element that could match "God's people" in what Daniel now sees. So they are attacked and conquered whilst awaiting judgment. This means that all God's people are awaiting judgment. We stand before His judgment seat, awaiting the start of the proceedings, and life happens to us as we are waiting. This gives an urgency to our living and thinking. We are awaiting judgment, standing there before the throne. Right now.

Let's not get caught up with the idea that Israel shall survive and defeat the invaders in her own strength. The beast must dominate Israel. Jerusalem will be taken. Dan. 7:7,21 speaks of how the beast made war with the saints and prevailed against them- Israel- *until* the Ancient of days came; in Dan. 7:23 he devours the whole land [as a beast] and shall tread it down. The beast of Revelation is so powerful in the earth / land that "the world" wondered at it and at the whore riding it (Rev. 13:3; 17:6,7), feeling unable to make war with it. This of itself requires the demise and degrading of America, Europe and the West generally. Dan. 11:41,45 are likewise clear about the latter day King of the North: "He shall also come into the glorious land... He shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him".

Dan 7:22 *Until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom*- These are the same "saints" who are prevailed against in :21. I have mentioned at several points in expounding Revelation that it could well be that those of God's people slain during the final tribulation are resurrected separately, and are used to judge their latter day abusers.

Dan 7:23 *Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on the land*- The land in view is that promised to Abraham. This is parallel with the fourth power in the image vision reigning over "all the earth" or land.

Which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole land, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces- In :19, the fourth beast devours, treads

down and breaks in pieces "the remnant", both of Israel and of the earlier beasts, just prior to being destroyed by the Lord's return to earth. All the beasts are therefore in existence together in the last days. Any attempt to find historical fulfillments of these things is therefore doomed, and at best only vague fulfillments can be suggested. Instead of devouring persons, "the remnant", here the fourth beast devours and abuses "the whole land". This is clearly the land promised to Abraham. No very satisfying fulfilment of this can be found in the various historicist interpretations. It is the "land" which is from where the beasts arise, it is that same land where they have dominion and are devoured by the fourth beast. It is the picture of a total bloodbath in the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham, and the scene is now set for that to happen. It is the sheer scale of the evil, aggression, torture and bloodletting which makes this final beast "different" from all others in history. The same word is used in Daniel for how the face of Nebuchadnezzar was "changed" because of the extreme wrath he felt towards the Jews (Dan. 3:19). Whilst all the beasts 'differed' from each other (:3), there was something radically different in how this beast was different to all of them (:7,19). Any attempt to apply this to historical Rome fails to account for this radical difference required by the text.

Dan 7:24 *As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be different from the former, and he shall put down three kings-* Zech. 1:19-21 specifically uses the language of horns to describe those Gentile entities who had scattered Judah and were to be judged. The behaviour of the horns on the fourth beast must be understood in terms of the persecution of natural Israel, not the Christians down the centuries. Seeing the little horn that arises out of the ten horns is so similar to Antiochus Epiphanes, it would seem one reasonable interpretation to be that they refer to the number of Greek rulers over Palestine. But the events of Antiochus Epiphanes didn't lead to the re-establishment of God's Kingdom, although that was potentially possible. And so the kaleidoscope turned again, and a fulfilment in AD70 became possible. But again, the preconditions required weren't fulfilled- Israel didn't repent. And so there will be the final fulfilment in the last days.

The language used in Dan. 7 about "the little horn" matches that of Dan. 11:36-45 about "the king of the north", who was Vespasian in the AD70 context. The shadowy primary fulfillments help us to imagine the kind of latter day fulfilment which is the primary burden of these prophecies. Vespasian directed war against the Jews and Jerusalem in particular for three and a half years, from the battle of Ptolemais in April AD67 to September AD70 when Jerusalem fell (Josephus, *The Jewish War* 3.29; 6.407; 435). He was made emperor in AD69, a year which saw three emperors in one year: Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. One cannot deny an initial fulfilment here; but Vespasian was in Palestine and Egypt all that time, and it is hard to say that he 'put them down' in the terms required by the language here. So we have to accept that this was but a primary fulfilment, looking ahead to a greater one when antichrist is established in the last days, presiding over the three and a half year tribulation of Israel and the Jews. Kenneth Gentry points out that if Julius Caesar is counted as the first emperor of Rome, then Vespasian would have been the tenth emperor, the tenth horn who was also the little horn (Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (San Francisco: Christian Universities Press, 1997) pp. 154-159). But this horn, different from the others just as the fourth beast differs from the other beasts (:7,19) is something radically different and unprecedented in human history. It points, as noted on :24, to a radically abusive destruction within the *eretz*

promised to Abraham; it will truly be the unprecedented time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1). The Nazi holocaust will pale into insignificance before it.

But Dan. 7:23,24 stress how the fourth beast was radically different to the preceding beasts, and the little horn was also radically different to the other horns. The beasts were different from each other (:3), but the fourth beast was different from all the other beasts (:7). The point is surely that although the previous empires were different to each other, they were effectively all in the same category when compared with the fourth beast. Because he was so totally different to them. Three times (:7,19,23) it is stressed that the fourth beast was different to all the other beasts. We note how just as the fourth beast was diverse from the other beasts, so the little horn is to be diverse from the other horns. We are given the impression of an ever more concentrated form of evil. The Roman empire was not so radically different to the preceding empires. Josephus describes that they did to Jerusalem and the Jews in AD67-70; the Old Testament prophets and Lamentations describe what Babylon did to Jerusalem and the Jews. Whilst it could be argued that what the Romans did was even worse than the Babylonians, it was not of such a totally different order as implied by Daniel's prophecies of the fourth beast. This is what leads us to think that what is in view is a latter day entity of a nature never seen before. We get the impression that this is indeed what Daniel will later call a time of trouble such as never was for God's people. It will be of an altogether more awful nature than anything done to God's people, including by the Nazis, Babylonians and Romans. Lamentations speaks of the horrors performed by the Babylonians in Jerusalem, but this latter day entity will be of a totally different order. Hence Daniel's fixation upon the fourth beast and little horn, and the Angel only really giving an explanation of those two entities. And Daniel becoming pale with fear and physically ill after seeing what the fourth beast would do to the Jews.

The ten horns represent "ten kings" which shall "arise" (Dan. 7:24); and although it is not stated specifically, we are to assume that they arise also out of the same area, the "earth" / land. We should therefore be looking for a group of four kings / kingdoms, out of which arise ten kings / kingdoms; and out of them arises one "little horn" in particular. Revelation's take on the beasts adds more detail- there are also seven heads, a false prophet acting as publicity agent for the beast, a whore riding the beast, sitting on seven hills / kings. The four beasts / kings are initially in conflict, striving with each other upon the sea, and arising from that comes the fourth beast entity, the composite beast including elements of all the previous ones. And from that there arises the ten horns and one little horn. We should not, however, think of these situations as having to be chronological developments, i.e. first the four, then the fourth beast, then the ten horns, then the little horn. It may work out like that, but not necessarily. The precise details need not concern us ahead of time; the picture is of a series of leaders and powers involved in the domination of the land promised to Abraham. The fact is, the beasts will all exist together in the last days, just as the metals of the image will. These various entities will "arise" from the land. And this is what we see happening already- in the last few years there has been what is called the Arabic, and particularly Sunni, *sahwa*, 'awakening'. Powers and kings have risen up out of the scrubland and desert of the *eretz*, united in their hatred of Israel, but bitterly divided against each other.

We are for sure in the stage of the winds / *ruach* / Angel controlled nations 'striving' with each other- the *eretz* is full of conflict as never before, not just between Israel and her neighbours, but between those neighbours. There are currently four non-Jewish nations within the *eretz*- Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. But they exist

just on paper as lines on the map; there are other significant entities within the area, e.g. Kurdistan, the Islamic State, Gaza, parts of Egypt and Turkey [depending how one defines the northern border of Israel], parts of Saudi Arabia [depending how the eastern border is defined]. In total they make ten kingdoms, but the number ten may not be literal. We would then be awaiting for the “little horn” to arise- a charismatic, antiChrist leader, or perhaps another very small entity. For the horn is called the *little* horn, and yet it is the most powerful in the very last days. However, the Hebrew and Aramaic words translated “little” can mean ‘short’ in terms of time as well as size. The idea may be that it lasts a very short time indeed, maybe literally days or hours in the very last day, and is the human representative of the beast / horns who personally challenges the Lord Jesus and is destroyed by the brightness of His coming.

Dan 7:25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear down the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time-

These things have a clear potential possible application to Antiochus Epiphanes. There was a three and a half year period of abuse of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, beginning in June 168 BC with the edict of Antiochus (1 Macc., 1:20-53); and ending with the re-dedication of the Temple on the 25th of Chisel [December], 165 BC (1 Macc. 4:52). But a three and a half year period can also be reckoned from the erection of the heathen altar in the court of the Temple, on the 15th of Chisleu 168 BC, to the death of Antiochus about the middle of 164 (as in Dan. 8:14).

We must note that we read of times and not years. The idea of a time being one year and times being two years has become an assumed truth. There are other options. "Times" could as well be translated "seasons". The same word is used in Is. 64:6 for a woman's menstrual "season" or "time", in which case we could even force an interpretation of a "time" as something between 28 and 35 days. Goldingay "posits that the sequence of elements in this expression refers to an unspecified “time that threatens to extend itself longer,” which is “brought to a sudden termination”. This fits admirably with the open, flexible, non-determinate approach to these prophecies which I am suggesting. "The time" is ultimately the point when the Lord returns and establishes God's Kingdom: "for the time had come, and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom" (Dan. 7:22 NJPS).

The little horn thought to change the times. The "times" surely connects with the various "times" or time periods found in Daniel's prophecies. They were flexible- the little horn sought to change them. This surely doesn't mean that the "little horn" knew the time periods of Daniel and consciously tried to change them. It may mean that he acts in such a way that God considers changing the time periods. God alone ultimately can change the time periods: "He changes the times and the seasons" (Dan. 2:21). Surely Acts 1:7 alludes to this: "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father has set within his own authority". The connection with Dan. 2:21 would mean 'set within His own authority to change'. This is why predicting things according to the time periods of Daniel must be overshadowed by an awareness that God changes the times. He can shorten the days for the sake of the elect.

The rabbis translate "Until the time of two times and half a time". There were 480 years from the founding of Israel at Sinai to the building of the temple, followed by 410 years from the building of the temple to its destruction. This makes 890 years, and half of that time is 445 years. Together this makes the figure of 1335 found in Dan. 12:12. Which would then be a cipher for the sanctuary being restored rather than a literally time period of days. We note that 1335 is the numerical value of "And I will

hide My face" (Dt. 31:18). The "times" are in God's hands and He changes times and seasons. The length of the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were flexible. Their "tranquility" could have been lengthened and in Belshazzar's case it was shortened. So attempts to work out time periods and fix their calendar end point is in fact not at all the spirit of what we see about God in Daniel.

This little horn tries to do what the previous human kings in Daniel had failed to do- change laws. We have just read of Darius' failure to change his own laws. The changing of times / seasons and law, as well as deposing three kings (:24), is all God's behaviour (removing kings and setting up kings, Dan. 2:21 and note the possibility of the "end" coming after God deposes three reigns in Dan. 8). This entity therefore acts as does the "man of sin" in 2 Thess. 2, showing himself as God. The fulfilment in Antiochus Epiphanes didn't lead to the Kingdom of God as was potentially possible, but 2 Thess. 2 and Revelation helps us see that the prophecy has been reapplied and reinterpreted to come true in its essence in the last days. The initial reference of this would be to the attempt by Antiochus IV to change the Jewish calendar and feasts in BC167. In contrast, Dan. 2:20,21 says that God alone "changes seasons and times"; He established the heavenly bodies for these times and seasons (Gen. 1:14). Yahweh alone has dominion over time, in all its aspects. It is relative only to Him.

The little horn seeks "to change times and laws"; but we go straight on to read that God's people are given into his power for "a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:25 AV). It could therefore be that the time period of time, times and half a time [three and a half years?] is in fact defined and chosen by the little horn, as part of him seeking to establish "times". This could explain why there is some variableness in this period- Daniel 12 mentions 1260, 1290 and 1335 days. If Israel repent, or other preconditions are met, then the time of intended abuse is changed. Israel were to be punished "seven times" for their sins (Lev. 26:18,21,24,28 etc.). Perhaps those seven times are halved to three and a half times, due to God's desire to shorten the days of this awful tribulation. It may be that the little horn power or ruler decrees a time of abuse for the remaining Jews. Or it may be that the new caliph seeks to change some tenets of Islam, as he already is doing by shifting the focus of Islam from Mecca (which is in Saudi Arabia, who are officially against the Islamic jihadists currently)- to Jerusalem. Or it may be that they seek to change GMT time to Mecca time- something radical Moslems already live by, and seek to spread to the entire planet. Indeed, the biggest clock in the world has been built in Mecca in a bid to enforce Mecca time on all Moslems rather than GMT. The Mecca Clock Tower has been designed in purposeful contrast to Big Ben.

The little horn of Daniel 7 is the beast of Revelation 13:

Daniel 7
 "... a mouth speaking great things" (verse 8)
 "And he shall speak great words against the most High ..." (verse 25)
 "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (verse 21)

Revelation 13
 "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies . . . And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (verses 5,6) "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (verse 7)

Notice that the little horn of Daniel 7 is actually called "the beast": "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

The little horn is also to be connected with the "King of the north" of Daniel 11, which is historically based upon Antiochus and the leaders of the northern part of the Greek empire, from Syria. The fact the Islamic jihadists and their leadership have emerged from Syria is maybe significant in this context:

	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Daniel 11
1.	The little horn	The little horn	"The king"
2.	At the end of the times of the Gentiles	At the end of the times of the Gentiles	At the end of the times of the Gentiles
3.	Very aggressive	Very aggressive	Very aggressive
4.	"A look more stout than his fellows"	Magnifies himself	Magnifies himself
5.	A mouth speaking great things against the Most High		Speaks marvellous things against the God of gods
6.	Makes war against the saints and prevails	Destroys the holy people	
7.	Destroyed by the Ancient of days	Destroyed by the Prince of princes	

We note further that the little horn of Daniel 8 is connected with the beast of Revelation:

"... it cast down some ... of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them" (Daniel 8:10)	"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth" (Revelation 12:4)
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We also see the similarities between the "little horn" and the "king of the north" (Dan. 7:25 cp. Dan. 11:36).

Dan 7:26 *But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away*- The "they" refers to "the saints", who shall judge the world. The saints refer to natural and spiritual Israel as well as the Angels. 1 Cor. 6:2,3 seems to have this passage in mind: "The saints shall judge the world. And if the world is to be judged by you... You shall judge Angels". This could therefore mean that the "saints", the Christian believers, shall along with Angels judge as Angels. For that is the idea here in Dan. 7, which was clearly in Paul's mind. The 'taking away' of the dominion is the same word as in Dan.

2:21- God "removes kings". The image vision shall come ultimately true at the hands of God's once oppressed people.

His dominion, to consume and to destroy it to the end- Just as the fourth beast consumed and destroyed, so it shall be consumed and destroyed. This is a major theme of Revelation- the judgments poured out upon the earth / land of Abraham by the latter day abusers are then given to them. Babylon drinks her own cup.

"To the end" connects with the proclamation of Darius which we have just read in Dan. 6:26: "His dominion shall remain to the end". The connection with Dan. 6:26 suggests this entity will be in existence immediately prior to the establishment of God's eternal Kingdom. At first blush, this is where the application to Antiochus Epiphanes breaks down. Until we realize that the Kingdom of God could have come at that time, but various preconditions weren't met. And so the kaleidoscope turned again, the same basic elements were rearranged into another possible fulfilment through the Romans and then through the latter day beast.

Dan 7:27 *The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him-* "Under the whole Heaven" now moves the focus further than "the land" which has been in view so far in this chapter. The kingdoms of the entire world shall be given to the saints. "The people of the saints" may suggest that "the saints" are Angels, and their "people" are those amongst natural and spiritual Israel whom they have represented before the court of Heaven. This is the moment when the kingdoms of this world become those of God and His Christ (Rev. 11:15). This is fair evidence that the Kingdom of God shall be established on earth, for it is on planet earth that present human kingdoms and "dominions" [empires] exist.

Dan 7:28 *Here is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my appearance was changed: but I kept the matter in my heart-* I suggested on :15 that Daniel was troubled and upset, to the point of his appearance changing, because he realized that the prophetic program was no longer to restore the Kingdom of God in Judah during his lifetime. "But I kept the matter..." may suggest that like Moses, he considered that possibly God's purpose may yet be changed by fervent prayer and repentance.

Literally, his colours changed. The book opens with Daniel's face colour improving as he stuck to his conscience before God. We get an impression of calm assurance. Now he seems to lose that. Possibly because he (like so many) was too set on the idea of the Kingdom of God and his own prophecies being fulfilled in his lifetime.

DANIEL CHAPTER 8

Dan 8:1 *In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, even to me, I Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first-*

We know from Dan. 5 that Belshazzar is about to be judged and destroyed for blaspheming the temple. But Daniel is now shown that beyond his time would come a "little horn" who would do the same and suffer the same. He is being set up to learn what we all need to, that Divine history repeats according to patterns and we are to learn those patterns.

The vision of Dan. 8 I suggest gives yet another possible outcome or schema leading to the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. The image of Dan. 2 spoke of four kings / empires followed by an unstable mixed period before the "end". Dan. 7 has four beasts, the fourth of which has ten horns and a little horn, who arises from among the ten horns against God and His people for a defined number of days and is destroyed by the "end". Dan. 8 has two beasts, Persia and Greece, led by Alexander the Great. Out of Alexander's four generals or four [not ten] "horns" comes a little horn, clearly Antiochus Epiphanes, who abuses God's people for a defined number of days and is destroyed by the "end". But that "end" didn't happen to Antiochus Epiphanes. These different scenarios do not perfectly map onto each other as is often suggested. There are similarities; the second beast of Dan. 7 [Persia?] has three ribs in its mouth, and the ram [Persia] of Dan. 8:4 butts in three directions. The "little horns" are described in very similar language and do the same things.

But the differences are significant. The fourth beast of Dan. 7, from which the little horn comes, has no equivalent in Dan. 8. The little horn arises from Greece, the third empire of Dan. 7. The little horn in Dan. 7:25 abuses God's people for "a time, times and a half", 1260 days; the little horn of Dan. 8:14 does so for 2300 evening-mornings. I suggest these are all different potential scenarios. Had the Jews repented at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, had Judas Maccabeus been a true spiritual leader, "the end" could then have come. The little horn of Dan. 8 would have been that of Dan. 7, making the sequence there and in Dan. 2 Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece. Indeed had Cyrus of Persia lived up to his potential as a Messiah figure, and had the Jews returned obediently to the land and rebuilt Zion as commanded, then none of these scenarios need have come true. The failure at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes meant that the kaleidoscope turned again, the fourth beast of Dan. 7 could then have been Rome, the Lord Jesus could have returned in AD70. That didn't happen and so the kaleidoscope turned again, and maybe it will again, until we come to the time when the Lord Jesus returns and establishes His Kingdom. Immediately prior to that, all these prophecies will have their final iteration. All the beasts and metals of the image will exist at the same time; as discussed on :17, the ram, goat and little horn of Dan. 8 will also all exist at the same time. And will all be judged together by His final return. That will be the final picture of the kaleidoscope. The failure of the earlier possibilities only led to something even greater- not merely the re-establishment of God's Kingdom as it was in the time of David, but the establishment of the eternal Kingdom of God on the whole earth under the rulership of the Lord Jesus.

Belshazzar could have repented, but didn't- as made clear in Dan. 5. And so therefore another outworking of prophecy became possible. Belshazzar only reigned three years so this vision was given around the time of the events of Daniel 5, when Belshazzar was slain and "Darius" took the kingdom. This was the first year of Darius, the time of the visions and events of Dan. 9:1 and Dan. 11:1. So the events of Dan. 5,8,9,11 all occurred within the same year. If Darius and Cyrus were separate kings but co-reigned and overlapped with each other, it's also possible that the third year of Cyrus in Dan. 10:1 was in fact this same year- the first year of Darius. Dan. 1:21 could be read as meaning that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus; but that may mean the third year of his total rule, if he co-reigned with Darius for the first two or three years. In this case then Dan. 5,8,9,10 and 11 were all within the same year or so.

Belshazzar only reigned a few years, so the vision was given about a year before he died and his deposition by Darius the Mede recorded in Dan. 5. Perhaps as with Nebuchadnezzar, this prophecy was as it were a serving of notice upon him, and he had like Nebuchadnezzar one year in which to repent and alter the otherwise

prophesied and inevitable chain of events. Belshazzar was aware of what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar and was condemned by Daniel for not having learnt the lesson from it. We too are expected to learn from situations going on in the lives around us or in our families. This is one channel of God's word of communication with us.

"To me, even to me" is a phrase picked up by Peter when he says that the vision of beasts and Gentile inclusion was given even to him (Acts 11:5). He read Daniel as we should- not as mere history alone, but as a living pattern to be followed.

Dan 8:2 *I saw in the vision; now it was so, that when I saw, I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the river Ulai-* This could mean that he was in Susa when he had the vision, although that is unlikely as he worked for Belshazzar of Babylon (:27) and the Persians were his enemies; or that he was transported in the vision to Susa. Daniel was seeing the vision of Medo-Persian power, viewing in vision the citadel or palace, just a year before that power would conquer Babylon. If he relayed the vision to Belshazzar, this was similar to his revelation of a dream of downfall to Nebuchadnezzar a year before *he* fell. So Daniel was having a repeat experience, just as circumstances repeat in our lives. Perhaps he was seeing what Elam, once a province of the Babylonian empire, was to soon turn into- a citadel epitomizing Persian and not Babylonian power.

I have discussed on Ps. 137 how Jews sat by the rivers / canals of Babylon like the Ulai and Chebar, and some like that Psalmist were caught up in bitterness, endlessly playing the tape of their own experiences and the bitter words spoken to them. Failing to accept that Ezekiel by the Chebar and Daniel by the Ulai had seen visions of restoration and victory over their oppressors. Those canals were dug by slave labour, including the Jewish exiles. But at those very places there was given the hope of glory in the midst of their workaday lives and experience.

Dan 8:3 *Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high-* Ulai was a canal joined to the Euphrates, so "the river" can have reference to that. We have the impression of a ram about to no longer be restrained by a river [Euphrates] and surge toward Babylon. This is the picture we have in Rev. 9:14; 16:12. Again, the historical application to Medo-Persia must be seen as only a pointer towards the fulfilment in the last days, when Babylon falls as a result of hordes of Islamists bursting across the Euphrates into the *eretz* promised to Abraham which is the focus of Bible prophecy. The ram was a symbol of Persia, embossed on their medallions and on the crown of their kings.

There is no word for "two" in the original. We wonder if in fact there was potential for this beast entity to have had more horns. It's just that two are mentioned.

But one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last- The power of the Medes was far less than that of the Persians who followed them under Cyrus. All the beasts and horns in Daniel are observed coming or growing up, and then being destroyed. When a power or individual are in the ascendancy, observers tend to think that they are unstoppable and invincible. Daniel's prophecies make the simple point that they too shall fade and fall, unlike the things of God's Kingdom.

The horns are uneven; just as the second beast of Dan. 7:5 was "raised up on one side". The second beast of Dan. 7 rampages in three directions; the beast of Dan. 8 has three ribs in its mouth.

Dan 8:4 *I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward; and no beasts could stand before him, neither was there any who could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and magnified himself*- This is language elsewhere used about Yahweh, who alone does His own will to the ultimate term, and is alone to be magnified, and before whom none can stand nor be delivered from. All the monarchs and empires considered in Daniel are all guilty of playing God, and are punished accordingly. The compass points recall Abraham being bidden look to them all, and being told that all he saw was to be part of the land eternally promised to him, the *eretz*. The ram didn't push East in the vision because the Persians came from the East, and their conquests Eastwards to India were irrelevant to the prophetic focus upon the *eretz* promised to Abraham. This small detail is strong confirmation of our position that the prophetic dominion of the beasts is over *eretz* Israel and not anywhere beyond that.

The beasts of Dan. 7 are supernatural, having elements of natural animals such as lions. The beasts of Dan. 8 are rams and goats- usually harmless animals, clean animals, at best only using force in defence; but they are presented here as being stirred up to uncharacteristic flights of aggression. We are left to infer God's influence upon them. On :17 I will comment upon the similarities between Ezekiel and Daniel. The people of Judah are likened to rams and goats in Ez. 34:17-19,21,25. And they too become aggressive. Their behaviour is described in the same language as that of the aggressive rams and goats of Dan. 8. They gore (Ez. 34:21 = Dan. 8:4) and trample others (Ez. 34:18 = Dan. 8:7,10). The simple takeaway is that as the people and leaders of Judah had done, so the beasts were doing to them. And Ez. 34:25 actually calls them "bad beasts".

There is a repeated theme of pride being the reason for the fall of the kings / empires. The ram "did as he pleased and grew arrogant" (Dan. 8:4), in turn "the goat grew more and more arrogant" (Dan. 8:8). In Dan. 8:25 The little horn "will be proud of himself", "the little horn bragging and boasting" (Dan. 7:11), "it had eyes and a mouth and was boasting proudly" (Dan. 7:20). Out of all the things they could be condemned for, pride is the number one issue. God is so sensitive to it. See on Dan. 7:11.

Dan 8:5 *As I was considering*- It was Daniel's desire to understand which led to further revelation and understanding. This recalls how those who enquired further about the Lord's parables were given further understanding "in the house".

Behold, a male goat came from the west over the surface of the whole land, and didn't touch the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes- The speed of the goat speaks of the lightning speed of Alexander's conquest. The "notable horn" was Alexander. Alexander's son was named Alexander Aegus, "Son of the Goat". The other horns in the visions can also be seen as individuals; the notable little horn we encounter on the fourth beast is therefore an individual who makes great and amazingly fast conquests, something like that seen by the jihadists taking large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria overnight in 2015. The "male goat" was a symbol for the leadership of the flock.

Dan 8:6 *He came to the ram that had the two horns, which I saw standing before the river, and ran on him in the fury of his power*- Alexander defeated the Persian Darius at the river Granicus in 334 BC, his forces plunging in swimming across the stream,

and rushing on the enemy. Hence the appropriacy of seeing the ram before a river. His fury was from his desire to revenge the Persian domination of Greece.

Dan 8:7 *I saw him come close to the ram, and he was moved with anger against him-* Persia had previously cruelly dominated Greece, and this was the anger of bitter revenge by Alexander the Great.

And struck the ram, and broke his two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him; but he cast him down to the ground, and trampled on him; and there was none who could deliver the ram out of his hand- Perhaps a specific reference to the burning and trampling of the Persian city of Persepolis. The trampling and casting down is exactly the language of the later abusers of God's people, the horn of Dan. 7:8. The clear historical fulfilment in how Alexander of Macedon / Greece treated the Persians is intended to explain how the latter day little horn shall act. Alexander was characterized by small forces winning amazingly quick victories against much larger forces due to their speed and military technology; and we can imagine this being repeated in the latter day little horn. This is already the feature of organized Jihadist groups. The two horns broken refer to the ending of the Medo Persian empire.

There is a repetition of how likewise Medo-Persia had been the same: "neither was there any who could deliver out of his hand" (:4). The point is that what seems invincible is replaced by something else that seems invincible. This is all the ebb and flow of human prowess and dominion, as taught in the vision of Dan. 2. And in this case the point is made that what man does to his fellow man, is in turn done to him. "There was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand" in that the other peoples whom the Persian empire called to its aid couldn't save them from Alexander.

Even before Babylon conquered Judah, Isaiah and Jeremiah had foretold that Babylon would be punished by Persia [Elam, a word similar to "the ram"] for being too cruel to the Jews (Is. 13:3,5,17; 47:6). But Jeremiah stated that Elam / Persia would "be dismayed before their enemies and before them that seek their life" (Jer. 49:37); God would "set His throne in Elam" and "destroy the king and the princes" (Jer. 49:38). This would be because He would "break the bow of Elam" by bringing "the winds from the four quarters of heaven" (Jer. 49:35,36). These four winds surely refer to the four generals of Alexander the Great that helped him to overcome the Medo-Persian empire. But they were raised up by God, by His winds / spirits / Angels which were seen whipping up the sea in Dan. 7 so that the beasts arose from it as a result. All was under God's control. This was just as God had earlier "raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes [to destroy Babylon]: for His device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple" (Jer. 50:28). Likewise Jer. 51:28, "Prepare against her [Babylon] the nations [Media and Persia] with the kings [Darius and Cyrus?] of the Medes". They were 'prepared', far above the time and tide of human history and aspiration there was this higher, controlling hand of God.

Dan 8:8 *The male goat magnified himself exceedingly-* Zech. 9:5,9 foretells Alexander's attack on Gaza and Palestine and paints him as the arrogant antithesis of the humble Messianic King of Israel, who was to ride a donkey rather than Alexander's charger. Alexander is thereby set up as a fake, imitation Christ, an antiChrist.

And when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and in the place of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of the sky- The notable horn was an

individual, Alexander the Great. The horns elsewhere in these visions likewise refers to individuals, not to any organization like the papacy. The horn was broken in that Alexander had no dynasty. His brother Philip Aridaeus, and his two sons, Alexander Aegus and Hercules, failed to continue it. This refers to the untimely death of Alexander the Great and his kingdom being divided amongst his four generals. "Lysimachus ruled over part of Thrace, Asia Minor, part of Cappadocia, and the countries within the limits of Mount Taurus. Casander possessed Macedonia, Thessaly and part of Greece. Ptolemy obtained Egypt, Cyprus, Cyrene, and ultimately Coele-Syria, Phoenicia and Judea. Seleucus obtained Phoenicia, Syria, Babylonia to the Indus". Daniel 11 focuses upon the two of them, the kings of the north and south, who dominated God's people and land of Israel. Again we see that the focus of the prophecies are upon them and not upon any other geographical area. But they were directed "toward the four winds of the sky / heaven", as if to say that they were under the domination of heaven, or perhaps opposed against heaven; the "four winds" may refer to the four cherubic Angels, as God makes His Angels spirits or winds (Ps. 104:4). See on :10.

Dan 8:9 Out of one of them came forth a little horn, which grew exceedingly great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land-

All the history of Seleucus ["one of them"] is passed over up to Antiochus Epiphanes, because these visions are about what was done to the land and people of Israel. They are not a general prediction of history in advance.

The push toward the South refers as in :5 to Egypt. Dan. 11:21 ff. provides us with the history and shows that this is clearly Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He attacked Egypt (1 Macc. 1:16-20; 2 Macc. 5:51; Dan. 11:29,30) and then Persia to the east (1 Macc. 6:1-6; 2 Macc. 9:1-28). It's hard to apply this attack of the South and then the East to any 'Roman' or Catholic entity. If this is the same little horn as in Dan. 7, then it surely has to be conceded that there was another primary intended fulfilment of that prophecy in relation to Greece and Antiochus Epiphanes. "Toward the east" references the expedition of Antiochus led an expedition into Elymais (on the East of Babylonia); and again we have this alluded to in Dan. 11:40. We note that like Dan. 8, the visions of Dan. 10 and 11 refer only to Persia and Greece existing before the final establishment of God's Kingdom. This is definitely an alternative to the four kingdom scenario of Dan. 2 and 7- it was another possible future that didn't happen.

The little horn of Dan. 8:9 pushes in three directions. Possibly this matches the little horn of Dan. 7:8 uprooting three horns.

The connection between the Angels and the people of God in their land is shown by how the horn extends horizontally on earth until it comes to the "glorious land"; and then it rises up vertically to the host of Heaven, the stars, and to the commander of the host.

Many historicists like to understand this "little horn" as Rome and the Papacy. But this little horn came out of one of the four generals who succeeded Alexander the Great. The reference seems without doubt to Antiochus. Israel even then was the land of glory- potentially. It was their legalism and apostasy which meant that the Messianic kingdom was not then established, but potentially it could have been. Rather like apostate believers are still given exalted titles in the New Testament because of the potential status they had.

The little horn of Dan. 8:9 is clearly related to the little horn that arises from the fourth empire in Dan. 7. And the little horn of Dan. 8 is clearly Antiochus Epiphanes. But that doesn't at all fit the 'Roman' interpretation of the beast of Dan. 7 from which the little horn arises. I suggested on Dan. 2 that this is an example of how there were possible, potential fulfilments. The little horn of Dan. 8 could have been destroyed by the coming of a Messiah figure. But that didn't happen. And so the kaleidoscope was turned, and the same images [in this case, of a little horn] meshed to produce a different picture. Greek step logic wants to see a simple correspondence between statement and fulfilment over time. But that is to misunderstand or ignore the genre of apocalyptic. This genre takes the images and realigns them, mixing them with others, to produce various possible pictures. A rigid step logic will fall down in making sense of the two 'little horns', and will fail even worse when it comes to the horns and heads of Revelation.

Dan 8:10 *It grew great, even to the army of Heaven; and some of the army and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled on them-*

"It grew great" is a key theme here. The word is used several times. The ram "magnified himself", grew great (:4); "The male goat magnified himself exceedingly" (:8); "a little horn, which grew exceedingly great" (:9); "it grew great" (:10); "Yes, it magnified itself / grew great" (:11). Men and empires grow great, but everything in this world is born to roll downhill. These prophecies help us to see all human glory as it is; beauty, wealth, power shall all briefly rise but eternally fall. Expensive homes fall down, beauty fades, well toned muscles flab, career training becomes obsolete... only the things of God's Kingdom are eternal. We note that in each case, the ram, goat and little horn 'grow great' or 'magnify themselves' immediately before their fall. This hubris is one reason for the Lord's judgments at His return- because He so hates pride and His coming will be timed in order to judge pride.

The "host of Yahweh" can refer both to the heavenly army of Angels (Josh. 5:14,15; Ps. 103:21; 148:2) as well as to the peoples or armies on earth which Yahweh calls "My host" (Ex. 7:4), "the hosts of Yahweh" (Ex. 12:41). The situation on earth is reflected in Heaven by the representative Angels playing out the roles before the court of Heaven. This is the Angelic / Spirit mechanism, as it were, through which God sees and knows all things. It heightens our awareness of the importance of our existence and actions on this earth. And may provide a clue to Paul's enigmatic comment "Because of the Angels".

God's Angels and people were as it were trampled under foot just as Alexander had done to the Persians in :7. In Daniel we find the "host" being trodden down, God and His Angels apparently defeated- when the truth was that this is only how it seemed, and Daniel's visions, like that of Ezekiel of the cherubim in this same context, show that in fact God works through this to the final achievement of His intention to save His people and establish His Kingdom. What a wonderful day it will be when these things are turned to sight before men, and what Paul calls "the weakness of God" is shown to be His power. The "weakness" of the Lord on the cross is the parade example of all this: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men... For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (1 Cor. 1:25; 2 Cor. 13:4).

"The army of heaven" could on one level refer to the way Antiochus saw himself as exalted above all gods of all nations. The term is used about them in 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3 "they worshipped all the host of heaven". The books of the Maccabees record

him demanding all conquered nations give up their own laws and gods; he frequently desecrated the temples of those he conquered. And as the Maccabees often record, he especially practiced this against Yahweh. The language of the little horn in Dan. 8:10 recalls that used of Nebuchadnezzar in Is. 14:13 "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God". Likewise the little horn "magnified himself even to the Prince of the host" (Dan. 8:11), i.e. even to God Himself, just as in Is. 14:14 Nebuchadnezzar claimed: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High". Although "the prince of the host" could also refer to the Angel Michael (Dan. 12:1), possibly manifest in the High Priest Onias. See on Dan. 7:8.

"Of the stars" implies "some of the stars". Stars can refer to Angels, but also to military commanders (Num. 24:17) or faithful ones amongst God's people (Dan. 12:3). Again, they had their Angelic representatives in Heaven. The stars who fought from Heaven appear to be Angels fighting for Israel in Jud. 5:20.

But the army and stars are defined in :24 as "the mighty and holy people", the army of Yahweh (Ex. 12:41). Stars are symbols of God's faithful people (Gen. 22:17; 26:4; Ex. 32:13; Dt. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62; Neh. 9:23; 1 Chron. 27:23). And yet the language sounds applicable to Angels. As Dan. 12:1 explains, Israel have an Angel superintending them, and perhaps we are to understand each individual member of God's people as having an Angel representing them. Hence the language here refers to both individual Jews as well as their representative Angels. The stars are specifically a symbol of the faithful Israelites in Dan. 12:3. The language also recalls that of Is. 14:13,14 regarding the desire of Babylon to take the temple mount.

Angels can represent political powers before God; see on :8. This has interesting implications in Dan. 8:8-12: "Four notable ones toward the four winds of Heaven (the number four and "winds" both have Angelic connections). And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which... waxed great, even to the host of Heaven (the Angels controlling the Jewish people); and it cast down some of the host and of the stars (both "host" and "stars" are Angelic words), and stamped upon them; Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host (the "Most High" Angel, the Angel of Jesus, who was the real prince of the Angel hosts), and by him... the place of His sanctuary (i. e. the temple, where the "Most High" Angel dwelt) was cast down. And an host (of Angels controlling the soldiers of Antiochus) was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the Truth to the ground". "The Truth" here does not necessarily refer to a set of doctrines or people holding them which comprises the true Gospel. This can never be thrown down, and in any case "the Truth" in this sense was not thrown down after the sacking of the temple. "The truth" being thrown down may parallel the host and stars being cast to the ground in :10- in which case "the truth" represents the Jews in covenant relationship- or it may hint at the Mosaic Law being "thrown down" by the Angelic destruction of the temple and the Mosaic system. "Thy Law (of Moses) is the Truth" (Ps. 119:142). This all lays the basis for Rev. 12 describing the conflicting groups of Angels in Heaven at the time of the final abolition of the Mosaic system.

Dan 8:11 *Yes, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the army-* "The prince of the host" was initially Onias the high priest of the host, the army, of priests and of Israel. But clearly it also refers to Michael the representative Angel of Israel. In Daniel, nine times "prince" [*shar*] is used of men and nine times of an Angel, reflecting the theme of how men have representative Angels matching them in the court of Heaven. We note that the term *elohim* is used of priests, of Angels and of God Himself. Michael was apparently defeated (see on :10) but arises in eternal victory in Dan. 12.

The Hebrew words for "host / army" [*ts'bah*] and "glorious / pleasant / beautiful" [*ts'bee*] in :9 are very similar. The little horn 'grows exceedingly great' towards the glorious / pleasant land of Israel in :9, and likewise towards the host / army of heaven and the prince of the host in :10,11. The heavenly host are the host of the land of Israel. We note that the "host" is not specifically defined here as the Jews. Because although these things clearly had a primary fulfilment in the abuses of Antiochus against the Jews, they will have a final latter day fulfilment against God's people however they are defined. The prince of the host / army has the burnt offering 'taken away from him', and "the place of his sanctuary was cast down"- all by a mere man. This is the degree to which God's mighty Angel, representing Himself, can have things taken away from Him by man.

Indeed "the prince of the host" could be read as God Himself. "Even unto the prince of the host it magnified itself" speaks of showing greatness against God, just as the king of Babylon did in Is. 14. The word for "place" is used mostly of God's abode, whether on earth (Ex. 15:17, 1 Kings 8:13), or in heaven (Is. 18:4, 1 Kings 8:39,43,49; Ps. 33:14). This is how far God allows human freewill, and how far He is sensitive to human behaviour. Man can, in the short term, take something away from God. The continual burnt offering was to be 'taken away' from "the prince" by the little horn. "Taken away" can mean to steal. From the God who in another sense owns everything. But He has given it to us. "Will a man rob God?", Malachi asks. And Malachi answers this shocking question "Yes". They were robbing God in not paying tithes and giving sacrifices. He is a God near at hand and not afar off, which is why He feels this things so closely and personally. This explains the strange statement in Dan. 12:7 that "the power of the holy people" will, for a time, be smashed or broken. That power is surely God. And in this light we must imagine how Daniel felt when he heard in Dan. 9:26 that the Messiah whom he was looking for as the saving answer was "to be cut off". Jerusalem and the sanctuary were again to be destroyed...

The army is the host of God's people and their representative Angels (see on :10). Their prince is "the prince of princes" (:25), "the God of gods" (Dan. 11:36 cp. Dan. 7:8). So God Himself could be in view. But the prince could equally refer to the high priest. And the language of "prince of princes" is applied to the Lord Jesus in Rev. 1:5. So whilst this prophecy may have application to the rage of Antiochus against Israel's God, it clearly is recorded because all the previous abusers of God's people point forward to the final entity which shall abuse them, which will incorporate features of all Israel's previous abusers. As Antiochus magnified himself against God and the Jerusalem temple, so shall the latter day antiChrist against the real Christ, the prince of princes. The little horn makes himself as if he is "the prince of the host" (Dan. 8:11 Heb.); he sets himself up as an alternative Christ, an antiChrist. God is presented in Daniel as being able to depose kings and change or decree the times and seasons; the decree of Nebuchadnezzar to kill all the Babylonian wise men was "changed" by the revelation of His prophetic word through Daniel. The same words are used for how the little horn will change times and laws [s.w. 'decrees'] (Dan. 7:25). In terms of 2 Thess. 2, he declares himself as God enthroned in the temple of God, after the historical pattern of Antiochus.

And it took away from him the continual burnt offering- This was specifically ordered by Antiochus (1 Macc. 1:20,47,54,59). Such a command was not specifically made by the Romans. The requirements of the text here fit Antiochus very well, but are a very imperfect fit to the events of AD67-70.

There are many connections between the historical chapters of Daniel and the visions. Daniel is noted for serving God "continually" (Dan. 6:11,14,17,21) His

morning and evening prayers were surely when the sacrifices would have been offered (1 Chron. 23:30). The Jews recognized the connection between the daily sacrifices and prayer, the prayer times in the temple were at the same time as the daily sacrifices (Acts 3:1). In Dan. 9:21 Daniel prayed "about the time of the evening sacrifice", seeing his prayer as the sacrifice. The connection is presumably to teach that despite the continual burnt offerings being ended, the essential offering to God was of prayer made toward Jerusalem as Daniel had done. There was no actual need for a sanctuary in order to offer to God. For the holy place is your own room and heart. We read here literally of "the continual", "burnt offering" is added by many versions in explanation but the corresponding words aren't in the original.

And the place of his sanctuary was cast down- This speaks of "the prince of the Host" living in the temple, a phrase recalling the Angel captain of the Lord's host in Josh. 5:15. See on Ps. 78:60. The prince of the army was therefore God manifest through the Angel superintending Israel. The casting down of the temple was not specifically done by Antiochus, but his abuse of the sanctuary is thus described because this history points forward to the latter day antiChrist who shall do this.

The LXX of Dan 8:9-11 would imply that only at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the captivity of Judah would be "delivered": "And out of one of them came forth one strong horn, and it grew very great toward the south, and toward the host: and it magnified itself to the host of heaven; and there fell to the earth some of the host of heaven and of the stars, and they trampled on them. And this shall be until the chief captain shall have delivered the captivity". Thus the period of only 70 years in captivity was lengthened; and even then, this is not how things worked out in practice. Likewise the time for the restoration of the temple from the hands of pagan abomination is redefined in Dan. 9:27 LXX as now no longer being in Daniel's time, nor any time close to it, but rather at the time of the Kingdom of God: "On the temple shall be the abomination of desolations; and at the end of time an end shall be put to the desolation".

It is stressed that the sanctuary of God was "cast down" (Dan. 8:11), "trampled under foot" (Dan. 8:13). "destroyed / wasted / spoiled" along with His capital city (Dan. 9:26), "made desolate" (Dan. 9:27). If the city and sanctuary of a god was destroyed in this way, so publically, then that god had lost and had been slain by the god of the army who did this. God as it were emphasizes His own apparent destruction. He recognizes by all this repeated language that indeed, it does look as if "the death of God" has validity, it is how it seems, it is what it looks like. He gets that. The purpose of the prophecies is to show that in fact He exists and is hugely active beyond that. Clearly enough, God doesn't care for His 'image'. He allows people to think as they do about Him, without rushing in to correct impressions. We think of His apparent silence and lack of involvement and engagement at the time of tragedies. It is all a test of our spiritual perception, and we are guided by His word in this. And yet Jeremiah had lamented, using the same word for "cast down", that "He has cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and hasn't remembered His footstool in the day of His anger" (Lam. 2:1). As ever, God was ultimately behind this casting down by the little horn.

The LXX reads very differently: "And this shall be until the chief captain shall have delivered the captivity: and by reason of him the sacrifice was disturbed, and he prospered; and the holy place shall be made desolate". This may be a legitimate reading, in that there was the potential for the Angel Michael, the "chief captain" of Israel (Dan. 12:1), to end the captivity / exile at this time. We note Daniel is next recorded as wondering why the captivity hadn't ended (Dan. 9:3).

Dan 8:12 *The army was given over to it-*

AV "And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice". This hints that it was God who gave the little horn a "host" or "army". Such hints are common in the visions of Daniel. Beasts are raised up, "given" things etc.- by God. But the host "given" was in order to overthrow the "host" or army of God's people and their Angelic representatives: "the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them" (:10). We would see here the way that representative hosts of Angels act out in Heaven the conflicts upon earth, host against host. We see here how all the conflicts ultimately have God in control over them.

However the GNB is likely not far wrong in offering: "People sinned there instead of offering the proper daily sacrifices, and true religion was thrown to the ground". It was abuses in the temple that led the little horn to desecrate it. This would fit the time of Antiochus and the Romans, but makes no sense if applied to the Papacy. The reference may be to how Antiochus installed an armed garrison in the 'city of David' with the object of overawing the worshippers and stopping any Jewish religious rites there (1 Macc. 1:33-38; 8:51; 2:15,31; 4:41).

This could be translated as AV "A host / army was given him". As in :13 and elsewhere, it is emphasized that all power is "given" to these horns and beasts. See on :24. Ultimately they were given power by God. The world is not radically out of control; there is no radical evil in the cosmos. All is finally under God's control, and this Divine giving of power to Israel's was "on account of [their] disobedience".

Along with the continual burnt offering on account of disobedience- Most expositors note the paganism of some of the Jews who returned from Babylon, and quote 1 Macc. 1:11-16: "In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the pagan that are round about us; for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow... Whereupon they built a place of exercise (a school) at Jerusalem, according to the customs of the pagan; and made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the pagan, and were sold to do mischief". This is true, but specifically the opportunity to offer the daily burnt offering was taken away because of "disobedience". Many of the Jews who returned from Babylon were proud of their obedience; but the prophets repeatedly warned them that their daily burnt offerings were a provocation to God because of their hypocrisy and legalism (Is. 43:23; 66:3; Am. 5:22; Mal. 3:3)

And it cast down the truth to the ground, and it did according to its will and prospered- See on :10. Is. 59:14 had lamented that amongst the restoration community, "truth is fallen in the street". Antiochus merely confirmed in physical terms the blasphemy of the sanctuary which they had committed in spiritual terms. "Truth" may refer to the law of Moses (Ps. 43:3; 119:4). But we can perhaps understand "the truth" in the sense it is used in John's writings and in Dan. 9:13, for a life lived in fellowship with God: "we have not entreated the favour of Yahweh our God, that we should turn from our iniquities, and accept Your truth". The result of the destruction of the sanctuary was that it severely damaged the walk of God's people with Him.

Another possibility, given the various potential fulfilments of the prophecies, is that "the truth" refers to what "the truth" usually refers to in Daniel- the prophecies (Dan. 8:26; 9:13; 10:1,21; 11:2). The visions of Dan. 2 and Dan. 7 had shown a fourth entity arising after Greece, which would be the prelude to the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. But this "truth" was deposed or cast aside ["down" isn't necessarily

implied in the original] in that Antiochus Epiphanes would behave in such an awful way, that the re-establishment of the Kingdom was made possible then. Because his sins were so extreme that he filled up the required level of sin, and this could've triggered the final judgment [see on :23].

Dan 8:13 *Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who spoke-* The tribulations which come upon God's people are described as being under the control of a "certain one", "Palmoni", or the 'wonderful numberer' as that can be translated, implying that there is one powerful Angel who co-ordinates the timing of all things, and other Angels ask this Angel for information concerning the time periods worked out for the saints in their charge, as here in Daniel's case. Job seemed to have sensed very keenly the "appointed time" for his trials to end and for his "change" of nature to occur. We have seen that the phrase "appointed time" is the same word as "host" used regarding the Angels. But like Job, because we can't see the Angel physically it's easy to get bitter about the trials brought upon us by them, as Balaam got bitter with the ass until he physically saw the Angel causing the trial (Num. 22:23). See on Job 14:5; Dan. 12:1.

How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, and the abomination that makes desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the army to be trodden under foot?- The desolation caused by transgression (the Jews' transgression, see on :12) is clearly initially that done by Antiochus (Dan. 11:31). He erected a heathen altar erected in place of the altar of burnt-offering in the Temple court. But there is a 1290 day period between the end of the continual burnt offering and the placing of the desolation (Dan. 12:11). But here the period for both is 2300 evening-mornings. The time periods definitely are variable. The 1290 period may possibly have been true in the time of Antiochus, but it was not true in AD67-70; the daily sacrifices were offered then right up to AD70. It could have come true then- the LXX of Dan. 8:13 is quoted by the Lord in Mt. 24:15 about the AD70 situation. So these were but incipient fulfilments- the last days will see the final fulfilment. Dan. 9:26,27 require the city of Jerusalem to be taken, and the abomination of desolation placed there; and this is quoted by the Lord Jesus as requiring fulfilment in the last days just prior to His return (Mt. 24:14,15,29-31). Any previous fulfilments were incipient at best; they did not immediately herald the Lord's visible return as required by the Oliver prophecy. Lk. 21:24 adds: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled". The allusion is to Dan. 8:13: "The transgression of desolation gave both the sanctuary and the host (i.e. the people of Israel) to be *trodden underfoot*".

Daniel's question "How long...?" was answered. The exiles had lamented that they had no prophet who knew "How long": "There is no longer any prophet, nor is there any among us who knows how long" (Ps. 74:9,10). He was thus assured that he was indeed a prophet. Even though the answer was not to his liking [as he was expecting an immediate re-establishment of the Kingdom of God], and therefore he struggled to understand it. So often our difficulty in understanding the Bible is because we subconsciously don't want to accept the truth that we see there, again, subconsciously.

We enquire who exactly are "the army" or "host". It is used of Angels, but also of the ministers in the sanctuary or priests (Num. 4:23,30,35,39,43; 8:24,25). Again we have the Angels representative of their charges on earth.

Dan 8:14 *He said to me-* Daniel has heard two Angels talking in :13. One has asked the other how long the desolation would continue. But the other Angel now speaks directly to Daniel. The first Angel was Daniel's representative in the court of heaven. Daniel naturally had the question in his mind, as to how long this would continue for. And his Angel asks another Angel that question, and that Angel then answers Daniel directly. Our questions and situations are likewise represented in Heaven. Truly man is not alone. In :13, Daniel has as it were overheard a discussion between two Angels. Daniel has within him the obvious question: "In that case, how long...?". One of the Angels asks that very question, and then the answer is directed to Daniel. We are to understand that our representative Angel carries our questions and fears before the court of Heaven, and answers are given. Note the parallel between Angels and God's people discussed on :11.

To two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed- The phrase "evening-mornings" refers to the daily sacrifices, which were offered twice daily, morning and evening. 2300 evening-morning sacrifices were therefore 1150 days. The various time periods in Daniel all seem around this number- 1260, 1290, 1335 days, and three and a half times [years?] which is 1260 days. Perhaps the variations are because the final periods are flexible, depending upon how quickly Israel repent in the last days, and how intense are our prayers and longing for "the end". Or it could be that the 2300 is the period from the beginning of the tribulation until the time when the abomination is ended. Perhaps the days of the elect's tribulation are shortened from 2300 to 1260 (Mt. 24:22).

Antiochus is clearly the "little horn" of Daniel 8, but this is the same little horn which arises from the fourth beast in Dan. 7. Consider the similarities: Dan. 7:8= Dan. 8:23; Dan. 7:20 = Dan. 8:9; Dan. 7:21,25 = Dan. 8:10; Dan. 7:25 = Dan. 8:11,25; Dan. 7:25 changing times and seasons = Dan. 8:11,12, and 1 Macc. 1:44-51 records how Antiochus forced the Jews to stop offering the daily sacrifice and Jewish feasts, and desecrated the altar with pigs' blood. The period in which the daily sacrifices were stopped is described as 2300 mornings and evenings (Dan. 8:13,14), that is 1150 days when the twice daily [morning and evening] sacrifices were stopped. According to the dates given in 1 Macc. 1:41-59; 6:1-17, this is the exact period between when Antiochus began forbidding the daily sacrifices in Autumn of BC167 to the day of his death in the spring of BC163. There is no other very compelling fulfilment of the 2300 mornings and evenings.

Dan. 9:27 says that "for half a week he will put a stop to the sacrifice and the meal offering". Dan. 8 gives a period of 2300 evening-mornings, i.e. 1150 days, for the cessation of sacrifices. In Dan. 9:27 the time period is different- three and a half days, possibly meaning three and a half years or 1260 days. So often in Daniel we find the time periods are flexible. Which they are, because there are various possible and potential fulfilments of the prophecies, and the range of them is because God takes into account human freewill. For prophecy doesn't make God deterministic. Possibly these 1260 days are reduced to 1150 because the "days are shortened for the elect's sake". We must also factor in that 1 Maccabees gives a period of exactly 3 years for the desecration of the altar by Antiochus Epiphanes [1080 days if we take a 360 day year, 1095 days if a 365 day year]. This again could be because there was a shortening of the days. Josephus however claims it was exactly three and a half years (*Wars* 1.32). We could simply suppose that the time periods in Dan. 7:25; 8:14; 9:27; 12:7,11,12 all designate a period of roughly three and a half years and refer to the same time. The differences are because "the days" are shortened or lengthened in accordance with human freewill responses. And another simple takeaway is that all

the suffering of God's people is only for a period foreknown by God. There comes a time of the end, a time when the days of suffering end.

The phrase 'evening-mornings' naturally recalls the account of creation, "There was evening and there was morning, a [e.g. second] day" (Gen. 1:8). The hint may be that through that long period [humanly speaking] of darkness, blasphemy and destruction, there was arising a new creation. Likewise in Dan. 7 we have the ferocious beasts arising out of the sea, with the winds / Spirit of God hovering over the waters. Those terrifying beasts and their evil work was in fact part of a new creation. The appearance of the "son of man" at the end then connects with the creation of man.

Perhaps the 'evening-morning' idea is used because we have noted the parallel with Daniel's continual evening and morning prayers, paralleled with the sacrifices. The message may be that the end will come if there is continued prayer during the period. And prayer is one of the human freewill responses that shortens or lengthens fulfilment of prophecy. Possibly there is an allusion to how the punishment for Israel's disobedience would be a longing for morning at evening, and a longing for evening at the morning (Dt. 28:66,67).

Dan 8:15 *It happened when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought to understand it; and behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man-*

This is clearly an Angel. The Angels are called those who stand by in Zech. 3:7.

Daniel sees the vision but doesn't understand it; but he wants to. Previously, it was the kings who had seen visions and wanted to understand, and Daniel had explained to them. Now the roles are reversed. Daniel is being made to feel himself into the place of those kings. Likewise he is described several times as awestruck and visibly sick and distressed because of the visions or their interpretations; just as the kings had been. Here we have a major feature of the Biblical histories, and of our lives as believers: we are made to experience and feel that which other people do. People who are in our lives, as believers or unbelievers. This is such a common theme in the Bible, and in life, that we conclude that this is what God does oftentimes with man, at least with believers. To bring us to greater human understanding, and to place our own apparently unique experiences within the wider context of society and people around us.

"Man" is *geber*, suggesting the name Gabriel (:16). Daniel sought to understand the meaning of a vision; but two verses earlier, an Angel had asked another Angel for understanding of the same vision. Here surely we have the practical meaning, in Angelic terms, of God knowing our prayers and arranging the answers before we even ask them. Perhaps it was Daniel's guardian Angel who asked a more senior Angel for the interpretation of the vision, knowing Daniel was going to be asking for it. Yet it was the second Angel who actually gave the answer to Daniel (Dan. 8:14). Verse 16 describes the one Angel standing at the Ulai river calling out: "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision". Yet at this time, Daniel himself was in vision at the Ulai river (:2). His guardian Angel was there, right in front of him. And He had foreknown Daniel's feelings and arranged for another Angel to respond to them... and so the second Angel (Gabriel) also comes near where Daniel was standing (:17). His guardian Angel had literally called Gabriel to come over to Daniel... And all this is going on for you and me *hourly* in the court of Heaven! There's another example of this in Dan. 12. There are two Angels with Daniel by the river (:2). One of them asks the other: "How long shall it be to the end...?" (:6; cp. 8:13). Yet this was exactly the spirit of Daniel! And then the other Angel gives *Daniel* the answer. His guardian

Angel knew his unexpressed questions and desires, and passed them on to another Angel to answer. See on Zech. 1:12.

If our Angel has not the strength or authority to give us a blessing which He sees we need, He can ask another Angel to bring this about- thus Daniel's guardian Angel had to ask Gabriel to help Daniel understand the vision which He knew Daniel so desperately wanted to have interpreted (Dan. 8:16). It may be that this request by the guardian Angel was not for the best for Daniel, because it seems to have been denied by God- v. 27 says that at the end of the interpretation or "understanding" being given by Gabriel, "I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding" (v. 27 N.I.V.). In that case, it would seem that when Gabriel said "Understand, O son of man" (v. 17), Gabriel Himself either did not appreciate that giving Daniel the understanding would not help him, or He obeyed the request from the guardian Angel unquestioningly. Or alternatively, was Gabriel saying in v. 17 that Daniel was to understand that the vision would not be fully understood till the last days, as in Dan. 12:4? This would mean that it is in the hands of the Angels as to at what time, both individually and as the body of God's people generally, we gain spiritual understanding of certain parts of the word, in the same way as the Angels debated "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?". This may be very relevant to the various interpretations of Revelation held by God's true people down through the years, each interpretation giving great encouragement to a certain group of saints, despite their details varying considerably. This process would then be seen to be under the direct control of the Angels.

Dan 8:16 *I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision-* Gabriel is El-Gibbor, a title of the Lord Jesus (Is. 9:6). Hebrews 1 labours the point that the Lord was not an Angel. This Angel was not the Lord Jesus, but just as Michael represented Israel (Dan. 12:1), so this Angel was the representative of the Messiah. I have noted on :11 the theme in Daniel of men and entities having Angelic representatives. It is only through reading the Old Testament in the light of the Lord Jesus that we can come to any correct understanding.

Dan 8:17 *So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened, and fell on my face: but he said to me, Understand, son of man; for the vision concerns the time of the end-* Daniel was face down (:18), the manner of the Jews to bury. He experienced a symbolic death and resurrection, because the vision concerned "the time of the end". Although the vision clearly concerned Antiochus and Alexander, clearly the essential fulfilment was not in them but in the events of the last days. This makes any other primary fulfilments of the prophecy no more than that- primary fulfilment. "The end" is the "end" of the final cleansing of the sanctuary (:14), "the end" of Lk. 21:24; 1 Cor. 15:23, the visible return of the Lord Jesus to earth to destroy the blasphemous edifice and system then enthroned in Jerusalem.

Being addressed as "son of man" would have reminded Daniel of his contemporary prophet [and possibly acquaintance] Ezekiel, who over 90 times was addressed as "son of man". Just as Daniel falls on his face and is restored upright by an Angel (Dan. 8:17,18), so was Ezekiel: "When I saw it, I fell on my face... He said to me, son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you. The spirit entered into me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me" (Ez. 1:28; 2:1,2). These parallels between believers are common in spiritual life, and are often recorded in Biblical history. We are intended to see such connections,

and this becomes the basis of being "in fellowship" in practice. No theological creed creates this fellowship; "doctrine divides; experience unites", as Paul Tournier put it long ago.

"For at the time of the end shall be the vision" (Dan. 8:17) would suggest that the things of the little horn etc. have their main fulfilment at the very end, before the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, and not in any other time historically. Indeed we could fairly define "the vision" as the entire vision of the ram and goat (:1). This would then require the ram, goat and little horn to all have a specifically latter day interpretation. The obvious historical references to Persia and Greece were therefore merely the immediate potential fulfilment, which didn't fully come about in that there was no direct Divine intervention to re-establish God's Kingdom and eternally save His people. Just as all the metals of Dan. 2 and beasts of Dan. 7 exist in the last day, despite their clear historical references.

Dan 8:18 *Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground; but he touched me, and set me upright-* See on :17; Dan. 9:21. Clearly enough, as noted on :17, the time of Daniel's resurrection was to be the time of the end, when these things would have their fulfilment. Any historical interpretations of the horn and desolation of the sanctuary are therefore not the essential fulfilments.

Dan 8:19 *He said, See, I will make you know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it concerns the appointed time of the end-* This is as clear a statement as we could wish that the events described in the vision speak of the last days, and the historical fulfilments were only incipient, clear as they were.

Dan 8:20 *The ram which you saw, that had the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia-* It has just been stressed in :17,19 that the vision is of the time of the end. The obvious historical fulfilments in the kings of Media and Persia were therefore only primary fulfilments. There must be a latter day equivalent, but in the very last days, the times when Daniel would be resurrected (see on :17,18).

Dan 8:21 *The rough male goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king-* Philip was king of Macedon before Alexander; this may be an example of where the prophecy will only have its 'best fit' fulfilment in the last days (:17,19). Or "first" may simply mean 'greatest'. Their great leader, Alexander the great, was "the great horn" on the goat (Dan. 8:21); this was broken, and four kingdoms arose out of that (Dan. 8:22). But out of them arose "a king of fierce countenance" who was to be "broken without hand" (Dan. 8:25). This is the very language of the entire image being broken by the stone cut out without hands, which speaks of the return of Christ to earth (Dan. 2:44). But at first blush, this seems out of chronological sequence- that a fierce king arising out of the breakup of the Greek empire [surely referring to Antiochus in its historical sense of fulfilment] should be broken by the second coming of Christ- many centuries later. But the problem is solved once we understand that the image stands erect and complete in the last days, in the sense that elements of all the previous empires and leaders would be incorporated in the final entity which shall be destroyed "without hand" by the return of the Lord Jesus. Daniel 7 has spoken of the fourth beast having a little horn which is destroyed by the coming of Christ and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. But Daniel 8 speaks of the *third* beast, the third kingdom of the image of Daniel 2, as having a "little horn" which is destroyed by the Kingdom of God. The conclusion

would seem to be that at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, to whom the little horn of Daniel 8 clearly refers, there could have been the coming of a "Christ" and establishment of the Kingdom. But this didn't happen, and so Antiochus Epiphanes became a prototype of the latter day little horn, which will emerge from the *fourth* beast; and there is a large gap or delay in fulfilment between his time and that of Christ's coming.

Dan 8:22 *As for that which was broken, in the place where four stood up, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power-* The four generals who took power after the death of Alexander the Great did not have "his power". But as laboured in :17,19, these historical events were not the ultimate fulfilment; they point forward to events specifically around the "time of the end", the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, when Daniel shall be resurrected. We can look therefore for the arising of an individual like Alexander, who shall be broken before the Lord's return.

Dan 8:23 *In the latter time of their kingdom-* The idea could be that the historical kingdoms and related events of Greece, Antiochus, Medo-Persia etc. are to have their latter day fulfilment, as stressed in :17,19.

When the wicked have come to the full, a king of fierce appearance and understanding mysteries shall stand up-

"When the wicked have come to the full" could mean "when the transgressors have completed (their guilt)", a similar idea to the iniquity of the Amorites becoming full, i.e. judgment came after a specified period. And why like that? Because that period was their opportunity for repentance. We marvel that a hardened blasphemer like Antiochus could be given a hope of repentance. We think of how God likewise tried to get Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar to repent and gave them a specific time period. It's the same idea of God elsewhere waiting until "the cup of iniquity was full" before judging as in Gen. 15:16: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full". Likewise Mt. 23:32: "fill you up then the measure of your fathers" and 1 Thess. 2:16: "to fill up their sins". This is the time of Dan. 9:24 "To make an end of sins". But that verse in Dan. 9 is in the midst of a quite different chronology, of the 70 weeks prophecy. Again we have to conclude that there were various chronological schemes that were potentially possible, such is God's sensitivity to human freewill, and His refusal to make His prophecies simply determinate predictions that rob man of his freewill.

The same words for a king of fierce face are found in Dt. 28:49,50, describing the *nation* that will be brought upon a disobedient Israel in judgment: "Yahweh will bring a nation against you from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flies; a nation whose language you will not understand; a nation of fierce face". That nation was embodied in this individual king. Just as there is confusion between king and kingdoms in all the visions. Dt. 28:50 can be understood on one hand as Rome, but as discussed on :1, the initial possible iteration of the vision concerned Antiochus Epiphanes. When that didn't work out, the kaleidoscope turned and it became relevant to Rome, and then it turned again, becoming relevant to the latter day antichrist. The whole vision of Dan. 8 is described as "the vision of the evenings and mornings" (:26) and this may also allude to Deuteronomy 28 and the curses for disobedience: : "In the morning you will say 'If only it was evening!' and in the evening you will say 'If only it was morning!' because of the great fear your heart will feel and because of the sight your eyes will see" (Dt. 28:67).

Antiochus Epiphanes is characterized by "understanding mysteries" in Dan. 8:23; he is a fake Daniel, who did understand (Dan. 1:4,17,20; 8:5,15; 9:2; 10:1). Just as he seeks to act as God.

This person arises in the time of the end- and this phrase in Daniel always has some reference to the time of the Lord's return and Daniel's personal resurrection (:17,19). He is to arise out of the Syrian Kingdom, i.e. part of the divided empire of Alexander the Great. Historically, this must refer to Antiochus who arose in the latter time of the kingdom of the four generals; Rome just doesn't fit here. Some Protestant expositors seem to wish to see the Papacy here, and so have ignored the obvious application to Antiochus and tried to force everything into a Roman context. The individual king of fierce countenance applies so much better to Antiochus than to any of the Roman generals involved in the events of AD67-70. But whether Antiochus or Rome, the vision specifically refers to the very last days. The time when he will arise will be the time when "iniquity is come to the full"- which fits most comfortably with the very last days. The iniquity is that of :12, the sin of Israel in rejecting Jesus as Messiah. Dan. 8:17, 19 make it clear: "The vision pertains to *the time of the end*... the final period of indignation... the appointed *time of the end*". This is the time when Israel's wickedness (:12) has come to its full point, when final judgment and deliverance will come. Such a point of the final filling up of Israel's sin is envisaged in Mt. 23:32; 1 Thess. 2:16. "Understanding mysteries" can mean that he would use deceit, as explained on :25. This makes sense when applied to Antiochus: "The king sent his chief collector of tribute, who came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude, and spake peaceable words unto them; but all was deceit: for when they had given him credence, he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel... Antiochus sent also that detestable ringleader, Apollonius, with an army of two and twenty thousand, commanding him to slay all those that were in their best age, and to sell the women and the younger sort; who, coming to Jerusalem, and pretending peace, did forbear until the holy day of the Sabbath, when, taking the Jews keeping holyday, he commanded his men to arm themselves, and so he slew all them that were gone to the celebrating of the Sabbath" (1 Macc. 1:30; 2 Macc. 5:24). Dan. 11:27 provides the history; he would "obtain the kingdom by smooth sayings". The deceit of Antiochus was seen in how he deceived and destroyed his nephew, Ptolemy Philometor, in order to get power.

The manifestation of a Kingdom in its leader is to be found in the way the antiChrist is called "the king of fierce countenance" in Dan. 8:23. But the entire nation or entity which persecute Israel in the last days is a "nation of fierce countenance" (the same words are used- Dt. 28:50). Their leader is an embodiment of them.

Dan 8:24 *His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall be very destructive, and shall prosper and do his own will-*

"But not by his own power" is yet another reminder that these powerful men and empires had actually no power of themselves, it was all given by God, as in Jn. 19:11; Is. 10:5 etc. We note that the interpretation in :24,25 differs somewhat from the original vision, which spoke of the desecration and destruction of the sanctuary. There is not reference to this in the interpretation. Possibly because the potential for Antiochus Epiphanes to do this wasn't realized. He did desecrate the sanctuary, but he didn't destroy the temple to the extent implied in the vision. The interpretation also makes no reference to the "host" or army given him in the vision. These aspects were unfulfilled in him; but did and will come true in future possible fulfilments of the prophecy.

See on Rev. 21:12. The Lord was intensely intellectually conscious throughout His sufferings. Often it is possible to see in His words allusions to even seven or eight OT passages, all in context, all relevant. Reflect how His response to Pilate "You could have no power against me" (Jn. 19:11) was a reference to the prophecy of Daniel 8, about the persecutors becoming mighty "but not by his own power". The apparent mightiness was due to God giving him the power; that is the point. See on :12. God only gives power to the Gentile persecutors of Israel because of their sins and His desire for their repentance. This is why the repentance of Israel is such an important precondition for the Lord's return, and we ought to be preaching it to them right now.

The reference however may also be to how the beast is given power not of himself but from the entity known as "the dragon" (Rev. 13:2), an earlier entity which has arisen.

And he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people- Or, "the people of the holy ones". As noted on :10,11, each of God's people have a representative Angel. What is done to them is effectively done to the Angels who represent them before the court of Heaven. The "holy ones" of :12,13 are clearly Angels. Again we have confirmed that in Daniel we are being invited to see God's host or people on earth as having representative Angels in Heaven. Hence the Lord Jesus will return with His holy ones or Angels with Him, in order to judge His holy ones on earth.

Dan 8:25 *Through his policy-*

"Policy" is the word elsewhere translated "wisdom" and it is used of Daniel himself in Dan. 1:17; 5:11,12,14. Likewise the little horn 'understands riddles', AV "understanding dark sentences" (:23), just as Daniel is described as doing (Dan. 5:12). Daniel repeatedly said that his wisdom was not from him, just as for the little horn "his strength will be mighty, but not with his own strength" (:23). "And so Daniel prospered" (Dan. 6:29) is the word thrice used of the little horn prospering (Dan. 8:12,24,25). The little horn is an anti-Daniel. Not simply evil, but actually a mimic of what is true and Godly; a veritable anti-Christ.

The singular "his" clearly refers to the latter day antiChrist individual in view. It appears somewhat of a twist to make this apply to generations of Roman Catholic leaders, as historicists do. It is the official policy of Islam to use deceit to bring down their enemies and to destroy under the banner of peace. The individual would fit a radical Islamist in the last days.

He shall cause deceit to prosper; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and in their security shall he destroy many-

Again, the initial application was to Antiochus. "In (time of) security he will destroy many" is the language used of him when we read the Biblically provided history of him in Dan. 11:21,24. Again we note that for all the reasons God could judge the little horn, the one given is his pride "in his heart", an internal attitude that God is so sensitive to.

The fierce king "by peace shall destroy many" (AV); perhaps alluded to in the prophecy that the sudden destruction wrought by the Lord's return will be when men are saying "peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:3). This certainly sounds like the result of jihadist Islam, the [supposed] religion of peace. The Semitic consonants S-L-M are at the root of the words Islam and also Shalom, Salaam [Hebrew and Arabic for 'peace']. There were no vowels in ancient Hebrew and Arabic. The connection is in that peace ['salaam' in Arabic] is believed to come from 'islam', submission. Muslim apologists frequently justify their religion by claiming that Islam is a religion of peace [even if they believe in murdering anyone who disagrees]. As we survey the atrocities being

performed in the name of Islam today in the territory of the land promised to Abraham... we are seeing this being fulfilled. By peace / salaam / Islam, many are being destroyed. What however we are still waiting to see is more focus upon the leader of the jihadists, for these prophecies focus upon 'kings' and 'horns' [kings] more than more abstract 'kingdoms'. This may partly be because God attaches much importance to the responsibilities of leaders, but also because there must arise prominent leaders, especially an antiChrist figure who is the "fierce king" orchestrating this destruction of many by his religion of 'peace'.

The latter day beast of Revelation and his publicity agent likewise do apparent miracles; the little horn of Dan. 8:24 will destroy by miracles (AV "wonderfully", but the Hebrew is elsewhere translated as 'miracles' or 'performing miracles'). The Koran claims that God will perform miracles in support of Moslem activity and judgment of unbelievers, especially Israel. The prophet Mohammad is the pattern and "aim" of Islam and their leaders. The miracles attributed to Mohammad in the Hadith are similar to latter day judgments upon Israel. It may be that the Islamists bring these judgments in a manner which appears miraculous:

Multiplying bread and water *Volume 4, Book 56, Numbers 779, 780*

Making animals speak *Volume 3, Book 39, Number 517*

Splitting the moon *Volume 6, Book 60, Number 388*

Making stars appear *Volume 1, Book 8, Number 454*

Making rain *Volume 8, Book 73, Number 115*

Making a dead body arise *Volume 4, Book 56, Number 814*

Ascended into the sky and thence to Heaven

All these things are spoken of as happening in the various seal or trumpet judgments. It may be that the Caliph of the final jihadist Islamic entity does indeed appear to be able to do miracles, and he consciously does these things because he wishes to impersonate Mohammad. Remember article 8 of the Hamas Covenant: "Allah is its target, the Prophet is its model"- also quoted by the jihadists today.

The coming of the "wicked one" is "after the working [Gk. *energeia*] of the Satan". The Satan of the last days is as defined in Revelation 12- the beast of the last days. But God sends "strong delusion that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:9,11). "Strong delusion" again uses the same term, *energeia*. The energy in the whole thing is from God, not some 'satan' in the orthodox sense of radical evil in the cosmos. The satan-beast of the last days is under God's direct Angelic control, as made clear in Revelation. Due to the false miracles, the masses will flock to believe in this individual. We are already seeing something of the sort in the land promised to Abraham, where the Islamic extremism and its caliph is being believed and followed in a way which is strange and unbelievable to the rational observer. God will confirm these people so that they believe this individual and the beast-satan system behind him.

He shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand-

"The prince of princes" could initially refer to Michael the chief prince (Dan. 10:13), "the commander of the [Angelic] host of Yahweh" of Josh. 5:14,15. This was in view in earlier potential fulfilments through Antiochus Epiphanes. But in the last days, it applies to the Lord Jesus. "He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes" ultimately refers to God ("the God of gods" Dan. 11:36; "God of gods and Lord of kings", Dan. 2:47). The parallel "little horn" in Dan. 7 exalts himself against "the most high" (Dan. 7:8,11,20,25). In the latter days, this refers to God manifest in the Lord Jesus, the prince of the kings of the earth. But this didn't happen, because the

Antiochus application was a potential that didn't happen. Just as in Dan. 11 everything fits so well, until we come to a sudden point when it no longer does. The application failed, but in essence will come true with a latter day Antiochus, another time of peace and safety, and the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is called "Messiah *the Prince*" in Dan. 9:25 in order to contrast with how the anti-Christ, the fake Christ, is also called "the prince of the host" in Dan. 8:11. "It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host" (ESV). This prince "shall stand up against the Prince of princes", the Lord Jesus (Rev. 1:5; see on :11). There will be a final showdown between these two princes, and their respective followers and Kingdoms. The armies of the earth / land will be gathered together against those of the Lord Jesus. And the Moslems will eagerly rush into this final conflict, believing that this is "the Day of Discrimination, the day when the two armies met" (Sura 8.41). Being broken without human hand is clearly the language of the Lord's return to destroy the king of the north and the entire image system he personifies (Dan. 2:34; 11:45). This individual therefore exists at the time of the Lord's return and shall be destroyed thereby. It cannot therefore majorly refer to any system or individuals before that time. The historical fulfilment would have been in Antiochus dying not in battle but of a mysterious illness. It is hard to see any possible application to the destruction of any Roman entity associated with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70.

The little stone cut out without human hand in Dan. 2 is the very phrase used of the destruction of Antiochus Epiphanes, who "shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand" (Dan. 8:25). Clearly there was a possible potential fulfilment of the Dan. 2 prophecy at his time. But again, it didn't happen and the prophecy was again reapplied and reinterpreted. Antiochus died suddenly of a stroke. But the Kingdom of God didn't come, perhaps because Judas Maccabeus failed to be the potential Messiah figure. And above all, because the Jews were not spiritually ready and wanted their own kingdom rather than God's Kingdom.

Dan 8:26 *The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true: but seal up the vision; for it belongs to many days to come-* Again we see emphasized, as in :17,19, that the obvious historical fulfilment in the likes of Alexander and Antiochus was only the incipient fulfilment; these things belong to the very last days, the time of Daniel's personal resurrection (:17-19). The simple statement that the vision is true is lifted from Dan. 2:45. As noted on :25, the destruction of the image system and the beasts is the same as the destruction of this latter day arrogant individual who will personify them. The vision was to be sealed until the time of the end, which Dan. 12:9 explains as meaning that it would not be understood until the time of the Lord's return; as Rev. 13:10. The unsealing of the scroll in Revelation therefore also majorly refers to the events of the very last days before the Lord's return. Only then, when prophecy is being fulfilled before the eyes of the faithful, will the ultimate interpretation be apparent. All we can do now is muse over the primary fulfilments, and get some broad picture of how things shall unfold at the end. The purpose of prophecy is not to predict the future, but so that the generation that sees the fulfilment will realize that this was all foretold and all is going wonderfully according to plan. And the traumas of the last days will mean that this is vital encouragement.

Daniel's prophecies, specifically those with potential for fulfilment under Antiochus, were "sealed". The implication may be that no matter how men go to and fro to find knowledge, the fulfilment will remain hidden. The text of the prophecies were possibly literally sealed but opened in the time of Antiochus. And they were written in

Aramaic so that the Jews of the time clearly understood. But Is. 29 speaks of prophetic words being sealed, impossible of interpretation by learned and unlearned alike, as a result of Israel's sin and refusal to realize their potential. The sealing of the prophetic book there referred to a judgment in consequence of Judah's sins. Daniel's prophecies about the Antiochus period were sealed because they were only to come to fulfilment if the seals were removed by the fulfilment of various preconditions. This didn't happen. And so the concept is repeated in Revelation, where the scroll of the book of life, the ultimate sealed book, is unsealed by the Lamb after the seal events of the very last days.

Dan 8:27 I Daniel, fainted, and was sick for some days; then I rose up, and did the king's business: and I wondered at the vision-

Daniel's trauma may be because he had lived through the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon, and was expecting restoration. But now he is given a vision of an even worse destruction of the temple and even more abuse of his people. For as yet he has not received the prophecies of Messiah and eternal restoration of Dan. 9 and 11. He had clearly underestimated the sin and impenitence of his people, and was still struggling to accept the conditional and flexible nature of Divine prophecy, as we see also in Dan. 9:1-4. And perhaps all God's children have struggled with these same things, especially those who come to accept they will likely die before their Lord returns; having lived their lives in expectation of His imminent coming. I suggest that it was Daniel's reflection upon these things at this point that led him to make the prayer of confession of sin of Dan. 9.

Why the mention that after seeing these things, Daniel got up and went back to work doing the King's work? The idea is that like us, we understand clearly that kings and empires shall all pass away and we always even know some details about events leading up to that. But for now, we must go on with our workaday lives. Although doing what we do in the knowledge that all this shall pass away and is as light as the chaff that shall be blown away and known no more.

This is the same kind of conclusion to Dan. 7; Daniel feels sick after the interpretation is given, having realized that the fulfilment was not until "many days to come" (:26). As noted on Dan. 7:15, he had the welfare of God's people so deeply in his heart that he felt actually ill because he realized that their restoration was not going to happen as had been potentially possible when Jeremiah first uttered the restoration prophecies and mentioned a 70 year period.

But none understood it- This may mean that he discussed it with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, but they too did not totally understand it. This lack of understanding was likely because he knew little about Greece. "But none understood it" suggests Daniel shared it with others, but no one was able to explain it. Thus his experiences again repeat those of the kings for whom he had interpreted dreams. Just as we have experiences which enable us to understand the feelings of others in our lives. Likewise "fainted" means to be exhausted or sleepless, the verb used in Dan 2:1 for how the king's sleep fainted from him. Again by this Daniel was allowed to enter into the experiences of a man who had been in his life many years ago. We may pass through experiences which help us understand how someone felt with whom we intersected decades ago.

Daniel didn't understand the 2300 evening-morning period (Dan. 8:27), and in Dan. 9 he is given understanding (Dan. 9:2,22,23). The answer was in the 70 weeks prophecy. "Understand the vision" (Dan. 9:23) prefaces the 70 weeks prophecy, and the vision in view is that of Dan. 8, repeatedly called "the vision" (Dan.

8:1,2,13,15,17,26). The issues of Dan. 9:24 are exactly those of Dan. 8:12-14: transgression will be finished, everlasting righteousness will be brought, and a holy of holies anointed. But just as the 2300 period differs from the 1260 day period of Dan. 7, so the interpretation in Dan. 9 differs. Because the 70 weeks period is not 2300 evening-mornings. Likewise the 1260,1290 and 1335 day periods of Dan. 12 seem to offer yet another scenario. The language of Dan. 12:10,11 is that of Dan. 11:31-35, initially about the possible fulfilment in Antiochus Epiphanes. Surely we have to conclude that the time periods are flexible and changeable, as God factors in all the possible fulfilments in line with human freewill decisions. This really has to be the case, for otherwise Divine prophecy would be simply deterministic and rob man of any freewill.

DANIEL CHAPTER 9

Dan 9:1 *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans-* Daniel would have known Isaiah's prophecies that Cyrus would or could have been the Messiah figure to save Judah. "Darius" was likely his general or another title for Cyrus. The 70 years prophecies of Jeremiah were all about 70 years dominance of Babylon ending with the restoration. Now was the time... but it wasn't happening. The end of the Babylonian domination of Judah spurred Daniel to study and pray for the restoration of the kingdom of God in the form of Judah. He had seen the first part of the image and beast prophecies come true, at least in its historical form. He obviously thought that in some sense, the "end" could come- if there was sufficient repentance. And his prayer of repentance was an attempt to demonstrate that. He didn't merely resign himself to there having to be a further sequence of kings and kingdoms dominating the land before the end came. He was open to the idea of God's flexibility and ability to change a predicted set of events, in line with human repentance and spirituality. Or perhaps he understood the image as standing complete under the headship of Babylon, and now being ready for destruction by the little stone, seeing that the Babylonian headship had now been removed.

Dan 9:2 *In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by the books-* Not by vision and direct revelation, but by his own studies. Hence his deep disappointment when he received the visions of Dan. 7 and 8 about how the end was not going to be after the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy, but there had been delays incorporated into the Divine program because of Judah's sin and refusal to fully repent. The record of this prayer is in the past tense (:4). It could be that after realizing at the end of Dan. 8 that things were not going to work out as had been potentially possible, Daniel recalls this previous prayer of his, and recognizes that it has not been answered as he had wished; it would be answered, but not within the time frame he had expected. And so was fulfilled Ez. 14:14, which had stated that even Daniel could not avert the calamity to befall Judah.

It could be argued that in fact Daniel misunderstood. He was calculating 70 years from the first deportations from Judah, which he had been part of. But a fair case can be made that those 70 years should have been calculated from the destruction of the temple. Yet still God responds to Daniel's prayer and misunderstanding, doesn't point out where he had miscalculated, and instead responds by refocusing Daniel upon the

final ultimate fulfilment of the restoration after the 70 weeks leading to Messiah's Kingdom.

The number of the years about which the word of Yahweh had come to Jeremiah the prophet for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years- God has intentions that He has placed in history. But this doesn't mean that man is predetermined beyond his freewill. Always there is a flexible element in prophecies, to allow for the human response element. No new vision appears after Dan. 8- what we have in Dan. 9-12 is explanation and further development of that vision. The explanations are in Dan. 8:17,19-26; 9:24-27 and Dan. 11:2-12:3. Clearly the kaleidoscope was turning and the elements being rearranged to give different scenarios as the primary possibilities were precluded by various human failures to meet the preconditions. Daniel understood that after 70 years Jerusalem must be restored; but he earnestly prayed for their forgiveness *so that* this would happen (Dan. 9:2 cp. 19). Perhaps he opened his window and prayed towards Jerusalem exactly because he wanted to fulfil 2 Chron. 6:37,38: "If they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn, and pray unto thee... toward their land... and toward the city which thou hast chosen". He knew that repentance was a precondition for the promised restoration to occur.

In the context of the returning exiles, Daniel was aware that the 70 years of desolation had to be fulfilled, and yet he asks God not to defer the promised restoration (Dan. 9:2 cp. 19), as if he understood that the predicted revival of Israel could still be delayed by God on account of their unpreparedness, even though it was prophesied. Daniel understood from Jeremiah's prophecies that Jerusalem's fortunes would be revived after the 70 year period was ended. Yet he goes on to ask God to *immediately* forgive His people, as if Daniel even dared hope that the period might be shortened. Daniel lived into the reign of Cyrus (Dan. 6:28), and so he would have witnessed "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25; Ezra 1:1). But it seems to me that whilst the prophecy of the 70 years came true in one sense, the Jews didn't respond as they should, and so the time of Zion's true freedom in the Messianic Kingdom was delayed. Daniel had been petitioning the Father to not delay beyond the 70 year period in doing this. But in another sense, the prophecy was re-interpreted; Daniel was now told that there was to be a "seventy weeks of years" (Dan. 9:24 RSV) period involved in order to gain ultimate forgiveness for Israel as Daniel had just been praying for. The 70 years had become "seventy weeks of years". The command to rebuild Jerusalem was given in the first year of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1); but Daniel must have watched in vain for any sign that Zion's glad morning had really come. And so it is recorded that in the third year of Cyrus Daniel was given a vision that confirmed to him that "the thing was true, but the time appointed was long [Heb. 'extended'; the word is also translated "greater", "more"]; and he understood the thing" (Dan. 10:1). What was "the thing" that was true, which Daniel sought to understand? Surely it was the vision of the 70 years that he had sought to "understand" in Dan. 9:2. The Hebrew "dabar", translated "thing", is usually translated "word". He was comforted that the word of prophecy would come true; it was "noted in the scripture of truth" (Dan. 10:21). It was just that it had been extended in its fulfilment; "for yet the vision is for many days" (Dan. 10:14). And this was how he came to "understand the thing / word". The essential and ultimate fulfilment of the 70 years prophecy would only be after a long time, involving 70 "weeks of years". Thus Daniel came to "understand" the vision (Dan. 10:1); hence he was so shocked, depressed and disappointed that the fulfilment would not be in his days. But he is set up as a representative of those of us in the very last days who shall

likewise “understand” (s.w. Dan. 12:10) the very same prophecies which Daniel studied. Daniel is described as both understanding, and also not understanding (Dan. 10:1; 12:8). Surely the idea is that he understood the principle of deferment and the outline meaning of the prophecy; but he didn’t understand the details. And so perhaps it is with us who will, or do, likewise “understand” as Daniel did.

The prophecy of 70 years exile in Babylon is specifically stated as having been fulfilled in the first year of Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:20-22, "till seventy years were completed... in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled"). But it is also said to have been fulfilled in the second year of Darius: "O Yahweh of Armies, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation these seventy years?" (Zech. 1:12; the rest of Zech. 1 shows that God has indeed had mercy on Jerusalem). Daniel 9 could be reinterpreting the 70 years as 70 'sevens'; or, adding another 70 'sevens' to the 70 years. Clearly fulfilment of time periods can be delayed or made open to various starting and ending points. Such is the open ended nature of such prophecies. Another possibility is that the taking of Babylon by "Darius" [unknown in secular history] was effectively by Cyrus. Daniel would have known Isaiah's prophecies, that had in advance named Cyrus as the Messiah. But that hadn't quite happened as envisaged in Isaiah- hence Daniel's concern.

The end of the exile and the restoration was the time when the prophecies of Jeremiah about 70 years would be fulfilled. It should be noted that Jer. 25:11 specifically states that the 70 years would be the length of the Babylonian kingdom: "And those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years". Jer. 29:10 is explicit: "When Babylon’s seventy years are over". I suggested on Dan. 2 that the initial possible fulfilment of the image prophecy was in the Babylonian kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar onwards until its fall. The beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign is often dated to 605 BC; and so the defeat of Babylon in BC 538 roughly 70 years later would mean that Darius was Cyrus [or his army general], and this was when the Jews were intended to return. But Cyrus failed to be the intended Messiah figure and the Jews generally preferred the soft life in Babylon rather than the restoration of Zion. And so there had to be the prophecy of Daniel 9 to provide another path forward.

I suggest that having read of the 70 year period in Jer. 29:10, Daniel went on to Jer. 29:12-14, which predicate the prophecy coming true upon Israel's prayer- and therefore he prays the prayer we have here: "When you call to Me and come and pray to Me, I will give heed to you. You will search for Me and find Me, if only you seek me wholeheartedly. I will be at hand for you – declares the Lord – and I will restore your fortunes. And I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have banished you – declares the Lord – and I will bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you". The time period was conditional upon Israel's prayer- just as prayer plays a huge part in the realisation of the final time periods. Daniel understood it was conditional and therefore he prays. Daniel is in fact praying hoping against hope; for he surely was aware of the words of his contemporary prophet Ezekiel, who had stated that even if Noah, Job and Daniel were to intercede for the remnant, they could save none but themselves (Ez. 14:12-20). But like Moses, he prays for what he has been told was impossible; or we think of Jeremiah, praying when God had told him not to pray any more for Judah. The problem was that one man's prayer could not be counted for all Israel. But Daniel gallantly tries- and fails. The Lord Jesus set His face to Jerusalem as Daniel set his face to Jerusalem to pray. And He succeeded where Daniel as a good but imperfect man had to fail. However his prayer did elicit Angelic response (:21-23)- the essence of the prayer would be even

more gloriously answered, but not immediately, as Daniel clearly hoped. We see the same with the Lord's request not to actually have to die on the cross and to be saved from that death. In one sense the 70 years prophecies were fulfilled (2 Chron. 36:21) but in another they weren't. But even the response to the prayer, in the 70 weeks prophecy, was open to adjustment. Even the word for "weeks" is literally 'sevens' and could apply to seven periods of things other than days. For it is hard to find a clear historical interpretation of the 7 - 62 - 1 week program outlined. Finding credible starting points is very difficult. Any interposition of a 'gap' within the 70 weeks [e.g. placing the final half week in the last days] surely is at variance with the whole idea of a 70 week period. The 'anointed one' initially could have been Cyrus (Is. 45:1), Zerubbabel or Joshua the High Priest. They all failed in their potentials. Cyrus was the best initial fulfilment option, appearing 49 years [7 'weeks'] after the destruction of the temple. But he failed in his potential, being distracted by worldly power and paying too much attention to the pressure from his princes and his son Cambyses. The rest of the 70 weeks prophecy goes awry after that point; just as Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled so much about the little horn and "king of the north" in Dan. 7,8,11, but failed to fulfil to the end. Various other preconditions, especially the spiritual state of God's people, were not met. And so the kaleidoscope turns again, and we have these things deferred until the last days. This is the genre of apocalyptic. All attempts to view these scriptures as simple linear predictions of events will fail. With the possible exception of the Lord's Olivet Prophecy, which is about events solely in the very last few days before His coming, Bible prophecy in the apocalyptic genre is not intended to have a single simple linear, chronological fulfilment. We naturally enquire why we have so much detail about scenarios that didn't come true; the same question as to why we have all the detail of Ez. 40-48 about the commands relating to a temple the exiles should have built but didn't. It is to bring us to the spirit of David in Ps. 139, marvelling at how much knowledge God has. Not only of our thoughts and actions before we do them, but of all our multiple potentials that didn't come true. And those of His collective people. The result of the 70 weeks was "to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (:24). This ultimately was not in practice achieved by the 70 weeks prophecy; it finally comes true through the work of the Lord Jesus coming to its full term at His return.

Another possibility is that there is an intentional ambiguity in how Jer. 25:11,12 speaks of "seventy years". The Hebrew word for "Seventy" is composed of consonants which with different vowel points could read "weeks". After 'weeks of years', the restoration would come. The difference is between *shav'uim* [weeks] or *shiv'im* [seventy]. And Daniel is being told that Israel's impenitence and the failure of the Messiah figures meant that God was now reading this as weeks of years, not 'seventy years'.

We note that Daniel was reading and responding to God's word through Jeremiah. In response, he has a word from God (Dan. 9:25). This is a more dramatic instance of what happens in the life of every believer. Our hearing of God's word leads to His word in response to us, in that His word is a living word.

Jeremiah's prophecies against Babylon were sent to Babylon when Zedekiah visited Babylon in the fourth year of his reign (Jer. 51:59-61). Quite possibly it was from this that Daniel became aware of Jeremiah's prophecies.

Dan 9:3 *I set my face to the Lord God*- Daniel prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem. Yet he was praying to God, not Jerusalem as a city or the temple as a material place. The physical praying toward Jerusalem was merely to focus him upon the essence, that God was still somehow present in ruined, Divinely judged

Jerusalem. If however the idea is that he prayed heavenwards, this could be read as him recognizing that as Ezekiel had described, the glory of the Divine presence had indeed now left Jerusalem.

To seek by prayer and petitions, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes- He recognized that Bible prophecy isn't just automatically fulfilled. He realized that the idea of revival after 70 years required prayer and deep repentance. Or maybe that 70 year period had already expired, and so Daniel begs for the restoration to happen. We see here the openness of God, which is a function of His extreme sensitivity to human prayer and repentance. This is why the 70 year period was understood by Daniel to be flexible, and why there are various time periods in Daniel which apparently reflect the varying possibilities in fulfilment. This is why we can never construct an exact chronology of latter day events in advance. So much is open.

"Petitions", Heb. *hanan*, is a form of the common word for 'grace'. He was looking for grace, realizing, as he clearly states, that Israel have sinned, broken the covenant and didn't deserve anything from God.

Dan 9:4 *I prayed to Yahweh my God, and made confession, and said, Oh Lord-*

The Hebrew for "prayed" is strictly 'to make intercession'. Daniel wasn't simply asking for something. He saw himself as interceding for Israel, based on his own rightness with God, and begging God to show grace to His impenitent people who had broken His covenant. He failed and His prayer as it stood went unanswered, in the short term. But the answer was the revelation of the Messiah, who would successfully mediate and make an end of all sin.

John Collins has observed that the prayer "flows smoothly, full of traditional phrases and free of Aramaisms" (*Daniel* p. 347). This is what we would expect when a native Hebrew speaker prays in Hebrew to his God; we can have every confidence that we are reading the actual words prayed by a man many centuries ago. The Hebrew translated "confession" is the common word used for praise or worship. To confess sin in such true penitence is the ultimate worship; we too easily associate worship with musical performance, but this is not the idea in Hebrew thought. God may be worshipped upon or using musical instruments, but the essence of worship is within the heart.

The great and dreadful God- The phrase is used to distinguish God from the gods of the nations (Dt. 7:21; 10:17; 1 Chron. 16:25; Ps. 96:4; there are many allusions to Deuteronomy in this prayer). Daniel realized that idolatry was the essence of Israel's sin. That there is only one God has such huge implications in human life. This title of God is also used by Nehemiah (Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32). Nehemiah was also influenced in his prayer of penitence by Daniel's prayer. We too should reflect Biblical influence in our words and reasoning; in this sense the Bible becomes a living word, a word for our lives.

Who keeps covenant and loving kindness with those who love Him and keep His commandments- Daniel accepts that covenant relationship requires obedience, and yet he is going to confess that Israel have been disobedient; and he has faith that despite their continued disobedience, his singular repentance and prayer might be accepted by God, so that the covenant blessings might be restored to Israel. This speaks to the issue of whether God's grace is conditional or not. As Daniel states, the grace of "loving kindness" of the new covenant is conditional upon obedience; and yet that grace is such by its nature that we can hope to receive this grace despite personal disobedience, through the mediation of another (the Lord Jesus, in our case). If Daniel had not understood that, he would not have prayed this prayer as he did.

It has been well argued that the prayers of Dan. 9 and Neh. 9 alludes heavily to Zechariah and Haggai's calls for repentance in order that the Kingdom be reestablished. "In both we see the key role of the prophets in warning the earlier generation (Zech. 1:4, 5, 6; 7:7, 12; cf. Neh. 9:26, 30; Ezra 9:10–11; Dan. 9:6, 10) and the use of the construction of בִּיד to speak of the agency of these prophets (Zech. 7:12; cf. Neh. 9:30; Ezra 9:11; Dan 9:10). In both we see the function of the law as the standard rejected by the earlier generation (Zech. 7:12; cf. Neh. 9:16,29,34; Ezra 9:10, 14; Neh. 1:7; Dan. 9:5, 10,11) and the near identity of the words of the prophets and the law (Zech. 7:12; 1:6a; cf. Neh. 9:29,34; Dan. 9:10,11). In both the earlier generation is identified as אֲבוֹת (Zech. 1:2, 4, 5, 6; 8:14; cf. Neh. 9:2,9,34,36; Ezra 9:7; Neh. 1:6; Dan. 9:16; Ps. 106:6,7) and the sin of that generation is linked with the present generation (Zech. 1:6b, 8:14; cf. Neh. 9:32–37; Ezra 9:6–7; Neh. 1:6–7; Dan. 9; Ps. 106:6). Finally, in both there is an admission of the justice of God (Zech. 1:6b; cf. Neh. 9:33; Ezra 9:15; Dan. 9:6,14)".

Dan 9:5 *We have sinned and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from Your precepts and from Your ordinances-* The prayers of Ezra 9 and Neh. 9 are similar to this prayer, with the faithful individual taking upon himself the guilt of the nation. Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel were likely inspired and encouraged by the examples of each other in doing so. It is the very opposite of the guilt by association mentality which is so strongly within human nature, and which has been wrongly glorified in so many religious communities. These men eagerly accepted the guilt by association, because they so loved God's people and were themselves part of that people. The Lord Jesus on the cross exemplified this attitude. As stated in :4, covenant relationship and the related blessings were conditional upon obedience; Israel had been disobedient, and were impenitent on an individual level. And yet as noted on :4, that grace is such by its nature that we can hope to receive this grace despite personal disobedience, through the mediation of another (the Lord Jesus, in our case). If Daniel had not understood that, he would not have prayed this prayer as he did.

"Done wickedly" translates the word usually understood as 'condemned', and the word for "ordinances" [literally 'verdicts'] continues the legal language. Israel had sinned and been condemned. And yet Daniel even at this stage pleads for their restoration and salvation. Paul develops this in Romans; we are condemned sinners, the verdict has been given; and yet even in our dire situation we can still be not only forgiven but counted righteous, thanks to the new covenant in Christ. The essence of the new covenant was what was promised to Abraham, so it was in operation at Daniel's time.

The triple mention of "sin... iniquity... and wickedness" is answered in :24. These were to be dealt with [and in a more permanent and more glorious way] by the work and cutting off of Messiah. The very thought of which initially would have struck desperation and bitter disappointment into Daniel's heart. Likewise :16,18 and :20 speak of the city, temple and people. Dan. 9:24 says these will suffer- but be restored by the 'cut off' Messiah. For us too, the very things that strike deep into our hearts with desperation, illness, death itself etc., are in the end all part of a far more glorious and eternal salvation than any immediate answer to our prayers could ever achieve.

Dan 9:6 *Neither have we listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land-* The prophetic ministry is not described in such detail in the historical accounts. This verse

implies that they spoke not simply occasionally to kings and leaders, but to absolutely everyone in Israelite society. Daniel was himself a prophet and yet he identifies himself here with the disobedient people, whom "we" had not listened to. This deep self-identity with sinners when not having sinned personally in that way is the essence of the work of the Lord Jesus and of all those in Him.

Dan 9:7 Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as at this day- As explained on :5, Israel had sinned and were in shame. Confession of sin involves an acceptance that Yahweh is righteous, and we are not. We see the same in David's confessions of sin after the Bathsheba incident. One title of the Lord Jesus is "the Lord our righteousness"; our confessed sin is a declaration that the Lord is righteous, and through imputed righteousness, all those in the Lord Jesus are therefore and thereby declared as righteous. If righteousness "belongs to You", then we are to identify with that righteousness rather than our own sinfulness. On a psychological level, the essence of repentance and indeed Christianity is a question of identity; despite our past and ongoing sinfulness, with whom and with what do we essentially self-identify? With our sin, or His righteousness?

To the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, who are near and who are far off, through all the countries where You have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You- Daniel and Judah were in captivity, but the ten tribe kingdom of Israel had been scattered by the Assyrians much earlier. But Daniel's vision was that repentance by himself and the remnant of Judah could lead to a total restoration of all Israel, in line with the prophecies of the restoration.

Dan 9:8 Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You- This repeated emphasis upon "shame of face" (:7) or 'blushing' reflects how deeply Daniel felt the presence of God. In that presence, he as it were blushed with shame. This is how close we can realize God's presence. In :6, Daniel has spoken of the shame of the same categories, the kings, princes, fathers and common people. Daniel was a prince (Dan. 1:9), but here he identifies himself with the common people. He speaks of "us", and then the kings, princes and fathers. He is a powerful example of identifying with people in order to try to save them, just as God did in His very human Son. And our outreach to the world is likewise at its best when we identify with our target audience. He had learnt all this from Jeremiah, whose prophecies he was now considering: "righteousness belongs unto You, but unto us [Jeremiah included] confusion of faces" (Jer. 7:19).

Dan 9:9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; for we have rebelled against Him- The term "mercies and forgiveness" is only used twice, and each time about how the punished exiles could receive mercy and forgiveness if they repented (1 Kings 8:50; Is. 55:7). But they had not repented, yet Daniel seeks to as it were do this for them. "Rebelled" is the word and idea used of how Israel rebelled against God in the desert and therefore didn't return to the promised land (Num. 14:9), and the word is repeatedly used about those who apparently rebelled in not wanting to inherit the land intended for them (Josh. 22:16,18,19,29). The same had happened with the exiles; they had rebelled, and most of them preferred to remain in Babylon rather than enter the promised land (Neh. 9:26; Ez. 2:3; 20:38). Daniel is aware of the situation, and yet has the spiritual vision to believe that in the spirit of Moses influencing God to all the same save Israel, so he could perhaps alter the nation's condemnation and

bring about the immediate restoration of the Kingdom in his lifetime. God didn't agree to this, giving the 70 weeks prophecy as His response; after all, most of Judah had remained in Babylon and didn't want the good news of the restored Kingdom. The essence of Daniel's request would come true, but not the timing. It seems he was too strongly influenced by his personal desire not to die and to see the restored Messianic Kingdom in his own lifetime.

Dan 9:10 *Neither have we obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets-* We note that the words of the prophets were still counted as God's "law" (:11); this means that the "law" could be amended, added to, and also subtracted from. Many of the laws were only really applicable to Israel in the wilderness; and this affects the issue of the Sabbath. The laws were not eternal but flexible, even in Old Testament times; and this paves the way for understanding the abrogation of those laws by the Lord's death.

Another take is that the "laws" in view were those given by the prophets, not those mediated to Israel by the priests as the law of Moses was. Possibly what is in view are the laws for the restoration given in Ez. 40-48 and the offer of a new covenant by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. All this had been unresponded to by God's people. God had offered to write His laws in the hearts of the exiles. And they had refused to be open to that.

Daniel's confession in :10-12 is full of allusion to Deuteronomy. He is admitting that Israel broke the old covenant and are receiving the results of doing so. Yet he still asks for forgiveness and restored relationship with God. This is his way of asking that the promised new covenant be put into operation by God. This request was answered in the 70 weeks prophecy, which speaks of Messiah being cut off and the ultimate ending of sin and its consequences. It was just that the timing was not going to be immediate, as Daniel hoped. But the essence of his prayer was to be gloriously answered, on a scale far beyond what he could have then imagined.

Dan 9:11 *Yes, all Israel have transgressed Your law-* Again Daniel focuses upon the ten tribes as well as Judah, "all Israel", because his vision was for the fulfilment of the prophecies of Israel's total restoration from wherever they had been scattered.

Turning aside, that they should not obey Your voice- The "turning aside" was in order that they should not obey; the idea is that they turned their ears away so that they didn't hear what they had to obey. I suggest that the psychological basis for all apparently intellectual failure to understand God's voice is because we subconsciously fear that if we understand rightly, we shall have to obey. See on :18.

Therefore the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses the servant of God has been poured out on us; for we have sinned against Him- The Mosaic curse for disobedience to the oath was punishment "seven times". Daniel seems to have thought that the sacking of the temple and Babylonian exile was that "seven times" punishment. The prophecy of the 70 weeks seems to be saying that the time of punishment was not yet over, not least because Israel had not repented, and most of the Jews preferred to remain in Babylon rather than participate in the restoration.

Dan 9:12 *He has confirmed His words which He spoke against us, and against our judges who judged us, by bringing on us a great evil-* The term "great evil" is exactly that used about the "great evil" of Judah's sins (Ezra 9:13; Neh. 13:27; Jer. 44:7). The sin was in effect its own punishment; the "great evil" of their sin was matched with the "great evil" of the Babylonian invasion and exile (Jer. 16:10; 32:42).

For under the whole Heaven such has not been done as has been done to Jerusalem- Daniel would have been unable to legitimately say this if he referred to the whole planet; for all he knew, similar desolations had been wrought in other places and times. "The whole Heaven" in view was as it were the sky over the land promised to Abraham, the earth-heaven system in Daniel refers specifically to that area, as I have explained on Dan. 2 and Dan. 7.

Dan 9:13 *As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil has come on us: yet have we not entreated the favour of Yahweh our God, that we should turn from our iniquities, and accept Your truth-* Daniel doesn't say 'We have not prayed for forgiveness', rather does he say 'We have not prayed that we might be turned away from our sins'. The promised blessing of the Spirit, that which was promised to Abraham, was not simply forgiveness but a being turned away from our sins, the same phrase is used in Acts 3:26. Daniel realized likewise that the gift of a holy spirit can be received from God; He can give us a new worldview, a new pair of eyes, a psychological acceptance of Divine truth. Daniel recognizes that sin is addictive, and we need to pray for direct Divine action upon the human heart so that we might turn away from sin and accept His Truth. Although Judah had not turned away from their sins, Daniel uses the same word to ask God to turn away His judgment of Zion (:16). He clearly had the spiritual vision to believe in the power of God's grace to accept the mediation of just one person, on behalf of those who are impenitent. We think of how the Lord accepted the faith of the friends on behalf of their friend (Mk. 2:5). "The truth" which they should accept would be the great truth that they had sinned, and that God through His grace could save them out of that sin to restoration through the Spirit. "Mercy and truth" is a common phrase for the promises to Abraham, and according to Acts 3:26 the turning away from sins is part of this covenant promise. The greatest, final truth is that we hopeless sinners have been forgiven by grace. And will surely be saved.

"Accept your truth" can be rendered as RV "have discernment in Thy truth". Meaning to acquire insight into God's revealed will, and to think and act in accordance with it. This is the meaning of "understand" in Dan. 9:25; 11:33,35; 12:3,10. Daniel repeatedly does not understand these later visions of God's word. He feels this is because of how closely identified he is with Israel in their sinfulness and judgment for it.

Dan 9:14 *Therefore has Yahweh watched over the evil, and brought it on us-*

The idea of God 'watching' to fulfil His word in Dan. 9:14 is also taken from Jeremiah, who begins his prophecy speaking of the almond tree, the tree of watching over or hastening (Jer. 1:11,12). The idea was that God watches for the moment to make His word come true, whether for good or evil. This of itself shows us the nature of Bible prophecy. The prophetic words are not determinate, meaning that certain things will happen regardless of human freewill. God has stated His intentions, and is waiting for the right time to fulfil it. Hence Daniel alludes to this idea, because He wants God to in one sense hasten His plan to re-establish His Kingdom, and wants Him there and then to seize the opportunity to fulfil it. In other words, God watches eagerly for human behaviour and required preconditions which enable Him to judge or save. Thus He waits until a certain amount of iniquity has built up before judging sinners; and waits in Daniel's case [or, as Daniel then understood it] for a certain amount of prayer and penitence before fulfilling His word of final salvation.

The implication could be that the evil is pronounced, but there is a period of time after that during which repentance is possible. This was clearly seen in the lives of

Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. But because Judah refused to repentant, God watched over the evil and brought it upon them. The idea may be that the Angels who are the eyes of Yahweh watched upon it, i.e. they brought it about.

For Yahweh our God is righteous in all His works which He does, and we have not obeyed His voice- Again we see that repentance involves the declaration of God as right and ourselves as wrong (Ps. 51:4 etc. "Against You, and You only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Your sight; that You may be proved right when You speak, and justified when You judge").

Dan 9:15 *Now, Lord our God, You who brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and has gotten Yourself renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly-* Daniel wished God to bring Judah back from Babylon to the land just as He had brought Israel out of Egypt to the same land. But the reality was that most of Jewry remained in Babylon and didn't want to restore the kingdom themselves.

Dan 9:16 *Lord, according to all Your righteousness, please let Your anger and Your wrath be turned away-* The spirit of this prayer is that God has rightly decreed judgment upon Israel, but the course of that projected history can be changed or ammended in outworking by prayer and repentance. This is similar to what Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar experienced, both being given the chance to repent in order to avoid stated judgments. The openness of God is seen clearer in Daniel than anywhere else. Daniel prayed at this point because Jer. 29:10-14 had predicted that after the 70 years, Judah would pray to God and the kingdom be restored; and Daniel saw himself as representative of Judah, reasoning that the prayer of just one man could be counted as that of the nation. Although in this case God didn't accept that, the principle was valid and is exemplified in the work and mediation of the Lord Jesus for us: "For thus says Yahweh, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you and perform My word of grace towards you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says Yahweh, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope and a future. You shall call on Me, and you shall go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says Yahweh, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places where I have driven you, says Yahweh; and I will bring you again to the place from where I caused you to be carried away captive".

From Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all who are around us- The same word for "reproach" is repeatedly used in Nehemiah of the "reproach" of Judah even after the exiles returned. The end of Judah's "reproach" was associated with the projected restoration from Babylon and reestablishment of God's Kingdom in the form of Judah under a Messianic ruler (Is. 54:4; Ez. 36:15,30 cp. Joel 2:19). But while God's word was a "reproach" to Judah, so their reproach would continue (Jer. 6:10 s.w.). Judah's reproach was to be "eternal" (Jer. 23:40), but Daniel believed that the restoration prophecies about the removal of reproach would reverse this. So to pray for the "reproach" to end was tantamount to asking for the prophecies of the restoration to come true. Daniel certainly had spiritual ambition and vision in praying for this, when the spiritual preconditions in Judah were simply not there. He had learnt from the example of Moses and his own life, that God is prepared to bless a spiritually weak majority for the sake of a righteous minority and their

intercession. And this is the essence of what was achieved in the Lord Jesus, as Rom. 1-8 makes clear.

The "great mountain" of God's Kingdom fills the whole earth, but the mountain initially begins at one point on the planet. Elsewhere in Daniel, the mountain is defined superficially as Jerusalem: "Your city Jerusalem, even Your holy mountain". The toes are therefore specifically dominating Jerusalem at the initial point of impact of the stone upon the land. And this is what we would expect from an Islamist confederacy dominating the land of Israel- Jerusalem is the key issue for them. And we know from Zechariah that "the city shall be taken".

Dan 9:17 *Now therefore, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant, and to his petitions-* Daniel had the vision to believe that "just" for the sake of his singular intercession, this restoration of God's Kingdom in Judah could occur. He clearly understood 'the power of one', as Peter Stringer put it to me some years ago. This is the spirit of Christ in Daniel; for our redemption as condemned sinners is on account solely of His work for us, the just for the unjust.

And cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake- The 70 weeks prophecy, given in response to this prayer, speaks of the placing of an abomination which desolates, using the same word as used here for "desolate". The answer was that indeed the desolation would finally be removed, but not when Daniel hoped, i.e. immediately, in his lifetime. The word is repeatedly used in the curses of Lev. 26:22,31,32,34. Lev. 26:35,43 mention that the desolation of the land would be to cover all the Sabbaths and jubilees that had not been kept. The prophecy of seventy sevens of continued desolation until the final cleansing could refer to 70 weeks or Sabbaths or jubilee years. The shining of God's face upon Zion is the language of Isaiah's prophecies of the restoration; Daniel was praying that the Messianic, restored kingdom would then be reestablished on account of his prayer.

Dan 9:18 *My God, turn Your ear, and hear-* As noted on :11, Israel had turned away their ears from God's word lest they understood it and had to obey it. Daniel recognizes this, but had such an insight into the depth of God's grace and His willingness to accept the intercession of just one man, that he asks God all the same to turn *His* ear to Judah's desolation.

Open Your eyes, and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name: for we do not present our petitions before You for our righteousness, but for Your great mercies' sake- Daniel has admitted that Judah have turned their ear away from God (:11) and were impenitent. But he doesn't therefore assume that God will not respond to them. He realizes that grace means that God can cover even that, for the sake of the intercession of the faithful. And so he appeals to God's great grace, admitting that Judah had absolutely no righteousness of their own, and that despite their sins, Zion was still called by God's Name, claimed as His own because He had an eternal purpose with it. This is the great significance of being baptized into that Name and thereby also becoming those claimed as God's very own, whom He will continue to work with according to His purpose even if we turn away from Him.

Daniel speaks of presenting the prayers of others, as if he were a priest. When he was from the royal family, and therefore from Judah. Likewise the whole work of intercession with God for Israel's sins was what the High Priest did on the Day of Atonement. He was forced by circumstance and lack of a visible high priest to do this, just as many who feel unqualified are forced by circumstance to pastor their families or other flocks of God's people.

Dan 9:19 *Lord, hear; Lord, forgive; Lord, listen and do; don't defer, for Your own sake, my God, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name-* As noted on :18, this appeal was for God to hear a people who didn't hear Him (see on :11), to forgive those who were impenitent, to listen to those who didn't listen to God. It was an appeal to His absolute grace and willingness to accept intercession. And that grace was 'God's own sake', it is at the very heart of God and is the quintessence of all He is and stands for. "Don't defer" reflects Daniel's understanding that the purpose of God can be delayed or deferred; the 70 years prophecy of Jeremiah appeared to him to be being delayed in fulfilment, and the answer he receives in the 70 weeks prophecy is effectively a deferment. Is. 46:13 could mean that at the final restoration, Zion's redemption will no longer be delayed (s.w.); and Rev. 10:6 is clear that in the last days, there will be "delay no longer". We may appeal against it, as Daniel does here, knowing that God is open to dialogue. But He also knows best and operates His delays and hastenings with a justice and grace beyond our comprehension.

The climax of the prayer is in this verse, which has seven Hebrew words in it. And the climax of those words is "Do not defer". This is what Daniel was leading up to. Daniel perceived the idea of God prolonging and delaying the final restoration, in that in Daniel 9 he begs that God will not in fact delay; for the visions of Dan. 7 and Dan. 8 all spoke of a delay in the restoration compared to his time. He was heard in that an Angel was caused to fly swiftly (:21), implying a speeding up of the Angelic processes; but still the delay remained in place because despite that, Israel refused to adequately repent. One could argue that the prayer wasn't answered- in fact there was a further delay, and the request for the current "delay" to be ended wasn't answered at all. Yet it was certainly 'heard'; and an Angel was caused to fly swiftly in response. But as with the Lord's unanswered prayer for deliverance from actual death on the cross, the answer in the end was the more glorious. The answer that Messiah would come but be killed and that Jerusalem would yet again be trashed... would have struck at the core heart of Daniel, dashing all his short term hopes. But that was to be the world's redemption. And it is the same with our apparently unanswered prayers...

Dan 9:20 *While I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel-* Daniel was aware that he too was a sinner, although the record presents him as almost spotless. Or it could be that he felt so identified with the sin of Israel that he felt personal guilt because of it. This helps us understand how the absolutely perfect Lord Jesus could be made a sin offering for us, could be identified with sinners to such an extreme extent that He died the death of a criminal on a Roman cross. I will note on Dan. 10:17 that Daniel had yet to be even deeper convicted of his own sins and also those of Judah.

And presenting my supplication before Yahweh my God for the holy mountain of my God- Note the personal pronouns. As I have repeatedly noted, he believed in 'the power of one', that 'just' one righteous man interceding for a sinful nation could cause their restoration and salvation. This is immense encouragement to us in our intercession for others who currently are far from God; see on Mk. 2:5.

The language of prayer and supplication is what Daniel did in Dan. 6, when the king's men "found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God" (Dan. 6:11). His regular habit of prayer continued, resulting in the deeper insight he now experienced in it.

Dan 9:21 *Yes, while I was speaking in prayer-* We are to imagine Daniel praying out loud.

The man Gabriel- Gabriel was an Angel, but was clearly portrayed as a man and perceived in that way by Daniel. Angels represent men and nations in Daniel, and are strongly identified with those they represent; so it is appropriate to call this Angel a "man".

Whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning- Gabriel had first appeared in Dan. 8:16; but the vision of Dan. 8 was given before the events of Dan. 9 (Dan. 8:1 cp. Dan. 9:1). So the idea is 'the vision I had seen earlier'. But "beginning" means just that. Perhaps the idea is that the vision of Dan. 8 was the beginning of the motivation Daniel received to pray that events might work out differently, and God's purpose be hastened. Gabriel came to explain the vision of Dan. 8 [no other vision had occurred between then and Dan. 9]. Daniel's desire to understand the 2300 period was answered now- with a different time period. The kaleidoscope of fulfilment had turned again.

Being caused to fly swiftly- See on :19. God's purpose and response was indeed hastened; although the chronological hastening of events was not granted to Daniel, he was assured that God was not therefore indifferent, and had immediately responded. The implication is that Gabriel had been sent forth from Heaven to earth by God to explain the vision to Daniel. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10. An alternative reading is that Gabriel was caused to "fly with weariness" (Dan. 9:21 AVmg.); this would then be an example of the Bible's 'language of limitation' which may refer to the Angels rather than God personally. The Angel flying swiftly should be compared with the passages which talk about running swiftly in order to understand and obey God's word (Hab. 2:2; Amos 8:11,12; Ps. 147:15; Dan. 12:4; 2 Thess. 3:1). Dan. 8:18 also describes how the Angel gave Daniel spiritual revelation.

Touched me about the time of the evening offering- The daily offerings were presumably not made in captivity, but Daniel's heart was very much in the land of promise and in the hope of the restoration of Israel's kingdom. He therefore calculated time according to the time of the offerings. Daniel understood his prayers as an offering to God (as in Ps. 141:2), and Gabriel therefore responded appropriately, answering prayer at the time of the evening sacrifice. In Dan. 8:18, the touch of Gabriel, literally 'laying the hand upon', is a sign of Daniel's acceptance. And so we learn that even if our prayers aren't answered as we wish, this is not to say that we are not acceptable with God. Gabriel seems to have been at pains to help Daniel understand this.

We note Daniel prayed at the time of the evening offering, as if his morning and evening prayers were the equivalent of the daily burnt offerings. See on Dan. 8:11. David in the Psalms often talks of praying in the morning, probably because he saw prayer as his morning sacrifice. Indeed it seems that the time was told by reference to the morning and evening sacrifices (1 Kings 18:29,36; 2 Kings 3:20). Regularity in prayer is critically important. Our natures are so weak that we need this kind of discipline.

Dan 9:22 *He instructed me, and talked with me, and said, Daniel, I am now come forth to give you wisdom and understanding-* This is prophetic of the faithful community in the very last days. The Lord says that when the abomination of

desolation appears, then His people should flee Jerusalem; and “let him that reads, understand” (Mt. 24:15-17). Whatever application this had to the events of the three and a half years tribulation of AD67-70 was at best a sketchy and incomplete fulfilment. The tell tale phrase is “let him that reads, understand”. This is inviting us to be like Daniel in Dan. 9:22-25, who also wanted to understand the meaning of the “abomination” prophecy. But he was told that the meaning of that vision about the abomination that desolates would only be revealed in the very last days, i.e. at the time of its fulfilment (Dan. 8:17,26; 12:9). The implication of all this is that there will be believing Jews living in the Jerusalem area at the time of the setting up of the abomination; and they will have special understanding of this prophecy which will lead them to flee. The importance of this for our present study is that this indicates that there will be believers in Israel just before the Lord returns. They will have “understanding” and will be motivated by this to respond. “*Let him... understand*” is paralleled with “*let him that is on the housetop [flee immediately]... let him that is in the field not return*”. Understanding leads to action- both then and now.

Dan 9:23 *At the beginning of your petitions the commandment went forth, and I have come to tell you; for you are greatly beloved: therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision-* Daniel's prayer, at least as it is recorded here, doesn't ask for understanding. Instead it is a request for God to act immediately, to not defer the fulfilment of Jeremiah's '70 years until the restoration, if you pray' prophecy. But God sees through to the essence of our prayers, just as the Lord saw that the essence of the tears and intercessions of Martha and Mary was effectively asking 'Raise Lazarus right now'. And so the essence of Daniel's heart was that he wanted to understand, and this therefore was the answer given. As explained on Rom. 8:26, we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the hidden spirit of our deepest heart is read and understood as our request. We also note in this context that as soon as Daniel prayed, the essence of his heart was read and Gabriel dispatched immediately; he was heard immediately. See on Dan. 10:12.

Daniel didn't understand the 2300 evening-morning period (Dan. 8:27), and in Dan. 9 he is given understanding (Dan. 9:2,22,23). The answer was in the 70 weeks prophecy. "Understand the vision" (Dan. 9:23) prefaces the 70 weeks prophecy, and the vision in view is that of Dan. 8, repeatedly called "the vision" (Dan. 8:1,2,13,15,17,26). The issues of Dan. 9:24 are exactly those of Dan. 8:12-14: transgression will be finished, everlasting righteousness will be brought, and a holy of holies anointed. But just as the 2300 period differs from the 1260 day period of Dan. 7, so the interpretation in Dan. 9 differs. Because the 70 weeks period is not 2300 evening-mornings. Likewise the 1260,1290 and 1335 day periods of Dan. 12 seem to offer yet another scenario. The language of Dan. 12:10,11 is that of Dan. 11:31-35, initially about the possible fulfilment in Antiochus Epiphanes. Surely we have to conclude that the time periods are flexible and changeable, as God factors in all the possible fulfilments in line with human freewill decisions. This really has to be the case, for otherwise Divine prophecy would be simply deterministic and rob man of any freewill.

Dan 9:24 *Seventy weeks are decreed on your people and on your holy city, to finish disobedience, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy-* The end point of the 70 weeks was to be the time when they would no longer be punished for their sins and would be reconciled to God. All prophecy would then be sealed or finished. Any other end point apart from the Lord's second coming is therefore not going to fit the requirements perfectly. We

will discuss various intriguing possibilities, but these were all potential fulfilments which didn't work out. The rabbis teach that "The number of seven weeks is four hundred and ninety years. The Babylonian exile was seventy [years] and the Second Temple stood four hundred and twenty" (Rashi). In this case the coming of Messiah would have been at the destruction of the temple in AD70, and that is exactly when the Lord could have come- but didn't. A prophecy of 70 weeks means 70 weeks or sevens- any interpretation that supposes a gap within the weeks is problematic. Because it takes away the obvious meaning of a time period. If I promise to come to your home after exactly seven weeks, my promise is falsified if I come to you exactly ten weeks later- explaining that in fact I had come after seven weeks, it's just that I inserted a gap of three weeks into my calculation of what "seven weeks" means. I would therefore suggest that the seventy sevens had various potential fulfilments that didn't come about, and may [at least in essence] have a final fulfilment at some later point in the actual "last days".

This prophecy is God's response to Daniel's request that Israel's sin would be overlooked and forgiven, so that they could be restored and judgment would end. Despite the fact they were largely impenitent. Daniel was totally identified with Israel in their sinfulness, and hoped that he could be accepted as their representative, so that his devotion to God and bearing of Israel's sin would be accepted by God. The answer was in the prophecy of the anointed one, the Christ, doing this job and playing this role- through His death. So Daniel's perception was correct and the essence of his prayer was heard- in the work and death of the Lord Jesus.

The chapter begins with Daniel praying for Jeremiah's prophecy of the 70 years desolation of Judah to be brought to an end. But Daniel and those who lived after him in the Maccabean period would have struggled to understand how this prophecy had been fulfilled, with Jerusalem still not liberated. I suggest that the 70 weeks prophecy is a reinterpretation of the 70 years prophecy of Jeremiah. The preconditions for the restoration were not met. Most of Judah preferred the soft life in Babylon, and as the restoration prophets make clear, the few who did return failed to fulfil the prophecies of restoration. They did not build nor operate the temple according to the requirements of Ez. 40-48, and so that prophecy was revealed as conditional, and was perhaps reapplied in a purely spiritual sense, or delayed in fulfilment. And the prophecy of 70 years desolation is now extended and tweaked by this prophecy of 70 sevens. But the simple takeaway point was and is that the period of Gentile domination of God's people is limited, an end will come, however delayed. The day for a year interpretation doesn't have to be pushed; the "sevens" could refer to "seven weeks of years". The idea of seven weeks of years, i.e. 49 years, must make every Jewish mind think of the year of Jubilee. $70 \times 49 = 3430$ years; but the problem is fixing when the first Jubilee was kept after Israel entered the land of Canaan under Joshua. And then there is the problem of the significance of the 7, 62 and final 1 week, which on this basis do not yield any particularly significant chronological points. It is significant that one of the few indirect references to the year of Jubilee in Scripture is in the time of Hezekiah, where it would appear that the great invasion of the land by the Assyrians was in a Jubilee year (Is. 37:30 and context). That invasion and its dramatic destruction by God's direct intervention would therefore typify the events at the end of the final half week, 3.5 year period of suffering.

The language of the ending of sin and bringing in eternal righteousness naturally has some application to the Lord's finished work upon the cross. The whole prophecy was in prospect fulfilled then, but only in the 'now but not yet' sense that we encounter continually throughout the Bible. God for the sake of that prayer of the Lord Jesus

Christ on the cross ["Father forgive them"] forgave us all our sins then (Eph. 4:32), the whole concept of sin was ended in prospect (Dan. 9:24), one final sacrifice was offered for sins (Heb. 10:12). The result of this is that we should repent, search ourselves and confess as many of our sins as possible, knowing they have been conquered. And we too should forgive each other in the same manner as we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:32), not waiting for repentance, but learning the spirit of the Lord Jesus and the attitude of our Father.

"I have finished the work which You gave me to do", ultimately finished when Christ cried "It is finished" (Jn. 17:4; 19:30), alludes to several Old Testament passages. Daniel 9:24 had prophesied that Messiah's sacrifice would "finish transgression... make an end of sins... make reconciliation for iniquity...bring in everlasting righteousness... and to anoint the Most Holy", as if a new sanctuary were being inaugurated. In prospect, the whole concept of sin was destroyed at the point of Christ's death, the devil (sin) was destroyed, the opportunity for us to have the everlasting righteousness of Christ imputed to us was opened up. "It is finished" may well have been uttered with an appreciation of this passage (for surely Dan. 9 was in the mind of our dying Lord). In this case, Christ died with the final triumphant thought that our sinfulness had now been overcome. Surely this should inspire us to a fuller and more confident, joyful faith in this.

But when we come to try to fit this in to the chronology of the 70 weeks prophecy, it is clear that the 70 weeks do not end on the cross. There are no significant events in the week and half week before this, nor 62 weeks before that last week. We must look to the last days for a complete, best fit fulfilment.

"To make an end of sins" is the same idea [in different words] to what we have in Dan. 8:23, when Antiochus or the little horn arises when "the wicked [or, wickedness] have come to the full", or "when the transgressors have completed (their guilt)", a similar idea to the iniquity of the Amorites becoming full, i.e. judgment came after a specified period. And why like that? Because that period was their opportunity for repentance. We marvel that a hardened blasphemer like Antiochus could be given a hope of repentance. We think of how God likewise tried to get Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar to repent and gave them a specific time period. It's the same idea of God elsewhere waiting until "the cup of iniquity was full" before judging as in Gen. 15:16: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full". Likewise Mt. 23:32: "fill you up then the measure of your fathers" and 1 Thess. 2:16: "to fill up their sins". This is the time of Dan. 9:24 "To make an end of sins". But that verse in Dan. 9 is in the midst of a quite different chronology, of the 70 weeks prophecy. Again we have to conclude that there were various chronological schemes that were potentially possible, such is God's sensitivity to human freewill, and His refusal to make His prophecies simply determinate predictions that rob man of his freewill.

Bringing in everlasting righteousness was the message of the new covenant offered to the exiles. There would be a future king named Yahweh Our Righteousness (Jer. 23:5,6; 33:15,16). This is the same as the anointed one, the Christ, the Lord Jesus. No such king-Messiah appeared before Him; but this was the potential in Cyrus and perhaps others. This provision of righteousness was the answer to the prayer in :16: "according to all Your righteousness, please let Your anger and Your wrath be turned away from Your city Jerusalem". The answer to that was in the provision of "The Lord our righteousness", the Lord Jesus. Every aspect and request of Daniel's prayer was answered not as he hoped for [immediate restoration of the Kingdom and forgiveness of Israel by God, yet again]- but in a far more glorious way. In the work of the Lord Jesus, a permanent end being made to sin, and the Kingdom of God being

re-established eternally and far more wonderfully than Daniel had in mind. And so it is for so many of our apparently unanswered prayers.

The conditional, potential nature of the 70 weeks prophecy is perhaps hinted at by the use of the word "decreed". The Hebrew word is unusual in that it occurs only here, and is hard to define. It is unclear whether this period was set in stone or not. The period had been cut out [one possible meaning of the Hebrew word], but that doesn't mean it had to be fulfilled literally.

The Lord seems to have had His mind on the idea of seventy sevens when He taught that this is how much forgiveness we must give people. Babylon was given 70 years until judgment; Israel were given 70 sevens, unlimited patience and forgiveness. That was His take on the prophecy.

Dan 9:25 Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem- The commandment that went forth could refer to the commandment issued in response to Daniel's prayer (:23 "At the beginning of your petitions the commandment went forth, and I have come to tell you"). The anointed one / Messiah was to come seven sevens from this point. In seven literal weeks, or seven 'sevens', be they days or something else, with a day possibly standing for a year- Messiah was to come. No significant point can be found historically, whatever starting point we choose- but perhaps Cyrus [or some other figure] was potentially enabled to do something then. Which he didn't.

Or this commandment to restore Jerusalem could refer to that of Jeremiah, who in 605 / 604 BC predicted restoration after 70 years. But the natural objection is that a command to restore could hardly be given before Jerusalem had been destroyed. So the reference could be to the word for restoration given right at this time by Gabriel in :23. Or perhaps the decree of Cyrus is in view (539 BC), or that of Artaxerxes (458 BC) or that given to Nehemiah (445 BC). But again, as noted on :24, no starting point yields significant events after 7, 62 and 69.5 weeks. And one has to imagine an inserted hiatus even if we wish to apply the last 3.5 years to the last days. And this does violence to the whole idea of a 70 week period. A case can be made that perhaps the decree to restore Jerusalem refers to that of Artaxerxes I in Ezra 7:24. If we date that decree as being given in 457 BC, then 69 weeks / 483 days / years takes us to the beginning of the Lord's ministry in AD 27.

To the Anointed One, the prince- The "people of the prince" in :26 would destroy the sanctuary, and in :27 "he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease". One clear possible initial fulfilment would have been in Antiochus Epiphanes. There would have been an exact match with the account of Josephus that "the daily offerings which they [the Jews] offered to God according to the law, he forbade them from offering". And yet still this didn't bring about "the end". And so there were other alternatives, such as the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 with "the prince" being the Lord Jesus at the head of the Roman armies. This would fit better than Antiochus, who defiled but didn't destroy the temple. There were various possible fulfilments for the anointed one, and somehow the prophecy would have worked out for each of them. It could have been Zerubbabel (Ezra 5:2; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 4:6-10) or Joshua the High Priest (Zech. 6:11,12). According to Is. 45:1, this prince potentially could have been Cyrus. But it could have many other referents (Joshua, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah or Sheshbazzar), or to the Angelic prince Michael who stood for Israel (Dan. 10:21). I suggest below that it could refer to the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross. But the chronological problems stubbornly remain. Just as Jeremiah's 70 years prophecy was recalculated and reapplied into this 70 weeks prophecy, so this 70

weeks prophecy itself has to be recalculated, and shall come true in perfection in the last days, perhaps during a literal 70 week or 70 'sevens' period within the final 3.5 year tribulation.

Shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troubled times- The Lord Jesus is called "Messiah *the Prince*" in Dan. 9:25 in order to contrast with how the anti-Christ, the fake Christ, is also called "the prince of the host" in Dan. 8:11. "It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host" (ESV). This prince "shall stand up against the Prince of princes", the Lord Jesus (Dan. 8:25). There will be a final showdown between these two princes, and their respective followers and Kingdoms. The rebuilding of the temple coincides with the appearance of the "Anointed One". And he is "cut off" then (:26). This just doesn't fit with an application to the Lord Jesus in the first century, although on :26 I give a possible attempt to make it fit. But the coincidence with the rebuilding of the temple is definitely problematic. So I feel confirmed in repeating that just as the 70 years prophecy was conditional and was reinterpreted and reapplied in the 70 weeks prophecy, so that too didn't work out as potentially possible because of Judah's impenitence. It will in essence come true in the last days, perhaps in a literal period of 70 weeks during the three and a half year tribulation.

"Seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks" is a poor attempt to reflect the Hebrew. There is a distinct break after the "seven weeks"; so we could translate "seven weeks, and [then after that] sixty-two weeks". It has been observed: "the 'athnach, the strongest disjunctive Masoretic accent mark between verse dividers, separates the "seven weeks" from the "sixty-two weeks," rather than joining them into a corporate entity equaling "sixty-nine"". It is hard to find specific points of fulfilment after the seven weeks. Likewise there was no time historically when Jerusalem was rebuilt with streets or squares- spaces for forum, market and justice court; as well as 'moats', referring to a defence system of canals like Babylon had. This is a stubborn problem for those who wish to argue that this part of the 70 weeks prophecy has already been fulfilled. It was surely a conditional prophecy, and it too has had to be reinterpreted, reapplied and recalculated.

Dan 9:26 *After the sixty-two weeks the Anointed One shall be cut off-*

The Hebrew of :26 and :27 is very difficult and ambiguous in places. Thus *nagid* [ruler, prince] is used rather than *melek*, the standard word for king. I suggest this was purposeful. Just as I noted above that the words of the "seventy years" prophecy of Jer, 25:11,12 were ambiguous as to whether "seventy years" were meant, or an undefined period of "weeks of years". All this is because God's plan was open-ended and conditional, and has [and had] various possible fulfilments and iterations.

I discussed on Dan. 8:11 how shocking this would have been to Daniel. It fits into a major theme that God is apparently defeated, the apparent salvation in Messiah was going to be "cut off". But still God would win in the end.

The reference could be to the killing of the High Priest Onias III in 171 BC as recorded in 2 Macc. 4:23-28 (also mentioned in Dan. 11:22). This would have been 62 weeks / 434 years after the prophecy of Jeremiah about the 70 years in BC 605. That would require the initial seven week / 49 year period to run concurrently with the 62 week period. But the temptation is to apply it to the murder of the Lord Jesus, the Christ / anointed one. The prophecy clearly had multiple possible applications, but none of them seem to fit exactly. This is not due to some prophetic miscalculation;

just as the 70 year period to restoration didn't happen because of Judah's lack of repentance, and had to be recalculated and reapplied, so the reapplication was likewise a potential that Judah's lack of repentance precluded from happening. As noted on Hos. 5:15, God's intention was that His people would "acknowledge their offence" in captivity, seek Him- and then be restored.

And shall have nothing: and the people of the prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and its end shall be with a flood, and even to the end shall be war; desolations are determined-

"And shall have nothing" is AV "but not for himself". If the AV is correct, and the Lord Jesus is this anointed one, then this surely implies He benefitted nothing from His own sacrifice as He was without sin. But "and shall have nothing" recalls how He died forsaken and betrayed by His friends, His clothing divided amongst His killers, buried in the tomb of a non-family member who took pity on His having nothing, apparently forsaken by God, a man who in His life had nowhere to lay His head and was popular with low lives, and became "the song of the drunkards". This kind of Messiah who 'had nothing' in His death was not exactly the kind of heroic Saviour that Israel wanted.

It is stressed that the sanctuary of God was "cast down" (Dan. 8:11), "trampled under foot" (Dan. 8:13). "destroyed / wasted / spoiled" along with His capital city (Dan. 9:26), "made desolate" (Dan. 9:27). If the city and sanctuary of a god was destroyed in this way, so publically, then that god had lost and had been slain by the god of the army who did this. God as it were emphasizes His own apparent destruction. He recognizes by all this repeated language that indeed, it does look as if "the death of God" has validity, it is how it seems, it is what it looks like. He gets that. The purpose of the prophecies is to show that in fact He exists and is hugely active beyond that. Clearly enough, God doesn't care for His 'image'. He allows people to think as they do about Him, without rushing in to correct impressions. We think of His apparent silence and lack of involvement and engagement at the time of tragedies. It is all a test of our spiritual perception, and we are guided by His word in this.

This appears to have similarities with the desolations of Antiochus IV; the "people / troops of the prince" would then be the Seleucid soldiers who settled in Jerusalem (Dan 11:31; 1 Macc. 1:29-40). But Antiochus didn't destroy the sanctuary; he desolated Jerusalem and defiled the temple (1 Macc. 1:46; 2 Macc. 6:2) but didn't destroy it quite to the extent required by the language here. There are of course similarities with the Roman destruction in AD70, but this Roman approach fails to make any sense in :27. And both references to Antiochus and the Romans run into difficulties in fitting in to the required chronology of the 7, 62 and final one week. The prince to come points to a specific individual, whose people or troops destroy the city and temple. He is an anti-Christ, an imitation of the One who is the true Prince of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:4,5).

However, a case can be made that the anointed one is the Lord Jesus, the Christ [Messiah, anointed one]. But again, the chronology is problematic, unless the periods are given big gaps between them, especially between the 62 weeks and the last half week. Such gaps seem to do violence to the whole concept of 70 weeks. But some may still find the idea attractive.

In reply to Daniel's prayer, God promises that:

- In the short term, there will be a decree made to enable the rebuilding of Jerusalem;
- A time for the ending of Israel's iniquity does lie ahead; their cleansing will be through the coming of their Messiah;

- To enable this, a new kind of covenant would be established with them;
- The means to forgiveness would involve a doing away of animal sacrifices and a destruction of the temple, with abominable idols standing there making it "desolate"

- Eventually this desolation would be done away with.

Thus Daniel's prayer for the forgiveness of Israel and his enquiry about the fortunes of the temple is given a complex answer; very soon a command would go forth to rebuild the temple, but the full judgment for Israel's iniquity still had to come. This would be through the death of their Messiah, great desolation of the temple and other times of trouble. However, ultimately the death and work of their Messiah would enable the eventual cleansing of Israel from their iniquities in a permanent fashion, so that never again would God's House lie desolate. After 69 weeks from the decree to rebuild the temple Messiah was to be "cut off". This ought to silence once and for all the constant Jewish objection to a suffering Messiah; he was to be "cut off". The decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem was given in BC457.

Commentators have frequently multiplied 69 by 7 to give a period of 483 day/years that were to elapse before Messiah's death. However, Jewish time is often reckoned in Lunar cycles rather than Solar, as Europeans are accustomed to. On the basis of Lunar time, 69 weeks of years comes out at 486.5 Lunar years. Allowing for a BC/AD calendar inaccuracy of 4 years, this brings us to AD33.5 for the time of Messiah being cut off; which is exactly when Jesus was crucified, 33.5 years after his birth.

The 69 weeks being split into 7 weeks and 62 weeks is understandable once it is appreciated that most Bible prophecy has some immediate reference to the period around which it was given. 7 weeks of years would come to around 50 years. According to the records of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai it would appear that the bulk of the work was done in the 50 years after the issuing of the decree for rebuilding. This mini time period would doubtless have been of great encouragement to the Jews of the time as they laboured in the rebuilding work amidst so much opposition.

The description of the sacrifices ceasing and the temple being desecrated by an "abomination" can comfortably apply to the final destruction of the temple in AD70. Application to the time of the Maccabees is difficult because despite the disruption of the temple services, the sacrifices did not "cease" permanently. The Hebrew word for "cease" is also translated in the Old Testament as "to cause to fail", "suffer to be lacking", "put down", "to rid", "to take away", showing that the sacrifices in the second temple were to be ended permanently. The placing of abominations in the temple sounds like the Roman desecration of it with the idols of their legions after its final capture in AD70. Jesus also interpreted this part of Dan. 9 with reference to the events of AD70 (Mt. 24:15).

The abomination that caused desolation in AD70 can also be referred to the abomination of Israel's sins, which finally resulted in the desolation of both the land and the temple. Dan. 8:11-13 (R.V.) has many connections with this prophecy of Dan. 9: "The daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down... an host was given against the daily sacrifice by reason of (Israel's) transgression... the transgression of ('making') desolation". Israel's sins reached the maximum degree to which God was willing to let them accumulate without intervening in judgment. If the Jewish crucifixion of Jesus a few years earlier was indeed their rejection of God's Messiah, then this is understandable. Deuteronomy chapters 28-31 consistently link the ideas of desolation and Israel's disobedience. Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, 4.6.6-8) records how the Jewish Zealots made the temple

a garrison in AD70 and thoroughly desecrated it by their actions even before the Romans took it.

If the middle of the 70th week was the destruction of the temple in AD70, then it follows that from BC457 to AD70 is 69.5 "weeks". Therefore, if AD70 was the middle of the 70th week, it follows that there was a gap in the fulfilment of the prophecy. Thus it should not appear unreasonable to say that the first 69 weeks had a chronological fulfilment from BC457 to AD33, and that the first half of the 70th week ended in AD70. Now it is of the utmost significance that the Jewish wars which culminated in the sacking of Jerusalem in AD70 began 3.5 years previously in AD66/67. Thus the first half of the 70th week of the judgments upon Jerusalem started at this time. We must ever remember that the 70 weeks prophecy was concerning the judgments upon Jerusalem and how God was going to deal with their sins, which formed the burden of Daniel's initial prayer.

This gap in the 70 weeks between AD33.5 and AD66.5 must be significant. It could imply that something happened in AD33.5 which gave Israel the opportunity to repent, and that during that time the judgments to come upon them were suspended, although being resumed in AD66.5-70, presumably due to Israel's failure to do anything in the former period to avert those judgments? The Christian reasoning surely sounds uncannily true, that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who was crucified in AD33.5, and that due to Israel's failure to repent as they should have done the judgments continued. It is noteworthy that the judgments on Jerusalem in the first half of the 70th week were to be by Messiah's armies (Dan.9:26). Having been given control of all things on earth (Mt. 28:18) after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was able to send the Roman armies, effectively His armies, against Jerusalem in judgment. Indeed, He foretold the future destruction of Jerusalem by God's armies (Mt. 22:1-7); which became His when God gave Him all power after His resurrection.

The final half (i.e. 3.5 day/years) of the 70th week is difficult by anyone's standards. Masada, the last outpost of Jewish resistance to the Roman re-invasion, fell in AD73.5, which could suggest that the final part of this week and indeed the whole prophecy, finished then. But we wonder why that point should be the end of Judah and Jerusalem's sufferings and the introduction of eternal righteousness. It was surely not that significant. This would mean that by AD73 "reconciliation for iniquity... everlasting righteousness" as promised in Dan. 9:24 would have been brought in. But surely that was achieved 40 years before, on the cross. The idea of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice which permanently overcame sin, thus doing away with the need for animal sacrifices, seems to fit what happened on the cross, not in AD73. The (new) covenant of Messiah was "confirmed" (the Hebrew implies violently, with strength) during the 70th week (Dan. 9:27), and therefore the Old Covenant of the law (Dt. 4:13) was finally done away then; yet surely this was achieved on the cross (Col. 2:14-17). The "vision and prophecy" being "sealed" (Dan. 9:24) at this stage may hint that it was by AD70 or just after that the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy was taken away, and inspired writing ceased. There is ample internal evidence that the whole New Testament canon was written before AD70. But again, this doesn't seem a totally comfortable, best-fit interpretation.

However, it is also possible to argue that the second half of the 70th week refers to a time yet future. The new covenant of Messiah must be powerfully confirmed to Israel, and finally an end of all Israel's punishment for sin must be made, with the result that an end (i.e. a permanent end) must be made to the powers that desolate Jerusalem (:24,27). Such an end clearly did not come in AD73, and the final deliverance of Israel from God's judgment and desolators of the temple mount must

be yet future. Other scriptures suggest that there will be a final 3.5 year downtreading of Jerusalem during which time Messiah's covenant will be confirmed mightily to Israel, and at the end of which time there will be a final end to Israel's sufferings and the destruction of their desolator. There are other references to a 3.5 year period of trouble for God's people in Daniel: "A time (a year), times (two years) and an half", i.e. 3.5 years (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14). The New Testament speaks of a similar period: 1,260 days -also 3.5 years (Rev. 12:6; 11:3); 42 months (3.5 years) (Rev. 11:2; 13:5). It seems fair to assume that they are all speaking of an identical or associated period of time. We have stressed that during the 70th week, the covenant of Messiah will be powerfully confirmed. Therefore we should see this happening during this final 3.5 years; and Mal. 3:1 describes the coming of the future Elijah prophet as "The messenger of the covenant", i.e. he will preach Messiah's covenant to Israel. It is thrilling to find that Jesus and James mention that Elijah's first ministry lasted 3.5 years (Lk. 4:25; James 5:17); it would be so fitting in the light of this for Elijah's second ministry to last the same period of time. Given the present world situation, this 3.5 year downtreading of Israel by those who would take every delight in desecrating Jerusalem and the temple area with their anti-Jewish abominations could begin any moment now.

This interpretation is not without problems. But we can note that the cutting off of Messiah and the temple's destruction do not have to be simultaneous, although they both occurred at some stage after the end of the 62 weeks; Messiah's death resulted in the abolition of the temple, seeing that on account of his death the Old Covenant had been done away.

Josephus describes how the Jews at the time of Jesus were looking for Messiah to come at that time due to their study of Dan. 9 and other such prophecies: "That which chiefly excited them (the Jews) to war was an ambiguous prophecy, that at that time, someone within their country should arise that should obtain the empire of the whole world. This they had received, that it was spoken by one of their nation". This is confirmed by the New Testament recording that "all men were musing in their hearts" about Messiah at this time. Dan. 9 could indicate that Messiah was to have two comings: firstly as a prince, and then returning as a King who has received his Kingdom. This is how the Lord Jesus saw himself in the parable of the nobleman (Lk. 19:12). The time period of 69 weeks from the command to rebuild the city ended in both "Messiah the Prince" (Dan. 9:25) and also in him being "cut off" (Dan. 9:26), i.e. killed. Thus it would appear that it was at His death that Messiah became "the prince", the definite article suggesting that this was the specific Messiah and the greatest ever prince. This is all fulfilled by Jesus Christ's triumphant death/sacrifice being rewarded by His being exalted to God's right hand in Heaven, and being made a "Prince and a Saviour" by Him (Acts 5:31), so that due to His death and subsequent glorification in resurrection he became "the prince of (i.e. over) the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). Messiah's making of "the sacrifice and oblation to cease" was at the end of His 3.5 year ministry. The exposition offered above applies this to His death bringing about the destruction of the temple in AD70.

Dan 9:27 He shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease-

Literally, "for half a week he will put a stop to the sacrifice and the meal offering". Dan. 8 gives a period of 2300 evening-mornings, i.e. 1150 days, for the cessation of sacrifices. In Dan. 9:27 the time period is different- three and a half days, possibly meaning three and a half years or 1260 days. So often in Daniel we find the time periods are flexible. Which they are, because there are various possible and

potential fulfilments of the prophecies, and the range of them is because God takes into account human freewill. For prophecy doesn't make God deterministic. Possibly these 1260 days are reduced to 1150 because the "days are shortened for the elect's sake". We must also factor in that 1 Maccabees gives a period of exactly 3 years for the desecration of the altar by Antiochus Epiphanes [1080 days if we take a 360 day year, 1095 days if a 365 day year]. This again could be because there was a shortening of the days. Josephus however claims it was exactly three and a half years (*Wars* 1.32).

The application to the Lord Jesus in the first century runs into problems here. It is hard to make the 69 weeks end at the beginning of the Lord's ministry. The covenant He made was eternal and not just for a week. And if the midst of the week when sacrifices were ended by Him refers to the cross, then it is out of decorum with the idea of 70 weeks that there should be a 2000 year delay until the fulfilment of the second half of the week. The historical fulfilment could have been in the "covenant" reported in 1 Macc. 1:11 between the Jewish hellenizers and Antiochus, which led to the sacrifices being stopped for three and a half years. This certainly fits the 1260 day [three and a half year] period mentioned in Daniel. There was no such covenant made after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. So

And on the wing of abominations shall come desolation- This "abomination that makes desolate" is applied by the Lord Jesus to the events of the very last days; it is this desolation which shall be removed by His literal return to Zion. The phrase is used in Dan. 8:13; 11:31 and 12:11 [see notes there]. In each case, it has discernible fulfilments at the time of Antiochus, when the temple was rededicated to Zeus and pigs sacrificed upon it, and the Romans who placed idolatrous symbols in it; but the context always required that it have a latter day fulfilment, and the earlier fulfilments are never without problems when compared to the text. It's the same here in Dan. 9:27. The outline fulfilments in Antiochus and the Romans don't fit perfectly with the prophetic language, nor do they fit the specific required chronology of the various weeks and days. Any references to the abominations placed in the temple by Antiochus and the Romans in AD70 are at best incipient fulfilments. A Messiah figure could have come then and restored Judah's kingdom, but the final, perfect-fit fulfilment shall be at the Lord's return.

Even to the full end, and the wrath that is determined shall be poured out on the one who makes desolate- This "full end" and total destruction of the desolator never came true of the Romans, and it is the language of the last days. Any applications to Antiochus and Rome are therefore at best incipient fulfilments. The chronology of the 7,62 and 1 weeks didn't work out; but it shall do so, in the last days. This final period of 70 weeks [and they may be literal weeks or some other form of "sevens"] will culminate in "the full end" and the full establishment of God's Kingdom. That was what Daniel longed to see happening and it forms the context of the 70 weeks prophecy. It could have come true at the time of Antiochus and the Romans, but Judah's lack of repentance precluded it. And so it shall come true in the last days.

Daniel 9 speaks of a coming "prince", an emir or caliph, in Arabic terms, who will lead Israel's enemies in desecrating the temple area and capturing Jerusalem. This figure had incipient fulfilments in Antiochus Epiphanes and the AD70 Roman desecration of the temple mount. The final conflict with a true Messiah figure and the establishment of God's Kingdom could have come at these points, but it was delayed, so that these became but shadows of the final fulfilment in the last days.

It is however significant that the Roman desecration of the temple is used by the Lord Jesus in the Olivet prophecy as a prototype of that which shall be done in the last

days. The Roman empire began as the republic of the city of Rome; but there were simply not enough literal 'Romans' to dominate the large area of the Roman empire. The majority of Roman soldiers were not Romans, but mercenaries or nationals of other areas apart from Rome. What's interesting is that the legions which destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD70 were largely comprised of Arabs, Syrians and other neighbouring nations who bitterly hated the Jews.

Tacitus explains: "Titus Caesar... found in Judaea three legions, the 5th, the 10th, and the 15th... To these he added the 12th from Syria, and some men belonging to the 18th and 3rd, whom he had withdrawn from Alexandria. This force was accompanied... by a *strong contingent of Arabs*, who hated the Jews with the usual hatred of neighbours..." (Tacitus, *The History*, New Ed edition Book 5.1. Editor: Moses Hadas, Translators: Alfred Church, William Brodribb (New York: Modern Library, 2003)). This Arab / Syrian destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, albeit under the control of a larger 'beast' entity, is a detailed prototype of that which is yet to come. Josephus confirms the record of Tacitus by saying that the Roman troops were gathered in Syria, i.e. the army was gathered together from Syrian recruits: "So Vespasian sent his son Titus [who], came by land into Syria, where he gathered together the Roman forces, with a considerable number of auxiliaries from the kings in that neighborhood" (Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus, The Wars of the Jews or The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem*, Book III, Chapter 1, Paragraph 3)". Josephus also mentions that at least 6000 Arabs were sent by just one Arab king: "Malchus also, the king of Arabia, sent a thousand horsemen, besides five thousand footmen, the greatest part of which were archers; so that the whole army, including the auxiliaries sent by the kings, as well horsemen and footmen, when all were united together, amounted to sixty thousand" (Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus, The Wars of the Jews or The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem*, Book III, Chapter 4, Paragraph 20)".

This picture of a Syrian / Arab desecration of Jerusalem in AD70 is supported by other discoveries and reports. "Legions based in Cappadocia, Syria, and Egypt were made up of recruits from Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt", Nigel Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria* (University of Michigan Press, 2000) p.15. Josephus claims that in the siege of Jerusalem, "the whole army, including the auxiliaries sent by the kings, as well horsemen and footmen, when all were united together, amounted to sixty thousand" (Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus, The Wars of the Jews or The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem*, Book III, Chapter 4, Paragraph 20). A legion contained around 5,000 soldiers and he says there were four full legions and two partial legions involved in the attack- around 25,000 legionaries. This means that the remaining 35,000 were auxiliaries, relatively local men. Josephus confirms this when by noting that the auxiliaries were "sent by the kings" from "the neighbourhood" of Syria, Asia Minor and Arabia. Pollard gives more reason to think of there being many Syrians involved: "Other evidence that Syrian legions of the Flavian period were characteristically 'Syrian' in some way comes from Tacitus' reference to Legion 3 Gallica saluting the rising sun 'according to the custom of Syria' [*ita in Syria mos est*]... in A.D. 69" (*op cit* p. 116). Josephus is quite explicit about this: "The greatest part of the Roman garrison was raised out of Syria; and being thus related to the Syrian part, they were ready to assist it" (*The Wars of The Jews, History of the Destruction of Jerusalem*, by Flavius Josephus. Trans. William Whiston, Book II: Chapter, Para. 7).

What we do know from Daniel 11:31 is that the "vile person" is also called "the king of the north", and this is a common title for the ruler of Assyria- present day Iran

/ Iraq / Kurdistan / Syria. And we've shown above that Old Testament passages about the ruler of Assyria are the basis for other 'antichrist' prophecies of the New Testament. The phrase "vile person" is interesting in itself. If the first usage of a word in Scripture is significant, then Gen. 25:34 is indeed helpful here- because it is used of Esau, father of many of the Arab tribes. And it recurs in describing Edom in Obadiah 2, Goliath the Philistine / Palestinian (1 Sam. 17:42), "Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian" (Neh. 2:19), and Haman the persecutor of the Jews (Esther 3:6). All these men were Arab prototypes of the "vile person", the ruler of Assyria, who is to again persecute God's people. Note that "the man of sin" of 2 Thess. 2:8 alludes to "the wicked one" of Is. 11:4 LXX, who is, again, "the Assyrian"! So it would appear very likely that the antichrist figure comes from 'Assyria'. And what's going on in Iraq and the territory of 'Assyria' right now is gripping the whole world's attention. Note how the Assyrian is described in Is. 30:31-33 as being thrown into a lake of fire- just as the future beast will be (Rev. 19:20).

A Jewish-Moslem Antichrist Covenant?

The "prince that shall come", who finally stands in opposition to "Messiah the Prince", will "confirm the covenant with many for one week", during which he places the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27). The same language is used here as about the "little horn" of Daniel 7 and 8. This individual is characterized in Dan. 8:24,25 as being politically crafty: "He shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand". Note that *amad* translated "stand up against" is a word also found in Arabic, and is one of the names of the prophet Mohammad (Sura 61:6). The latter day caliph or "prince of the [Moslem] faithful" will (like all good Moslems) be the emulation of Mohammad. I have explained in commenting on Revelation chapters 6 and 7 that radical Islam has a special theological interest in forcing Jewish people to convert to Islam. And they will feel justified in brutally punishing those who resist- all as predicted in those chapters of Revelation. The idea of Antichrist making a covenant with the Jews is in fact required by the Koran in Sura 3.64: "Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah". It would seem that a covenant is made whereby the Jews accept Islam in return for mercy; but then this covenant is broken and the Jews are butchered. Such agreements featured in Israel's Old Testament history. Sura 4.154,155 and commentary upon it justifies the fiercest punishment of the Jews by Moslems because "We took from them a firm covenant. But because of their breaking of their covenant...". We can imagine how things will develop: The downtrodden people of Israel will enter a covenant with the radical Muslims or jihadist Islamic Beast / State, then they will be accused of breaking it, and this will justify the Moslems in embarking upon a policy of totally destroying them, believing they are being obedient to the Koran by doing so. Sura 5.14,15 likewise: "And because of their [O children of Israel] breaking their covenant, we have cursed them and made hard their hearts. They change words from their context [in distorting the Torah to contradict the Koran] and forget a part of that whereof they were admonished... Therefore we have stirred up enmity and hatred among them till the Day of Resurrection". This "enmity and hatred" is the kind of hatred against God's people in the land that is described in the prophecies of the latter day beast, venting "the old hatred" (Ez. 25:15) against Israel.

The Koran frequently complains that Israel broke their covenant with God and were punished, and the commentaries on the Koran passages about this urge that Muslims should in God's Name punish Jews for doing the same: Sura 7.12 "We found no [loyalty to any] covenant in most of them. Nay, most of them we found wrong-doers". Sura 7.134-136 is relevant: "And when the terror fell on them they cried: O Moses! Pray for us unto thy Lord, because He hath a covenant with thee. If thou removest the terror from us we verily will trust thee and will let the Children of Israel go with thee. But when we did remove from them the terror for a term which they must reach, behold! they broke their covenant. Therefore we took retribution from them; therefore we drowned them in the sea: because they denied our revelations and were heedless of them". Jihadists believe that they must punish Israel, and then make a covenant with them in order for the punishment and terror to be lifted; but Israel will break that covenant and therefore be totally destroyed. This is precisely the picture we get from Daniel 9, speaking of how the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel after abusing them first, and then attempt to totally destroy them for breaking that covenant. Sura 33.7,8 and commentaries thereon almost revel in the pain to be exacted upon Israel for breaking the covenant: "We took from them [O children of Israel] a solemn covenant; that He may ask the loyal of their loyalty. And He hath prepared a painful doom for the unfaithful".

DANIEL CHAPTER 10

Dan 10:1 *In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia something was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar-*

"Something" is Heb. *dabar*, the standard word translated "word". "Revealed" is literally 'made naked', the covering or clothing was taken off it. The vision he will not have, which continues into Dan. 12, presents a somewhat different outworking of events to that revealed in Dan. 2 and Dan. 7. The 'word' of another possible scenario was already set up and spoken by God, but it had not been revealed or denuded because a chance had to be given for the earlier potential scenarios to work out.

Belshazzar only reigned three years so the vision of Dan. 8 given in his "third year" was given around the time of the events of Daniel 5, when Belshazzar was slain and "Darius" took the kingdom. This was the first year of Darius, the time of the visions and events of Dan. 9:1 and Dan. 11:1. So the events of Dan. 5,8,9,11 all occurred within the same year. If Darius and Cyrus were separate kings but co-reigned and overlapped with each other, it's also possible that the third year of Cyrus in Dan. 10:1 was in fact this same year- the first year of Darius. Dan. 1:21 could be read as meaning that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus; but that may mean the third year of his total rule, if he co-reigned with Darius for the first two or three years. In this case then Dan. 5,8,9,10 and 11 were all within the same year or so.

According to Ezra 3:12, some old men returned to Judah when the possibility was created in the first year of Cyrus. Why not Daniel? Admittedly he was very old at this time. Is this one of the few indications of spiritual weakness in Daniel? Note his confession of personal sin in Dan. 9:20. Others would be in Dan. 3, where the obvious question is 'Where was Daniel'? Another would be the consideration from Dan. 10:4 cp. Ex. 12:18 that he didn't keep Passover (see on :4). The third year of Cyrus meant 72 years after the captivity. Daniel therefore was wondering why there had been no successful restoration according to Jeremiah's 70 years-to-restoration prophecy- he'd been over 70 years in Babylon. He may also have been distressed that the majority of Jews in Babylon had chosen not to return to Judah; and he would've heard that those

who had returned had faced huge opposition, indeed the rebuilding of the temple was halted until the second year of Darius (Ezra 4:24). Jewish tradition has it that Daniel did return, finally. He would however have been very elderly, at least in his 90s. And we note that the names of Daniel's friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah occur in the list of names of those exiles who returned.

The LXX says the first year of Cyrus, and that a "decree" was issued to Daniel. This would agree with Dan. 1:21 saying that Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus. It's as if in one strand of the Divine working, the decree of Cyrus fulfilled Bible prophecy. But Daniel asks why it hadn't been fulfilled, and is shown in Dan. 10-12 that in fact there will be a great delay in fulfilment. Because clearly Judah were not obedient to the terms of the new covenant which Jeremiah and Ezekiel had proposed. The return from captivity was only to be when Judah returned to God. And they didn't. So it seems Dan. 10-12 is God telling Daniel privately that in fact the apparent restoration wasn't the real thing. It could've been, but God foresaw Judah wouldn't do their part. Daniel surely sensed that. And so he is shown that the plan of restoring the Kingdom would happen, but with a deferred and re-worked fulfilment.

And it was true, even a great warfare: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision- The "great warfare" is that between the kings of north and south described in chapter 11, which forms part of this vision Daniel now receives. Or we can read as AV "But the time appointed was long", alluding to Daniel's deep disappointment that prophetic timetables were not going to lead to the restoration of the Kingdom during his lifetime. This is a recurrent theme in Daniel.

The long warfare is that which is said to have been ended when the exiles returned (Is. 40:2). But most didn't return, and Cyrus wasn't the Messiah he could have been. So the warfare was as it were extended. Time and again we find God being flexible in response to human freewill. For His prophecies are not determinate of human action to the extent that man is robbed of his freewill. And yet the word was and is true although the warfare was long or prolonged: "the word (is) true, and a great warfare".

Another option is to translate "but it was a great struggle to understand the word". It was hard for Daniel as it is for so many today to accept the Lord may not return in their lifetimes, despite all their lives having eagerly struggled to match Bible prophecy to geopolitics.

Dan 10:2 *In those days I Daniel was mourning three whole weeks-* Daniel's mourning may have been for the fact Israel's sin was precluding the immediate reestablishment of God's Kingdom. Or we can take the "mourning" as also meaning that he was praying for the restoration to happen, seeing it was already the third year of Cyrus and he had not turned out to be the Messiah which Isaiah had prophesied he would be, nor had the restoration gone according to the prophetic possibility. In Dan. 9:23, Daniel had experienced praying and then being told that the moment he started to pray, the answer had been given. And now he has another example of it. His fasting we can assume was associated with prayer; three weeks of prayer makes 21 days, and in :12 Daniel is told by the Angel that "from the first day...your words were heard, and I am come for thy words". So because of his prayer ("words"- perhaps put like that to emphasize the power of the 'mere' words uttered in prayer), an Angel was sent from God to give him the understanding he had asked for. His very first prayer for this was answered- but the actual answer came three weeks later. The reason for this was that the Angel had been withstood by the prince of Persia for 21 days (:13). Three weeks is 21 days. So Daniel's first prayer was answered, but it took the Angel three weeks to work out the answer in practice; but during this time Daniel

kept on praying, although at the time it must have seemed to him that no answer was forthcoming. So let us be prepared to persevere in prayer, as those saints in Rev. 8 did and were rewarded by the incense finally being offered by the Angel to the Lord Jesus Christ, and thence to God. It may just be possible that there is a mighty Angel of answered prayer (Gabriel?), in the same way as there is a 'wonderful numberer' co-ordinating the timing of God's purpose, and an Angel specifically representing Jesus and Israel (do these four make up the four forms of Angel manifestation in the cherubim and four living creatures?). This Angel would co-ordinate the presentation and answering of prayers. The Angel then describes how he confirmed and strengthened Darius (Dan. 11:1) to the same end to enable the prayer to be answered- as if when our Angel sees someone set in a course of action which will lead to the answer of our prayer, they are confirmed and strengthened in it. The wonder of all this needs some reflection. Our words, the thoughts within human brain cells, call forth the Angels from the court of Heaven. "When we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel [from the myriads standing on the right and left hands of His throne] and brought us forth out of Egypt" (Num. 20:16). Yet the voice that Angel responded to was the voice not so much of specific prayers but of the situation of the people. And the same is with us... See on Zech. 3:1; Zech. 6:8; Hag. 1:2.

Dan 10:3 *I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, until three whole weeks were fulfilled-* This was not only fasting, but an expression of genuine sadness over the Passover period (see on :4). His sadness was clearly that the prophetic program was going to be seriously delayed beyond the 70 years-to-restoration prophecy of Jeremiah, and this was because of the weakness of Judah. Daniel had prayed in Dan. 9 for the restoration to happen anyway, but had been answered by the 70 weeks prophecy. And he would have been so sad that the opportunity to return to the land given in the first year of Cyrus had been responded to by so few Jews; and at the time of the third year of Cyrus (:1) the rebuilding of the temple had been delayed.

Perhaps he had in view the anointing before the Messianic feast of Is. 61:3. Daniel's fasting may mean that he didn't keep Passover (:4, he had been fasting from the 3rd to the 24th of the first month). Both the Passover (on the 14th day) and feast of Unleavened Bread (15th–21st; Ex. 12:1-20) fell within the period of Daniel's fast. We have here an example of where principles are often in conflict in our lives, and this is intentionally so. The law of Moses contained many such conflicts- disobedience to one law in order to be obedient to another. This is structured into our lives by God so that our obedience is consciously thought out.

Daniel apparently was used to eating meat and drinking wine. We recall how he initially refused to eat the meat and wine that came from the king. Seeing he still lived in the court, we wonder whether his meat and wine still came from the king. Possibly his conscience changed over time. And yet he remained a man much beloved by God.

Dan 10:4 *In the twenty fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river which is Hiddekel-* This means that for 21 days before this, he had been fasting, throughout the Passover period. So Daniel didn't keep Passover- he kept the eating of unleavened bread but if he didn't eat any meat, he didn't eat the Passover lamb. Was his faith in God's deliverance of His people fading? Or was he spiritually so on another plane that it was OK for him not to keep the Passover, even though the person who didn't keep it was to be cut off from amongst God's people? See on :1.

Dan 10:5 I lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, whose thighs were adorned with pure gold of Uphaz-

A man clothed with linen represents both a priest and an Angel (Mk. 16:5; Rev. 15:6). Ezekiel the priest and prophet saw himself thus represented (Ez. 9:2,3,11) yet he also saw the man dressed in linen representing an Angel who was involved with the awesome cherubim system (Ez. 10:2,6,7). He had a guardian, representative Angel that was part of the glorious cherubim. Possibly likewise the Angel of Dan. 10:5 represented Daniel.

The "man clothed in linen" of Dan. 10:5 reappears in Dan. 12:6,7 who is over the waters of the river. This was an Angel in Dan. 8:16, "between the banks of the Ulai [river]". Linen was worn by the priests especially the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4). We note that the term "prince", used in Daniel of Angels, is used of the High Priest in Ezra 8:24 and of a priest in 1 Chron. 24:5. These Angels of Daniel were ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. Michael "stands" for God's people (Dan. 12:1) as the High Priest stood for them on the Day of Atonement; to stand before God is to intercede (Dt. 10:8; Jud. 20:28). The Angel does indeed represent the Lord Jesus and Michael perhaps played His role in the court of Heaven before He came into existence and ascended to His Heavenly role and intercession. The idea is that Michael in previous possible iterations of the prophecy, and the Lord Jesus in the last day fulfilment of it, intercedes for Israel before God in the very last days, leading to their salvation.

The very same Hebrew phrase "lifted up the eyes and saw" is found twice in the record of Abraham lifting up his eyes and seeing the place of sacrifice of his son, and also seeing the ram caught in the thicket there (Gen. 22:4,13). This sets us up to expect that Daniel likewise will see something prefiguring the Lord Jesus. The very same three Hebrew words are used in Isaiah's prophecies of how men would lift up their eyes and see the restoration of Zion (Is. 49:18 "lift up your eyes and behold... the Lord shall restore again Zion"; 52:8; 60:4). This was what Daniel had lived his life expecting to see, but instead he sees something more wonderful- a vision of the future Lord Jesus. This was exactly what happened to him in Dan. 9; he had been expecting the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies in his lifetime, but instead is given an extended vision of the death of the future Messiah and the resultant eternal life of God's Kingdom. Something far more wonderful than he had envisaged.

See on Rev. 1:13; this appears to be a vision of an Angel representing the Lord Jesus in glory. The white linen represented righteousness (Rev. 19:8), and yet the visions of Zechariah present the leaders of Israel as clothed in "filthy garments". This therefore was the Messianic Saviour who was perfect. It connects with the prophecy of Is. 11:5 about the Messiah who would restore Judah: "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins". The gold therefore represents His faith and truth (1 Pet. 1:7). This awesome vision of an Angel representing the then-future Lord Jesus was to encourage Daniel that although his life was ending not as he wished, and things hadn't worked out as he had hoped, yet God's purpose remained sure, and there would be a wonderful Messianic redeemer figure who would save him and all God's people from their hopeless lethargy and sin, and bring about the restoration promised, which in their own strength Israel could not bring about.

Dan 10:6 *His body also was like the beryl-* This stone in the breastplate represented Dan, meaning 'judgment' (Ex. 28:17-21 cp. Num. 2:25). But Dan is absent from the list of the tribes in Rev. 7:5-8. Perhaps the idea is that this is the future Lord

Jesus in judgment; and yet also identifying with Dan, the condemned excluded from the Kingdom. We could maybe conclude that this spoke of the Lord Jesus carrying our condemnation in His own body.

And his face as the appearance of lightning- This was the feature of the Angel cherubim who are presented as present at Judah's exile and being the source of their potential restoration (Ez. 1:13). But the vision is ultimately of the Lord Jesus. The final restorer and Saviour of Israel is Him and not Angel cherubim, and so we note the connection with the vision of the glorified Lord Jesus with a face like the sun, the beams of which could be compared to lightning (Rev. 1:16).

And his eyes as flaming torches- The Angels are as it were God's eyes, and they are associated with the potential work of restoring Judah through the activity of the cherubim (Ez. 10:12; Zech. 4:10). But this is a vision of the future Lord Jesus, who was to take over the work of Angels and personally enable the ultimate restoration of God's people. It is He who has eyes as a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14). Hebrews 1 labours the point that the Lord is not and was never an Angel. Here an Angel is used to represent Him to Daniel, in His then future glory.

And his arms and his feet like burnished brass- The idea of a man who had passed through a furnace [the idea of "burnished"] would have reminded Daniel of the experience of his three faithful friends. This Messianic Saviour was truly human, and representative of all the faithful. Again, this is the language of the cherubim (Ez. 1:7) who were associated with Judah's exile and restoration. But their role and ministry for God's people was to be replaced by the Lord Jesus who likewise is presented as having such feet and arms (Rev. 1:15).

And his voice like the voice of a multitude- This likewise is the language of the cherubim associated with the exile and restoration (Ez. 1:24), but this is also the voice of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 1:15. He has taken over their work, and the potential restoration of Judah to their land by the cherubic Angels has now become reworked as the narrative of the Lord Jesus ultimately restoring and eternally saving all God's true people from bondage to sin.

This individual is the embodiment of the cherubim which Ezekiel had recently seen active for the exiles. Both visions were received by a river of Babylon; and there are so many connections: "His body" = Ez. 1:11,23; "the beryl" or LXX "the chrysolith" was a flashing stone = Ez. 1:16; 10:9; "as the appearance of lightning... as torches of fire" = Ez. 1:13 (R.V. mg.) "In the midst of the living creatures was an appearance like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches... and out of the fire went forth lightning". "Like the gleaming of burnished brass" = Ez. 1:7 where the feet of the cherubim "sparkled like the gleaming of burnished brass". "Gleaming" is literally 'as an eye' and connects with Ez. 1:4,16,22,27; 10:9. "Like the voice of a multitude" = Ez. 1:24 (R.V.). The vision of Ezekiel was contemporary with Daniel; he was being encouraged that despite the long delay, God was hugely active, the cherubim were still there endlessly churning away towards the final glory of God. Ezekiel's prophecy opens with the cherubim visible by the rivers of Babylon, having left Jerusalem; but the cherubim of glory are seen returning to the rebuilt temple in Ez. 43. In the first year of Cyrus, the decree had been given for the Jews to return and rebuild the temple. But now in his third year (:1), the cherubim of glory had not returned. They were still in exile as it were. The message was clear- the few Jews who had returned had not obeyed the commands of Ezekiel to rebuild the temple as commanded in Ez. 40-48, and therefore the cherubim of glory had not returned. Nor would they. Instead, the final visions of Daniel give a far more glorious resolution- although it would be at a point far in the future. Michael would stand up for God's

people, there would be the resurrection of the dead and eternal life for God's true people. A scenario far more glorious than the glory returning to a rebuilt temple in this life.

The figure ultimately looks ahead to the Lord Jesus who likewise was the bodily image of the Father's glory (Col. 2:9). Hence the description of the risen Lord in Rev. 1:14 has many similarities.

Dan 10:7 *I Daniel alone saw the vision; for the men who were with me didn't see the vision; but a great trembling fell on them, and they fled to hide themselves-* There are evident similarities with Saul's encounter with the glorified Jesus in a vision (Acts 9:7; 22:11). We are to understand this vision as being of an Angel who was not Jesus, but represented Him in His then future glory. The Lord Jesus, the future Messiah, was the answer to all Daniel's concerns about the when, where and how of the restoration of the Kingdom. Their trembling and fleeing into hiding is Biblically associated with the reaction of those who feel unworthy and who are condemned. Daniel's faith in God's saving grace was apparently stronger than theirs at this time.

Dan 10:8 *So I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my moisture was turned in me into corruption-* Daniel was to undergo a figurative death and resurrection. Perhaps this is why he had to be "left alone", to experience the totally personal issues and feelings of death and resurrection. Daniel was disappointed that the Messiah and His Kingdom wouldn't come in his lifetime. So he is given this experience of death and glorious resurrection to encourage him that truly, the best is ahead. At the resurrection, all human strength and glory will be as nothing. No beauty, wealth or human success will have any significance. The Hebrew behind "moisture" is that of dignity of face. Majesty, glory, is the idea of the word (s.w. Ps. 8:1; 45:3; Jer. 22:18; Hos. 14:6; Hab. 3:3). But thereby we will come to identity with the Lord Jesus. For when we read that therefore all that glory ["moisture" "was turned in me into corruption" it means he was disfigured; and the same word is used of how the Lord's face on the cross was "marred" (Is. 52:14). The repeated statement that Daniel was left alone may seem to state the obvious. But this too is an aspect of how we shall be at the resurrection and judgment. All social connections, church, family and friends will not figure at all. We will meet the Lord as we are. And it is for us to develop that personal relationship with Him now. Seeing that's the intention, it's no surprise that human relationships and social connections often go wrong in the lives of those the Lord has chosen as His very own. Being "left alone" with God is a repeated feature in the life of God's children. We think of how Jacob was "left alone" with the Angel (Gen. 32:24), as was Benjamin when his brothers all went to Egypt (Gen. 42:38), the suffering servant (Is. 49:21), Martha left alone in the kitchen (Lk. 10:40), the woman caught in adultery left alone with the Lord (Jn. 8:9), the Lord Himself left alone apart from having the Father (Jn. 8:29), Elijah feeling "left alone" in apostate Israel (Rom. 11:3), Paul left alone at Athens (1 Thess. 3:1). Daniel later tells the Angel how he feels (:16). Likewise every tongue shall confess how we are nothing. But we must get there in this life.

And I retained no strength- As in Dan. 11:6. Often in Daniel we read of "power" coming from God and being given to and taken from men. Daniel learnt in his own personal experience what this felt like, to enable him to better understand the prophecies he was giving. His mortality and weakness, and ours, is the whole world's mortality and weakness. The Hebrew word for "power" is that used in Dan. 1:4- Daniel had ability [power] to stand before the earthly King; now he is unable to stand

and has no power, before the Heavenly King. All his human strength was being shown to be nothing. Not by [human] power but by God's Spirit would the restoration be achieved (Zech. 4:6).

Dan 10:9 *Yet heard I the voice of his words; and at the time I heard the voice of his words, I had fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground-* This alludes to how in Persian courts, the accused lay prostrate with their face to the ground until the verdict was given; they were raised up if they were innocent. Daniel 10:9-11 describes in parabolic form the judgement, with Daniel representing the saints, rising from the grave (as he rose from "deep sleep" on the ground) in great fear and sense of unworthiness, but being comforted by the Angel with news of how pleasing we have been to them ("O Daniel, a man greatly beloved"). This indicates that the Angels will have a large part to play in the judgement; the Lord Jesus returns from Heaven with the Angels with Him, and they are sent forth to gather the responsible to judgment.

Dan 10:10 *Behold, a hand touched me, which set me on my knees and on the palms of my hands-* Heb. "set me tottering upon my knees". Presumably this was a repeat of how Gabriel had twice touched him in reassurance before (Dan. 8:18; 9:21). Daniel's great fear and weakness was because the whole vision was a foretaste of the final judgment, when he was to be resurrected and stand before the saviour Messiah of Israel- and be accepted. This was the final answer to all his concerns, and the disappointment of a life that had not turned out as he had expected by witnessing the restoration of the Kingdom as prophesied.

Dan 10:11 *He said to me, Daniel, you man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright; for I am now sent to you. When he had spoken this word to me, I stood trembling-*

"Greatly beloved" is literally "greatly desired". God has and will have a desire to the work of His hands, as Job finally figured. He desires us, although the extent of that will only be fully felt by us at that wonderful moment. He now is likewise to be the desire of our soul.

Daniel's figurative resurrection was appropriate, because he was so heartbroken that his life was not going to conclude as he had expected, in seeing the restoration of God's Kingdom in Judah. But he is comforted through the vision of the Lord Jesus in His future glory that there would be the sure hope of personal resurrection. Gabriel says that "I am *now* sent", after the three weeks delay from the first prayer of Daniel being answered. Gabriel came so that Daniel might "understand", but from the end of Dan. 12 it's clear that Daniel didn't understand all the details. But there is no need to understand all the prophetic details to "understand" the essential picture- that God's Kingdom purpose shall come finally true through the Lord Jesus. Or maybe Daniel's final lack of apparent 'understanding' was because he didn't want to finally accept that, and still hankered for Kingdom now.

Dan 10:12 *Then he said to me, Don't be afraid, Daniel-* Whenever Angels appear to God's people, they urge them not to fear. Angels will be sent to gather us to judgment, and meeting them will be the first we know that "He's back!". And surely we can expect the same words in that great day.

For from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard- Daniel's prayer for Israel's restoration was above all a desire to "understand"; but his prayer was surely for the

forgiveness and immediate restoration of Israel, as he had prayed in Dan. 9. But God sees to the core. In essence, Daniel was struggling to understand, and God saw this and read this as his prayer. As explained on Rom. 8:26, we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the hidden spirit of our deepest heart is read and understood as our request. See on Dan. 9:23.

And I have come for your words' sake- Another proof that prayer is immediately heard, though the answer may be long delayed. And is often more glorious than what we had first intended or envisaged. This is the extreme sensitivity of God Almighty to the words of prayer, the words meant in our hearts. Human words call forth an Angel to be sent from Heaven all the way to a man on earth, struggling for three weeks to human obstacles to the fulfilment of the wish. We see the same thing in Revelation, where human prayer and actions on this earth call forth Angels to leave Heaven and do mighty things on earth- all for our sakes. We could have no greater encouragement towards seriousness and intensity in prayer. One word of prayer can result in Angels being sent all that 'distance' from Heaven to earth to assist us, as in Num. 20:16 "when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt".

Dan 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but, behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the kings of Persia-

The "prince of Persia" was both the human prince of Persia and his representative Angel in the court of Heaven. The idea of representative Angels is found in Is. 24:21: "On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth". Just as Michael is the Angel who represents Israel in Dan. 12:1. The idea of peoples having a guardian or representative angel is also found in Dt. 32:8 LXX. "He fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God". "The chief princes" may refer to a group of senior Angels, perhaps those referenced in Rev. 8:2 ("the seven angels which stand before God").

The prince of Persia is surely Cyrus. He resisted the role set up for him in Is. 45:1 and this was one reason why the potential prophetic program was delayed and rescheduled. We note the language of Isaiah is not saying that Cyrus without doubt would restore Jerusalem. He was bidden do this work: "Who bids Cyrus be wise, and he shall perform all my will" (Is. 44:28 LXX). Cyrus was "stirred to action" by God (Is. 45:13 GNB); but being Divinely stirred to action and actually acting are two different things. He was chosen and appointed to restore the Kingdom (Is. 45:1,4). But men can be chosen and appointed to do things which they fail to do. Israel were chosen and appointed to so much which they failed to achieve. The Cyrus passage in Is. 45 goes on to pronounce woe upon the man who strives with his maker and who is as clay unresponsive to the Divine potter. Cyrus is in view immediately before and after that passage, so it seems to speak of him. And in Dan. 10 we see how the Angels were struggling with him as the Divine Potter struggled with the piece of clay that was Cyrus. It is hard to understand Is. 45:11 unless it refers to Cyrus: "The LORD, the holy God of Israel, the one who shapes the future, says: "You have no right to question me about my children or to tell me what I ought to do!" (GNB). And especially, the prediction of Cyrus' conversion was a potential that went unfulfilled: "I will give you treasures from dark, secret places; then you will know that I am the LORD and that the God of Israel has called you by name" (Is. 45:3 GNB).

In the record, Cyrus seems willing to restore Israel- but he resisted three weeks. At this time (10:1) the project of the restoration had been temporarily halted, and it

took the Angel three weeks to overcome this. Things aren't what they seem- people may appear to act or believe one way, when they've greatly resisted it. This means that Cyrus didn't simply wake up one morning and decree that the rebuilding could continue; he resisted it, and the Angel had an ongoing battle with him over it. Those who appear 'on our side' in life may have actually battled against Angels *not* to be like that to us. In Dan. 10:20 Angel fought with him; and he remained fighting with the rulers of Persia, and strengthening Darius the Mede in Dan. 11:1- and I there suggest this figure may refer to Cyrus. The "prince" refers to the human prince of Persia, but then the Angel Michael is called "one of the chief princes". Intentionally, the term "prince" is used for both Angels and those whom they represent on earth, in this case, the princes of men. I suggest that the "princes" in apparent conflict are Angels within the court of Heaven; there, each Angel represents a person or entity upon earth. All the Angels are righteous, but they act out the roles of the various situations on earth, and God gives His judgment upon them. Dt. 32:8 LXX suggests each nation has a representative Angel.

The difficulty with this approach is that it was in the first year of Cyrus that he restored the Jews; we are now in his third year (:1). Perhaps the reference is to the events of Ezra 4, where the Samaritan opposition was given credence at the Persian court. Or possibly the reference is to Cambyses, who was a prince of Persia in the third year of Cyrus, and who apparently was very anti-Jewish. Cambyses was the son and crown prince of Cyrus. Unlike Cyrus, Herodotus details how he was against the toleration of any other gods or religions within his empire. Possibly "the prince of Persia" refers to Cambyses, and "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" to Cyrus. Perhaps other princes were against the policy of Cyrus regarding the Jews- hence Gabriel remained [working] with "the princes of Persia". Yet Michael was "one of the chief princes" (:13). Those "princes of Persia" (:13) had their Angelic representatives in Heaven. We learn from Ezra 4:4,5 that some counselors from among the local inhabitants had been hired by the Persian government to stop the rebuilding of the temple. That shows that not all the Persian government were behind the idea of Judah's restoration. And Cyrus himself suspended the temple reconstruction project.

Jacob wrestled with an Angel and God almost allowed the Angel to be defeated at one point. Here we note that the prince of Persia "withstood". God of course could have forced him to do His will. But God respects human freewill more than that. He does not force, treating men as mere puppets, but operates at length in such a way whereby His will is done whilst respecting human freewill and self-determination. The original for "withstood" is literally 'to stand before / in front of'- the same two Hebrew words here translated "withstood" recur in Dan. 10:16, where Daniel 'stood before' the Angel. As Daniel stood before the Angel, so the Prince of Persia had also stood before the Angel. It could be understood that Daniel likewise withstood the Angel [see on 10:1 about Daniel's possible weakness]. But more likely are we to perceive that the Angel had both Daniel and the Prince of Persia standing before Him- and had had this situation for the past three weeks in which Daniel had been in prayer. Our prayers are therefore a coming before God in a judgment scenario; we stand before Him, as our adversaries do; and He will hear us.

Michael came to "help" Gabriel- a common word in the restoration prophecies, promising God's "help" for Judah's restoration (Is. 41:10,13,14; Is. 44:2; Is. 49:8). Those promises of "help" were fulfilled in the Angels being sent to help. Michael being "one of the chief" implies a hierarchy amongst Angels; hence Jude 9 speaks of "Michael the Archangel".

Gabriel "remained" with the princes of Persia, implying the physical presence of the Angels is significant. They can as it were only be in one place at a time. We are invited to see them as leaving the court of Heaven in response to our prayers and needs (as in 1 Kings 22:19-22), and moving around the earth to operationalize God's answers to our prayers- as in Dan. 10:20; 9:21,22; Gen. 18:10. Or we can read the text as meaning that when Michael came to help the other Angel overcome the prince of Persia, that Angel "was not needed there with the kings of Persia" (Dan. 10:13 RVmg.). It seems that once the job was done, the Angel wasn't physically required there any more. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

Dan 10:14 *Now I have come to make you understand what shall happen to your people in the latter days; for the vision is yet for many days-* This understanding is through the "writing of truth" (:21) which refers to the revelations of Dan. 11. As noted throughout that chapter, the various conflicts between the kings of north and south over the promised land have undeniable connections with historical realities, but they are never a perfect fit to them. They therefore refer to a situation yet to come in the last days; and here we are told that in so many words.

Dan 10:15 *And when he had spoken to me according to these words, I set my face toward the ground, and was mute-* The fact that the [fulfilment of] the vision was "yet for many days" (:14) was obviously distressing for Daniel. He had several times already been told that he was not to live to see the full restoration of the Kingdom, but no matter how many times we are told things in God's word, even by direct Angelic revelation in his case, we still struggle to accept them on a personal level. Our preconceptions of how things must work out in our own lives are very strong, and to resign them, or allow them to be re-interpreted by God, is so difficult. I will suggest on :16 that Daniel's muteness and staring at the ground is in shame, having been convicted of his sin. Despite being commanded not to fear (Dan 10:12), and being given every encouragement by the Angel, Daniel still fears. To the point he was dumb with fear. "Was mute" is LXX "was pricked in my heart", in which case we may have a description of how the fact the fulfilment was not to be "for many days" was like a stab in the heart for Daniel, who had lived a long life expecting the Kingdom to come in his lifetime. Or it may be a hint that he in this foretaste of resurrection, he was struck immediately by his own unworthiness. Yet will be reassured that he is indeed greatly beloved. We can just imagine that being our experience at the resurrection. In the LXX of :16 he describes this as "at the sight of thee my bowels were turned within me".

Dan 10:16 *Then behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spoke and said to him who stood before me-*

The intimate connection between men and Angels is perhaps revealed by the way the Angels who appear in Daniel are never described by the usual Hebrew term for 'Angel', *malakh*. Instead the Angels are given human-like descriptions" "like the appearance of a man" "one in human ['Adam'] form" and "the man Gabriel" (Dan. 8:15; 10:16; 9:21). It has been suggested that "Gabriel's name is likely a play on the Hebrew word *gabor* for both "strength" and "man" as seen in the attribution in Daniel 8:15, "an apparition of a man (*gaver*)". The association between the Angel and his

charge, Daniel, is shown by the Angel calling Daniel a "man [greatly beloved]"; when the Angel himself, it is stressed, appeared as a "man".

The one "like the son of man" is the Lord Jesus in Dan. 7:13 and Rev. 1:13, a vision very similar to the vision of the heavenly being Daniel has just seen. The one who stood before Daniel was presumably the same one who touched his lips. The awesome being Daniel has just seen was a vision of an Angel, perhaps Gabriel, manifesting the yet unborn Lord Jesus in His future glory, such as will be displayed at His return to resurrect Daniel and restore Israel's Kingdom. There is a similarity with how out of the same cherubic vision which condemned Isaiah, there came a being who touched Isaiah's lips and cleansed him from his sin (Is. 6:5-7). This would mean that Daniel's muteness and staring at the ground in :15 was in shame for his sins; he as representative of Israel, as well as a personal sinner, perhaps feeling guilt that he had so insisted upon seeing the restoration in his own lifetime, felt convicted of sin by the vision of the Christ in glory. And yet it was that same saviour Christ who also cleanses him from his sin.

My lord, by reason of the vision my sorrows are turned on me, and I retain no strength- "Sorrows" is an idea Biblically associated with sin. The vision convicted him of his sinfulness, as any human being would feel in the presence of the Lord Jesus- although of course the Lord didn't then exist, and was represented in His future glory by an Angel. "Turned on me" is the same word as in :8; Daniel's human strength was now felt by him to be nothing, he was totally convicted of his sin.

But "sorrows" is also the word for birth pangs (s.w. Is. 13:8; 1 Sam. 4:19). Daniel felt as prostrate and helpless as a woman in the pains of labour.

Dan 10:17 *For how can my Lord's servant talk with my lord? For as for me, immediately there remained no strength in me, neither was there breath left in me-*

The lack of breath or chronic difficulty in breathing connects with the idea of being like a woman in labour (see on :16). He was almost suffocated with sorrow.

This sense of inability to talk with "my Lord" [perhaps said in the same way as David in spirit called Jesus "Lord", Mt. 22:43] reflects a sense of moral unworthiness. He feels not only convicted totally as a sinner, but also dead, as if he has no breath. Daniel has previously identified himself with Israel's sins and also confessed his own sins in Dan. 9:20. But now before the presence, as it were, of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah he had so hoped to see in his own lifetime, he is the more deeply convicted of his sin. It is one thing to intellectually admit that we are sinners; but there are levels to that conviction, and Daniel now reaches a very high level of contrition. And yet from the very vision which convicted him, he is given cleansing and every assurance of salvation. It is the same experience we may pass through, perhaps when remembering the Lord Jesus as appointed at His memorial table.

Dan 10:18 *Then there touched me again one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me-* This could be another Angel, or perhaps the same "son of man" of :16, representing the Lord Jesus, but described as a different personage here because He assumed a different form. The Lord Jesus likewise used physical touch to assure sinners throughout His ministry; although I again emphasize that the Lord had no personal pre-existence, and we are reading here of an Angel representing the then future Lord Jesus in the glory He shall have at His return in judgment. Hebrews 1 explains in detail that the Lord was not an Angel, but in vision He could be represented by Angels.

Dan 10:19 *He said, Greatly beloved man, don't be afraid: peace be to you, be strong, yes, be strong-*

The only other time an Angel uses these words, "Don't be afraid, peace to you" is when the Angel tells the fearful, sin-convicted Gideon "Don't be afraid, peace to you, you will not die" (Jud. 6:23). Daniel is the most righteous man presented in the Bible, apart from the Lord Jesus. But even he, at his figurative resurrection, feared condemnation. It is the same phrase used by Joseph in assuring his guilty brothers of his grace and acceptance of them. I have explained on :15-18 that Daniel was deeply convicted of his sinfulness by this encounter with the Angelic representative of Messiah in glory. Hence he is again assured, and told not to be afraid- of condemnation for his sins. The "peace" wished to him is surely peace with God. And he is encouraged as we are to accept the strengthening of the Spirit.

When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, Let my lord speak; for you have strengthened me- Daniel accepts God's grace in Messiah, and believing that he is indeed forgiven and cleansed, he agrees to listen and have dialogue with "my Lord", the Angelic representative of the then future Lord Jesus.

Dan 10:20 *Then he said, Do you know why I have come to you? Now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia. When I go forth, behold, the prince of Greece shall come-*

The implication here, as in :13,14, is that the Angel is hectically busy in the fight with the prince of Persia. He uses this busyness to excuse his delayed appearance to Daniel, and says that once he has finished explaining to Daniel, he must be off again to fight with the prince of Persia and also prepare to also fight with the prince of Greece [who would appear about 200 years later]. The impression is given of frenetic activity by the Angels, even working on issues which will only appear on earth after 200 years, in this case. The prince of Persia needed constant attention so that God's saving purpose would not be obstructed. We have but a peek into what was going on behind the scenes of mundane life on earth. It is the same impression Ezekiel was given in the vision of the highly active cherubim, with wheels within wheels buzzing with activity. Whilst on earth, it appeared nothing much was happening to progress God's Kingdom purpose. By faith we are to perceive the same intense activity.

The Greeks were required to take over from the Persians according to Daniel's visions of Dan. 2,7 and 8. But they were still some way off in time [200 years]; but the Angel Gabriel was showing Daniel that he was already at work, even with Persia at its zenith under Cyrus, to bring about God's longer term purpose. Gabriel explained to Daniel that he had to battle with both the rulers of Persia *and Greece* in order to bring about the fulfilment of Daniel's prayer for the final restoration to happen. By appreciating the local politics which the Angel brought about between Persia and Greece, we can better understand why Gabriel had to manipulate *Greece* in order for the *Persians* to allow the Jews to return, and even to encourage them to do so: "From the point of view of the Persian king a strong pro-Persian Judea was a major threat to the Greek coastal lifeline, and as long as the Greeks dominated the coast and Egypt he supported a strong Judean province headed by a Judean-Persian official and peopled by a pro-Persian population, most of whose families were hostages in Babylon and Persia"- Othniel Margalith.

The references to the Angel princes of Greece, Persia and Israel in Dan. 10:20,21 could suggest that each nation or people has an Angel representative in Heaven. Indeed Dt. 32:8 appears to say so: "[God] laid down the boundaries of every people

according to the number of the sons of God", i.e. the Angels. It could even be possible that the strange reference in Eph. 6:12 to wicked spiritual beings in the Heavens refers to the Angelic representatives of the evil nations and powers here on earth. Those righteous Angels represent those powers in the court of Heaven- without themselves personally being the least bit wicked or sinful.

Dan 10:21 *But I will tell you that which is inscribed in the writing of truth-* What is noted "in the writing of truth" is the detailed predictions in chapter 11. Other such predictions in Daniel, and generally in the prophets, are presented in terms of visions which must be interpreted. But here we have a direct statement of future history without symbols and visions. This has fazed many interpreters, as they encounter what appears to be a recounting of history told in the future tense. But the key is to appreciate that this is simply a revelation to men of what is noted in God's book of time. The events are stated as they shall be, without symbols and visions.

It may be that the Bible or the "whole counsel of God" existed in written form in Heaven before it was revealed to men. The fact that there is a literal book of life with writing in it indicates that the Angels do use their capacity to read; and will we too in some form in the Kingdom? But the writing in view is likely the details of the great wars of Daniel 11. This passage would seem to necessitate some written record in Heaven capable of interpretation by the Angels, the meaning of which was being given to Daniel. Gabriel goes on to say "now will I shew you the truth" (Dan. 11:2). So the Angels hear God's word in Heaven, and sometimes inspire men to write some of these words down. Likewise in Rev. 1:1 we learn that the Revelation came from Jesus originally (and from God before that), but was sent to us and signified by the Angel. Does it follow that the Angel was responsible for working out the symbology, the signifying (putting into sign language) of the book, under the infallible guidance of God and Jesus? If so, we can better understand how the Angels eagerly watch over our attempts to understand the word, and are in a position, as Gabriel with Daniel, to step in and assist us in our understanding of it- not least through the trials of life which they bring opening our eyes to it (cp. Job 36:15). However, we know that not all the Angels have this ability, but rather earnestly look into the things contained in the word; or alternatively, they are used by God to work out the symbology which they themselves do not fully understand.

And there is none who holds with me against these, but Michael your prince- "Holds with me" is the same word used for 'strengthen' in this chapter. The word 'strengthened' occurs several times in Dan. 10. An Angel 'strengthens' Daniel, and then comments that "Michael your prince", another Angel, had also helped him- he had "strengthened himself with me" (Dan. 10:21 RVmg.). But then the Angel comments that "As for me...I stood up to confirm and strengthen him", i.e. Michael (Dan. 11:1 RV). The Angel who strengthened Daniel was helped by another Angel, Michael, strengthening him; and then that Angel strengthened Michael. This is possibly a window into the nature of our existence and relationship with each other in the future age! The great Angel Michael is described as "your (Daniel's) prince"- i.e. his personal guardian Angel (Dan. 10:21)?

"Hold" translates the common Hebrew word for 'strengthen'. Possibly the idea is that the Angel had no help in the work of strengthening apart from Michael. He will go on to use the word several times of 'strengthening' men to arise and play their roles, just as the previous visions showed God making nations and kings arise and fall. So often it will be used in the next vision: Dan. 11:1,5,6,7,21,32. The Angel is explaining

to Daniel how busy he is in this work of strengthening men; it is beyond his sole personal ability, but he only has Michael to help him. It is however the same word just used of the Angel strengthening Daniel (Dan. 10:18,19,21). The guardian Angel of Daniel who was involved in strengthening Daniel had the same power so strengthen not just him but kings and nations.

We should note that these mighty Angels were fighting "against" the princes of Persia and Greece. But Cyrus prince of Persia is presented as being strangely supportive of the Jews returning from exile and rebuilding the temple. The apparent mystery as to why he made that decree is answered: it was the result of a huge amount of Angelic work over a long time. We may pray for something and have an answer, but that answer took a huge amount of Angelic work to achieve. In this case, it seems Cyrus was not cooperative. The language of Angels fighting *against* him could imply that he was actually against the Jews in some ways and wanted to do them evil, or at least, not to allow their return. And it took Angelic effort to overcome him. The language of Angelic effort and struggle is reflective of how God will never force man against his will but will work so hard to get the balance right between encouragement on one hand, and the railroading of predestiny on the other.

DANIEL CHAPTER 11

Dan. 11:1 *As for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him*- "Darius" may refer to a general of Cyrus. The "him" being strengthened could refer to Darius, or it could be that Gabriel stood to confirm and strengthen Michael, Israel's representative Angel. This strengthening and confirming is typical of how God works with man. Man may be confirmed in a path but this doesn't mean he will achieve God's intended path for him. The same word is repeatedly used of God's strengthening of Cyrus (Is. 41:9,13; 42:6; 45:1), confirming our suggestion that Darius is effectively Cyrus. The same word for "confirm" is now going to be repeatedly used of how the various kings became strong. But that strength was because of the Angel strengthening or confirming them and not solely of their freewill (Dan. 11:5,6,7,21,32). This is the potential strengthening of the Spirit available to us too. LXX "The first year of Cyrus".

See on Dan. 10:13. This is the Angel of Dan. 10 speaking. "Darius the Mede" took the Kingdom from the Babylonians in fulfilment of the prophecies of Dan. 2 and Dan. 7, that Babylonian was to be succeeded in dominating the earth / land promised to Abraham. The Angel 'stood' to do this, and the desire of Darius was confirmed by the Angel who strengthened him to achieve this. And the Spirit works in our lives in the same way, to confirm and strengthening us in our desires to do God's will. Multiple times David uses the same word in describing God as his 'strength' or 'strengtheners'. The word occurs several times in this chapter (Dan. 11:7,10,19,31,38,39); clearly the idea is that the apparent strength of human leaders, armies and kingdoms is from God, as His hand moves in human history. There is a strong possibility that this "Darius the Mede" was in fact the Cyrus who made the decree for the Jews to return; there is no such figure as "Darius the Mede" in history, nor is there anyone between Belshazzar and Cyrus. In this case the reference here would be to the Angelic confirmation and strengthening of Cyrus to make the decree, after the three weeks struggle with him discussed on Dan. 10:12, and also overcoming the opposition from the rest of the Persian rulership, called "the princes of Persia" in Dan. 10. "Confirm" is the Hebrew word used of Angelic strengthening of Lot to leave

Sodom (Gen. 19:16), and of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21). But such strengthening has to be accepted, and therefore those involved with the restoration are asked to "let your hands be strengthened" (Zech. 8:9,13 s.w.), Zerubbabel and Joshua were to "be strong" (s.w. Hag. 2:4), and Daniel himself was an example of accepting this Angelic strengthening (s.w. Dan. 10:18,19).

Dan. 11:2 *Now will I show you the truth-*

It seems that the vision of Dan. 11:2-12:3 is the third explanation or development of the vision of Dan. 8:3-14. No new vision appears after Dan. 8- what we have in Dan. 9-12 is explanation and further development of that vision. The explanations are in Dan. 8:17,19-26; 9:24-27 and Dan. 11:2-12:3. Clearly the kaleidoscope was turning and the elements being rearranged to give different scenarios as the primary possibilities were precluded by various human failures to meet the preconditions.

As noted on Dan. 10:21, the Angel is allowing Daniel to hear what is written in God's planned history. The material is presented as historical statements of fact, and is not shrouded in vision, apocalyptic and imagery as is found in the other prophecies. This is an unusual genre within the Biblical record. The higher critics cannot accept that God can predict history in advance and so they claim that such a detailed outline of the history of the kings of north and south simply could not have been written in advance. To disbelieve God's word is a basic human tendency, the record of Adam and Eve's sin opens the Bible by making this point. The higher critical approach has merely made this lack of faith intellectually respectable. But as often, the critics have failed to do their homework. As I will demonstrate throughout the commentary on Dan. 11, the fit between the history and the prophetic word is not that good. There are indeed outline similarities and points at which the correspondence, or fit, is indeed very tight. But not consistently, especially in the way everything fits Antiochus Epiphanes until :40 but not afterwards. I explain this by stating that Daniel 11 just like Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 describes a situation specifically existing in the last days, which will be the perfect fit. There were hazy hints of continuous historical fulfilments, but they were but incipient, primary fulfilments. This situation is also due to the way that much Biblical prophecy is conditional; as explained on Dan. 2, there were potential fulfilments, scenarios which could have come true, and led to the appearance of a Messiah figure and the re-establishment of Israel's Kingdom as God's Kingdom on earth. But Israel's lack of repentance precluded them. And so we are left with an apparently messy scene in the aftermath- bits of prophecy which had partial fulfilments, at times very clear, at times not at all clear. But God's word shall ultimately come true in the situation of the last days.

The best fit is to the events of the Seleucids and Ptolemies. And yet Daniel 11 has a strangely strong relevance to events later, in the Roman period. Again we conclude that the prophecy had another potential fulfilment at that time, which would have climaxed in the return of the Lord Jesus in AD70: ""Octavius, one of the Second Triumvirate, went to war with Marc Antony (also one of the three) and Cleopatra. Reading Octavius as the willful king, Marc Antony as the king of the North (in the region of Syria), and Cleopatra as the King of the South (in Egypt), we see that most of the reading of Daniel 11 comes forth straightforward. Octavius, also Caesar Augustus (the first ruler of the Roman Empire), regarded no other gods, but on legions of their army, they honored "forces", signs of the Zodiac. He attacked the fortress a Phillip with many legions of Roman soldiers and conquered it, and actually displaced whole towns to honor his retiring soldiers after the war. vv. 40-43 depict the

Battle of Actium in 2 September 31 BC, between Marc Antony and Cleopatra, both in scope and in composition of military forces. The battle was comprised much at sea, and the large infantries were not engaged. He also left out Edom, Moab, and Ammon, as in v. 41. And, after conquering Cleopatra in Egypt, he then took hold of the wealth of Egypt. The last two verses, then, while not directly seeming applicable to Octavius, could then look forward again, to the same throne, but a different individual king reigning on it. If the above holds true, then the introduction of Daniel 12 falls in the beginning of the Roman Empire, and the time of great trouble prophesied in Daniel 12:1, with Michael the great Prince, would most likely be looking towards the First Century (i.e., the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD)".

This prophecy has many hints that it will all come true in the last days, "at the end of years" (:6). We can therefore expect intrigue and strife between two entities who both seek to dominate the *eretz* promised to Abraham, the latter day kings of north and south. The reference could be to Shia and Sunni Islamic extremists, the two groups of Israel's latter day abusers represented by the two feet / legs of the image of Dan. 2. All Bible prophecy has its final fulfilment in the last days. The image of Dan. 2 stands complete; the final abuser of God's land and people will include elements of all the previous entities who have done this, headed up by a Nebuchadnezzar type 'head' or individual, the antiChrist. The events of Daniel 11 are an expansion upon those of Daniel 8, where we learn of how the Persians were replaced by the Greeks. The "king of the north" is presented in terms of the little horn that Dan. 8 shows arising out of the Greek empire. This in turn is the same little horn of Dan. 7 which arose out of the situation at the end of the fourth empire- which could have been Greece, with the previous empires those of Babylon, Media and Persia. But the historical fulfilments we can discern in Dan. 11 are only partial; the situation could have resulted in a charismatic king of the north appearing, and being crushed by the appearance of a Messiah. But that didn't happen; but the detailed historical fulfilment of the predictions in Dan. 11 came true up until that point. The detail of the predictions and the exactness of their fulfilment serves as a guarantee that the final fulfilment shall also come. All these historical aspects of the various recorded dominations of the land shall be repeated in essence in the last days; there will again be kings of north and south who at times unite to dominate the *eretz*, at times fight each other, with the king of the north coming out as dominant and then an individual figure arises who seeks to dominate the land; and he is brought to his end by the return of the Lord Jesus and the full re-establishment of Israel's Kingdom as that of God.

Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia- Cambyses, Smerdis and Darius I. Or Cambyses (BC 529–522), Gaumata (Pseudo-Smerdis) BC 522 (for 7 months), and Darius Hystaspis (BC 522–485).

And the fourth- Xerxes. The fourth who is the third could also be a way of saying that the third king would be the most significant and final king.

Shall be far richer than they all: and when he has grown strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece- Xerxes is the Ahaseureus of Esther, proud of his riches (Esther 1:4,6,7). Xerxes raised an army of 5 million men to invade Greece. But the original could also mean that he would stir up all the realm of Greece.

I suggested on Dan. 2 that Daniel's prophecies had potential fulfilments which never came about; there is also a discernible although inconsistent and vague fulfilment of some elements of the visions throughout history; and the main fulfilment is in the last days, when the image stands complete, all the beasts of Dan. 7 are

incorporated into the final beast which is to be destroyed, and likewise Daniel 11 may come true in a way we cannot yet imagine, in our last days. The initial possibility of the image prophecy was that there would arise a sequence of kings immediately after Nebuchadnezzar, which would climax in the appearance of Messiah and the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. And here again we have a sequence of four kings arising after Babylon.

GNB "At the height of his power and wealth he will challenge the kingdom of Greece". This continues the theme we will often note in Dan. 11, that kings and nations are struck down at the height of their power, because that is the height of their pride. The same term is repeated in :4: "At the height of his power his empire will break up".

Dan 11:3 *A mighty king shall stand up, who shall rule with great power-*

The word for stand or stood up is so often used in Dan. 11 (:2,3,4,6,7,8,11,14,15,16,17,18,20,21,25,31) just as it is of the ram in Dan. 8:3,4,6,7 and just as Daniel himself was stood up by the Angel. Nations and kings rise and fall under God's Angelic direction. Just as their strengthening is from Him, as discussed on :1.

This king is Alexander the Great of Greece (:4). The focus shifts from Persia in :2 to Greece here in :3, against whom the Persians came with a huge army but were unable to dominate. "Great power" is better "great dominion", in reference to how Alexander ruled the largest ever known empire on earth until that time.

And do according to his will- The language of Dan 8:4 about the ram. Yet the language is allusive to how Yahweh rules with the greatest dominion and does according to *His* will (Dan. 4:35). The various kings and kingdoms of men are all portrayed as playing God, as being fake Messiah figures, and will all have their summation in the final antiChrist figure of the last days.

Dan 11:4 *When he has arisen-*

Throughout Daniel 11 we see continued a theme of the earlier visions: Kings and peoples suddenly fall when at the height of their power (Dan. 11:4 "When he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken", 6,12 "The multitude shall be lifted up, and his heart shall be exalted; and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail", 14 "the children of the violent among your people shall lift themselves up... but they shall fall, 17 "He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom... but shall not stand", 19 "he shall turn his face to the islands, and shall take many... but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found"). This surely is because pride triggers the coming of God's judgment; He is so sensitive to pride, and so loves humility. The language of :4 is that of Dan. 8:8 concerning Alexander: "when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven". See on :24.

As soon as Alexander had arisen to power, he suddenly died. We can look to the arising of a latter day individual or entity which appears to dominate the *eretz* promised to Abraham, but this will fall and be divided, resulting in two power blocs struggling for dominance of the *eretz*.

His kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of the sky, but not to his posterity- We note that division of a kingdom is Divine judgment. The same word is used for the division between Israel and Judah. The restoration would mean that God's people would not be "divided" into two kingdoms any more (Ez. 37:22). Divisive behaviour is therefore self judgment. There was an attempt to keep the Kingdom intact under the rulership of Alexander's half brother and then in

the name of his son who was born after his death, but these attempts failed. The four winds are the four generals of Alexander, the four heads of the leopard (Dan. 7:6) and the four horns of the goat in Dan. 8:8,22.

Nor according to his power with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides these- The kingdom was divided between Alexander's four generals. But the focus of Bible prophecy is upon the powers which dominate the *eretz* promised to Abraham, and so only two of them are now spoken of; the king of the north, the Syrian [Seleucid] kingdom, and that of the south, referring to the Egyptian [Ptolemaic] kingdom, the division taken by Alexander's general Ptolemy Soter. The simple takeaway is that God's focus is so intensely and exclusively upon His people.

Dan 11:5 *The king of the south shall be strong-* Ptolemy Soter defeated the other generals and established a strong kingdom dominating the land of Israel. His 'strength' again is in relation to dominance of the land of Israel, which is the earth / land which the powers of the image in Daniel 2 reigned over.

And also one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion- The reference is to Seleucus Nicator. He was driven out of the northern kingdom and took refuge with Ptolemy, but then returned and became the king of the North, ruling the Seleucid section of the Greek empire.

Dan 11:6 *At the end of years-* This could simply mean 'in the future' or 'after a period of years', but that is surely axiomatic. The marriage between the leadership of the two groups happened 35 years after the death of Seleucus. This is one of the many reasons to think that the ultimate fulfilment of these prophecies will be "at the end of years", in the last days, before the Lord's return. See on :2.

They shall join themselves together- There were attempts at unity between the kings of north and south, the two parts of the Greek empire which sought to dominate Israel. Likewise the two groups of Israel's enemies may unite together in the last days in their common hatred of Israel, but as explained throughout this chapter, they will not remain together and will bitterly fight each other. This is the iron and clay of the feet of the image not mixing together. The joining in view here is the marriage of the grandson of Seleucus, the first leader of the northern Greek empire ["Syria"], and the daughter of Ptolemy, the leader of the southern Greek empire in Egypt.

And the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the strength of her arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up, and those who brought her, and he who became the father of her, and he who strengthened her in those times- The marriage between the leading families of the kings of north and south came to an end when the wife poisoned her husband. "His arm" can also be rendered "his seed"; the idea of a joint offspring uniting the two groups came to nothing. But the language here is detailed, and will have its fuller fulfilment in events of the last days which are yet to unfold. "Those who brought her" would refer to the Egyptian courtiers who came with the wife, who were also murdered. "He who became the father of her" is AVmg. "whom she brought forth"; the offspring of the marriage was also killed.

The "king of the North" throughout Daniel 11 refers to the King of Syria- so the latter day King of the North who attacks Israel and is destroyed at Christ's return, as detailed at the end of Daniel 11 and the start of Daniel 12, must refer to an individual

based upon a King of Syria. Such an individual could easily be the leader of a jihadist entity like ISIS, who took power in Syria.

There are multiple connections between the "King of the North" and the little horn of Dan. 8: 8:11,12,25 = Dan. 11:22,36; 12:1; 8:12 = 11:31; 8:24 = 11:36; 12:6; 8:12,24 = 11:16,17,24,28,30,36,29; 8:12,24,25 "succeeds" = 11:36; 8:19 = 11:30,36; 8:17,19 = 11:27,35,40.

Dan 11:7 *But out of a shoot from her roots shall one stand up in his place, who shall come to the army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail-* In revenge for the murders, the southern kingdom [Egypt] invaded and devastated the Syrian kingdom of the north. The idea of another standing in his place is found also in :20,21 and continues the theme of Dan. 2- the apparently powerful and eternal kings and entities of this world shall all rise and fall under God's hand.

Dan 11:8 *Also their gods, with their molten images, and with their attractive vessels of silver and of gold, shall he carry captive into Egypt; and he shall refrain some years from the king of the north-* Or, "And he shall continue more years than the king of the north". The king of the south at this point was Ptolemy Euergetes, who lived and reigned longer than the king of the north, Seleucus Callinicus. The latter day application of this may be in that the king of the south is to be extremist Islamic, who wishes to destroy all images and perceived idols.

Dan 11:9 *He shall come into the realm of the king of the south, but he shall return into his own land-* If we read as AV "So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land", this would then appear to be a summary of the events of :8. But why the repetition? The alternative reading would refer to an unsuccessful attack on Egypt by the king of the north about 240 BC. However, :29 states there have been three attacks on Egypt by the king of the north, and so here in :9 we read at least of an attack only upon "the realm" of the southern kingdom, i.e. Palestine.

Dan 11:10 *His sons shall war, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall come on, and overflow, and pass through; and they shall return and war, even to his fortress-* The focus of Bible prophecy is upon the land of Israel. The various conflicts between the kings of north and south, the Syrian and Egyptian wings of the Greek empire, are recorded only insofar as they affected Israel. This confirms my view that the "earth" ruled over by the metals of Dan. 2 and beasts of Dan. 7 is the land promised to Abraham. The two sons of the king of the north, Antiochus, attacked Palestine in order to retake it from the king of the south, Egypt. He passed through Palestine up to the border of Egypt but with Winter approaching (BC218), he 'returned' to his fortress in Ptolemais and then in the spring of BC217 returned towards Egypt. The king of the south [Egypt] counterattacked and drove him back to the Ptolemais fortress.

The language of overflowing and passing through is also used of the Assyrian invasion of Judah (Is. 8:8) and of the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 47:2); and here and in Dan. 11:40 it is used of how the king of the north shall overflow and pass through Israel "at the time of the end". So we are encouraged to see this as also having a latter day application; there will be waves of invasions of the land. It is only radical Islam which has such an interest in dominating Israel and Jerusalem.

"Stirred up" twice here and in :25 begs the question "By whom?". Again we have hints at God's hand, meddling with the psychology of men and yet without interfering with their freewill. His hand can meddle (how the word is usually translated) in the hearts of men today, through His Spirit. Likewise "overflowing" is a word repeatedly used (:10,22,26,40). This too begs the question, "Who is driving this storm surge of water?". It is the wind of God's Spirit, driving men even more headlong in the path they have themselves chosen.

Dan 11:11 *The king of the south shall be moved with anger, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north; and he shall set forth a great multitude, and the multitude shall be given into his hand-* This refers to the great battle fought at Raphia, near Gaza, which was won by Ptolemy Philopator, the king of the south. "Moved with choler" (AV) again implies being stirred up by some unseen influence. Again the question is begged, as to what this is. Clearly it is God doing this by working on the hearts of men. It is the same word in Dan. 8:7 about Greece being "moved" to attack the ram of Medo Persia, and is elsewhere translated "provoked". "Given into his hand" likewise suggests some higher force giving victory.

Dan 11:12 *The multitude shall be lifted up, and his heart shall be exalted; and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail-* The great victory at Raphia wasn't followed up on. Ptolemy wished to enter the inner sanctuary of the temple, but was refused by the priests. He therefore threatened the whole nation of the Jews with destruction, and murdered thousands of them. In Alexandria, 40,000-60,000 Jews were slain. Again we note that the prophecy focuses upon history as it affects God's people and land. And again we note that pride leads to destruction: "He will be proud of his victory and of the many soldiers he has killed, but he will not continue to be victorious" (GNB). God looks carefully at the heart of unbelieving Gentiles; how much more upon ours.

Dan 11:13 *The king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former; and he shall come on at the end of the times, even of years, with a great army and with much substance-* Antiochus III invaded Palestine again in 201 BC. Again we note that the prophecy focuses entirely upon the relationships between the kings of the north and south insofar as it affects God's land and people. "At the end of times" again suggests that whatever historical application this clearly had, it points ahead to the major fulfilment in the last days. If the idea was simply 'after a period of time', then this would have been expressed differently. The idea of 'after a period of time' would refer to the 16 year gap between the battle at Raphia (see on :11) and this second campaign against the king of the south.

GNB "When the proper time comes, he will return with a large, well-equipped army". Daniel often speaks of "time" and "times"; and they are always under God's control. Here we have another hallmark of the Divine inserted. All these kings and powers had their Divine time to do this or that, despite exercising their freewill. They come to "the end of years" for them (:6,13), as the king of the north finally comes to his "end" in :45 (See on :24 "he shall devise his devices against the strongholds, but only for a time", 27 "they shall speak lies at one table: but it shall not prosper; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed", 33 "they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, for [many] days", 35 Some of those who are wise shall stumble, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, until the time of the

end; because it is yet for the time appointed", 36 "he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished", 40 "At the time of the end shall the king of the south contend with him").

Dan 11:14 *In those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the children of the violent among your people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision; but they shall fall*- From this verse onwards, commentators are divided between those who see the prophecy continuing to describe the conflicts between the northern and southern parts of the Greek empire; and those who see the focus now upon the Roman empire, which according to some interpretations of Daniel 2, was the next power to take over dominating the land promised to Abraham. Both lines of interpretation have some undeniably valid connections between the prophetic words and history. But unlike the preceding verses, the match is not so precise as from :4-13. I suggest again that it is the conditional nature of Bible prophecy which explains this. A path of events could have been followed but it was not, because Israel did not fully repent; and so God tried again, and again. Therefore these same prophetic words have some limited application to both the Greek kingdoms and the Roman empire. I suggest this is understandable if we accept that the main fulfilment of the entire chapter is in the future; the latter day entity which dominates the land and people of Israel will have elements of both Greek and Roman empires, just as the image stands complete in the last days, and the last terrible beast of Dan. 7 and Revelation is a composite of all the previous beasts.

The flow of thought seems to continue naturally from :13, which speaks about the king of the north invading Palestine; and now he directly attacks the king of the south, who at the time was the infant king Ptolemy Epiphanes. Antiochus was not the only one to rise against this infant king of the south; Agathocles, his prime minister, and other groups within Egypt joined in; and Antiochus was supported by Philip of Macedon.

"The children of the violent among your people" are interpreted as the Romans by John Thomas and those who follow the AV "Also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision". But "they shall fall" seems out of sequence; the Romans didn't fall for a long time afterwards. And the original does demand that these violent ones or robbers are "among your people". The reference seems more naturally to Jews among Daniel's people who sided with Antiochus as he attacked Jerusalem. "Your people" is the phrase elsewhere used in Daniel about Daniel and his people the Jews. This surely means that the words of Dan. 11 were given to Daniel as prophecy, and are not some later description of elapsed history presented as prophecy and added by another hand (as some claim). "Establish" is the same word translated "stand up" earlier in the verse. These Jewish traitors "stood up" with the Syrian invaders because they justified their actions by saying that they were making this vision of Daniel 11 'stand up' or be established. They justified joining in the destruction of Jerusalem by saying that it had been prophesied in this vision. GNB "they will rebel because of a vision they have seen, but they will be defeated". Possibly a false vision from a false prophet is referenced. You can't force Bible prophecy into fulfilment. The required preconditions were Israel's repentance and the appearance of a Godly Messiah, to re-establish God's Kingdom on His principles, rather than a desire for political, nationalistic independence.

"Stand up" is better 'be stood up'. This repeats the great theme of Daniel, that the Divine hand raises or sets up, and takes down. The same word will be used twice in

:15 translated "withstand" (AV). The power to withstand or stand up is therefore given or taken- clearly, by God.

Dan 11:15 *So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mound, and take a well-fortified city: and the forces of the south shall not stand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to stand-* This can apply to both the siege of the Romans in AD70 [although there would be a large gap in the prophecy in this case, and the Romans didn't take Palestine after a conquest of Egypt, nor did they as the king of the north give any daughter in marriage to the king of the South as required by :17] or to Antiochus. The Antiochus interpretation fits better with the forces of the south not standing, and the ones chosen by Ptolemy of Egypt failing to resist Antiochus. As noted on :14, these same prophetic words have some limited application to both the Greek kingdoms and the Roman empire. I suggest this is understandable if we accept that the main fulfilment of the entire chapter is in the future; the latter day entity which dominates the land and people of Israel will have elements of both Greek and Roman empires, just as the image stands complete in the last days, and the last terrible beast of Dan. 7 and Revelation is a composite of all the previous beasts. However, "the king of the north" in the context refers not to Rome but to the northern part of the Greek empire, Syria, governed by the Seleucids. The king of the south, Egypt, true to Biblical precedent, failed to help the Jews against the king of the north, just as Egypt had not saved them from the Babylonians and Assyrians. The lack of strength to stand may refer to a severe famine which led to the garrisons of the king of the South surrendering; this was why the army led by Scopos who took refuge in the walled city of Sidon had to surrender to the king of the north, Antiochus.

Dan 11:16 *But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land, and in his hand shall be destruction-* This refers to the actions of Antiochus and the Syrians in Palestine at this time, and the inability of Ptolemy and Scopos, the leaders of the "king of the south", to resist. The language is similar to that about God in Dan. 4:35. This is a major theme of Daniel- that the apparently invincible armies of men are brought to nothing before God. Those who appear so invincible are merely playing God and will be judged by He who is ultimately invincible, and whose will triumphs over human will. And that is the simple takeaway lesson for us to this day. In Daniel's time, Palestine was largely in ruins. But he is reminded that it is still "the glorious land" from God's perspective, and was invited to see it that way with the eye of faith.

"He will do as he wills... none able to stand before him" recalls the description of the ram at the peak of its power in Dan. 8:4, after which he fell. It's the same here. Having arisen to this point, he would soon stumble and fall (:19). This is a common theme in Daniel- that all rise and fall, and they fall at the point of their greatest pride.

The Hebrew translated "destruction" is the word usually translated 'ended', 'finished' or 'accomplished'. It is the word used in :36 of the judgment being "accomplished" or ended; and twice in Dan. 12:7 of the 'finishing' of the destruction of God's land and people. So we could better translate with LXX "he shall stand in the land of beauty, and it shall be consumed [ended] by his hand". The obvious observation is that the destruction of the holy land was not at this point 'ended'. Hence the difficulty of the translators. But once we grasp the idea of conditional fulfilment of prophecy, all becomes clear. The land could at that point have been destroyed 'to the end'. Just as the abomination that makes desolate was set up in :31, well before the

time for this to be done in Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Mt. 24:15. This was a possible point of 'ending' that didn't come.

Dan 11:17 *He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom-* Antiochus determined to focus all his resources on the destruction of Egypt, the king of the south.

And he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them- Antiochus was unable to do as he planned, due to the growing threat of Rome. So instead he tried to make treaties with Ptolemy, the king of the south.

He shall give him the daughter of women, to corrupt her; but she shall not stand, neither be for him- Ptolemy married Cleopatra, the daughter of Antiochus. The intention was that Cleopatra would be her father's secret agent in Egypt. But Antiochus didn't succeed in corrupting her; she came to support her husband rather than her father. Note that Cleopatra Syra is not the Cleopatra VII the mistress of the Roman Caesars. Cleopatra I Syra (died 176 B.C.) was the daughter of the Seleucid king Antiochus III the Great (lived 242-187 B.C.) a king of the north, who gave her in marriage to Ptolemy V of Egypt, the then king of the south.

Dan 11:18 *After this shall he turn his face to the islands, and shall take many-* After Rome defeated Philip of Macedon, Antiochus capitalized on this by grabbing many of the Greek islands.

But a commander shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; yes, moreover, he shall cause his insolence to return upon him- The Romans demanded that Antiochus relinquish all the islands and territory of Philip of Macedon which he had seized. He refused, and reproached the Romans, but the Romans defeated Antiochus at Magnesia. GNB stresses how yet again, pride was the root of his downfall and not anything else: "a foreign leader will defeat him and put an end to his arrogance; indeed he will turn the arrogance of Syria's king back on him". If pride is the reason for failure, we can only conclude that this was because of the intervention of the God who is so sensitive to pride- even in the hearts of those who are not His people. How much more sensitive is He to pride in those who are His people.

Dan 11:19 *Then he shall turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found-* After the defeat at Magnesia, the Romans demanded a tribute of 15,000 talents. Antiochus tried to raise this by breaking into temple citadels ["fortresses"] of various gods. Whilst plundering the temple of Jupiter Belus in Elymais, Antiochus was killed.

The language of turning face, returning to the homeland and falling is exactly that of another "king of the north" from Assyria: "he returned [s.w. "turn" in Dan. 11:19] with shame of face to his own land. When he had come into the house of his god, those who came forth from his own bowels killed him there with the sword" (2 Chron. 32:21). The idea is surely that the same Divine hand was at work with the king of Assyria as with this king of the north. Just as God makes empires and kings rise and fall.

"And shall not be found" connects with the fate of all the kingdoms of men at the end of Dan. 2- they will be as chaff that will be blown away never to be found again. But the essence of that future judgment is manifest now in how God judges. We are to have the wisdom to perceive that; the principles of final judgment are manifest in God's judgments in the world in our lives now. See on :22.

Dan 11:20 *Then shall stand up in his place one who shall cause a tax collector to pass through the kingdom to maintain its glory-* As noted on :19, the Romans had laid a huge tribute upon Antiochus and the northern Seleucid kingdom. His successor, Seleucus Philopator, tried to raise the tax / tribute by plundering temples, including that in Jerusalem. The tax was particularly levied upon Judah, "the kingdom" and land which is the focus of the prophecies.

But within a few days- He reigned only 11 years; although "a few days" implies somewhat less than that. This is an example of where the "fit" between prophecy and history is good in places but not in others. This is because the fulfilments were either potentials which began to 'work out' and then didn't; or only primary fulfilments. Only the latter day fulfilment will be the perfect fit.

He shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle- Seleucus Philopator was poisoned by his trusted minister Heliodorus.

Dan 11:21 *In his place shall arise a contemptible person, to whom they had not given the honour of the kingdom-* The reference appears to be to Heliodorus who poisoned Seleucus Philopator. But he was unpopular and "not given the honour".

But he shall come in time of security, and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries- This appears to refer to how Antiochus IV Epiphanes returned from imprisonment in Rome, came to Athens and flattered the Athenians to support him rather than Heliodorus. Whilst Antiochus IV Epiphanes fits the following verses quite well, his taking of power doesn't nicely fit here. It was not a "time of security", and he actually amassed a large army against Heliodorus although he didn't use it.

Dan 11:22 *The overwhelming forces shall be overwhelmed from before him, and shall be broken; even the prince of the covenant-* The idea may be that Antiochus took control of Syria and overcame some "prince" who opposed him, possibly Onias III, according to 2 Macc. 4. Or it could be that another invasion of Egypt is described, although this is hard to find historically at this time; and we ask why "the prince of the covenant" should be mentioned in this connection. Here as mentioned earlier, there seems a gap between the prophetic words and the possible historical fulfilment. The main fulfilment is yet future. "Shall be broken" recalls how the iron legs of Dan. 2 and the fourth beast of Dan. 7 are to "break" others, and yet then be broken by the Lord's return. This king of the north again acts as a fake Messiah, an antiChrist. "The prince of the covenant" refers most comfortably to the Lord Jesus; "even" is elsewhere translated "in like manner as". Perhaps we are to understand that his 'breaking' is just as the little stone, Messiah, the prince of the covenant, will in turn break him. He is thereby presented as an imitation Christ, who shall be destroyed by the real Christ, in the latter day manifestation of these things. As discussed on :19, we have here an example of how God's final judgment of Dan. 2 is also seen in essence in how He judges now. The connection with the breaking and sweeping away of the chaff of Dan. 2 is strengthened by the GNB: "swept away".

Another view is that "the prince of the covenant" refers to Antiochus removing Onias as high priest in Jerusalem in favour of his own supporters. But this bit of political intrigue against a priest who was himself a political animal hardly seems to fit the language of *the prince of the covenant* being "broken". And why call the priest a "prince" if Messiah is not in view? All the other suggestions seem out of step with historical reality- e.g. the idea that it refers to "Ptolemy Philometor, the son of Cleopatra, Antiochus' sister, who was joined in covenant with him". How were such

people "broken", we ask. And :23 speaks of Ptolemy Philometor as now making a league with Antiochus, so he was hardly "broken" by him in the preceding verse.

Dan 11:23 *After the treaty made with him he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people-* This seems to speak of the treaty between Antiochus as king of the north and Ptolemy Philometor as king of the south, who was then but a child and was deceived. Under the guise of assisting Ptolemy Philometor to rule over all Egypt, Antiochus came with a small army and grabbed much of Egypt. We can likewise imagine the latter day king of the north arising from a position of weakness; rather than being the leader of an already large people such as Russia.

Dan 11:24 *Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province-* "Without warning" can be translated "in the midst of peace" which is exactly the language of Dan. 8:25 about Antiochus as the little horn: "in the midst of peace he shall destroy many". But the prophecy of Dan. 11 about him is of grater detail and likewise is intended to end with the destruction of Antiochus by the Lord's coming- and that didn't happen. It was a potential that didn't come about and was delayed and reinterpreted until the last days. Antiochus used the guile explained in :23 to take the best parts of Egypt, around Memphis and Alexandria, for himself. But why describe Egypt as a "province"? Again we do not see a perfect fit of the history to the prophetic language; that shall only come in the latter day fulfilment, when there are two power blocs dominating the land and people of Israel with various intrigues between them.

And he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them prey and spoil and substance- This was the first time that the king of the north had so totally taken over Egypt, the king of the south. The historical fulfilment is recorded in 1 Macc. 1:17-20, "And the kingdom was established before Antiochus, and he had a mind to reign over the land of Egypt, that he might reign over two kingdoms. And he entered into Egypt with a great multitude, with chariots and elephants and horsemen, and a great number of ships: and he made war against Ptolomee, king of Egypt, but Ptolomee was afraid at his presence, and fled, and many were wounded unto death. And he took the strong cities of the land of Egypt: and he took the spoils of the land of Egypt". But again the fulfilment is not exact, because there is no record of Antiochus scattering the Egyptians. Perhaps in the last days the two warring factions in the Middle East will end up with the king of the north briefly dominating the king of the south. Who those latter day players are, isn't clear. There could be a clear divide amongst Israel's enemies, like the two legs of the image; perhaps along the lines of the Sunni-Shia divide. Or perhaps the king of the north will be the latter day Assyrian, and the king of the south corresponds to Western forces in the Middle East.

Moreover, he shall devise his devices against the strongholds, but only for a time- Egypt had a series of fortresses for defence, which Antiochus overcame. Egypt was a protectorate of the rising Roman empire, and they demanded Antiochus retreated from Egypt. We wonder whether "a time" is to be understood in the context of Dan. 7:25, "a time, times and a half". In this case, we have evidence that the meaning of "a time" is flexible. GNB "but his time will soon run out". As discussed on :13, the continual reference to "time" and "times" in Daniel all implies that the desperate freewill efforts of men are all in fact within the frames of Divinely arranged "times".

Dan 11:25 *He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south*

with a great army; and the king of the south shall war in battle with an exceeding great and mighty army; but he shall not stand-

Again we can read this as 'he shall be stirred up'; hence LXX "his strength and his heart shall be stirred up against the king of the south". This implies an unseen hand stirring up the heart of men- and this is clearly God's activity, directly upon the human heart.

This mighty army of Antiochus is described in 1 Macc. 1 as quoted on :24. Ptolemy likewise raised a mighty army to drive Antiochus out of Egypt. But again the chronology seems slightly "out"; this great invasion ought to have been described before the events of :24 it was to apply totally to Antiochus. The difficulties in correspondence are again a reminder that Antiochus was only a primary fulfilment of the greater which was to come. According to :29, there were three invasions of the king of the south by the king of the north, and this was the first and greatest of them.

For they shall devise devices against him- Ptolemy Philometor [the king of the south] was weak and betrayed by his own nobles and their intrigues.

Dan 11:26 *Yes, they who eat of his dainties shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain-* 1 Macc. 1:18 describes how "Many fell wounded to death". His army was "swept away" (NIV, RSV). Ptolemy Philometor was betrayed by those who ate "at his table" (LXX). To eat together was a sign of mutual trust and fellowship, and our breaking of bread at the table of the Lord Jesus speaks of His acceptance of us. All we have to do is to accept it; and we should therefore never deny another presence at His table.

Dan 11:27 *As for both these kings, their hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table: but it shall not prosper; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed-* This again is a hint that the entire situation here is intended for ultimate fulfilment in the last day and not in a continuous historical sense, although there clearly are elements of primary fulfilment in history. All the power and device of human politics and military might will not prosper, because it is God's intention that things shall come to "the end" at the "time appointed" by Him. And this is a wider comfort in human life and experience. Antiochus sat at Ptolemy's table, pretending to be just merely supporting him, when he was lying to him. And yet again, the historical fit isn't exact, because this deceit was really before the massive invasion of :25. The fulfilment is vague and inexact- because it was but a primary fulfilment, and we look to the last days for the exact fit. "The time appointed" might initially have had possible fulfilment at the end of the 62 weeks of Dan. 9:25. GNB "They will not get what they want, because the time for it has not yet come". See on :13,24,33 for how "the time" in Daniel is always a Divinely appointed time. There is the sense in the original that the end has been delayed by an appointed time. Only the Russian Synodal translation seems to get this right: "потому что конец еще отложен до времени", 'because the end is still postponed for a time'. This is exactly what we learn by comparing the various time periods of Daniel; they reflect continual postponements and extensions and reframing of the periods.

A theme developed in Daniel is that there is no essential difference between the various kings and empires. Because human nature is the same in men and empires great or small. Both "the king of the north" and "the king of the south" act according to their own will (11:3,16,36); they attack each other whenever they can; they use their daughters for the sake of their own political advantages (11:6,17); and finally they lie to each other at the same table (11:27).

Dan 11:28 *Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do his pleasure, and return to his own land-* Antiochus took the riches of Egypt and returned northward. He heard that Jerusalem was in festivity because of a false report about his death, and so he decided to stop there on the march homewards and punish them. His heart was not simply against the Jews but against their holy covenant. In the latter day scenario, it is "the holy [Abrahamic] covenant" which is the root source of bitterness between Islam and Judaism, and between Israel and her neighbours. Antiochus sought to replace Jewish culture with Greek [Hellenic] culture, introducing Greek games on the temple mount, such as naked wrestling and discus throwing. He killed 40,000 Jews there at this time according to Josephus, and desecrated the temple. There will be something similar done by the latter day king of the north.

Given all the emphasis upon the hand of God influencing human hearts, we should consider here that it would be quite legitimate to translate "His heart shall be *turned* [by God] against the holy covenant". The same words are found in :25, where the king's heart was turned or stirred up against the king of the South.

Dan 11:29 *At the time appointed he shall return, and come into the south; but it shall not be in the latter time as it was in the former-* The evil planned against Judea and Jerusalem was "at the time appointed"; those who thought they were indulging their own plans were in fact under Divine control. This is the consistent comfort of the prophecies. Antiochus made a second attack upon the king of the south, but not as successful as that of :26-28; and his third attack upon Egypt in :42,43 was likewise not so successful as the first one.

Dan 11:30 *For ships of Kittim shall come against him-* A reference to Roman forces and envoys arriving in Egypt, which they saw as their protectorate, forcing Antiochus to back off and return homeward.

Therefore he shall be afraid and shall withdraw, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and shall do his pleasure: he shall even return- On his return northward, as happened in :28, he attacked Jerusalem. He sacked the city and again, his anger was against the covenant; he again sought to impose Greek culture upon the Jews. Maccabees records that he forced the Jews "that they should follow the law of the nations of the earth, and should forbid holocausts and sacrifices, and atonements to be made in the temple of God. And should prohibit the sabbath and festival days to be celebrated. And he commanded the holy places to be profaned, and the holy people of Israel. And he commanded altars to be built, and temples, and idols, and swine's flesh to be immolated, and unclean beasts. And that they should leave their children uncircumcised, and let their souls be defiled with all uncleannesses, and abominations, to the end that they should forget the law, and should change all the justifications of God. And that whosoever would not do according to the word of king Antiochus should be put to death". Such spiritual and psychological domination of the Jews is to be expected from the latter day king of the north, and radical Islam seems a very likely way of fulfilling this.

And pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant- The idea could simply be that the punishments inflicted by Antiochus were judgments upon the many in Judah who had forsaken the covenant. But the original can as well be translated "and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant" (AV). This would then refer to how Antiochus used the apostate high priest Menelaus to develop a group of

Jewish apostates who supported the imposition of Greek [Hellenic] culture upon Judaism. The Biblical background of the term "those who forsake the covenant" is that because of this, the temple would be destroyed and Israel judged by their neighbours (Dt. 29:25; 31:16; 1 Kings 19:10; Jer. 22:9). We are therefore set up to expect what we read in :31, that the temple and people of Judah were to be judged.

Dan 11:31 *Forces from him shall appear, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering, and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate*- This is the language of Dan. 9:27 about what the Romans did in AD70, and it is understood by the Lord to refer to both the Roman actions in AD70 and more fully, the situation immediately before His return (see on Mt. 24:15). But that is not to preclude a reference to the blasphemies of Antiochus, who dedicated the Jerusalem temple to Zeus and placed a statue of Zeus on the altar (2 Macc. 6:2). Lk. 21:20 alludes to the same idea but connects this with Dan. 9:27, seeing the desolator as the Roman armies of AD70 and the armies of the latter day invader. However, the "he" here can have application to John of Gischala, the Jewish zealot leader, who was actually the one who made the sacrifices to cease, and with whom Josephus records he pleaded to re-instate them. Josephus saw John as the fulfilment of this prophecy. And yet in the context it clearly also refers to what was done by Antiochus (1 Macc 1:45, 54, 59; 4:52–53). And so we again see that the prophecies have various historical fulfilments, all of them not a perfect fit with the actual prophetic words; but they will have their full and seamless, perfect fit fulfilment at the time of the Lord's return. Just as the metals of the image and the various beasts had their historical fulfilments but will all exist at the Lord's return, when the image of Dan. 2 stands complete. The final abuse of God's land and people will contain all the elements of the previous abusers; in this case, by the likes of Antiochus and John of Gischala.

The abomination that makes desolate can be understood as that which desecrates the temple, as in Dan. 8:12,13, "the transgression of desolation"; and also as 'the abomination of the desolater', which is how Antiochus Epiphanes is described in 1 Macc. 1:29,37–49. The abomination in view was in each historical context some material shrine or altar built on the temple mount, once fortified by the Jews ["the fortress"], with the agreement of apostate Jews. 1 Macc. 1:54 describes what happened at the hands of Antiochus: "Now in the fifteenth day of the month Casleu in the 145th year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Judah on every side". The temple was dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, and a smaller altar built upon the original altar for sacrifices to this god, with an image of the idol upon it; "abomination" in the Old Testament means an idol. The Roman 'desolation' of the temple was in similar terms, and so we can look to something similar happening in the latter day fulfilment. This abomination is to be set up in the last days by the latter day invader, and then destroyed by the Lord's return, and 2 Thess. 2 is likewise clear about this; so I cannot see the Mosque of Omar currently on the temple mount as anything more than at best a primary fulfilment of it, along with the erection of a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on the temple site in AD 132.

The fact is that the abomination that makes desolate is understood as specifically appearing in the last days, before Messiah comes to save His people (Mt. 24:15). But that didn't happen in the times of Antiochus. What he did to the temple could have been 'the end'. But it wasn't. The term is clearly to be linked with the desolation prophesied as being accomplished by the little horn of Dan. 7 and Dan. 8. And that

was to be ended by the Lord's coming. But He didn't come then. And so the whole scenario has some apparent reference to what happened in AD70. And again, the Lord didn't come. Clearly there were a series of potential fulfilments, but each time they didn't fully happen. The kaleidoscope turned again. But finally a glorious picture will be presented and fulfilled by the Lord's return to the earth to eternally establish His Kingdom.

Dan 11:32 *Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries-* Antiochus got the apostate Jews on his side. Alcimus and other apostate high priests were used by Antiochus to enforce the Greek culture over the Hebrew. There is a strong theme in all the fulfilments, that apostate Jews enabled the desolation of the temple. And we are to expect this in the greater, final fulfilment of the last days.

But the people who know their God shall be strong, and do exploits- There was a reaction against this enforced Hellenization. There arose the *hasidim*, called "the Assidseans" in the Book of Maccabees, headed by Mattathias and his sons. Their "exploits" against the Hellenists are recorded in the books of the Maccabees, particularly those by Judas Maccabaeus. Those who "know their God" are those who are faithful to the covenant; the whole purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was and is to know God personally, in the sense of having a personal relationship with Him.

Dan 11:33 *Those who are wise among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, many days-*

The connection with Dan. 12:3 is clear: "Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever". That speaks in its context of the last day, of resurrection and judgment at the Lord's coming. The conclusion surely is that that day could have come at this time. Just as the abuses of Antiochus, the little horn, could have led to the Lord's coming in the visions of both Dan. 7 and Dan. 8. But it didn't. Various preconditions weren't fulfilled, and so the kaleidoscope turned again and other possible fulfilments arose. We note another connection between the historical parts of Daniel and the visions- in this case, to the way the three friends were preserved from the sword and flame. But these "wise" amongst God's people would not be spared. Sometimes God visibly comes through for His people and other times He doesn't- in the short term.

"The wise" are a group whose prototype was in the wise Daniel and his three friends, who were the minority of Jews who weren't corrupted by the pressures of the Gentile world. Even though the other 'wise' amongst the Jews were corrupted. These wise who instruct many are those of Dan. 12:3 [see notes there], who shall shine eternally. They become representative of all the faithful. We note that Daniel and his friends are presented as having instructed the Gentile kings with Divine wisdom. They are purified, refined and made white (:35) just as were the Jewish friends in the fiery furnace. It is this group of "wise" in the last days who will understand the prophetic word, just as Daniel and his friends did: "those who are wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:10).

The revolt against the Hellenization of Antiochus and the apostate Jews was intellectual as well as in terms of military rebellion and massacres of garrisons etc. This revival of attention to the Mosaic law by the *hasidim* (see on :32) spawned the movements such as the Pharisees which were so opposed to the Lord Jesus when He came. This group are alluded to in Dan. 12:3 as being sure of resurrection and eternal blessing because of their teaching of righteousness. But again, there is an imperfect fit

here; because the *hasidim* were often teaching more nationalism than true spirituality, and their understanding of the covenant was Biblically weak. Much of what they said and believed was hardly Biblical spirituality. The falling or stumbling alludes to the judgments upon Israel for forsaking the covenant (Dt. 32:35; Lev. 26:37); perhaps the implication is that they too were not faithful to the covenant. We could conclude that even those who misunderstand are blessed despite their doctrinal weaknesses. But the latter day application is a far tighter fit; that there will be those who teach about Jesus as Messiah within the persecuted Israel of the last days under [Islamic?] domination, who will be eternally blessed. Several passages in Revelation can be seen as referring to them; these are the pastors who will be given to repentant Israel of Jer. 3:15.

"Many days" implies a specific time. "Many" isn't in the original. See on :13 for how "the days" or "time" in Daniel is always a Divinely appointed time.

Dan 11:34 *Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help-* The Maccabees won amazing victories, but as noted on :33, they were generally far from Biblical spirituality. This was reflected in God giving them a "little help". They of course claimed, as did subsequent Judaism, that their amazing victories against "the king of the north" were due to God being with them. But the record here distinctly downplays that. And there is the statement here that the "little help" would be received at the time of their "fall". Again, the victories of the Maccabees doesn't exactly fit with the Biblical prediction, and we are to look to a latter day fulfilment for the perfect fit.

But many shall join themselves to them with flattery- "Join" may suggest marriage (AV "cleave"). Some joined the revolutionaries, even intermarrying with them, as agents of the Hellenists, the king of the north. Infiltration of the Jewish ranks was seen in the time of Antiochus and also the AD70 scenario, and we can expect it to feature in the final, last days fulfilment.

Dan 11:35 *Some of those who are wise shall stumble, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, until the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed-* 'Stumbling' [Heb. to totter / waver] is mostly used in a negative sense, of spiritually stumbling. The gods of the kings of Syria were the "ruin", s.w. stumbling, of Judah (2 Chron. 28:23); "you have fallen / stumbled by your iniquity" (Hos. 14:1). But the righteous falls seven times and seven times rises up again (Prov. 24:17, the same word is used); and that stumbling is part of the refining and purifying of the saints. Sin is never wasted, but always used by God towards His glory. This implies that some of "the wise" at this point would endure to "the time of the end", which is the time of Daniel's resurrection and "the end" of the time periods. But they didn't- that potential scenario didn't come about. The situations at the time of Antiochus and AD70 could have led to the ultimate "time of the end". But that potential wasn't realized; Israel did not repent, and instead focused upon nationalism and the hope of a political Kingdom of God. And therefore and thereby these words of Daniel 11 concern the situation in the ultimate "time of the end", the same "end" foreseen in Dan. 9. The LXX gives: "And some of those of understanding shall consider to purify themselves both to be chosen and to be purified to the time of the end, for the season is for hours". It could be that for the sake of the faithful minority, those who were "wise", the time of the end was but hours away; but that "end" still didn't come. The potential was not reached fully. The 'stumbling' of "those who are wise" could refer to their 'falling' by the sword as in :33,34. But the Hebrew for "stumble" is very often used about spiritual stumbling (Is. 8:15; 28:13; 59:10,14; Jer. 6:21; 18:15; Mal. 2:8

etc.). The idea seems to be that some of the wise spiritually stumbled. The Hebrew, followed by AVmg., suggests that it is the fall of some of the wise, either physically or spiritually, which will be the refining and purifying of the truly faithful. And yet even their experience of stumbling, physically and / or spiritually, was part of the Divine effort to purge them so that they might be acceptable at the time of the end, the day of final judgment. The latter day application is imaginable; some of the wise fall in the persecutions of :33,34, some spiritually stumble, but those who are purified by these experiences are those of Dan. 12:3 who shall be resurrected to especial glory. But the text clearly requires that this group who are purged by the sufferings of some of the wise, or even their stumbling in faith, will endure until the time of the end; the time when "Michael" stands up for God's people and the dead are resurrected (Dan. 12:1-3). Clearly the language demands a latter day application for its main fulfilment. Any attempt to apply this language to the time of Antiochus or AD70 is weak and patchy, and at best but an incipient fulfilment of the final, greater one. This focus upon the faithful Jewish remnant of the last days is found at several points in the visions of Revelation, not least those of the 144,000. The ultimate 'making white' is through accepting the cleansing of the Lord's blood (Rev. 7:9).

See on :13 for how "the time" in Daniel is always a Divinely appointed time. GNB "This will continue until the end comes, the time that God has set".

Dan 11:36 *The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods-*

The king doing according to his will recalls how other kings did the same; Dan. 11:3 uses the term of Alexander the Great; Dan. 11:16 of Antiochus III). The phrase is also used of the ram [Medo-Persia] in Dan. 8:4,20. These visions are portraying a battle between human will, and that of God. Naturally God wins. And that same battle is played out within every human heart.

"Speak marvellous things against God" is the language of Dan. 7:21, where the little horn [identified in Dan. 8 as Antiochus Epiphanes] "shall speak words against the Most High". John Thomas and others see this "king" as the Romans. But Roman power did not extend until the indignation is accomplished, i.e. the last day, and surely "the king of fierce countenance" here and in Dan. 8:23 better fits Antiochus. But even that is not a perfect fit. As noted on :35; this looks forward to the latter day antichrist, a charismatic "king of the north". The blasphemy of Antiochus is well recorded. His coins bore his image with the inscription "Antiochus: God manifest". He claimed he could touch the stars (2 Macc. 9:8-10) and could like Yahweh weigh the mountains in his scales. Parts of the prophecies seem to 'best fit' Antiochus, others, the Roman-Jewish war of AD67-70. This is intentional. But all these shady and incomplete historical fulfilments prepare the way for the major one, in the last days. They also reflect the conditional nature of the prophecy; the program could have all come true in the time of Antiochus, but it didn't; and likewise in AD70 with the Romans. The factor which precluded it each time was the lack of repentance and true spirituality amongst the Jews.

And he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished; for that which is decreed shall be done- GNB "until the time when God punishes him. God will do exactly what he has planned". See on :13 for the major theme of how all this apparent exercise of human freewill is still within the frames of God's appointed times. "The indignation" is another connection with the little horn of Dan. 8:19, who is Antiochus: "at the latter end of the indignation". "That which is decreed / determined" uses the

word twice used in Dan. 9:26,27 about that which is "determined" being done at "the end". The very last day is in view here. Antiochus didn't bring about that final "end". The end could've come then. I suggest it didn't because various preconditions weren't met. No Messiah figure arose as intended, Cyrus failed in this; Israel didn't want to return from Persia nor did they rebuild the temple as commanded in Ez. 40-48. And so the kaleidoscope turned, and the various elements will form the final picture of the actual last days. But the book is sealed, we will not understand that picture until it happens at "the end". The same "end" when Daniel is resurrected and stands in his inheritance.

The individual spoken of here, the king of the north, was to "prosper" until the last day. Although the time of the accomplishment of wrath could refer specifically to God's judgments upon Jerusalem, as in Dan. 9. But when that finishes, and the times of Gentile domination of her are accomplished, then the Messiah shall come and Israel's Kingdom be re-established. So again we see that the ultimate fulfilment of these words is in the last days. The LXX renders: "And shall prosper until the wrath be accomplished; for on him there is an end". The idea of "*an* end" could be another hint that these prophecies had various provisional, conditional fulfilments in history, various "ends" were potentially possible, but they did not come about. Yet ultimately, the final "end" shall come at the Lord's coming. Thus it could be argued that :36-40 is a summary of the situation which is brought about by the events of :41-45. This approach fits the AD70 situation fairly well, but not perfectly because the main fulfilment of all this chapter is in the last days.

The allusion here in :36 is back to Dan. 9:26,27, leading us to see these words as having an initial fulfilment in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. And yet as I have so often reasoned, all these historical events were not the main fulfilment of these words; they were but precursors of the main fulfilment which is yet to come. But this same language of the self exalted king is used of Alexander (:3), Antiochus (:16), Medo-Persia (Dan. 8:4,20) and the little horn (Dan. 8:12,24). The latter day abuser of God's people will include elements of all the previous ones, which explains the similarities. It could be that :36-39 is a description of how the situation in :40 arises, when the kings of north and south both unite against a third party who is within Jerusalem. So "the king" here would refer to someone in Jerusalem; I suggest in the AD70 context this was John of Gischala, the zealot king / leader. :36-39 would then be describing him.

The exaltation of John above every god was through his blasphemy, as Josephus comments about him: "John, when the plunder from the people failed him, had recourse to sacrilege, melting down many of the temple-offerings and many of the vessels required for public worship, bowls and salvers and tables; nor did he abstain from the vessels for pure wine sent by Augustus and his consort. For the Roman sovereigns ever honoured and added embellishment to the temple, whereas this Jew now pulled down even the donations of foreigners, remarking to his companions that they should not scruple to employ divine things on the Divinity's behalf, and that those who fought for the temple should be supported by it. He accordingly drew every drop of the sacred wine and of the oil, which the priests kept for pouring upon the burnt-offerings and which stood in the inner temple, and distributed these to his horde, who without horror anointed themselves and drank therefrom. Nor can I here refrain from uttering what my emotion bids me say. I believe that, had the Romans delayed to punish these reprobates, either the earth would have opened and swallowed up the city, or it would have been swept away by a flood, or have tasted anew the thunderbolts of the land of Sodom".

Dan. 11:36,37 are clearly given a latter day application by Paul's allusion to them as descriptive of the latter day antichrist figure who will be enthroned and destroyed by the Lord's second coming (2 Thess. 2:3-8). And yet Paul writes as if that person or entity was alive in his time; "the mystery of lawlessness" was already at work, he wrote; although the man of lawlessness was alive but restrained at the time of writing. But again, that was only a primary fulfilment; the main and essential fulfilment is in an individual or entity at the time of the Lord's return.

The references to Rome are however significant. Dan. 11 began with the Persians taking over from Babylon, then talks about the Greek domination of the land, and now we have Rome, then the breakup of Rome, and finally the coming of Messiah to destroy them and establish God's Kingdom. This is exactly the sequence of rulership we have in the visions of Dan. 2 and Dan. 7. And yet the entire image, all the beasts, and the scenario of Dan. 11, all exist together in the very last days when the Lord returns. The value of appreciating any historical fulfilments are only in that they provide assistance to us in imagining how the final scenario will work out.

Dan 11:37 *Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all-* In the AD70 context, Josephus says of John of Gischala: "But now John, aspiring to despotic power, began to disdain the position of mere equality in honours with his peers, and, gradually gathering round him a group of the more depraved, broke away from the coalition. Invariably disregarding the decisions of the rest, and issuing imperious orders of his own, he was evidently laying claim to absolute sovereignty. Some yielded to him through fear, others from devotion (for he was an expert in gaining supporters by fraud and rhetoric); a large number thought that it would conduce to their own safety that the blame for their daring crimes should henceforth rest upon one individual rather than upon many; while his energy both of body and mind procured him not a few retainers. On the other hand, he was abandoned by a large section of antagonists, partly influenced by envy—they scorned subjection to a former equal—but mainly deterred by dread of monarchical rule; for they could not expect easily to depose him when once in power, and thought that they would have an excuse for themselves if they opposed him at the outset. Anyhow, each man preferred war, whatever sufferings it might entail, to voluntary servitude and being killed off like slaves".

His attitude to women and lack of desire for them is again explained by Josephus: "John's lack of an appropriate desire for women can be seen in his abandonment of the women and children in the middle of his flight from Titus to Jerusalem (*The Jewish War* 4.103–11), and also in his allowing his Galilean contingent in Jerusalem to rape women for sport, to indulge in effeminate practices, and to imitate the passions of women (4.558–63)".

Rejecting the god of his fathers fits Antiochus, who rejected the gods of Syria. And yet his establishment of idols in the temple hardly sounds as if Antiochus didn't regard any god. Not regarding the desire of women is hard to pin on any of the candidates; Antiochus apparently destroyed the idols which were beloved by women, but we must look to the latter day fulfilment for the perfect fit. It may imply the king of the north is homosexual.

The dominant individual presented here doesn't fit perfectly with John, nor with Antiochus, let alone with Constantine [as John Thomas suggests]. Clearly there is to be an individual who must appear in the last days; the focus is very much upon the individual rather than the 'kingdom' represented. I suggested on Dan. 2 that the metals

of the image primarily spoke of a sequence of kings, rather than kingdoms. And this will come to its final term in this super-king figure. The LXX offers: "Because that in everything he shall be exalted". This is a personality cult such as never seen in human history. The refusal to regard any god / idol may refer to some radical form of Islam which smashes everything they perceive as idolatry.

Dan 11:38 *But instead he shall honour the god of fortresses*- Trusting in his own fortifications as if they were God, rather than in the true God (cp. Hab. 1:11). Or the idea may be that the God of the fortress is the fortress of :31, the sanctuary of Zion. He honours Israel's God as well as a god whom his fathers didn't know. This would fit John of Gischala; it also helps us understand the renegade nature of the final antichrist, who Paul says shall sit in the temple of God as "the son of perdition", a phrase used about Judas, one of the twelve. He will be a partial believer, perhaps a renegade Jew. It would also fit how Antiochus likewise glorified his military technology.

But the LXX "And to his place he shall move" reflects the difficulty of the Hebrew here. The future antiChrist will "move" to Jerusalem and enthrone himself there, in a way which none of the previous fulfilments have done. The Peshitta offers: "The mighty god he shall honour in his possession, and a god whom his fathers have not known shall he honour". How can this latter day individual honour "the mighty god" and yet also honour a god whom his fathers have not honoured? The cry of radical Islam is *Allah Akhbar*, Allah above all; and this insistence upon the supremacy of Allah is taken to an extent unknown to previous more moderate Muslims. The idea that Allah is above all leads to the total destruction of anyone and anything outside their group and religion.

"Fortresses" could be an intensive plural referring to the God of the one great fortress, Zion. This is its reference in :31, the fortress of the temple sanctuary (Ez. 24:25). And Zion is often described like this by contemporary writers. Perhaps the latter day antiChrist will claim to worship the God of Zion. But as suggested on :40, actually they come against this one true God in the final fury which leads to their destruction.

And a god whom his fathers didn't know shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things- The language of serving a god whom his fathers didn't know is that of an apostate Israel serving new gods which their fathers didn't know. The suggestion in the latter day context could be that this antiChrist figure is a renegade Jew. The AD70 application would be to John of Gischala, the self proclaimed king of Jerusalem who provoked the Roman onslaught. He used the precious things of the temple in order to worship "the god of fortresses", the god of trusting in human military power. But as always, the historical interpretation is incomplete and therefore to the skeptic would appear forced, and that is fair enough as observation; because the full and seamless fulfilment is yet to come, in the last days.

Dan 11:39 *He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whoever acknowledges him he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price*- This can be seen as partially true for Antiochus as well as the AD70 situation. Antiochus well rewarded the Jews in Jerusalem who accepted him as king. His division of the land for a price would refer to his annulling of the law of Jubilee, and selling the land at cheap prices to the Jews who supported him, or giving it to his mercenaries in lieu of wages. The strong fortresses would then refer to the towns he built throughout Palestine, inhabited by

Syrian mercenaries, who pushed their foreign gods as part of the process of Hellenization. But again, this seems an imperfect fit; we look to the last days for the fulfilment in detail. The purpose of prophecy is not to predict the future in advance, but so that when things happen, then we perceive the fulfilment of prophecy. The primary fulfilments (in this case, in Antiochus and the AD70 situation) serve to direct us towards some imagination of how the final fulfilment may materialize.

Another translation is "And he [the king] will take action against the strongest fortress with a foreign god; whoever will acknowledge him [the foreign god] will increase honor, and he [the foreign god] will cause them to rule over the many, and he [the foreign god] will apportion land for a price". Whatever historical fulfilment is suggested is at best sketchy and apparently forced. This is simply because this passage along with the entire prophecy will have its fulfilment in the last days. The purpose of prophecy is not to predict the future, but in order that when events happen, those who know the prophecies will immediately see their obvious fulfilment. And this passage is a classic example of that. "The strongest fortress" would refer to the fortress of :31, the fortress of the temple sanctuary (Ez. 24:25). In the first century fulfilment, Josephus records that John and the Zealots "converted the temple of God into their fortress [note that word] and refuge from any outbreak of popular violence, and made the Holy Place the headquarters of their tyranny" (*Jewish War* 4.151; also 4.172, 208–16). Tacitus likewise describes the temple area as a fortress, "built like a citadel", "the mountain-citadel" (*Hist.* 2.4; 5.12). John fought against the other zealot factions within Jerusalem, and apportioned land within Jerusalem to his followers (*The Jewish War* 4.135–50, 326–33, 389–97, 558–73).

Perhaps the idea is that the latter day capture of the temple mount will be ascribed to their false god, and then the land of Israel will be divided up, just as envisaged in the last days in Joel 3:2. This conquest of the great fortress, Zion and the temple area (:31), would connect with how 2 Thess. 2 portrays the latter day antichrist as sitting in the temple of God- and then being suddenly destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's coming.

The period of history between Dan. 11:39 and :40 is not described because it is irrelevant to the Jews in Israel, just as there is a gap in fulfilment between the iron legs and the feet in the historical outworking of the image in Daniel 2.

Another take is that the predictions of the lead up to Antiochus Epiphanes up until Dan. 11:40 all came precisely true. So precisely that the critics claim this must have been written after the event. Yet the record says that these things were given to Daniel by the Angel. And they are in the future tense. The predicted death of Antiochus and the resurrection and judgment of the dead are all part of the same prophecy in Dan. 11:40-12:3. But the fulfilment suddenly breaks off. There was no resurrection nor final vindication of God's people at that point. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes is the obvious 'best fit' for the little horn of Dan. 7 and 8. The next step was the conflict with Messiah and the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. That didn't happen. Because various preconditions weren't met. And so the kaleidoscope turned again, and other possible fulfilments came into view. The path of history predicted in Dan. 11 so far is similar to what we have in Dan. 2 and Dan. 7. The path of human history was and is to lead up to the final conflict which will lead to the Lord's coming.

Dan 11:40 *At the time of the end shall the king of the south contend with him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with*

horsemen- GNB when his "final hour has almost come". See on :13 for how everything is in the end according to God's times, even if those time periods are expanded or conflated and Daniel could not understand them. The time of the end" is another connection with the prophecies about Antiochus in Dan. 8:19: "at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end". Likewise Dan. 8:25 "and he shall be broken—but by no human hand" is Dan. 11:45 "Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him". The vision of Dan. 8 concerns 'the time of the end' and the goat represents Greece (Dan. 8:17,21). Clearly Antiochus Epiphanes was the primary potential fulfilment of the "king of the north" who would've been destroyed at the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. Possibly "the time of the end" refers to the "time, times and a half" of Dan. 7:25. It makes no sense to suddenly demand that the "King of the north" from :40 onwards refers to a totally different entity to "the king of the north" in the rest of Dan. 11. It is simply that the prophecy from :40 onwards could have come true in Antiochus Epiphanes, but it didn't. Because these prophecies are conditional. "Contend" is to push / gore as an animal does; the very word used of the ram in Dan. 8:4. Again we see how all these kings and empires act similarly; and meet their end. All human behaviour is so similar in essence; individuality is a myth, given we all share the same nature. It is only the things of God's Spirit which are radically 'new' for the human experience.

I have suggested that Daniel's prophecies have an element of conditionality to them. There were various potential paths of historical fulfilment which Israel's lack of repentance precluded. And yet the prophecies will all come wonderfully true in the events of the last days. Hence it has been commented: "Whereas the events leading up to the sacking of the Temple in 167 and the immediate aftermath are remarkably accurate (chapter 11:21–29), the predicted war between the Syrians and the Egyptians (11:40–43) never took place, and the prophecy that Antiochus would die in Palestine (11:44–45) was inaccurate (he died in Persia)". Even if we read this as meaning that the king of the south pushes at the king of the north, there is little historical evidence that Egypt pushed at the king of the north after the third invasion of Egypt by Antiochus which is apparently in view. The correspondence with the historical situation breaks down- because it will be finally fulfilled in the last days.

"The time of the end" naturally suggests the time of the Lord's return. But "the end" in Daniel's context would be an allusion to Dan. 9:26, the end of the 70 weeks prophecy: "[Jerusalem's] end will come with a flood, and until the end will be war". That prophecy could have been fulfilled in the re-establishment of Israel's Kingdom as God's Kingdom in AD70, but they did not repent, and so the Lord's 'coming' then was in judgment and not salvation. The 'overflowing' spoken of in Dan. 9:26 is repeated here, where the king of the north is likened to an overflowing river, after the pattern of the earlier Assyrian invasion of Judah. A primary fulfilment would have been in the invasion of Vespasian and Titus against John of Gischala, the self proclaimed "king" in Jerusalem. The king of the south in the AD70 context would have been Tiberius Julius Alexander who was the prefect of Egypt and second in command to Titus, and the king of the north would have been Vespasian, who had just defeated Syria and replaced "the king of the north" in its Greek manifestation. He attacked Jerusalem as commander of the Syrian Legion [X Fretensis]. But this interpretation runs into various problems; it doesn't fit all the details. This is because it was but a primary fulfilment, looking forward to the main fulfilment at the Lord's return.

The "him" in view may be a third party, against whom both kings of north and south unite to attack. It could be the Lord Jesus, then enthroned in Jerusalem and

attacked by His enemies (as outlined in Psalm 2 and Ez. 38). Historically, it could have referred to John of Gischala who commanded the zealots within Jerusalem in AD70.

But if the "him" is the king of the south, then the Antiochus fulfilment would be in that it is claimed that he attacked Egypt, the king of the south; this would be the third and final attack upon Egypt mentioned in :29. The events of :40-45 have some relevance to both Antiochus the Great and to Antiochus Epiphanes. All these various but not incomplete historical fulfilments were because in each one, there was the potential for the end to come. But it didn't, and God sought other opportunities to bring about "the end"; and that end shall finally come in the last day. But the historical evidence for this third attack upon Egypt by Antiochus is lacking; and the "many ships" would have been largely unfulfilled. Again we are to understand that this is but a primary fulfilment, and the main fulfilment is yet to come.

The "him" in terms of grammar and context most comfortably refers to "the God of the great fortress / citadel" of :38. The two power blocs in the land of the last days, the kings of north and south, would then each come against this God. Thus would be fulfilled the scenario of Psalm 2 and 2 Thess. 2- the united fury of the various neighbouring enemies of Israel and the Lord Jesus being thrown against Him. The king of the north 'pushes' against Him, the idea being of a beast in wild fury goring someone. This again fits in with the evidence elsewhere provided that the king of the north, the antichrist, is the epitome of the final beast.

And with many ships- In the AD70 context, this would refer to the fleet used by Vespasian to ship his soldiers into Judea (Tacitus records this in his *Histories* 2.4). Any attempt to conquer Palestine and Jerusalem would likely involve shipping in soldiers to the coast, and we shall see this again in the latter day invasion. There were also naval battles on the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea in AD67/68.

According to some, Antiochus also came with many ships in his campaign against Egypt, so it is claimed. But the problem is that many claims of historical fulfilment are influenced by Jewish sources such as Josephus who wanted to see the fulfilment of this prophecy in Antiochus. And once one commentator picks up on that, the others tend to follow suite, until the claim becomes perceived as hard historical fact. Antiochus was bankrupt, stealing from pagan temples in order to pay his troops; he wouldn't have had the resources to obtain "many ships" at this point.

And he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through- This appears to be a summary of what we will read in :41-45, which lists "the countries" taken. The LXX gives "the land" for "the countries", perhaps reading the Hebrew as an intensive plural, "the [singular, most significant] country". The overflowing and passing through of the land would then be in the spirit of the Assyrian invasion being described by Isaiah in the same terms. The overflowing flood of Dan. 9:26,27 is likewise against Jerusalem rather than the surrounding lands. Against this is the statement in :41 that he shall enter "the glorious land", but see commentary upon that.

Both the prototype in Hezekiah's time and the descriptions in Dan. 11:40 and Ez. 38 require there to be a personal leader of the northern invasion. Rabshakeh and latter day Sennacherib equate with Daniel's "King (not 'power') of the north", and Ezekiel 38's specific reference to a *rosh* [mighty one, chief prince] and use of the personal pronoun "thee": "Turn thee back... thy jaws... thine army... be thou prepared... thy company" etc. All this emphasis needs some explanation. If the prototype of latter day Sennacherib / Rabshakeh is to be closely followed, this individual need not be a nation, but a young, headstrong, powerful army commander that mirrors Rabshakeh. To make the clues more exciting, remember that Rabshakeh was probably an apostate

Jew (note his references to the covenant name, and evident knowledge of conditions inside Jerusalem). "The man of sin" that is to sit in the temple of God in the last days would seem to have reference back to the "abomination that maketh desolate" and to the planting of the king of the North's tabernacles "between the seas in the glorious holy mountain"- i.e. in the temple area of Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45). This "man of sin" points to an individual.

Daniel 11 speaks of an invasion of Israel by "the king of the north" which results in a time of trouble for Israel such as never was, and the standing up of 'Michael' and the resurrection of the dead. The period of history between Dan. 11:39 and :40 is not described because it is irrelevant to the Jews in Israel, just as there is a gap in fulfilment between the iron legs and the feet in the historical outworking of the image in Daniel 2. The section speaking of the last days begins by saying that the king of the north hears "tidings" (Dan. 11:44). The same word is used of Assyria at the time of her invasion of Israel and siege of Jerusalem: "I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land" (2 Kings 19:7). Thus at the very time of Assyria's destruction by God, her previous allies turned against her, exemplifying how Arab in-fighting will be one of the means which God will use to finally destroy them (Zech. 14:13, etc.). "A blast" (Heb. 'ruach', a spirit/angel?) being sent upon Sennacherib is the same term used about Pharaoh's destruction (Ex. 15:8) and that of Babylon (Jer. 51:1), both of which are typical of the final Islamic defeat. Babylon also hears 'rumours' at the time of her destruction (Jer. 51:46). It is to these 'rumours' of wars within the land / earth promised to Abraham which Christ may allude in Mt. 24:6, speaking of "rumours of wars" in the very last days. The smaller nations associated with Babylon/Assyria also hear "tidings" (same word translated "rumour") in Jer. 49:23, showing that they meet the same judgment as 'Assyria' to some extent.

Close analysis of Dan. 11:40-44 reveals that it is couched in terms of the Ez. 38 invasion, which is based upon that of Assyria. However, it is also full of direct allusions to the Assyrian invasion:

"The king of the north" (Dan. 11:40) - Assyria (cp. Zeph.2:13).

"Shall come against him like a whirlwind" (Dan. 11:40), as God will against the invaders in response to this (Zech. 9:14; Is. 28:2). God comes up "like a storm... a cloud to cover the land" in a similar way (Ez. 38:9). A whirlwind attacks from all sides. The combined typology of the previous invasions has shown them coming from all points of the compass. The final combined 'Assyrian' invasion will also have this feature, as it did in Hezekiah's time.

"With chariots, and with horsemen" (Dan. 11:40), for which the Assyrians were famous, and Gog likewise (Ez. 38:4).

"He shall enter into the countries" (Dan. 11:40) as Assyria did *en route* to Israel; "and shall overflow and pass over" (Dan. 11:40), as Assyria under Sennacherib (Is. 8:8; 43:2) and Babylon (Jer. 47:2) are said to have done. The Hebrew root for "overflow" means "to cleanse", occurring in Ez. 16:19 concerning God 'thoroughly washing away' Israel's sins in the last days, as a result of their final tribulations. Thus the 'Assyrian' 'overflowing' of the land in the last days will result in Israel's spiritual cleansing. "The consumption decreed (the final invasion) shall overflow in righteousness" (Is. 10:22). "He shall enter also into the land of delight" (Dan 11:41 A.V. mg.). At the time of Sennacherib's destruction, God termed the land 'delight' (Is. 62:4).

This could indicate that this invasion comes after the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom. The ambiguity is because of the 'variable' timing of

Christ's return, seeing this is related to Israel's spiritual reformation - at least it appears this is how God wishes us to see it.

"Many countries shall be overthrown" (Dan. 11:41). 2 Kings 18:34 lists these countries in the Sennacherib context. This confirms that there will be conflict throughout the land / earth immediately prior to the final 'Assyrian' attack on Israel. We are seeing this before our eyes.

"But these shall escape out of his *hand*, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief ('*rosh*') of the children of Ammon (Dan. 11:41). These areas were not meddled with by Sennacherib. There is a triple emphasis on how the other nations fell into his "hand" in 2 Kings 18:33-35.

"He shall stretch forth *his hand* also upon the countries" continues this "hand" connection, "and the land of Egypt shall not escape" (Dan. 11:42). There is a possible allusion here to Moses stretching out his hand upon Egypt (Ex. 9:15), which would show that the latter-day "king of the North" will claim that he has received Divine guidance to judge Israel. Assyria's invasion of Egypt was associated with that of Israel, further demonstrating that the invasion of Dan. 11:40-43 is alluding to Sennacherib's battle plan.

"He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver" (Dan. 11:43). We are seeing the IS fulfil this by taking over oil wealth as well as billions of dollars of gold reserves.

"The Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps" (Dan. 11:43) may appear to contradict Ethiopia suddenly becoming opposed to Assyria during the final attack on Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:9). This can be reconciled by realizing that Dan. 11 speaks of two phases in this final invasion. Ethiopia is with Assyria during the blitzkrieg towards and through Israel, but is not necessarily with her in the final 'going forth with great fury' against Jerusalem (Dan. 11:44).

There were these same two phases in the Assyrian prototype - the "great fury" of the king of the north is modelled upon Sennacherib's rage of 2 Kings 19:27,28. The fact that Ethiopia is described as being with Gog in the Ezek. 38 invasion may be an indication that this prophecy is not concerning the final push on Jerusalem, but rather the Assyrian/Arab pillaging of the land for "a spoil and a prey... cattle and goods" (Ez. 38:12) after the pattern of the neighbouring peoples raiding the land in the Judges period. Ethiopia being mentioned in tandem with Libya in both Ez. 38:5 and Dan. 11:43 could suggest that the North African Arabs break ranks with those of 'Assyria' during the attack on Jerusalem, as evidently occurred in Hezekiah's time (2 Kings 19:9).

"He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace... in the glorious holy mountain" of Zion (Dan. 11:45) is the language of Is. 14:13,14 concerning both Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar desiring to take Jerusalem. Thus Dan. 11:45 is saying that the latter-day Assyria/Babylon will do this, seeing that Jerusalem will be taken by their final invasion (Zech. 14:2). Dan. 12:1 says that it is at this time of the latter-day Assyrian/ "king of the north" being in Jerusalem, that Israel will suffer "a time of trouble such as never was", out of which the righteous remnant will be delivered ("every one that shall be found written in the book") by God's intervention, which will be associated with the resurrection (Dan. 12:2).

Dan 11:41 *He shall also come into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief leader of the children of Ammon-* This could also be translated "and myriads shall stumble", referring to the spiritual stumbling of God's people at the time of the

invasion of Judea. And if we stick with "many countries", the reference is to territories around Israel, showing yet again that the focus of Daniel is upon the land and people of Israel and not Europe or the entire planet. In the AD70 fulfilment, the reference would be to the Nabataean kingdom being taken over by Vespasian and Titus as they marched towards Jerusalem. But the Nabateans collaborated with the Romans, providing soldiers to join the Roman advance on Jerusalem, and so they were not "overthrown"; the area was not annexed into the Roman empire until AD106. But which countries did the Romans "overthrow" on their march towards Jerusalem? Again we have the sense that the fulfilment was hardly a perfect fit; the ultimate, seamless, unquestionable fulfilment will be in the last days. In the Antiochus fulfilment, it is notable that "Moab, Ammon, and Mount Seir" were his allies. And yet the language of escaping from him is another reason to see this fulfilment as an imperfect fit, and looking ahead to the major latter day fulfilment.

I suggested on :40 that the invasion of Israel and Jerusalem specifically has already begun. "The glorious land", the land of glory, is clearly Israel. And "many countries" could be an intensive plural for *the* country, the land of Israel, forming a parallel with "the glorious land"; see on :40. Perhaps this is repeated in order to emphasize the point; but Israel will then be the land of glory because the Lord Jesus is already enthroned in Zion. This would be the scenario of Psalm 2, 2 Thess. 2 and Ez. 38, all of which picture the surrounding nations furiously attacking the Lord Jesus and His people within Jerusalem, and being destroyed; the invasion described in those passages is therefore unsuccessful.

Dan 11:42 *He shall stretch out his hand also on the countries*- As suggested on :40 and :41, "the countries" may be an intensive plural for *the* singular country, Israel. It is the Hebrew word *eretz*. The same Hebrew for "stretch out his hand" is used of how Haman sought to 'stretch out his hand' upon the Jews (Esther 8:7).

And the land of Egypt shall not escape- The idea of the original may not be that Egypt too shall be conquered, but rather than Egypt shall not be a place of escape / deliverance; which would continue a long Biblical theme, of Israel vainly looking to Egypt for help. The LXX says that Egypt shall not be a saviour. This makes more sense; for the idea is of an invasion coming from the north, aiming at Jerusalem, taking all territories on its southward journey until it comes to Jerusalem. Egypt is south of Jerusalem. And as a result of the Jewish war, the Egyptian Jewish community in Alexandria was massacred in AD66.

Dan 11:43 *But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps*- The AD70 fulfilment was in Vespasian going to Egypt from Palestine in order to take control of grain supplies for the Roman empire. He only left Alexandria in Summer of AD70 after being declared emperor (Josephus, *The Jewish War* 4.658; 7.21–22; Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81). Libya and Ethiopia were very supportive of Vespasian being declared emperor.

The Antiochus fulfilment could fit reasonably well at this point; he got support from the Libyans and Ethiopians and sought out the treasures of Egypt for himself. But this was in an earlier invasion of Egypt, not in the final invasion suggested here. So again, the fit may be good in some ways, but is imperfect. I suggested on :40 that both kings of north and south attack Jerusalem and the God of Zion; it could be that the king of the north has dominance over the resources of the latter day "king of the south" and uses their resources in this final onslaught against Jerusalem.

We note the king of the north is destroyed immediately after dramatic success. This is quite a theme in Daniel; we think of the success of the little horn [also = Antiochus Epiphanes] just prior to his destruction. And it is a theme with other kings (Is. 10; 14; 47:1-5; Ez. 27;28). The simple takeaway is that God so hates pride and it is extreme pride that motivates and triggers Him to judge.

Dan 11:44 *But news out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and to devote many to destruction-*

The attack on the latter day King of the North will be from the north and from the east. Cyrus was prophesied as Judah's Messiah, and is the only person described as coming both from the north and from the east: "I have raised up one from the north, and he has come; from the rising of the sun [the east], one who calls on My name; and he shall come on rulers as on mortar, and as the potter treads clay" (Is. 41:25)- language full of allusion to the destruction of the image in Dan. 2. Elsewhere Cyrus is described as "a ravenous bird from the east", the one "raised up from the east" (Is. 41:2; 46:11). He failed to be the Messiah intended; it is true that Cyrus came from Persia in the east via the north (Opis and Sippar) to conquer Babylon, as recorded in "The Babylonian chronicle". But this was just an incipient fulfilment. He didn't come in this way to save Jerusalem. And so perhaps the hint we are supposed to pick up is that now the true Messiah is going to appear and do what Cyrus could have done- but far more gloriously and eternally. Human failure led ultimately to a far more glorious solution in the Lord Jesus, as we saw in the answer to Daniel's concerns in Dan. 9. This approach obviates all struggles to try to interpret these words with reference to Antiochus or later to the Romans.

As explained on :43, Vespasian left the campaign against the Jews in the hands of Titus, and went to Alexandria in Egypt, where he was declared emperor. Exactly North East of Alexandria was Jerusalem.

In the Antiochus fulfilment, he also turned northwards and entered Palestine as a result of bad news received; he met his end by doing so, at the hand of the Romans. Tacitus [*Histories* 5.8] attributes his change of plans to being "hindered by [news of] a Parthian war" and also of a revolt in Armenia; again, news from the North East. 1 Macc. 1:24-28 and Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.5.3 claim that Antiochus was so angry at being thwarted by the Romans in Egypt that he attacked the Jews with all his might as a kind of anger transference. The "tidings" from the North East could simply have been the news of the restoration to some extent of Jewish rule in Jerusalem.

The religious dimension of the latter day invasion is found here, albeit masked by translation, and without any clear precedent in the primary fulfilments. The King of the North will invade *eretz* Israel "to destroy and utterly to make away many" (AV). The Hebrew word *charam* translated 'to utterly make away' specifically means to consecrate, NEV "to devote", to make something over to another, specifically their god or religion. And this is the stated motive of the jihadist groups- to sanctify Israel as a spoil of war to Allah and the Prophet. This is the predicted call found in Joel 2, to sanctify war against Israel- the very language of jihad, holy war. We could speculate that the "tidings" the latter day king of the north hears are the news that the Lord Jesus has returned and established Himself King in Zion, and this provokes his final furious attack. The news of Jewish restoration may have been the tidings from the north east which Antiochus heard and which provoked him to attack them.

Dan 11:45 He shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain-

Or, "seas", referring to the Dead Sea and Mediterranean. The AD70 interpretation would apply this to Vespasian [in Alexandria, Egypt] ordering Titus [the commander on the ground] to establish two encampments on Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives. The AV "tabernacle" is more or less correct, so we see here a hint at a religious dimension to this invasion, which is only going to be fully fulfilled in the latter day invasion. This invasion unlike those mentioned earlier in this chapter is not apparently successful; the tabernacle is not planted on mount Zion, but between there and the "sea". This would then equate with the unsuccessful attack against the enthroned Jesus in Zion of Ps. 2, 2 Thess. 2 and Ez. 38. There is no very clear historical fulfilment of this by Antiochus nor Titus, for neither made a tabernacle or encampment between Mount Zion and the Mediterranean. These events are specifically for the last days.

"The glorious holy mountain" could refer to Ezekiel's prophecies of the glory returning to Mount Zion and the rebuilt temple. This was precluded from happening in its primary potential by Judah refusing to rebuild the temple as commanded. And Ezekiel and Daniel both saw the glory of God still hovering above the rivers of Babylon- and not back in Jerusalem. Perhaps the idea is that at the point of this final fulfilment, the glory will have returned to Zion in that the Lord Jesus will have returned and is enthroned there. "The tents of his palace" suggests he will declare himself as king there; near the mountain where Yahweh is now enthroned in the form of the Lord Jesus. The scenario of Ps. 2.

Yet he shall come to his end- The destruction of the latter day invader at the mount of God is a strong theme in prophecy. It is found in Ps. 2,46,48,76. But it didn't come true for Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus died in Persia not in Palestine. But this was the potential envisaged for his end. His end is surely "the end" spoken of so much in Daniel (Dan. 8:17,19 "at the time appointed the end shall be"; 9:26 "unto the end of the war desolations are determined"; 11:27,35,40 "the time of the end"). It is at this "end" that the sealed books are opened and Daniel's prophecies will be understood (Dan. 12:4,9); and "the end" is the time of Daniel's resurrection and rewarded (Dan. 12:13). Any attempt to understand is going to be fruitless; only at that "end" will these prophecies become clear and obvious as daylight in their fulfilment. The implication is that as soon as "the end" of the king of the North comes, there will be the "end" resulting in Daniel's resurrection at the Lord's return.

The end of Antiochus doesn't really fit here. And the AD70 invader did not come to an end after an unsuccessful attack upon Jerusalem. Clearly the fulfilment is yet future. "Holy mountain" is the language of Dan. 9:16,20 about Jerusalem. I suggested on :40 that the "time of the end" is "the end" of Jerusalem as spoken of in the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9; and the same "end" of the invader is in view here. But here the first century, Roman fulfilment ceases to be impressive. The Romans won, not lost. And Dan. 12 goes on to explain that this "end" is at the hand of Messiah's appearance and the resurrection of the dead. Clearly enough, all the primary fulfilments of this chapter which are discernible all come unstuck; because they are no more than shadowy fulfilments, pointing forward to the ultimate fulfilment which is in the last days before the Lord returns. However, it's possible to translate the original here as meaning that it is the "glorious holy mountain" which comes to his end, rather than the king of the north. "The end" refers to the end of the Jerusalem temple in Dan. 9:26; and "the end of these wonders" likewise does in Dan. 12:6,7. This ambiguity in

translation is purposeful; because indeed there is a primary fulfilment in the Roman desolation of Jerusalem in AD70, but the main fulfilment is in the destruction of the latter day "king of the north" at the last day. "The end" of Dan. 12:6,7 is in the three and a half year desolation of the temple by the Gentiles, which is repeatedly applied to the very last days in Revelation and the Olivet prophecy. "The end" of the king of the north is "the time of the end" (:40); as Dan. 12 will go on to explain, the "end" of Israel's tribulations at the hand of this "king of the north" will be in Messiah's coming, the resurrection of the dead and the establishment of Israel's Kingdom as God's Kingdom on earth. This never fully happened; the series of invasions of the land by the kings of the north and south are yet to happen, and will be ended by the Lord's return to earth.

And none shall help him- The Romans mocked the Jews for trusting in allies who never came to help them: "Did you rely on... the fidelity of allies? Pray, what nation beyond the limits of our empire would prefer Jews to Romans?" (Josephus, *The Jewish War* 6.330). This assumes the "him" is the king in Jerusalem. But the more natural interpretation is that the king of the north is destroyed without helpers as a result of attempting to attack the God of Zion, the fortress (see on :40). And that has no clear historical fulfilment; it is for the last days.

The Hebrew for "help" here is a common word mostly used of God's help. The king of the north meets his end perhaps desperately wanting God's help but not finding it. That is the essence of the pictures of condemnation, crying out "Lord, Lord open to us", not turning away from God but in fact turning to Him. But all too late. This creates the imperative for us to seek Him now rather than then.

DANIEL CHAPTER 12

Dan. 12:1 *At that time-* The "time of the end" of Dan. 11:40. The chapter break is unfortunate. This verse is interpreted by the Lord as referring to both AD70 and the last days (Mk. 13:19; Mt. 24:21; Lk. 21:23). I have outlined on Dan. 11 the initial fulfilment in the Roman invasion of Judea in AD67-70, but it was not a perfect fit with the prophetic text. This is simply because it was but a primary fulfilment, and the latter day fulfilment will be the perfect fit, although at our standpoint in history we cannot exactly discern how it shall all work out.

Shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people-

The "man clothed in linen" of Dan. 10:5 reappears in Dan. 12:6,7 who is over the waters of the river. This was an Angel in Dan. 8:16, "between the banks of the Ulai [river]". Linen was worn by the priests especially the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4). We note that the term "prince", used in Daniel of Angels, is used of the High Priest in Ezra 8:24 and of a priest in 1 Chron. 24:5. These Angels of Daniel were ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. Michael "stands" for God's people (Dan. 12:1) as the High Priest stood for them on the Day of Atonement; to stand before God is to intercede (Dt. 10:8; Jud. 20:28). The Angel does indeed represent the Lord Jesus and Michael perhaps played His role in the court of Heaven before He came into existence and ascended to His Heavenly role and intercession. The idea is that Michael in previous possible iterations of the prophecy, and the Lord Jesus in the last day fulfilment of it, intercede for Israel before God in the very last days, leading to their salvation.

There are many allusions to Dan. 11 and 12 in the Olivet prophecy. One is the command to pray earnestly, so that we may "escape all these things that shall come to pass" (Lk. 21:36). This is the word the LXX uses here for Michael's intercession ['standing up'] so that God's people may be delivered [escape]. Their / our prayers match the mediation of Michael, who surely refers to the Lord Jesus in the final iteration of "Michael".

'Michael' elsewhere in Daniel refers to an Angel, the Angel especially responsible for Israel, and therefore one of the most powerful Angels- "Michael one of the chief princes" (Dan. 8:13), "the great prince" (Dan. 12:1). The LXX renders Dan. 12:1 as "the great Angel" (AV "great prince"). The closeness of association between the Angel Michael and His people Israel is shown by the fact that when He 'stands up' in the last days many of the people of Israel ("Your- Daniel's- people") also 'stand up' in resurrection (Dan. 12:1-3).

The standing up of Michael in heaven also reflects the standing up of a new king and kingdom on earth. I explained on Dan. 11 that there is there an account of the succession of empires and kings also found in Dan. 2 and Dan. 7, from the Persians through the Greeks and Romans to the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth at Messiah's coming. This could therefore have potentially happened in AD70; but it didn't. Israel didn't repent. And so there is a gap in fulfillment until the last days, when the image shall stand complete, all the beasts of Dan. 7 reappear in the final terrible beast, to be destroyed by the Lord's coming.

Amos 7 speaks of God through His Angels 'standing up' for Israel as the result of the prayer of Amos and a faithful remnant. Amos sees visions of the impending judgments on Israel. After each he prays "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee: who shall stand for Jacob? (If you, his Angel-God, don't?) For he is small". The answer comes: "The Lord repented for this. It shall not be, saith the Lord". He repented for the sake of one intense prayer! Notice too Amos asking "Who shall stand for Jacob?". Michael the Angel stands for Israel in the court of Heaven, and thus it appears Amos is pointing out that if Israel is condemned and punished they will have no Angel with them- and so the Angel changes His mind.

"The *children* of your people" may be a reference to how Daniel had hoped that the young people of his generation would return to the land and re-establish God's Kingdom. That would happen- but not when Daniel was expecting it.

And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time- This unprecedented "time of trouble" is the basis for Mt. 24:21: "great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be". "Such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" quotes the language of the plagues that fell upon Egypt (Ex. 9:18,24; 10:6,14; 11:6; cp. Josh. 10:14); Israel are to be treated as Egypt so that a minority might leave Egypt and be saved. "A nation" refers specifically to Israel; there is to be a time of trouble for them far worse than anything they experienced to date, including the 6 million murdered in the holocaust. This requires the total collapse of modern day Israel, and the fall of Jerusalem as required by Zech. 14.

Here the fulfillment in the events of AD70 comes to an end; the time of Jacob's trouble which Jer. 30:7-11 spoke of, and which is here alluded to, would bring about the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, the re-establishment of Israel's kingdom, the mountain being established in Jerusalem and spreading throughout the earth. And this didn't happen. Any attempt to apply this to the events of the day of Pentecost is misplaced, because that was 37 years before AD70, and the Roman empire was not then destroyed by the little stone. Mk. 13 speaks of how "in those

days" those in Judaea should flee to the mountains; "for *in those days* shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of creation... neither shall be (referring to Dan. 12:1 concerning our last days)... except that the Lord had shortened *those days... in those days*, after that tribulation... *then* shall they see the son of man coming". Surely "in those days" shouts for a continuous application to the same "days"- the days of the second coming. At best, "those days" can have a primary reference to the events of AD70, but the *main* fulfillment of the whole prophecy must be in the last days. This point seems impossible to answer by those who disallow any reference to the second coming.

And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book- The Lord seems to allude to this in saying that "the chosen" shall escape the traumas of the destruction of the temple (Mt. 24:22; Mk. 13:20). This only had a primary fulfillment in AD70; the deliverance is to eternal life through the resurrection of the dead (:2), which refers without doubt to the last days. The references to "your people" reflect Daniel's deep and abiding concern for his people, even though they had generally turned away from God in Babylon, and only he and his friends had resisted eating meat offered to idols in their youth, only his friends had refused to bow down to the image, and he alone had insisted on still praying to Jerusalem under threat of death. He still felt identification with God's people, even in their weakness.

In the final tribulation of Israel, those Jews who are "written in the book", i.e. who are acceptable believers (Ex. 32:32; Rev. 21:27) will be delivered. So there will be a minority in latter day natural Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal, as in Elijah's time- which is typical of the situation at the latter day Elijah ministry.

Dan 12:2 *Many of those-* The Hebrew generally means simply 'a large number'. Many relative to the wonder of salvation, as many as the stars; but perhaps still numerically small seeing that so few find the way to the Kingdom. "Are there few that be saved?" was a question met by the Lord- and His answer was to refocus the questioner upon entering themselves by the narrow gate through which few shall pass.

Daniel's immediate hope and expectation had been that the Jewish exiles would return to a re-established Kingdom of God. For that was the climax of Jeremiah's "70 years" prophecies. He is now being shown that this wasn't to happen- but there would be a far more glorious answer. All the faithful would be resurrected and glorified. The great enemy is thus revealed as being death itself, rather than Antiochus, the little horn or any other abuser of God's people. This "many" may refer to the "many" Jews of Dan. 11:33,34 who had turned away from Divine wisdom under persecution. The "many" who run to and fro in :4 may also refer to this group. Literally, "many from those". This is not teaching a universal resurrection. And the "many" may be relative to the wonder of resurrection and salvation, rather than implying a large percentage of dead persons shall awake. It could be that the "many" are a subset of "those who sleep", i.e. those who have hope of resurrection. This could imply that this is a particular group who are resurrected, perhaps of those who are slain in the final traumas upon Jerusalem. The primary fulfillment may have been in the resurrection of some in Jerusalem in Mt. 27:52,53.

Who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt-

The language is that of Is. 26:19: "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead". There is no mention of judgment; the New Testament teaches a judgment [and technically, therefore, a mortal resurrection] and

immortality being granted at the judgment seat. We have to put the scriptures together to get the picture. In one sense, as Paul explains, judgment has been dealt with for the believer. But it will still happen, for our education. The Old Testament concept of eternal life began with the promise to reverse the curse in Eden, went on through the promise to Abraham of eternal inheritance of the land, the promise that David would see and experience his great descendant reigning eternally, and is frequently mentioned elsewhere (Ps. 21:3; 28:9; 37:18, 27,28; 41:12; Prov. 10:25,30). Adam was cursed with returning to dust and was then exiled from Eden lest he eat the tree of life and live for ever (Gen. 3:19). This is being alluded to here. Daniel had lived in hope of a mortal return from exile in Persia. But he is being shown that there is a glorious silver lining to that desire not being granted- he will return from man's exile from the tree of life, and be allowed to have everlasting life. Likewise, "shame" is a feature of the curse and exile from Eden. The implication in Dan. 12:2 is that no longer will "shame" be the experience of the redeemed, although it will be so for the rejected. Is. 25:8, quoted in 1 Cor. 15:54 about the final resurrection, likewise carries the idea of shame being removed by resurrection to eternal life: "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach / shame [GNB "disgrace", s.w. "shame" 2 Sam. 13:13, "shame of nakedness" Is. 47:3] of His people He will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken".

The reference is to the curse upon Adam, that having been formed of "the dust of the earth" he was to return to it (Gen. 2:7; 3:19). The curse shall be overcome; those who have suffered for their sins, which is Israel in this context, shall still be saved ultimately. And this again is huge comfort to ourselves. It is not the personally righteous alone who shall be saved, but those who suffered for their sins and yet believed. But some of them shall receive eternal "contempt"; not all Israel shall be saved. But all who are responsible to judgment will be resurrected; and the final reward shall be given then, at the Lord's coming, and not at the point of death nor in this life. The word for "contempt" is only elsewhere used in Is. 66:24, of how the bodies of those within Israel who refused to accept the restoration of the Kingdom would be eternally despised by those who are saved: "Then they (the Israelites) will go out and look at the corpses of the people who have rebelled against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be extinguished; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind". The 'eternal' nature of it doesn't imply their conscious existence. It is 'eternal' by its nature in that they have missed out on eternity, their decisions in this life had eternal moment and consequence. And perhaps we who by grace shall live eternally will eternally despise or somehow remember those who in this life refused it. Just as we despise the name 'Judas Iscariot' when we think of it. For to hate sin in all its forms is a really part of loving righteousness; we see this hatred of sin in David's Psalms and also very clearly in Paul's expression of it in Rom. 7:15-25. On the other hand, there are many Bible verses which speak of how the wicked shall be "forgotten" and the memory of them perish, or more precisely, their 'name' shall eternally perish (Ps. 9:5,6; 109:13; 112:6). Perhaps the resolution is that they have no 'name' to be remembered, nothing good to be preserved nor remembered about them; and therefore for eternity we shall despise them. In contrast, the righteous will receive an "everlasting name which will not be eliminated" (Is. 56:5).

The "contempt" is therefore eternal, whereas the "shame" is that of Rev. 16 when the rejected walk naked and their shame is exposed. The punishment of "shame" for the rejected, in the period between their condemnation and their dying the second death, is a major Bible theme. Prov. 6:33; 11:2: "his shame / disgrace will not be wiped away"; "Do not let me be put to shame O LORD, for I call on you let the

wicked be put to shame; let them go dumbfounded to Sheol" (Ps. 31:17). "I am against you, says the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will let nations look on your nakedness and kingdoms on your shame. I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt" (Nah. 3:5,6). "...will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonour will never be forgotten" (Jer. 20:11). And so many others. It will be so awful that men will seek death and not find it, and how long someone lives or exists in that awful situation will be the measure of the degree of their punishment. Or we could argue that concepts of honour and shame were more pronounced in the ancient world than they are today. The condemned will have no burial, and this was the ultimate shame in the ancient world: "If a man has a hundred children and lives many years but if he... has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he" (Ecc. 6:3; also Ps. 79:2 and think of the death of Jezebel). We note the huge efforts made to properly bury the dead (Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David's concern for Saul's body, the Mosaic command that the bodies of criminals should not be left permanently exposed etc.). It could be that whatever is the maximum painful psychological experience for a condemned person, that is what they will receive.

I have elsewhere speculated that the new covenant offered in Jeremiah, Hosea and Ezekiel appears to offer the total resurrection of the historical Israel who went into exile. Dan. 12:2 may appear to contradict this, by speaking of how although "your [Daniel's] people" would be delivered (Dan. 12:1), there would be a resurrection where some receive eternal life and others "shame and everlasting contempt". But those terms "shame" and "contempt" are often used of the Gentile nations around Israel and Judah; possibly those resurrected to shame are the Gentile abusers of God's people during their exile. It was those nations who had shamed and despised [s.w. "contempt"] Israel and Judah in exile (this is stated very often, s.w. Neh. 1:3; 2:17; 4:4; 5:9; Ps. 44:13; 79:4; Is. 4:1; 25:8; Jer. 24:9; 29:18; 44:12; 51:51; Lam. 5:1; Ez. 5:14; 16:57; 21:28; 22:4; 36:15; Dan. 9:16; "reproach" is s.w. "shame"). Those who had shamed and reproached God's people would be the ones who experience shame and reproach at the day of judgment at the resurrection. Thus Ps. 79:12 "Render unto our neighbours sevenfold their reproach wherewith they have reproached". This will come true at their judgment at the resurrection. Thus Egypt will finally have "shame and reproach" (Is. 30:5) as will Edom (Jer. 49:13), the very words here used of the shame and reproach given to those rejected after resurrection to judgment.

Dan 12:3 *Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever-*

"Those that are wise" is literally 'they that make wise'; those of Dan 12:10; 11:33,35. And we could render "they that make the many righteous", the same phrase as in Is. 53:11: "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant make the many righteous". That is what the Lord did in His death on the cross; and we are to not only accept the work of the cross for ourselves, but to do the work of the cross for others. To be Him in this world. As He bore our burden there, so we are to bear the burden for others.

The mention of the "wise" shining for ever in Dan. 12:3 forms an inclusio with the opening of the book of Daniel. Daniel is presented as the truly wise man because he has God's wisdom in contrast to the wise men of Babylon, who are shown to be fools. Daniel is thus presented as typical of the entire class of those who will be saved. He is our pattern. His wisdom was not in all the human wisdom which he was taught

and even excelled at, according to Dan. 1. It was in using *God's* wisdom to turn many to righteousness. See on Dan. 11:33.

Dan. 12:3,10 draw a parallel between those having wisdom and those who turn many to righteousness. The RVmg. translates "those that be wise" as "the teachers", reflecting the play within the Hebrew sense of 'wisdom'- to have wisdom is axiomatically to teach it. To possess God's Truth therefore means that we will teach it to others. One primary application would have been to the *maskilim* who were murdered by Antiochus IV (see Dan. 11:33–35). But again, these were but a primary fulfilment of the wonderful prophecy. They "instruct many" (Dan. 11:33), here they turn them to righteousness. Dan. 11:33 uses the word used in Is. 52:13 of how the servant of Yahweh, the Lord Jesus, instructs or turns to righteousness through His sacrificial work: "My servant shall deal wisely... so shall he sprinkle many nations... that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand [from Him]". And we are to share that with others. Despite the fact that this group of "the wise" will "stumble", as is stated three times in Dan. 11:33–35: "the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble... When they stumble, they shall receive a little help... some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end". Their witness is in fact exactly because their own stumbling refined them. These ideas are repeated about "the wise" in Dan. 12:10: "Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined". This group of "the wise" who would "understand" are specifically alluded to in Rev. 13:18; 17:9 where we find the latter day group of believers who likewise will be they who "understand" the prophecies.

"Shine" translates a Hebrew word elsewhere translated to the effect of 'teach'. Their wisdom was in turning others to righteousness; and they shall continue eternally doing the essence of what they did in this life, which was to shine as the stars for the sake of others. God's people have been described as "stars" in Dan. 8:10 (s.w.). They were stars, and shall eternally be. This simply means that we should focus upon our spiritual ministry to others in this life; because it's what we shall be eternally doing. The making of others righteous or cleansed connects with another passage in Dan. 8, this time with Dan. 8:14, which speaks of the sanctuary [God's people?] being cleansed or [s.w.] 'made righteous'. It seems that we have here a specific reference to those who preach to and teach Israel within the land / *eretz* of the last days, risking the wrath of the beast to do so. They shall be specifically rewarded. But the essence is true for us all; we shall eternally continue our service and ministry which we each developed in this life. This group of people are defined in Dan. 12:10 as "the wise" amongst latter day Israel who are purified and refined in the latter day time of Jacob's trouble such as never was for Israel. The very same phrase occurs in Dan. 11:35, where we read that some of these wise and understanding ones will perish during "the time of the end... the time appointed" (RV)- of the three and a half year tribulation? One wonders if the Lord had these "wise" in mind in His parable of the "wise virgins" of the latter days. This would all suggest that some amongst Israel will repent and zealously preach in the last day tribulation, even if it costs them their lives. And Rev. 11 seems to be saying something similar.

Thus in the practice of preaching today, we are working out who and how we shall eternally be. The very concept of preaching is therefore partly designed by God for our benefit, to develop us into the persons we shall eternally be, by His grace. When we read that God will 'require the blood' of those to whom we fail to preach His word

(Ez. 3:18), we may here have another reference to a 'going through' of our deeds at the day of judgment. There, perhaps, we will have to give an account, an explanation, of why our neighbours and workfellows lie eternally dead- because we were too shy, too weakly convinced of the eternal realities we knew, to tell them. For the Hebrew word translated "require" implies some kind of inquisition / explanation. Here we see the vital importance of witness.

Is. 53:14 prophesied that through the cross, the Lord Jesus would "justify the many". Yet this phrase is picked up in Dan. 12:3 and applied to those who preach the Gospel- and thereby become "*those* who justify the many". The implication is plain enough. Through preaching, we live out the Lord's death for others in practice, we placard Him crucified before the world's eyes. We are not simply "Him" to them; we are Him crucified to them. The honour of this is surpassing.

Those who have lived in Christ will then shine as the brightness of the firmament. But the description of the Lord's face shining as the sun draws on this; as if to say that our shining in the future Kingdom will be because we were and are in Him. We will shine forth then (Mt. 13:43), as the Sun of righteousness Himself. The allusion is to the promise that Abraham's seed shall be as the stars (Gen. 15:5). It is through the resurrection at the last day that the covenant will be finally fulfilled. We are to shine now as a candle, and we will shine forth for ever. Like stars, who have no glory of their own but only reflect that of the sun, the Lord Jesus.

All the prophecies could have had a more immediate fulfilment, but the possibility was messed up by Israel's impenitence. Is. 40:5 had called out to a Zion about to be restored that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed". In other words, the temple ought to have been a re-establishment of Solomon's, with God's attendant acceptance of it also. However, this didn't happen. Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory of Yahweh filling the temple (Ez. 43:5), as if to show that this, in line with Haggai's words, was what *could* have happened at the restoration. However, it's fulfilment must now await the future. Daniel's prophecy that there would be a time of trouble for Israel, followed by a resurrection and judgment, may have had a potential fulfilment in Haman's persecution. The LXX of Esther 5 includes her prayer, in which she says that Haman was seeking to hinder the work of the temple. This would explain why initially the Samaritans persuaded the Persians to make the work cease, but then (humanly inexplicably) another edict is given for it to resume. The people were delivered (Dan. 12:1), as they were by Michael the Angel manipulating Esther. But the resurrection, judgment and Kingdom didn't follow, because Israel weren't ready for it. Then those who turned many to righteousness- i.e. the priesthood, in the primary context- would be rewarded (Dan. 12:3). But Malachi and Haggai repeatedly criticized the priesthood at the time of the restoration for being selfish and not teaching Israel (Mal. 2:7). Daniel and Jeremiah were heartbroken that there had to be such a delay to the full fulfilment of the Messianic restoration of the Kingdom.

We have seen that Daniel's prophecies often parallel the Angels with God's people on earth, whom they represent in the court of Heaven. It is no surprise that the visions conclude with the individual believers shining like the stars, a symbol of both Angels (Jud. 5:20; Job 38:7) and believers, as discussed on Dan. 8:10. There will be some equivalence between us and the Angels [as in Lk. 20:35,36], although Heb. 1 is clear that our role and status will be higher than Angels. The "stars" who were cast down by the little horn and stamped upon (Dan. 8:10) shall now be resurrected and shine for ever. The "wise" who now shine for ever had once fallen: "Those who are wise among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword and by

flame, by captivity and by spoil, many days" (Dan. 11:33). This was a far more glorious scenario than Daniel's desire that God's stars not be cast down nor trampled, and that Judah be restored from exile to a restored temple, which according to Ez. 40-48 would be inhabited by mortals- we read of sweat, of divorce and death amongst the priests there.

Dan. 12:4 *But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of its fulfilment*- Beginning at the end of the vision of Dan. 8, Daniel had prayed to understand, indeed he had a desperate desire for understanding. And again he is being told that this will not be granted- only those who live at the end of "the days" will understand. Is. 29:11,12 clearly uses the same image of a sealed prophecy to mean that the prophecy isn't currently understandable. And that is the case with Daniel's prophecies: "All vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is educated, saying, Read this, please; and he says, I can't, for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to one who is not educated, saying, Read this, please; and he says, I can't read". Daniel was told to seal the book (Dan. 12:4), but it was already sealed by God (Dan. 8:26; 12:9). I take this to mean that he is asked to accept that the book is sealed to him, he will not understand it. Instead, Dan. 9:24 speaks of the work of Messiah as sealing the book. His work would be to "bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy". The wonderful reality of what the Lord Jesus achieved for us should be our focus; it has sealed the book. But the glorious silver lining for Daniel was that because of this he will be resurrected, to witness and participate in the ultimate return from exile, that from Eden and everlasting life. So many amateur Bible students have likewise ended their days without seeing in their lifetimes what they hoped for, and therefore without correct understanding of Bible prophecy. We are to learn from Daniel, and accept that the seals will be removed in the very last days- and then the interpretation will be clear as daylight. Our focus instead must be upon our final resurrection to eternal life, which is far more wonderful than any 'cracking' of Daniel's prophecies in terms of mapping them onto current geopolitics. The Bible is not a riddle to be solved; rather does it present the simple reality of our eternal salvation, and bids us trust in it as gloriously true for ourselves.

The meaning of the final prophecy of Daniel would only be clear at the time of its fulfilment; and this is the case with all prophecy. It would've been hard for Daniel to accept, who obviously wanted to understand his own prophecies immediately. But the imagery of shutting and sealing could suggest that an interpretation of it was possible in Daniel's lifetime, but that was now precluded, and the interpretation and outworking was now hidden until the time of the end. This would confirm what we noted on Dan. 2- that the restoration of Israel's Kingdom as God's Kingdom on earth could have come during Daniel's lifetime, but it was precluded by Israel's lack of repentance. And so the prophecies would come true, but at a longer term moment. This is a classic example of 1 Pet. 1:12 "Unto whom it was revealed (in response to their enquiries) that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister". And yet the Lord's death opened the book, broke the seals. But the end didn't come then, the book *to us* remained sealed, because the intended, possible fulfilment in AD70 didn't come about- again, because Israel didn't fully repent.

A sealed book or scroll is one that cannot be opened or read (Is. 29:11). The opening of the seals in Revelation surely alludes here; they will be opened in the very last days, rather than over a long period of continuous history. The seals of Revelation bring forth events on earth; here, the seals represent the limitations upon understanding Daniel's visions. The idea surely is that when the visions start to be

fulfilled, then the faithful of the last days will perceive this and understand the prophecies which previously were unclear. We should therefore not put too much energy into trying to apply them to current world events; their fulfilment in the land promised to Abraham in the last days will be clear to all.

The repentance of Israel will be associated with an opening of their eyes to God's word. "The Lord hath poured out upon (Israel) the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes (quoted in Rom. 11:8 concerning Israel's blindness to Christ)... the vision of all (God's word) is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed... (but) in that day (of the Kingdom) shall the deaf hear the words of the book" (Is. 29:10,11,17,18). This will be when the book is *unsealed* at "The time of the end". It will be in our last days that Israel's blindness starts to be cured, thanks to a Word-based revival, led by the Elijah ministry.

Malachi's prophecy of the faithful remnant earnestly speaking to each other about the word in preparation for the Lord's coming can be equally applicable to spiritual Israel. The flagship verse concerning the opening of our eyes to latter day prophecy must be Dan. 12:4,10: "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro (an idiom often used concerning response to God's word: Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.), and knowledge (of Daniel's prophecies) shall be increased... many shall be purified, and made white, and tried (in the tribulation); but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand". This is all in the context of the Angel rejecting Daniel's plea for insight into his own prophecies. All he was told was that they would be fulfilled in the far distant future, but he was comforted with the thought that the faithful at that time would understand. Thus Dan. 12:4 LXX reads: "Seal the book until the time of its accomplishment"- *then* it will be unsealed and the meaning become apparent to our generation. "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" suggests that this true understanding of God's word motivates the faithful remnant in holding on to a righteous lifestyle in the morally chaotic latter day world. Those who are "wicked" will not understand, indicating that understanding God's word correctly is in some sense a moral issue and is related to our spirituality. Those who do God's will therefore understand His doctrine (Jn. 7:17). Time and again Israel are condemned because their lack of *understanding* of the prophecies led them into sinful behaviour (Dt. 32:29; Ps. 94:8; Is. 44:18).

Many shall run back and forth, and knowledge shall be increased- This speaks of a time in the very last days when "many shall run to and fro (an idiom often used concerning response to God's word: Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; Jn. 8:37 RV; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.), and knowledge shall be increased [the context is of Daniel wanting to understand about the second coming of Jesus]... many shall be purified, and made white, and tried (in the tribulation); but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand". This increase of knowledge of the Gospel is to be spread world-wide by many running to and fro in the last days. The great commission will be fulfilled then as never before.

The vision was to be made plain, so that a herald may run with it (Dan. 12:2,3 Heb.). The latter day preaching of the Gospel world-wide will be motivated by this true and thrilling understanding of latter day prophecy. We will see our place in God's larger plan, and respond to it. Many will run to and fro to increase knowledge, i.e. to increase knowledge amongst others- for running to and fro will not increase knowledge amongst the runners (Dan. 12:4). Yet according to 2 Thess. 2, there will be

a massive apostasy from the Truth in the very last days, whilst antiChrist is enthroned. Could this not be because so many of the true Christian community have been expecting that antiChrist will *not* reign like this, that Israel will never possibly be overrun, and that they have had to own up to having been looking the wrong way in their decades of analysis of the Roman Catholic church and Russia? When they finally own up to the anti-Semitism of Britain, will it not be they will find it hard to maintain faith in a God whom they had hitherto believed had prophesied that Tarshish / Britain would save Israel? And yet, the Gospel will be accepted world-wide in the final preaching of it; and when it has gone into all nations, then shall the end come.

There is another possible translation of these words for "run back and forth / to and fro". The Hebrew *shut* is literally to rove, turn about, despise. Hence, to do despite (Ez. 16:57; 28:24,26). But if we spell the word *sut*, removing the dots added by the Masoretic scribes so that we read 's' rather than 'sh', the meaning is to swerve, turn aside, apostatize, as in "those who turn aside" (Ps. 40:4; 101:3; Hos. 5:2); hence the LXX "till many shall have gone raving mad". Likewise "knowledge" is LXX "wickedness". This verse thus connects with the description of wickedness in :10. The idea is of a time in the very last days when sin and wickedness will be unbridled and unrivalled. This was exactly the Lord's picture of the last days in Mt. 24:12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall turn cold".

Dan 12:5 *Then I Daniel looked-* The section called "the scripture of truth" which began at the start of Daniel 11 has now finished; what follows now is a kind of appendix to it.

And behold, two others stood, one on the river bank on this side, and the other on the river bank on that side- "Others" suggests that they too were Angels, like the Angel who has been telling Daniel the things noted in "the scripture of truth"; and that Angel seems to be "the man clothed in linen" of :6. "The river" is the Hiddekel or Tigris of Dan. 10:4; but it is called "the great river" in Dan. 10:4, a term usually used of the Euphrates. The Tigris is joined to the Euphrates by the Hiddekel. Effectively, the Hiddekel is the Euphrates. This would have been the north eastern border of the land promised to Abraham. Angels also stand guarding this river in Rev. 9:14, and they signal the time of the end by releasing the latter day invaders of Israel to come pouring across the river to dominate the land, crush God's people, and thereby lead the remnant to repentance. Perhaps the idea of the two Angels (Michael and Gabriel? Although Gabriel is the man clothed in linen of Dan. 10:4) is that they were witnesses to the utter truth of the words of the Angel who stood above the waters of the river (:6), representing God, and made a solemn oath (:7). The two Angels of Dan. 8:13 seem to serve a similar witnessing function.

Dan 12:6 *One said to the man clothed in linen-* The Septuagint makes Daniel the speaker: "And I said to the man clothed in linen, who was standing over the waters of the river, When shall be the end of these marvels?". His words in this case would be the basis for those of the disciples in Mt. 24:3, who likewise wanted to know "How long?", as do all the saints.

Who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?- There were two Angels seen, one on each side of the river. One of them had power over the waters [was "over" them]. The other asked him "how long...?". This was precisely Daniel's question. That Angel therefore represented him. The idea of guardian Angels is not far off the truth; although the Hebrew Bible portrays a court in Heaven, a heavenly throne room, where Angels represent men and situations on earth before God. And that is what we have here. The Angels likewise have genuine

questions, seeing they don't have total knowledge (Mk. 13:32); they desire to look into these things (1 Pet. 1:12). In this case therefore the Angel was not merely representing Daniel but was himself genuinely in his position before God.

The "wonders" refer to the deeds or words of Antiochus in Dan. 8:24 and Dan. 11:36. There was the potential that the 'end' would come with Antiochus Epiphanes. It didn't, and the kaleidoscope turned again to present another possible scenario in the truly 'last days'.

Dan 12:7 *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-* This is the scene of Rev. 10:5. I suggested on :5 that the other two Angels were as it were legal witnesses in the court of Heaven as to the utter truth of these things. The "man clothed in linen" may represent God Himself; for He Himself swears by Himself as He can swear by no greater (Heb. 6:13), and lifts up His own hand to Heaven and swears by His own eternity (Dt. 32:40).

That it shall be for a time, times, and a half- If "time" is taken for one year, and "times" as two years, then we have the three and a half year tribulation period, the 42 months or 1260 days, comparable with the ministry of the historical Elijah. This period is so relatively common that we can indeed expect such a period in the chronology of the last days. It could possibly have had a primary fulfilment in the period between Antiochus entering Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple by the Maccabees. But all such primary applications are hazy and problematic; clearly the idea is that from Daniel's time there could have been a three and a half year period to the full restoration, but this didn't happen, and so the time period definitely refers to the last days for its main fulfilment. The original word for "time" can refer to a feast day; perhaps the idea is of a period of events featuring significant things on the Jewish feast days. The book of Revelation is structured around the Jewish feast days, which are frequently alluded to, and one possible interpretation of Revelation is that it is an account of the final three and a half year tribulation. Paul Wyls has demonstrated that the 'feast' allusions in Revelation make up a total of three and a half years. But it is difficult to understand Revelation as a strictly chronological prediction of latter day events, which would be required by this approach.

And when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished- LXX "When the dispersion is ended they shall know all these things". This suggests that the understanding of the prophecies would only be at the time they were fulfilled. Daniel of course was hoping and expecting that the return of the exiles under Cyrus would be the end of all things, and would herald the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God. This indeed was the intended initial scenario. But it was only a potential scenario. For generally the dispersion chose not to return. And so Daniel died not understanding, although trusting.

The Hebrew for "breaking in pieces" can mean as AV "to scatter". The idea seems to be that Daniel would not understand these time periods, but they would become clear "when the dispersion is ended". This is in line with the purpose of prophecy generally- not to provide a timeline of events ahead of time, but so that when the fulfilment comes, we realize that prophecy has been fulfilled. Fulfilled prophecy gives meaning to event when it happens; but not beforehand. All we know beforehand is that events are not random, God is in control, and they are all moving towards a final end in the Lord's return and establishment of the Kingdom. If the Masoretic Text reading is correct, then the holy people must be broken in pieces

before the time period is fulfilled. That breaking in pieces is allusive to the actions of the little horn and fourth beast against God's people. Israel must be "broken" in the last days, and then the salvation will come. The Lord alludes to this by saying that we can fall upon Him and be broken right now, so that we shall surely be saved at the last day (Mt. 21:44). The latter day tribulation would be avoidable if they would only fall upon the rock of Jesus the Christ right now. And the purpose of the latter day tribulation is to bring Israel to this point, of accepting Jesus as Christ. The AV and other texts read "He" instead of "they", as if referring to God; "finished" or "accomplished" is often used of the accomplishing of God's anger with Israel. It was ultimately God who broke or scattered them. If there had been a total return of scattered Jewry, then their judgments would have been finished and the Messianic Kingdom re-established. But most of them preferred to remain scattered, by remaining in the lands of their captivity. And so the prophecy will have its final fulfilment in the last days, when again the holy people are broken into pieces, a clear figure of judgment.

We may ask how can the power of the holy people be broken or smashed. I discussed on Dan. 8:11 the extent to which such shocking language is used of God Himself, so closely identified with His people that what is done to them is *apparently* done to His power. This is the time of Dt. 32:36, when God's people perceived "that power has vanished and nothing is left to keep or abandon".

Dan 12:8 *I heard, but I didn't understand: then I said, my lord, what shall be the issue of these things?*- Daniel came to "understand" the vision of Dan. 9, but only in that he understood that he would not see its fulfilment; hence he was so shocked, depressed and disappointed that the fulfilment would not be in his days (Dan. 10:1). But he is set up as a representative of those of us in the very last days who shall likewise "understand" (s.w. Dan. 12:10) the very same prophecies which Daniel studied. Daniel is described as both understanding, and also not understanding (Dan. 10:1; 12:8). Surely the idea is that he understood the principle of deferment and the outline meaning of the prophecy; but he didn't understand the details. And so perhaps it is with us who will, or do, likewise "understand" as Daniel did.

Daniel began his life as a young man by being famed for understanding visions (Dan. 1:17). He ends his long life not understanding. This perhaps was his final humiliation. For we are progressively humbled under God's hand in this life, that we might be exalted in due time. He was given understanding, but perhaps he died 'not understanding' in that he struggled to the end to 'understand' that the restoration of God's Kingdom would not in fact happen in his lifetime. Possibly this is the only hint at anything negative in Daniel's character. He had to resign that little personal hope he had laboured with and for all his life long. Just as all God's children have to.

"The issue of these things" or AV "end of these things" fails to properly reflect the Hebrew original. The idea is 'what will be the closing stage of the wonders / sufferings of Dan. 12:6, which will be a sign that the actual 'end' is near?'. The Hebrew means not the absolute close of a thing, but the closing or latter part of it, as in Job 8:7; Job 42:12.

Dan 12:9 *He said, Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end*- Daniel was to 'go his way', but to rest in the sleep of death (:13). Death, although it is not consciously experienced, is all the same part of our journey. It is a going away, towards a certain future. Daniel was to understand that this prophecy of the three and a half years would not be understood until "the time of the

end"; "the end" often refers to the end of Israel's judgments. Daniel wanted it of course to be "the end" of them in his day; but all he knew was that there was to be a time period before they ended. Like all the prophets, Daniel was made to understand that he was not reporting these things for himself, but for later generations (1 Pet. 1:12 surely alludes here). Only when the prophecies come true will the faithful at the time perceive the fulfilment. As noted on :4 and Dan. 8:26, the meaning was shut up to Daniel; and yet the same word is used of how Daniel was famed for having no "secret" (s.w. "shut up" thing) hidden from him (Ez. 28:3). This was therefore a way of humbling him; and we all have to be brought down, particularly in our last days in this world, that we might be exalted in due time. The sealing of the words, as in a scroll, is obviously alluded to in Revelation, when the scroll is unsealed, and the opened seals refer to events of the last days. The unsealing of the book is therefore in the last days; any historical application of the seals is incidental or at best only a primary fulfilment compared to the major fulfilment, when believers of the last days shall see these things unambiguously fulfilled before their eyes, and shall be encouraged thereby in their tribulation.

Dan 12:10 *Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined-* The day of judgment will involve the Lord sitting "as a refiner of silver... for he is like a refiner's fire" (Mal. 3:2,3). And yet these very Hebrew words are used about how in the final tribulation, God's people will be "refined as silver is refined" (Zech. 13:9), and "be made white and refined" (Dan. 12:10). So the essence of judgment day will be worked out for us in our response to the latter day tribulation. This makes sense- the generation that are alive and see the Lord's return will effectively experience the judgment seat as they pass through the tribulation. It is to prepare them for being the only mortal generation to be alive at His return, the generation who shall greet Him, and never actually die. The faithful will be "tried" (AV) by the latter day invader, as Israel were by the Babylonian invasion of the past (Jer. 9:7). The same word is used in Zech. 13:9 and Mal. 3:2 concerning the faithful remnant in Jerusalem enduring their future sufferings. The idea seems to be that prior to this refining process in the final tribulation, they were impure and not refined. For both natural and spiritual Israel, the tribulation functions to prepare that generation for acceptance at the Lord's return. The returned exiles ought to have purified themselves from Babylon when they left (Is. 52:11; Ez. 20:38 s.w.); but they did not. And so this three and a half year tribulation, perhaps initially envisaged at the hands of Antiochus and then the Romans in AD66-70, was intended to purify them. But instead their love of materialism and self-righteousness would not be purged, and the fulfilment was delayed until our last days. Likewise the word for "made white" is used of how Judah could have made themselves white by repentance (Is. 1:18); but they didn't, and needed this final tribulation to bring about that repentance; and also the word for "refined" is used in just the same way (Is. 1:25). Judah's experience at the Babylonian invasion and in exile in Babylon was the intended refining (Is. 48:10 s.w.); but they didn't respond. The refiner refined in vain (Jer. 6:29 s.w.). The latter day tribulation will be successful in this refining attempt; a third will be refined when Jerusalem is taken (Zech. 13:9 s.w.). And then immediately, the Lord will come; He will in that sense appear on earth as the ultimate refiner of Israel (Mal. 3:2,3). And it is why we ought to be breaking up the ground for it by preaching repentance to Jewish people.

But the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand- This is the spirit of Rev. 22:11 which may allude here, in concluding the visions of Revelation just as this concludes the visions

in Daniel: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still". As noted earlier on this verse, not all will respond to the refining process of the tribulation; the wicked shall do wickedly, but a minority of wise "shall understand", and it is that understanding which is the intellectual basis for their moral purification and repentance in practice.

Daniel didn't understand the 2300 evening-morning period (Dan. 8:27), and in Dan. 9 he is given understanding (Dan. 9:2,22,23). The answer was in the 70 weeks prophecy. "Understand the vision" (Dan. 9:23) prefaces the 70 weeks prophecy, and the vision in view is that of Dan. 8, repeatedly called "the vision" (Dan. 8:1,2,13,15,17,26). The issues of Dan. 9:24 are exactly those of Dan. 8:12-14: transgression will be finished, everlasting righteousness will be brought, and a holy of holies anointed. But just as the 2300 period differs from the 1260 day period of Dan. 7, so the interpretation in Dan. 9 differs. Because the 70 weeks period is not 2300 evening-mornings. Likewise the 1260,1290 and 1335 day periods of Dan. 12 seem to offer yet another scenario. The language of Dan. 12:10,11 is that of Dan. 11:31-35, initially about the possible fulfilment in Antiochus Epiphanes. Surely we have to conclude that the time periods are flexible and changeable, as God factors in all the possible fulfilments in line with human freewill decisions. This really has to be the case, for otherwise Divine prophecy would be simply deterministic and rob man of any freewill. But they will somehow come obviously true in the last days, or at least one of them will. There is a stress on the wise then understanding, when Daniel couldn't at his time. And this surely was what the Lord had in mind in Mt. 24:15: "let him that reads understand"; possibly too in Rev. 13:18, addressed to those of the last days: "Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast" (cp. Rev. 17:8 "Here is the mind that has wisdom"). Likewise Mt. 24:13: "he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved" may refer to the language of Dan. 12:12 LXX about the blessedness of those who endure to "the end" of the 1335 days. These time periods of Dan. 12 were surely in the Lord's mind when He spoke of how "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles [of Gentile domination of Jerusalem] be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24).

"That understand" if read as a hiphil would mean 'those who give heed', i.e. those made wise and understanding.

Dan 12:11 *From the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days-* The LXX is clearer that the abomination is set up exactly when the daily sacrifice is ended: "And from the time of the removal of the perpetual sacrifice, when the abomination of desolation shall be set up". There could have been a 1290 day period from the ending of the daily sacrifice by Antiochus and then also by the Romans in AD70, which would have terminated in the establishment of the Kingdom. But that didn't happen. This is an example of potential prophecy which didn't come about because the various preconditions, not least the repentance of Israel, didn't come about. Rather like the detailed descriptions of the restored temple in Ez. 40-48 didn't come about, because the Jews didn't build it that way and didn't truly repent. If this approach is correct, then we need not particularly worry about working out the meaning of this time period. If it is to apply in the last days, then the Jews would have to re-take the temple mount, build a temple and institute the daily sacrifices there. For the significance of the 1290 days in the latter day chronology, see on :12.

Dan 12:12 *Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days*- As noted on :11, there was a potential fulfilment of significance at the end of the 1290 period from the establishment of the abomination by the desolator. And 45 days later there could have been another significant event. Perhaps these were all only potential scenarios after the daily sacrifices were ended by Antiochus and then later in AD70. Just as the Lord could have returned in AD70, but Israel didn't bring forth the fruit of repentance, and so the potential fulfilment was lost.

And yet it would seem that the three and a half year period [time, times and a half, or 1260 days / 42 months] occurs often enough in latter day prophecy for us to understand it literally, as going to happen in the last days. "Comes" here is Heb. 'to reach, stretch unto' the (end of) the 1335 days. This suggests the difficulty in enduring to the end. But those who spiritually endure to the end of the tribulation period will be saved (perhaps the Lord in Mt. 24:13 had Dan. 12:12 in mind). There are forty five days between Passover and Pentecost; the difference between the 1290 and 1335 day periods. And there are thirty days between Purim and Passover- the difference between the 1260 and 1290 days (:11). So nearly all these time periods will start or finish on a Mosaic feast day. It is not without relevance that the period of the last days is described often as "the day of the Lord"- but "the day of the Lord" is a phrase very commonly used to describe the Jewish feast days. Good cases can be constructed for thinking that the Lord will return on Jewish feast days; but the whole period of the last days may well be based around significant events which occur on each of the feast days. If this proves nothing else, it shows that it is quite legitimate to view the time periods as literal days.

We must note that when we read of "time, times and half", we read of times and not years. The idea of a time being one year and times being two years has become an assumed truth. There are other options. The rabbis translate "Until the time of two times and half a time". There were 480 years from the founding of Israel at Sinai to the building of the temple, followed by 410 years from the building of the temple to its destruction. This makes 890 years, and half of that time is 445 years. Together this makes the figure of 1335 found in Dan. 12:12. Which would then be a cipher for the sanctuary being restored rather than a literally time period of days. We note that 1335 is the numerical value of "And I will hide My face" (Dt. 31:18). The "times" are in God's hands and He changes times and seasons. The length of the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were flexible. Their "tranquility" could have been lengthened and in Belshazzar's case it was shortened. So attempts to work out time periods and fix their calendar end point is in fact not at all the spirit of what we see about God in Daniel.

We naturally enquire why the more common 1260 day / year period now morphs into 1290 and 1335 as if there were significant incidents then too. One explanation may be that in the very last days, the Lord Jesus comes but is not openly revealed until a while later; or it may take 30 or 45 days to achieve various points in the establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

Daniel was having to learn that the delay in fulfilment was actually to bring about a far greater salvation and an eternal Kingdom of God on earth, with eternal life for the faithful like himself. And so a special blessing is here given to whoever 'waits and attains' to the 1335 days. It is the spirit of Is. 30:18,19: "Therefore Yahweh will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you, for Yahweh is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for Him. For the people will dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you will weep no more".

Dan 12:13 *But go you your way until the end; for you shall rest, and shall stand in your lot, at the end of the days-*

As in Dan 12:9, there is nothing in the Hebrew corresponding to 'your way'. The idea is "But you, you go to the end". The end which Daniel had longed to see in his lifetime was effectively going to be the day of his death. This has been the similar comfort to those who realize they are going to die without having seen the second coming in their lifetime.

The allusion is to the way that Daniel has just heard that the faithful who "sleep" shall be resurrected at the Lord's return; and he is being told that he will be among them (:2). If the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul and life after death in heaven were true, this would be the place we should read of it. But instead, Daniel is comforted with the Biblical hope of the resurrection of the body at the last day. He was however told to go his way "until the end". Although death is not a conscious experience, it is all the same part of our spiritual journey; he was to go his way to his grave, but he was going his way on a journey unto "the end", when he would stand in his lot. We each have a specifically designed, unique eternal future, a name written which nobody else knows apart from us and the Lord; and Daniel too will have his unique "lot" or inheritance. He would receive it "at the end of the days", perhaps referring to the various periods of days just spoken of; they were to terminate in the resurrection of the dead at the last day. Any attempts to interpret them with end points other than that are therefore faulty, or at best only primary fulfilments.

There are some definite links between the Greek text of Matthew's record of the commission, and the LXX of the end of Daniel 12:

Matthew	Daniel 12:13 LXX
Go ye into all the world (Mt. 28:20)	Go thou thy way
"...then shall the end come" (when the Gospel has been preached to all the world)	till the end
I am with you all the days (28:20 Gk.)	for still there will be days
unto the end of the world	to the end of the world.

Daniel being sent away with God's promised blessing, the very picture of spiritual calmness and peace with his maker, sure in hope, yearning for the day... this is the very picture which the Lord gives of His preachers as He sends them forth. If we are to understand the time periods at the end of Daniel as literal days, i.e. a three and a half year period at the end, then we have in the great commission a specific hint that it will be fulfilled during the three and a half year tribulation.

We reflect that Daniel's life had been focused upon the hope of restoration from Persia once the 70 years were fulfilled. He had lived through that entire period, and

his hope was clearly very great that he would see the Kingdom of God and the Davidic throne re-established in Jerusalem. He is assured now at the end of his long life that his expectation wasn't going to happen and his prayers for it weren't going to be answered- in the form he expected. But they would be answered ultimately and in a far greater way- he would not simply live to return home from exile, but he would arise from the exile of sin and death to life eternal. In a Kingdom of God far greater than it had ever, or could ever have, existed in the form of Israel with a mortal Davidic king. Daniel would have understood from Ez. 37 that Judah's restoration would be a political 'resurrection'; but he was going to experience a real personal resurrection, to eternal life and not just a political mortal kingdom. Daniel had had hints of resurrection when the stone was removed, as if from a tomb, and he emerged alive from the den of lions. He had collapsed feeling dead and unworthy in Dan. 10, to be 'resurrected' and assured of salvation. Those experiences paved the way for this final message about actual resurrection.