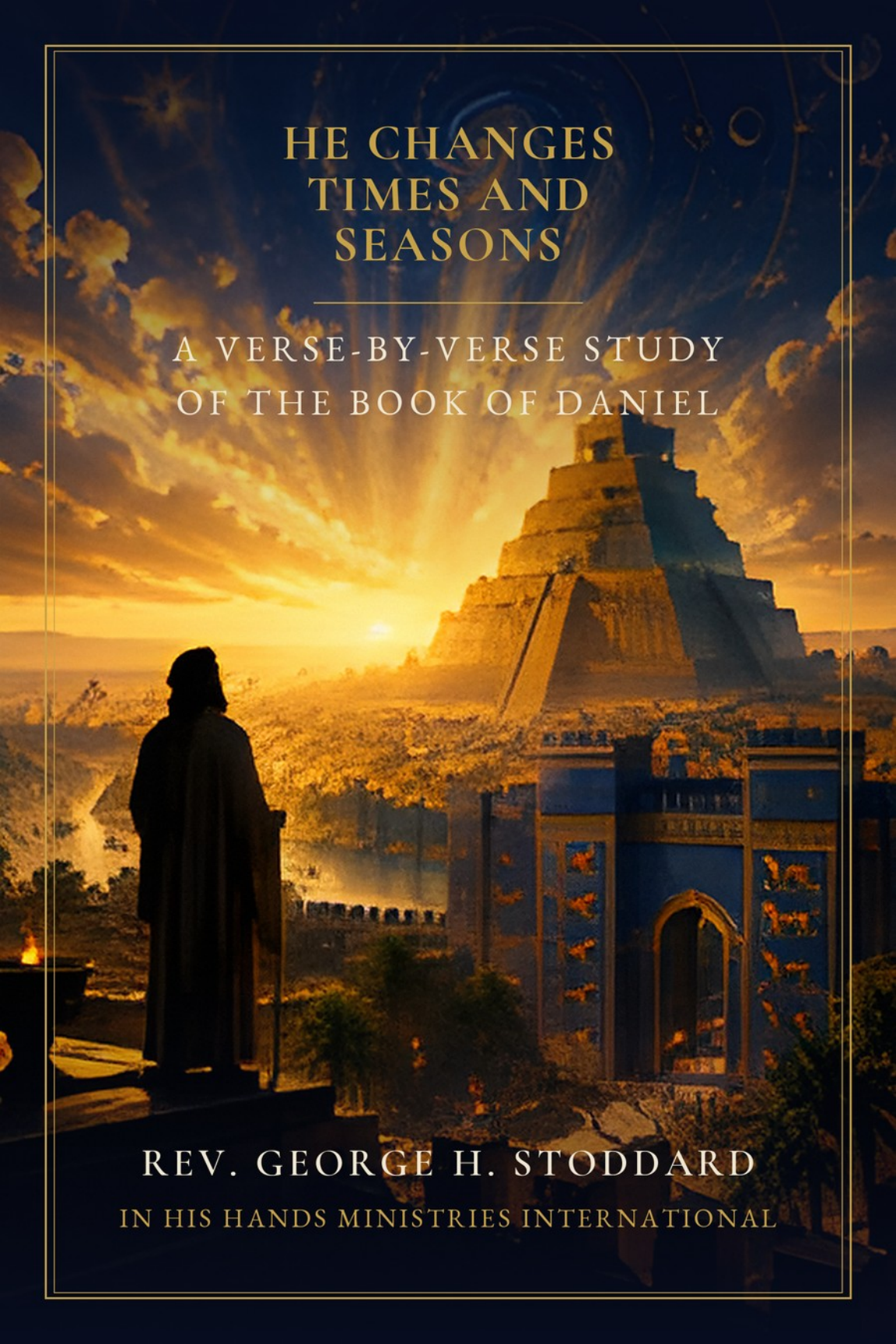

HE CHANGES TIMES AND SEASONS
A VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL
REV. GEORGE H. STODDARD
IN HIS HANDS MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

HE CHANGES TIMES AND SEASONS

Audiobook Narration Script

REV. GEORGE H. STODDARD
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Production Notes

Length. About 25,329 words, an estimated 2 hours 49 minutes at 150 words per minute, across 14 tracks (opening, twelve chapters, closing).

Voice. A warm, steady male American narrator. Scripture readings are slower and more deliberate; commentary is conversational; prayers are quiet and reverent. For synthetic narration, a neural male American voice such as Kokoro works well.

Pacing. Pause one second after each section heading, a half second between verses, and two seconds before each prayer. Allow a one-second breath between paragraphs.

Structure of each chapter track. The chapter overview is read first. Each section then announces its heading and Scripture reference, reads the verses from the American Standard Version, and continues with the commentary and the application.

Scripture. Quote the text exactly as printed. The words “LORD” and “Jehovah” appear in the ASV, so say “Jehovah” where it is printed.

Technical. Record at 44.1 kHz, 16-bit or higher, mono, with room tone of at least five seconds at the head and tail of every track.

Images. Illustrations in the book are AI-generated and are not described in the narration.

Pronunciation Guide

Name	Say
Daniel	DAN-yul
Belteshazzar	BEL-tuh-SHAZ-er
Hananiah	HAN-uh-NY-uh
Shadrach	SHAD-rak
Mishael	MISH-ay-el
Meshach	MEE-shak
Azariah	AZ-uh-RY-uh
Abednego	uh-BED-nee-go
Nebuchadnezzar	NEB-uh-kud-NEZ-er
Ashpenaz	ASH-puh-naz
Jehoiakim	jeh-HOY-uh-kim
Shinar	SHY-nar
Chaldeans	kal-DEE-unz
Arioch	AIR-ee-ock
Dura	DOO-ruh
Belshazzar	bel-SHAZ-er
Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin	MEE-nee, MEE-nee, TEK-el, oo-FAR-sin
Darius	duh-RY-us
Cyrus	SY-rus
Gabriel	GAY-bree-el
Michael	MY-kul
Ulai	OO-ly
Shushan (Susa)	SHOO-shan
Antiochus Epiphanes	an-TY-uh-kus eh-PIF-uh-neez
Ptolemy	TOL-uh-mee

Name	Say
Seleucus	sih-LOO-kus
Kittim	KIT-im
Hiddekel (Tigris)	HID-eh-kel
Uphaz	YOO-faz
Ancient of Days	AIN-shunt of DAYZ

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Track 00: Opening

He Changes Times And Seasons. A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Daniel. By Rev. George H. Stoddard. Published by In His Hands Ministries International.

Welcome to the book of Daniel. In this study we will read every verse of Daniel from the American Standard Version, and then walk through the text section by section. Daniel is a book about who rules, and its message is that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. Let us begin.

Track 01: Chapter 1: Faithful in Babylon

The book of Daniel opens in 605 B.C., in the first wave of Judah's captivity. A nation has lost its temple treasures, its king, and its best young men, yet the first chapter quietly announces the thesis of the whole book: the Lord is still on the throne, and nothing happens in Babylon that He did not first permit. Notice the repeated phrase "the Lord gave" in verse 2 and again in verse 9; the hand behind history is never Nebuchadnezzar's.

Chapter 1 is the training ground. Before Daniel ever interprets a dream or faces a lion, he settles a small question about food. The pattern is plain: faithfulness in the little decisions prepares a servant of God for the great ones.

[SECTION] The Siege and the Sacred Vessels

The reading is Daniel 1:1–2.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God; 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.*

Daniel dates the opening scene to the third year of Jehoiakim, which fits the first Babylonian campaign against Jerusalem in 605 B.C. (Jeremiah counts the same year from Babylon's side, which is why the two reckonings differ by a year). Nebuchadnezzar was then crown prince and commander; he soon became king when his father Nabopolassar died.

The key theological statement is that the Lord delivered Jehoiakim into the king's hand. Jerusalem did not fall because Babylon's gods were stronger. It

fell because Judah had broken covenant, exactly as Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah had warned. Part of the temple vessels went to the land of Shinar, the old plain of Babel, and into the treasury of Nebuchadnezzar's god. To the pagan mind that was a victory of Marduk over Jehovah. To Daniel's readers it was discipline from a faithful Father.

Apply it. When your circumstances look like a defeat for God's people, read them in the light of the sovereignty of God before you read them in the light of the headlines.

[SECTION] Chosen for the King's Service, Renamed for His Gods

The reading is Daniel 1:3–7.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring in certain of the children of Israel, even of the seed royal and of the nobles; youths in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and endued with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace; and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And 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 nourished three years; that at the end thereof they should stand before the king. Now among these were, of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. And the prince of the eunuchs gave names unto them: unto Daniel he gave the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.*

Ashpenaz, the chief of the court officials, was told to select young men of royal or noble descent, without blemish, quick in wisdom and learning, able to stand in the palace. Babylon wanted the finest minds of the conquered nation and meant to reshape them: three years of instruction in the language and literature of the Chaldeans, and a daily allotment from the

king's own table.

Then came the renaming. Daniel ("God is my judge") became Belteshazzar, a name invoking Bel. Hananiah ("Jehovah is gracious") became Shadrach, Mishael ("Who is what God is?") became Meshach, and Azariah ("Jehovah has helped") became Abednego, "servant of Nebo." Every Hebrew name carried the name of the true God. The new names were designed to erase it. Babylon's strategy was re-education: change the diet, the language, the name, and eventually the worship will follow.

Apply it. Ask what the culture around you is trying to rename in you, and hold fast to the identity God has already given.

[SECTION] A Purpose in the Heart

The reading is Daniel 1:8–10.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself 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. Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths that are of your own age? so would ye endanger my head with the king.*

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. The verb describes a settled decision made before the test. Why the king's food? It was likely offered first to idols, it may have included meats forbidden by the Law, and to eat the king's table was to swear allegiance to the king's gods and to the king's patronage.

Notice how Daniel acts. He does not stage a protest. He asks the official respectfully, and God had already granted him favor and compassion with Ashpenaz. The official's fear is honest and human: if you look worse than

the others, the king will have my head. Courage and courtesy are not opposites. Daniel keeps both.

Apply it. Take the stand that conscience requires, but take it with grace, wisdom, and a respectful appeal.

[SECTION] The Ten-Day Test

The reading is Daniel 1:11–16.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then said Daniel to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's dainties; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties. So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.*

Daniel turns to the steward over the four men and proposes a trial: ten days of vegetables (plant food, grains, and seeds) and water, then compare appearances. The proposal is modest, fair, and measurable. He does not demand a miracle; he places himself and his friends in God's hands and lets the outcome speak.

At the end of ten days the four looked healthier and better nourished than all who ate the king's food, and the steward continued to give them the vegetables. This is not a verse about vegetarian diets as a spiritual law. It is a verse about obedience: when God's people refuse to compromise, He supplies what the compromise promised.

Apply it. Faithfulness is not a loss of opportunity. God can make a small act of obedience the doorway to a larger work.

[SECTION] God Gave Them Knowledge and Skill

The reading is Daniel 1:17–21.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *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. And 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. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.*

Verse 17 is the hinge of the chapter: God gave the four young men learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel in particular understanding in all visions and dreams. They studied Babylonian learning, but their gift came from above. At the end of the training the king examined them himself and found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole realm.

The chapter closes with a quiet remark: Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus, which is 539 to 538 B.C. Empires rose and fell across those sixty-odd years, and Daniel outlasted the one that had carried him off. The man who purposed in his heart at the beginning is still faithful at the end.

Apply it. Excellence and holiness can live in the same person. Do the work before you, with all your might, as unto the Lord.

Let us pray. Lord, You are the God who rules over kings. Give me a heart settled in advance, so that when pressure comes I do not have to decide who I am. Make me faithful in small things, courteous in conviction, and diligent in my calling, for Your glory. Amen.

Track 02: Chapter 2: The Dream of the Great Statue

Chapter 2 is the first great prophecy of the book, and it sets the outline of world history that chapters 7 through 12 will fill in. A pagan king dreams of a statue made of four metals and a stone. Only the God of Israel can tell the dream and its meaning, and in doing so He announces that human empires will be replaced by an everlasting kingdom.

From 2:4 through the end of chapter 7 the book is written in Aramaic, the international language of the Babylonian and Persian empires, because the message concerns the nations. Chapters 8 through 12 return to Hebrew, because they concern Israel.

[SECTION] A Troubled King Makes an Impossible Demand

The reading is Daniel 2:1–6.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the enchanters, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in the Syrian language, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye make not known unto me the dream and the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye show the dream and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and*

great honor: therefore show me the dream and the interpretation thereof.

In the second year of his reign (counted from his full accession in 604 B.C., which is consistent with the three-year training of chapter 1) Nebuchadnezzar dreams and cannot sleep. He summons the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans. When they ask him to tell the dream so they can interpret it, he refuses: they must tell him the dream itself, or be cut in pieces and their houses made a dunghill.

His reasoning is shrewd. If they truly speak with the gods, they should be able to see what is in his mind. If they only invent interpretations, they cannot be trusted. He offers great rewards for success, and dismemberment for failure.

[SECTION] The Wise Men Confess Their Limits

The reading is Daniel 2:7–13.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *They answered the second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. The king answered and said, I know of a certainty that ye would gain time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. But if ye make not known unto me the dream, there is but one law for you; for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter, forasmuch as no king, lord, or ruler, hath asked such a thing of any magician, or enchanter, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is no other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went forth, and the wise men were to be slain; and they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain.*

The wise men answer twice that the king should tell the dream and they will interpret it. They then say the plain truth: no man on earth can do what the king asks, and the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh, are the only ones who could. In saying so, they unwittingly confess the failure of every human wisdom and false religion.

The king is enraged and orders every wise man in Babylon destroyed. Because Daniel and his friends are counted among them, the decree reaches the four Hebrew young men as well. Notice that Daniel had not been summoned to the failed audience; he is endangered by a decree about a dream he knew nothing of.

[SECTION] Prayer, Revelation, and Praise

The reading is Daniel 2:14–23.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then Daniel returned answer with counsel and prudence to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Wherefore is the decree so urgent from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. And Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would appoint him a time, and he would show the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding; he revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast*

given me wisdom and might, and hast now made known unto me what we desired of thee; for thou hast made known unto us the king's matter.

Daniel responds with tact and counsel to Arioch, captain of the guard, then goes to the king and asks for time. He does not guess; he gathers his three friends and asks them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this secret. Daniel's first strategy is prayer in company.

That night the secret is revealed to him in a night vision, and he blesses the God of heaven in one of the great doxologies of Scripture. The central lines are these: wisdom and might belong to God, He changes the times and the seasons, He removes kings and sets up kings, He gives wisdom to the wise, and He reveals deep and hidden things, knowing what is in the darkness with light dwelling with Him. The title of this book is taken from this praise. History is not a random cycle; it is a calendar kept by the Lord.

Apply it. Take your impossible situation to the people who pray, and when the answer comes, praise before you hurry on.

[SECTION] Daniel Gives God the Glory

The reading is Daniel 2:24–30.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said thus unto him: Destroy not the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the children of the captivity of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? Daniel answered before the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a

God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and he hath made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these: as for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and he that revealeth secrets hath made known to thee what shall come to pass. 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 thou mayest know the thoughts of thy heart.

Daniel asks Arioch to spare the wise men and brings him to the king. When the king asks whether Daniel can do what the others could not, Daniel answers that no wise man or magician can show the king the secret, but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets and has made known to Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

Daniel makes two things clear: he is not wiser than any living person, and the revelation came so that the king might know the thoughts of his own heart. A servant of God takes no credit for what God alone gives.

[SECTION] The Dream Told: The Statue and the Stone

The reading is Daniel 2:31–35.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

Thou, O king, sawest, and, behold, a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the aspect thereof was terrible. As for this image, its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet part of iron, and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon its feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. 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; and the wind carried them away, so that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Daniel describes a great image, bright and terrible. Its head was fine gold, its breast and arms silver, its belly and thighs bronze, its legs iron, its feet part iron and part clay. A stone was cut out without hands, struck the image on its feet, and broke the whole figure to pieces. The metals became like chaff on a summer threshing floor and the wind carried them away, but the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The details are deliberate: a descending value of metals (gold, silver, bronze, iron) but an increasing strength (iron crushes), ending in a mix of iron and clay that cannot hold together. The stone is cut without hands, meaning it is not of human origin.

[SECTION] The Head of Gold

The reading is Daniel 2:36–38.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art king of kings, unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all: thou art the head of gold.*

Daniel states the interpretation with the boldness of a man who knows he is speaking God's word. The king is a king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory, and into whose hand He has given all the places of men and beasts and birds. The king is the head of gold.

Babylon was the gold of the ancient world: the wealth of its temples, the magnificence of its palaces, the single sovereign authority of its king. Yet the verse stresses that all of it was given. Nebuchadnezzar is a steward, not an owner, and chapter 4 will teach him that lesson in a way he will never forget.

[SECTION] Silver, Bronze, Iron, and Iron Mixed with Clay

The reading is Daniel 2:39–43.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee; and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay.*

After Babylon will come another kingdom inferior to it, which is traditionally identified with Medo-Persia (539 B.C.); then a third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth, identified with Greece under Alexander the Great (331 B.C.). The fourth kingdom is strong as iron, breaking and crushing everything, which fits the Roman Empire.

The feet and toes of iron mixed with clay describe a divided kingdom, part strong and part brittle, with peoples mingled by marriage and political alliance who will not hold together, as iron does not mix with clay. Many conservative students understand this to point to a final, revived form of the fourth kingdom in the last days, a view supported by the fact that the stone strikes the statue at its feet (v. 34) and the kingdom of God is set up in the days of those kings (v. 44), which did not happen at the fall of Rome. Other interpreters see the toes as the fragmented nations that arose from Rome's ruins. In either case the main point is the same: every human kingdom is

unstable.

[SECTION] The Kingdom That Shall Never Be Destroyed

The reading is Daniel 2:44–45.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor left to another people. It will break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and shall stand forever. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the kingdom He establishes is the one for which the church prays: Thy kingdom come.

This is the great hope of Daniel, and the reason the rest of the book can look at fearful beasts and fierce kings without despair. The end of the story is already told: the stone wins.

Apply it. Do not be intimidated by the size of the statues in your world. Whatever is built without God is already marked for the wind.

[SECTION] The King Bows and the Four Are Promoted

The reading is Daniel 2:46–49.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou hast been able to reveal this secret. 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. And Daniel requested of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel was in the gate of the king.

Nebuchadnezzar falls on his face before Daniel and commands that an offering and sweet incense be presented to him. Daniel plainly would not accept worship, and the king shifts his praise to the right target: your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets. The king is not yet a worshiper of the Lord alone, but he has learned something true.

Daniel is made ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief of the governors over all the wise men. At his request, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are placed over the affairs of the province, while Daniel remains at the king's gate, near the center of power. Faithful prayer put four exiles into the places of greatest influence.

Let us pray. Father, You change the times and the seasons, You remove kings and set up kings. When I am tempted to fear the powers of this age, remind me of the stone that will fill the earth. Give me wisdom that comes from You and humility to give You the glory. In the name of Jesus, the Stone and the King. Amen.

Track 03: Chapter 3: The Fiery Furnace

Chapter 3 is one of the best-loved narratives in Scripture. It follows chapter 2 deliberately: a king who has seen a statue with a head of gold now builds a statue entirely of gold, as if to deny that his kingdom will pass. The test comes for three men who were promoted at Daniel's request. Daniel himself is not mentioned in the chapter; the story belongs to the faithful trio and to the fourth figure in the fire.

[SECTION] The Golden Image and the Decree

The reading is Daniel 3:1–7.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 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. 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 unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the*

cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, 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.

Nebuchadnezzar makes an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide (roughly ninety feet tall and nine feet wide, a tall, narrow shape like an obelisk), and sets it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He gathers the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, and all the officials of the provinces for the dedication.

A herald proclaims the command: when the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music is heard, all peoples, nations, and languages must fall down and worship the golden image, or be thrown that same hour into a burning fiery furnace. The repeated catalog of officials and instruments in this chapter gives the scene the sound of a state liturgy. It is forced unity under a single religion, a foreshadowing of the end-time pressure described in Revelation 13.

[SECTION] The Accusation

The reading is Daniel 3:8–12.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and brought accusation against the Jews. They answered and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, O king, live for ever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Certain Chaldeans come forward and accuse the Jews. Their words reveal both their jealousy and the courage of the three: the king had set these Jews

over the affairs of the province, yet they pay no heed to the king, they do not serve his gods, and they do not worship the golden image. The accusers repeat the king's own words and then name the three men.

It is worth noting what is not said. Nobody accuses them of crime, disloyalty, or rebellion in any other thing. Their only offense is that they will not worship what God forbids. Faithful believers have often been charged with trouble when the real problem was conscience.

[SECTION] "But If Not"

The reading is Daniel 3:13–18.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said unto them, Is it of purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that ye serve not my god, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye 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? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. 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 thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

Nebuchadnezzar summons the three in a rage and offers a second chance: if they will bow when the music sounds, all will be well; if not, the furnace. Then comes the challenge: who is the god who can deliver you out of my hands?

The reply is one of the great confessions of the Bible. They do not need to defend themselves in this matter. Their God whom they serve is able to deliver them from the burning fiery furnace and out of the king's hand. But even if He does not, they will not serve the king's gods or worship the golden image. Their faith does not depend on the rescue. They trust God's power without demanding His method.

Apply it. Faith says God is able. Mature faith adds, even if He does not, I will still obey.

[SECTION] The Furnace Heated Sevenfold

The reading is Daniel 3:19–23.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded certain mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their hosen, their tunics, and their mantles, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

The king's countenance changes. He orders the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commands the strongest men in his army to bind the three and throw them in. The men are bound in their coats, trousers, turbans, and other garments. The heat is so fierce that the soldiers who carry the three are killed by the flames, while the three fall bound into the fire.

The furnace was probably a brick kiln with an opening at the top and another at the side. The king's rage works against him: the greater the fire, the clearer the miracle will be.

[SECTION] The Fourth Man in the Fire

The reading is Daniel 3:24–27.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste: he spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace: he spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth out of the midst of the fire. And the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, that the fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed, neither were their hosen changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them.*

Nebuchadnezzar leaps up in astonishment and asks his counselors: did we not cast three men bound into the fire? They answer, true, O king. Then the king says, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.

Most Bible teachers see here a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God, or at minimum an angel sent by God, as the king himself later says in verse 28. The principle is certain whichever view is taken: the Lord does not always keep His people out of the fire, but He joins them in it. When the officials gather round, they see that the fire had no power over the bodies of the three, the hair of their heads was not singed, their garments were not changed, and not even the smell of fire had come upon them.

Apply it. When you walk through the fire, you do not walk alone. His presence is the promise that matters most.

[SECTION] A New Decree

The reading is Daniel 3:28–30.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other god that is able to deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.*

The king breaks into praise: blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and who yielded up their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. He issues a decree that anyone who speaks against their God shall be cut in pieces, and no other god can deliver in this way.

The three are promoted in the province of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar still has much to learn (the humbling of chapter 4 is ahead), but the witness of the three had done what no argument could. Their obedience preached louder than a sermon.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, You walked in the fire with Your servants. Give me courage to stand when the music plays and the crowd bows. I trust You to deliver, and even if You do not, I will serve only You. Be with me in every furnace until the day You bring me out. Amen.

Track 04: Chapter 4: The Tree and the Humbled King

Chapter 4 is unique in Scripture: it is a letter written by a pagan emperor, a public testimony from Nebuchadnezzar himself, beginning with praise and ending with praise. In between is the story of a proud man who was brought low until he learned the one lesson every ruler needs: heaven rules.

The chapter is the second great Gentile dream in the book and sets a pattern that will return in Belshazzar's feast: a man in power is warned, given time to repent, and then judged.

[SECTION] The King's Testimony

The reading is Daniel 4:1–3.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. It hath seemed good unto me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.*

Nebuchadnezzar addresses all peoples, nations, and languages and wishes them peace. He announces that it has seemed good to him to show the signs and wonders the Most High God has done for him. His opening praise is the book's summary in miniature: His signs are great, His wonders are mighty, His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.

The king is telling his story after the fact. That is why the letter begins with doxology: he already knows how it ends.

[SECTION] The King Dreams Again

The reading is Daniel 4:4–9.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid; and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. Then came in the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers; and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, 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, O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.*

The king was at ease in his house and flourishing in his palace when a dream made him afraid. Again he summoned the wise men of Babylon, who could not interpret it. Last of all came Daniel, called Belteshazzar after the name of the king's god, in whom the king recognized the spirit of the holy gods.

Nebuchadnezzar's description of Daniel is careful: he still thinks in polytheist terms, but he knows that this young man has access to something the court magicians do not. He tells the dream to Daniel with confidence that no secret is too difficult for him.

[SECTION] The Great Tree and the Watcher's Decree

The reading is Daniel 4:10–18.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Thus were the visions of my head upon my bed: I saw, and, behold, a tree in the midst of the earth; and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and*

was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was food for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the heavens dwelt in the branches thereof, and all flesh was fed from it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven. He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from its branches. 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 heaven: and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men. This dream I, king Nebuchadnezzar, have seen; and thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation; but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

In the dream a tree stands in the midst of the earth, great in height, strong, reaching to heaven and visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves are fair, its fruit abundant, and it feeds all; beasts shelter in its shade and birds nest in its branches. Then a watcher, a holy one, comes down from heaven and cries aloud to hew down the tree, cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. The stump and roots are to remain, bound with iron and bronze in the tender grass.

Then the figure changes from tree to man: let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given to him, and let seven times pass over him. The purpose is stated plainly: that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets

over it the lowest of men. Notice the word "times," here best understood as years.

Apply it. God does not delight in humbling people, but He is faithful to do it when pride is about to destroy them.

[SECTION] Daniel's Interpretation and Counsel

The reading is Daniel 4:19–27.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was stricken dumb for a while, and his thoughts troubled him. The king answered and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine adversaries. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was food for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the birds of the heavens had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew down the tree, and destroy it; nevertheless leave the stump of the roots thereof 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 heaven: and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; this is the interpretation, O king, and it is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and shalt be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee; till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee,*

after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if there may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

Daniel is appalled for a time, his thoughts troubling him, and he says with real compassion that he wishes the dream were for those who hate the king. The tree is the king himself: great and strong, his greatness reaching to heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth. The watcher's decree is the decree of the Most High: he will be driven from men, dwell with the beasts of the field, eat grass as oxen, and be wet with the dew of heaven for seven times, until he knows that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

The stump left in the ground is a promise: the kingdom will be assured to him after he has learned that heaven rules. Then Daniel does what a true prophet does: he gives counsel. Break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if there may be a lengthening of your tranquility. Even a pronounced judgment is given with an open door.

Apply it. A faithful word is not only a warning of judgment, but also a call to turn so that judgment may be delayed or avoided.

[SECTION] Pride and Sudden Fall

The reading is Daniel 4:28–33.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking in the royal palace of Babylon. The king spake and said, 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? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee:

and thou shalt be driven from men; and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen; and seven times shall pass over thee; until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

Twelve months pass. The king walks on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon and says, 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? Archaeologists have found Nebuchadnezzar's own inscriptions boasting of the same work. While the word is still in his mouth a voice falls from heaven announcing that the kingdom has departed from him.

What follows is exactly as foretold. He is driven from men, eats grass like oxen, his body is wet with the dew of heaven, his hair grows like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. Ancient and modern physicians recognize this condition as a form of mental illness in which a person believes he is an animal. The point is not the diagnosis but the author: God gave it, and God measured it.

[SECTION] The King Looks Up and Praises

The reading is Daniel 4:34–37.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time mine understanding returned unto me;

and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent greatness was added unto me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are truth, and his ways justice; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

At the end of the days, Nebuchadnezzar lifts his eyes to heaven and his understanding returns. The first thing a restored mind does is bless the Most High and praise and honor Him who lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, who does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say to Him, What doest thou?

His counselors seek him, he is established in his kingdom, and excellent majesty is added to him. The chapter ends with the king's own verdict: all His works are truth and His ways justice, and those who walk in pride He is able to abase. A man who lost his reason found his true mind when he looked up.

Apply it. Humility begins when we lift our eyes to heaven instead of looking at our own accomplishments.

Let us pray. Most High God, You live forever and Your dominion has no end. Keep me from the pride that says, I have built this. Teach me to give You every crown, to show mercy to the poor, and to look up before You must bring me down. Amen.

Track 05: Chapter 5: The Handwriting on the Wall

Chapter 5 jumps forward twenty-three years from chapter 4, to the night of October 12, 539 B.C. Babylon is under siege by the Medo-Persian army, yet the king gives a banquet as if nothing threatens him. The story is brief and terrible, and the phrase "handwriting on the wall" has entered every language.

Archaeology confirmed what critics once doubted: a king named Belshazzar did exist, as the son and co-regent of Nabonidus, who was away from the city. That explains why Belshazzar can offer Daniel only the third place in the kingdom (v. 16).

[SECTION] The Feast and the Sacred Vessels

The reading is Daniel 5:1–4.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels 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 therefrom. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.*

Belshazzar makes a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drinks wine in their presence. Under the influence of wine, he commands that the gold and silver vessels Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem be brought in so that the king, his lords, his wives, and his concubines may

drink from them.

It is a deliberate act of defiance. He knew the history of his predecessor's humbling and chose to profane what had been dedicated to the living God. While praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, he mocks the God who made them all.

[SECTION] The Fingers of a Man's Hand

The reading is Daniel 5:5–9.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts troubled him; and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spake and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were perplexed.*

In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand come forth and write on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, over against the lampstand, and the king sees the part of the hand that writes. His countenance changes, his thoughts trouble him, the joints of his loins are loosed, and his knees smite one against another.

The king cries aloud for the enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers, offering scarlet, a chain of gold, and the third place in the kingdom to anyone who can read the writing. They cannot. Once again the wisdom of

Babylon fails, and the king and his lords are greatly perplexed. Earlier mockery turns to terror in a single moment.

[SECTION] The Queen's Counsel and Daniel's Summons

The reading is Daniel 5:10–16.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed. There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of dark sentences, 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. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. The king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, who art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judah? I have heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in thee. And now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing. But I have heard of thee, that thou canst give interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

The queen (most likely the queen mother, who could remember the days of Nebuchadnezzar) enters the banquet hall and calms the king. She reminds him of a man in the kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, whom Nebuchadnezzar made master of the magicians, and who has light, understanding, and excellent wisdom. Daniel is brought in.

By now Daniel is an old man, probably over eighty, long set aside from the center of power. The king offers him honors, and Belshazzar admits that he has heard that Daniel can give interpretations and dissolve doubts.

[SECTION] Daniel's Rebuke

The reading is Daniel 5:17–24.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty: and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone,*

which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed.

Daniel does not flatter the king. Let your gifts be for yourself, he says, and give your rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and make known the interpretation. He first reminds Belshazzar what God did to his predecessor: the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar the kingdom, majesty, and glory, and when his heart was lifted up he was driven from men until he knew that the Most High rules.

Then comes the indictment: And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this. Belshazzar had lifted himself against the Lord of heaven, drunk wine from the temple vessels, praised gods that neither see nor hear nor know, and not glorified the God in whose hand his breath is and whose are all his ways. Therefore the part of the hand was sent from Him and the writing was inscribed. The word "son" here has the same sense as in other Semitic languages: descendant or successor.

Apply it. Knowing the truth and refusing it makes a person more responsible, not less. What we have been taught is the measure of what we owe.

[SECTION] MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

The reading is Daniel 5:25–28.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

The writing is four words in the original: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. Daniel interprets. Mene: God has numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end. Tekel: thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. Peres (the singular form of Upharsin): thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

The three words correspond to three weights or coins (the mina, the shekel, and the half-shekel), but Daniel reads them as verbs. God has counted the days, weighed the character, and divided the realm. Judgment by the unseen Judge is exact.

[SECTION] The Fall of Babylon

The reading is Daniel 5:29–31.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *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. In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.*

Belshazzar keeps his word and Daniel is clothed with scarlet, a chain of gold is put on his neck, and a proclamation makes him the third ruler in the kingdom. In that same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king is slain, and Darius the Mede receives the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Historically, Babylon fell to the forces of Cyrus, whose general Ugbaru (Gobryas) entered the city without a battle after diverting the Euphrates. The identity of "Darius the Mede" is debated: he may be Ugbaru, a Median governor appointed by Cyrus, or another name for Cyrus himself. What is certain is that the empire of gold gave way to the empire of silver exactly as chapter 2 said it would.

Let us pray. Lord God, You number our days and weigh our hearts. Let me not be found light in Your scales. Make me quick to humble myself before

You, and give me the courage to speak Your truth even to the powerful. Amen.

Track 06: Chapter 6: Daniel in the Lions' Den

Chapter 6 gives the best-known story of Daniel. Daniel is now in his eighties, and he has served three kings with integrity. His enemies cannot find anything against him except his devotion to his God, so they build a trap out of the law of the land.

The chapter is a mirror of chapter 3. There, three men refused to worship an image and were thrown into a furnace. Here, one man refuses to stop praying and is thrown into a den. In both, a pagan king ends by praising the living God.

[SECTION] An Excellent Spirit and a Conspiracy

The reading is Daniel 6:1–5.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps, who should be throughout the whole kingdom; and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one; that these satraps might give account unto them, and that the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find occasion against Daniel as touching the kingdom; but they could find no occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.*

Darius sets over the kingdom one hundred twenty satraps and three presidents, of whom Daniel is one. Daniel distinguishes himself because an excellent spirit is in him, and the king thinks to set him over the whole

realm. The other officials are jealous and look for a charge against Daniel regarding the kingdom, but they can find no occasion or fault, because he is faithful and no error or fault is found in him.

The opponents therefore admit that they will not find any charge against Daniel unless it concerns the law of his God. That is the finest testimony anyone could receive from an enemy.

[SECTION] The Flattering Law

The reading is Daniel 6:6–9.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then these presidents and satraps assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the deputies and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a strong interdict, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the interdict, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the interdict.*

The presidents and satraps assemble before the king and propose a decree: whoever asks a petition of any god or man for thirty days, except of the king, shall be cast into the den of lions. They ask the king to sign the writing so that, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, it cannot be altered.

Flattery is the bait. The proposal sounds like a loyalty test, but its purpose is to trap a single man. King Darius signs the document without perceiving the plot.

[SECTION] Daniel Prays as Before

The reading is Daniel 6:10–15.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's interdict: Hast thou not signed an interdict, that every man that shall make petition unto any god or man within thirty days, save unto thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, who is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the interdict that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to rescue him. Then these men assembled together unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no interdict nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

When Daniel knows that the writing is signed, he goes into his house, where in his upper chamber he has windows open toward Jerusalem. As he did previously, he kneels three times a day, prays, and gives thanks before his God. He does not change his habit, hide it, or argue about it. The windows open toward Jerusalem recall Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8 that when the exiles prayed toward the temple, God would hear.

The conspirators come in a body and find him praying and making supplication. They remind the king of the decree, then tell him Daniel pays no regard to the king. Darius is very displeased and works until sundown to deliver Daniel, but the men remind him that no decree of the king can be changed.

Apply it. Daniel did not start praying because trouble was coming. His habit was already in place, which is why it held when the pressure came.

[SECTION] The Den and the Deliverance

The reading is Daniel 6:16–23.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep fled from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice; the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 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 manner of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God.*

The king commands Daniel to be brought and cast into the den. Darius says, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. A stone is laid on the mouth of the den, and the king seals it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed. The king returns to his palace, fasts, refuses entertainment, and cannot sleep.

At the first light of day he hurries to the den and cries with a lamentable voice: Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Daniel answers, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, and

they have not hurt me, because innocency was found in me before Him; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. The king is exceeding glad, and Daniel is taken out of the den and no manner of hurt is found upon him because he trusted in his God.

[SECTION] The Accusers Meet the Lions

The reading is Daniel 6:24.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And the king commanded, and they brought those men that had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, before they came to the bottom of the den.*

The men who accused Daniel are brought and cast into the den of lions, along with their children and their wives, and the lions overpower them before they reach the bottom of the den. The brutality reflects the Persian practice of the time, not a standard for God's people, and the Bible reports it without approving it. The point is that the trap they set for Daniel closed on them, as Proverbs and the Psalms say it will.

[SECTION] Darius's Decree and Daniel's Prosperity

The reading is Daniel 6:25–28.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then king Darius wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. 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 stedfast for ever, And his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed; and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Darius writes to all peoples, nations, and languages: In every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God and steadfast forever, His kingdom shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivers and rescues and works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

So Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. His story continues across empires because the One he serves outlasts them all.

Apply it. When you cannot change the decree, you can still change what you do with your windows. Keep praying, keep your faith visible, and trust the God who shuts the mouths of lions.

Let us pray. Living God, steadfast forever, make me a person of daily prayer so that when the pressure comes I am already kneeling. Shut the mouths that would destroy Your servants, deliver me in Your way and time, and let my life tell the world that You are the living God. Amen.

Track 07: Chapter 7: Four Beasts and the Son of Man

Chapter 7 is the hinge of the book. Everything before it is written about Daniel; everything after it is revealed to Daniel. The vision belongs to the first year of Belshazzar (about 553 B.C.), and it returns to the four world kingdoms of chapter 2 but shows them from heaven's point of view. Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue of glittering metals; Daniel sees a sea churning with predators. Human empires look splendid to men and savage to God.

The chapter is still in Aramaic, the language of the Gentile nations, and it is the high point of the Aramaic section. It also introduces the Son of Man, the title Jesus used for Himself more than any other.

[SECTION] The Four Beasts and the Little Horn

The reading is Daniel 7:1–8.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of heaven brake forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon two feet as a man; and a man's heart was given to it. And, behold, another beast, a second, like to a bear; and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and, lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon its back four wings of a bird; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night-visions, and,*

behold, a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, 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.

Daniel dreams and writes down the sum of the matter. In the night vision the four winds of heaven strive upon the great sea, and four great beasts come up from it, diverse one from another. The first is like a lion with eagle's wings; its wings are plucked, it is lifted from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart is given to it. This is Babylon (compare Jeremiah 4:7 and the winged lions of Babylonian art), and the man's heart recalls Nebuchadnezzar's restoration in chapter 4.

The second beast is like a bear, raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth, told to arise and devour much flesh. This is Medo-Persia, with its dominant Persian side and its three conquests (Lydia, Babylon, Egypt). The third is like a leopard with four wings of a bird and four heads, and dominion is given to it. This is Greece, swift under Alexander and divided afterward among four generals.

The fourth beast is dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong, with great iron teeth; it devours, breaks in pieces, and tramples the residue with its feet. It is different from all the beasts before it and has ten horns. Daniel considers the horns and sees another little horn come up among them, before which three of the first horns are plucked up by the roots. This little horn has eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things.

[SECTION] The Ancient of Days Sits in Judgment

The reading is Daniel 7:9–12.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

The scene changes from earth to heaven. Thrones are placed and an Ancient of Days takes His seat. His raiment is white as snow, the hair of His head like pure wool, His throne is flames of fire and its wheels burning fire. A fiery stream issues from before Him; thousands upon thousands minister to Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him. The judgment is set and the books are opened.

The little horn keeps speaking great words until the beast is slain and its body given to the burning flame. The other beasts lose their dominion, though their lives are prolonged for a season and a time. Here is the great reversal: the proud rulers of earth are sentenced in a courtroom where the Judge never loses a case.

[SECTION] One Like a Son of Man

The reading is Daniel 7:13–14.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And 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.

Daniel sees one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He comes to the Ancient of Days and is brought near before Him. To Him is given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

This is the Lord Jesus Christ. When the high priest asked Jesus whether He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, Jesus answered that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven, and the high priest tore his robe (Mark 14:61-64). The priest understood perfectly that Jesus was claiming the Daniel 7 throne.

Apply it. The final authority belongs to a Man, and that Man is our Savior. The kingdoms of this world are all under His coming reign.

[SECTION] The Heavenly Interpretation

The reading is Daniel 7:15–18.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *As for me, Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, that shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.*

Daniel's spirit is grieved within him and the visions of his head trouble him. He approaches one of those who stand by and asks the truth of all this. The attendant gives the interpretation: these great beasts, which are four, are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.

The interpretation is brief and sufficient. Beasts come and go, but the kingdom ends in the hands of those who belong to the Most High.

[SECTION] The Little Horn Makes War on the Saints

The reading is Daniel 7:19–22.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was diverse from all of them, exceeding terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than its fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 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.*

Daniel wants to know more about the fourth beast and about the little horn. He sees that the horn makes war with the saints and prevails against them until the Ancient of Days comes, judgment is given to the saints of the Most High, and the time comes that the saints possess the kingdom.

The saints here are the holy ones of the Most High: God's people who suffer under this ruler and then receive the kingdom. Revelation 13 draws on this very passage in its picture of the beast who is given authority to make war on the saints.

[SECTION] The Fourth Kingdom and the Ten Horns

The reading is Daniel 7:23–25.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth,*

and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out 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.

The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom upon the earth, diverse from all the kingdoms, devouring the whole earth, treading it down and breaking it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise out of this kingdom, and another shall arise after them; he shall be diverse from the former and shall put down three kings.

He shall speak words against the Most High, wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change the times and the law. The saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. This period of three and a half years appears again in Daniel 9:27, 12:7, 12:11-12, and in Revelation 11-13. The little horn is the final Antichrist, a man who rises out of a revived form of the fourth kingdom, persecutes God's people, and dares to tamper with the times that God has set.

Apply it. Evil in this age may look unstoppable, but it carries a limit written on its calendar: a time, times, and half a time.

[SECTION] The Judgment and the Everlasting Kingdom

The reading is Daniel 7:26–28.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

But the judgment shall be set, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And 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. Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

The judgment shall sit and they shall take away the little horn's dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. The kingdom, 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.

Daniel, a man of great intelligence, is overwhelmed. His thoughts trouble him and his countenance changes, but he keeps the matter in his heart. A faithful student ponders what he cannot yet fully understand.

Let us pray. King Jesus, Son of Man, all dominion and glory are Yours. Help me to live as a citizen of Your everlasting kingdom while I walk among the beasts of this age. Keep my heart steady in tribulation, and let me look for the day when You come with the clouds. Amen.

Track 08: Chapter 8: The Ram and the Goat

From chapter 8 the book returns to Hebrew, because the vision concerns Israel and the land. It was given in the third year of Belshazzar (about 551 B.C.), and Daniel sees himself in Susa, the capital of the empire that will soon replace Babylon. The vision moves quickly through the Persian and Greek empires and then lingers over a vicious ruler who arises from one of the four Greek divisions.

Students recognize a double fulfillment here. The little horn of chapter 8 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple in 167 B.C., but he is also a type of the final Antichrist, and the angel says the vision concerns the time of the end (v. 17).

[SECTION] The Ram with Two Horns

The reading is Daniel 8:1–4.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me, Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in the vision; now it was so, that when I saw, I was in Shushan the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the river Ulai. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; and no beasts could stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and magnified himself.*

Daniel sees himself in Shushan the palace in the province of Elam, beside the river Ulai. He sees a ram with two horns standing before the river; the

two horns are high, but one is higher than the other, and the higher came up last. The ram pushes westward, northward, and southward, and no beast can stand before him. He does according to his will and becomes great.

The two horns are the Medes and the Persians, and the higher horn that came up last is the Persian side, which became dominant under Cyrus.

[SECTION] The Goat with the Notable Horn

The reading is Daniel 8:5–8.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And as I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west over the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had the two horns, which I saw standing before the river, and ran upon him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with anger against him, and smote the ram, and brake 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 upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. And the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven.*

A he-goat comes from the west across the face of the whole earth and touches not the ground; the goat has a notable horn between his eyes. He runs at the ram in the fury of his power, smites him, breaks his two horns, casts him to the ground, and tramples on him. None can deliver the ram out of his hand.

The goat waxes great exceedingly, and when he is strong the great horn is broken and in its place come up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven. This is the swift conquest of Alexander the Great and the division of his empire among four generals (Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy) after his death in 323 B.C.

[SECTION] The Little Horn and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary

The reading is Daniel 8:9–14.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. Yea, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the host; and it took away from him the continual burnt-offering, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt-offering through transgression; and it cast down truth to the ground, and it did its pleasure and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said unto that certain one who spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt-offering, and the transgression that maketh desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.*

Out of one of the four comes forth a little horn which waxes exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. It reaches the host of heaven, throws some of the host and the stars to the ground, and magnifies itself even to the prince of the host. The continual burnt offering is taken away from Him and the place of His sanctuary is cast down. A host is given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression, and it casts down truth to the ground and does its pleasure and prospers.

A holy one asks another how long the vision will last, concerning the continual burnt offering and the transgression that makes desolate. The answer is: unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. Interpreters differ on whether this

means 2,300 days or 1,150 days (counting the morning and evening sacrifices separately). Either way, Antiochus's persecution of the temple from about 171 to 164 B.C. fits closely, and the rededication under Judas Maccabeus is remembered at Hanukkah.

[SECTION] Gabriel Explains the Vision

The reading is Daniel 8:15–19.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And it came to pass, 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. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was affrighted, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man; for the vision belongeth to the time of the end. 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. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it belongeth to the appointed time of the end.*

Daniel sought the meaning and, behold, there stood before him as the appearance of a man. A man's voice between the banks of the Ulai calls, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. Gabriel comes near, and Daniel is afraid and falls on his face. Gabriel says: Understand, O son of man; for the vision belongeth to the time of the end. Daniel falls into a deep sleep, and Gabriel touches him and sets him upright.

This is the first time an angel is named in the Bible, and Gabriel appears again in Daniel 9 and in the first chapter of Luke. The angel makes known what shall be in the latter time of the indignation, for it belongeth to the appointed time of the end.

[SECTION] The Interpretation: Persia, Greece, and a King of Fierce Countenance

The reading is Daniel 8:20–26.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *The ram which thou sawest, that had the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough he-goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. And as for that which was broken, in the place whereof four stood up, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and do his pleasure; and he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people. And through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and in their security shall he destroy many: he shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. And the vision of the evenings and mornings which hath been told is true: but shut thou up the vision; for it belongeth to many days to come.*

The ram which has the two horns is the kings of Media and Persia. The rough he-goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that came up in its place are four kingdoms that shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power.

In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power. He shall destroy wonderfully, prosper and do his pleasure, destroy the mighty ones and the holy people. Through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand, magnify himself in his heart, and in time of security destroy many. He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes, but he shall be broken

without hand.

The phrase “broken without hand” echoes the stone cut without hands in chapter 2. The ruler’s downfall will not come by human power. The vision of the evenings and mornings is true; Daniel is told to shut up the vision, for it belongs to many days to come.

Apply it. Pagan power may rage against the people of God, but it is always working on borrowed strength.

[SECTION] Daniel Is Sick but Goes On

The reading is Daniel 8:27.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick certain days; then I rose up, and did the king’s business: and I wondered at the vision, but none understood it.*

Daniel fainted and was sick certain days; afterward he rose up and did the king’s business. He was astonished at the vision, but none understood it. The prophet’s faithfulness in ordinary work after an overwhelming revelation is a model for every believer: after the mountain, return to the king’s business.

Let us pray. Sovereign God, You know the end from the beginning and You have numbered the days of every proud ruler. Give me the quiet strength to carry on with my daily work while I wait for the fulfillment of Your promises. Amen.

Track 09: Chapter 9: Daniel's Prayer and the Seventy Weeks

Chapter 9 is the most important prophetic chapter in the Old Testament and one of the most beautiful prayers in all of Scripture. It belongs to the first year of Darius the Mede (539 B.C.), when Daniel was an old man. Having read the prophet Jeremiah, he realizes that the seventy years of exile are almost fulfilled, and he turns not to charts but to his knees.

The chapter has two parts: Daniel's prayer (vv. 1-19) and Gabriel's answer (vv. 20-27). The answer reaches far beyond Daniel's immediate question and lays out a timetable for Israel and Jerusalem that reaches to the coming of the Messiah and to the end of the age.

[SECTION] Understanding by the Books

The reading is Daniel 9:1–3.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *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, in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*

In the first year of Darius, Daniel perceived by the books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem: seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10). Daniel does not conclude that because God has promised, he need not pray. He sets his face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

True understanding of prophecy leads to prayer. God's promises are not a substitute for prayer; they are the ground on which prayer stands.

Apply it. Let what you read in Scripture lead you to your knees. The more clearly you see what God has said, the more boldly you can ask Him to do it.

[SECTION] Confession Begins with the Character of God

The reading is Daniel 9:4–6.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And I prayed unto Jehovah my God, and made confession, and said, Oh, Lord, the great and dreadful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from thy precepts and from thine ordinances; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, that spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

Daniel prays to the Lord his God and makes confession. He begins with who God is: the great and dreadful God, who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments. Then he says "we": we have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from Thy precepts and from Thine ordinances. Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets.

Daniel, who himself had been faithful for over sixty years, identifies himself with the sins of his people. The great intercessors of the Bible (Moses, Nehemiah, Ezra, Daniel) all pray this way.

[SECTION] Righteousness Belongs to the Lord, Confusion to Us

The reading is Daniel 9:7–14.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; for we have rebelled against him; neither have we obeyed the voice of Jehovah our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even turning aside, that they should not obey thy voice: therefore hath the curse been poured out upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God; for we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil; for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet have we not entreated the favor of Jehovah our God, that we should turn from our iniquities, and have discernment in thy truth. Therefore hath Jehovah watched over the evil, and brought it upon us; for Jehovah our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth, and we have not obeyed his voice.*

Daniel contrasts God and the people: righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day. Compassions and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, though we have rebelled against Him. All Israel has transgressed His law and turned aside; therefore the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses has been poured out upon them.

The exile is not a mystery or an accident. God had warned and was faithful to His word. Yet all this evil has come upon us and we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, that we should turn from our iniquities.

Therefore the Lord has watched over the evil and brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth.

[SECTION] "For Thine Own Sake, O My God"

The reading is Daniel 9:15–19.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, let thine anger and thy wrath, I pray thee, be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are round about us. Now therefore, O our God, hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies' sake. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.*

The prayer turns from confession to petition. Daniel reminds the Lord that He brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and made Himself a name. He asks that Thine anger and Thy wrath be turned away from Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain. He bases his request not on Israel's righteousness but on God's great mercies: Hear, O Lord; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.

Notice how short and direct the final verses are. After the long confession the petitions come in rapid succession: hear, forgive, hearken, do, defer not. The person who knows God's character asks with boldness.

[SECTION] Gabriel Arrives at the Time of the Evening Offering

The reading is Daniel 9:20–23.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Jehovah my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he instructed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to tell thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.*

While Daniel is speaking, praying, confessing his sin and the sin of his people, and presenting his supplication, the man Gabriel, whom he had seen in the vision at the first, being caused to fly swiftly, touches him about the time of the evening oblation. Gabriel says that he has come forth to give Daniel wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to tell thee; for thou art greatly beloved.

The answer began when the prayer began. Daniel's request was about seventy years of exile; God's answer is about seventy sevens of history. The Lord often gives more than we ask.

[SECTION] Seventy Weeks Are Decreed

The reading is Daniel 9:24.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, 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.

Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. The Hebrew word for weeks means "sevens," and the context shows that each seven is a period of seven years, so seventy sevens equals 490 years.

Six goals are named, and together they describe the full work of redemption: to deal with transgression, sin, and iniquity, and to establish everlasting righteousness, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the anointing of the most holy place. Some of these were accomplished at the cross, and others await the return of Christ.

[SECTION] Sixty-Nine Weeks to Messiah the Prince

The reading is Daniel 9:25.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times.

Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. Sixty-nine sevens equals 483 years.

The starting point is the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Most conservative interpreters identify this with the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:1-8). On the prophetic calendar of 360-day years, Sir Robert Anderson calculated that the period ends at Christ's triumphal

entry into Jerusalem. Other scholars start with different decrees (for instance that of Cyrus in 538 B.C. or of Artaxerxes in 458 B.C.) and arrive at the same general conclusion, that the Messiah was to appear in the first century. In every case the prophecy points to a particular time when the Anointed One would come.

[SECTION] The Messiah Cut Off and the Prince Who Is to Come

The reading is Daniel 9:26–27.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. And 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 oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.*

After threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. These words were fulfilled when Christ was crucified and when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. The prince that shall come is a ruler who arises from the people who destroyed the city, which points to the Roman Empire and to the revived form of that empire in the last days.

And 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 oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate. Futurist interpreters understand that there is a gap

between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, during which the church age runs, and that the seventieth week is a seven-year period of tribulation beginning when the coming prince signs a covenant with Israel. In the middle of that week he breaks the covenant and sets up the abomination that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24:15. Other interpreters (historicists and some amillennialists) apply the seventieth week to the ministry of Christ and the early church. Both agree that the passage presents Jesus as the Messiah who was cut off for the sins of His people.

Apply it. The God who numbered the weeks of Israel's history numbers the days of your life. He is faithful to every word, and His timing is never late.

Let us pray. Lord God, great and dreadful, keeper of covenant and mercy, I confess the sins of my own life and the sins of my people. Hear, forgive, hearken, and do, for Your own sake. Teach me to pray the promises of Scripture and to trust Your timetable for all that You have decreed. Amen.

Track 10: Chapter 10: The Unseen War

Chapters 10 through 12 form a single final vision, given in the third year of Cyrus (about 536 B.C.), when the first exiles had already returned to Jerusalem and Daniel, in his nineties, remained in Persia. Chapter 10 is the prologue: it describes the preparation of the prophet, the appearance of a glorious Person, and a glimpse into the spiritual conflict that stands behind the political history of chapter 11.

The chapter teaches that prayer is heard from the first day, that God's answers sometimes meet resistance in the unseen realm, and that the believer's weapon is persevering prayer.

[SECTION] Three Weeks of Mourning

The reading is Daniel 10:1–3.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, even a great warfare: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three whole weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.*

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the word was true, even a great warfare: and he understood the word, and had understanding of the vision. In those days Daniel was mourning three whole weeks. He ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into his mouth, neither did he anoint himself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

The occasion for his grief is probably the discouraging news from Jerusalem, where the returned exiles were struggling to rebuild amid opposition (Ezra 4). Daniel does not complain; he intercedes with fasting.

[SECTION] The Man Clothed in Linen

The reading is Daniel 10:4–9.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel, I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like unto burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words; and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground.*

On the four and twentieth day of the first month, as Daniel was by the side of the great river, the Tigris, he lifted up his eyes and saw a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz. His body was like beryl, his face as the appearance of lightning, his eyes as flaming torches, his arms and feet like burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

Daniel alone saw the vision. The men with him did not see it, but a great quaking fell upon them and they fled to hide themselves. Daniel was left alone, saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in him; his comeliness was turned in him into corruption, and he retained no strength. Many students identify this Person as the Lord Jesus Christ before His

incarnation, since John's description of the glorified Christ in Revelation 1:13-16 is closely similar; others see a high-ranking angel. In either case the vision is a revelation of holy majesty that no man can bear without help.

Apply it. The more clearly you see God's glory, the more clearly you see your own weakness, and the more eagerly you receive His strength.

[SECTION] Heard from the First Day, Delayed for Twenty-One

The reading is Daniel 10:10–14.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, thou man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy words' sake. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days; for the vision is yet for many days.*

A hand touches Daniel and sets him trembling upon his knees and the palms of his hands. The messenger tells him to stand upright, for he is sent to him. Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy words' sake.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Behind the human kingdom of Persia stands a

powerful spiritual being in opposition to God's purposes. The delay did not mean that God was inactive or unwilling; it meant that a real conflict was underway. The angel has come to make Daniel understand what shall befall his people in the latter days: for the vision is yet for many days.

Apply it. When the answer to your prayer is delayed, do not conclude that heaven did not hear. The answer was dispatched on the first day.

[SECTION] Strengthened Again and Again

The reading is Daniel 10:15–19.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And when he had spoken unto me according to these words, I set my face toward the ground, and was dumb. And, behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by reason of the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I retain no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither was there breath left in me. Then there touched me again one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. And he said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he spake unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.*

Daniel sets his face toward the ground and becomes dumb. One in the likeness of the sons of men touches his lips, and he opens his mouth to speak. He says, My lord, by reason of the vision my pangs are upon me, and I retain no strength. How can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither was there breath left in me.

Then he touches me again and strengthens me. He says, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. When he spoke unto me, I was strengthened. Three times Daniel is touched and

strengthened, and each time the sequence is the same: weakness, touch, strength. God does not demand that His servants stand in their own power.

[SECTION] The Conflict Continues

The reading is Daniel 10:20–21.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I am come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I go forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come. But I will tell thee that which is inscribed in the writing of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me against these, but Michael your prince.*

The messenger asks, Knowest thou wherefore I am come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I go forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come. But I will tell thee that which is inscribed in the writing of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me against these but Michael your prince.

The curtain is drawn back for a moment: wars on earth are linked with wars in the heavenly realm. Paul teaches the same truth in Ephesians 6:12. Michael is described as "your prince," Israel's guardian angel, and Daniel 12:1 will say that he stands up for the children of Daniel's people.

Let us pray. Lord, You hear the first word of every sincere prayer. Strengthen me when I am weak, and teach me to pray with persistence when the answer seems delayed. Give me confidence that the battle is Yours and that Your angels contend on behalf of Your people. Amen.

Track 11: Chapter 11: Kings of the North and the South

Chapter 11 is the most detailed prophecy in the Bible. In forty-five verses it describes the history of the Persian, Greek, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid empires with such precision that skeptics have long argued it must have been written after the events. Conservative scholars accept the book's claim that Daniel wrote it in the sixth century B.C. and that the accuracy shows divine foreknowledge. The chapter starts with ancient history, moves to the tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and then, in verse 36, shifts to a final king who fits no earlier ruler.

The "king of the south" is the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt and the "king of the north" is the Seleucid dynasty of Syria. Israel lies between them and is trampled by both. The angel's message to Daniel is that the land and people he loves will be caught in these conflicts, but God knows the whole outcome.

[SECTION] Persia and the Mighty King of Greece

The reading is Daniel 11:1–4.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and when he is waxed strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion wherewith he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others*

besides these.

The angel recalls that in the first year of Darius the Mede he stood to confirm and strengthen him. Now he reveals: Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and when he is waxed strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. The fourth king is generally identified as Xerxes I (the Ahasuerus of Esther), who assembled a huge army against Greece in 480 B.C.

Then a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled. This is Alexander the Great, who died at thirty-two, and whose empire was divided among four generals rather than passing to his heirs.

[SECTION] The First Conflicts Between South and North

The reading is Daniel 11:5–9.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. And at the end of years they shall join themselves together; 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 they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in those times. But out of a shoot from her roots shall one stand up in his place, who shall come unto the army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail. And also their gods, with their molten images, and with their goodly vessels of silver and of gold, shall he carry captive into Egypt; and he shall refrain some years from the

king of the north. And he shall come into the realm of the king of the south, but he shall return into his own land.

The king of the south shall be strong (Ptolemy I Soter), but one of his princes shall be strong above him and have dominion (Seleucus I Nicator). At the end of years they shall join themselves together; and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement (Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II, married Antiochus II about 250 B.C.). But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, neither shall he stand, nor his arm; she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in those times.

A branch from her roots shall stand up in his place (her brother Ptolemy III Euergetes), who shall come to the army and enter into the stronghold of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail. He shall carry captive into Egypt their gods, with their molten images and their goodly vessels of silver and of gold. Each detail matches the record of the third century B.C.

[SECTION] Antiochus the Great and the Rise of Rome

The reading is Daniel 11:10–19.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

And 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. And 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. And 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. And 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. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the

children of the violent among thy people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision; but they shall fall. 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. But he that cometh 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. And he shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and with him equitable conditions; and he shall perform them: and he shall give him the daughter of women, to corrupt her; but she shall not stand, neither be for him. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; yea, moreover, he shall cause his reproach to turn upon him. Then he shall turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.

The sons of the king of the north (Seleucus III and Antiochus III the Great) assemble a great multitude. Antiochus III pushes south and is defeated by Ptolemy IV at Raphia in 217 B.C. but returns some years later with a larger army and defeats Egypt at Panium in 200 B.C., gaining control of the glorious land, which was in his hand to be destroyed (v. 16).

He then turns his face unto the isles and takes many, but a prince (the Roman general Scipio) shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; yea, moreover, he shall cause his reproach to turn upon him (Magnesia, 190 B.C.). Then he shall turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found, a reference to Antiochus's death while plundering a temple in Elam in 187 B.C. In these verses we see that Rome is already waiting in the wings.

[SECTION] The Contemptible Person

The reading is Daniel 11:20–28.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

Then shall stand up in his place one that shall cause an exactor to pass through the glory of the kingdom; but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. And in his place shall stand up a contemptible person, to whom they had not given the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in time of security, and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And the overwhelming forces shall be overwhelmed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and shall become strong, with a small people. In time of security shall he come even upon the fattest places of the province; 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: yea, he shall devise his devices against the strongholds, even for a time. And 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; for they shall devise devices against him. Yea, they that eat of his dainties shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain. And 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. Then shall he return into his land with great substance; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do his pleasure, and return to his own land.

Seleucus IV Philopator sends a tax collector through the glorious kingdom and is destroyed within a few days, neither in anger nor in battle (v. 20). In his place stands up a contemptible person, to whom they had not given the honor of the kingdom; he comes in without warning and obtains the kingdom by flatteries. This is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), who seized the throne from the rightful heir.

Even the prince of the covenant is broken (a reference to the murder of the high priest Onias III). He works deceitfully, and becomes strong with a small people. His first campaign against Egypt succeeds, but the two kings

speak lies at one table and their schemes do not prosper, for the end is yet for the time appointed. On his return he sets his heart against the holy covenant and does his pleasure.

[SECTION] Ships from Kittim and the Abomination

The reading is Daniel 11:29–35.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *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. For ships of Kittim shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and shall return, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and shall do his pleasure: he shall even return, and have regard unto them that forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall stand on his part, 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 maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries; but the people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that 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. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help; but many shall join themselves unto them with flatteries. And some of them that are wise shall fall, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed.*

At the time appointed he returns toward the south, but it shall not be as the former or as the latter. For ships of Kittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and shall return, and have indignation against the holy covenant. In 168 B.C. the Roman envoy Popilius Laenas drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and demanded his answer before he stepped out of it. Antiochus withdrew from Egypt in humiliation and turned his rage against Jerusalem.

His forces profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and take away the continual burnt offering; and they set up the abomination that maketh desolate (the altar to Zeus in the temple in December 167 B.C.). Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries: but the people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. They that 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. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help (the Maccabean revolt); but many shall join themselves unto them with flatteries. Some of the wise shall fall, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for the time appointed.

Apply it. God uses seasons of persecution to refine and purify His people, and the faithful instruct many even when they pay a price.

[SECTION] The Willful King

The reading is Daniel 11:36–39.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And 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; and he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. 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. But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things. And he shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whosoever acknowledgeth him he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price.*

From verse 36 the language no longer fits Antiochus. 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; and he

shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. Antiochus never claimed to be above all gods, and he did not live until the "time of the end" as defined in chapter 12. For this reason most conservative interpreters see a shift here to the final Antichrist, the little horn of chapter 7 and the prince of chapter 9.

He shall regard neither the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers knew not; he shall honor with gold, silver, precious stones, and pleasant things. Paul describes the same figure in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 as the man of sin who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God.

[SECTION] The Last Campaign and the End of the Willful King

The reading is Daniel 11:40–45.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And 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, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through. He shall enter also 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 of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 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. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to sweep away many. And 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.*

At the time of the end the king of the south pushes at him, and the king of the north comes against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and many ships; he enters into the countries, overflows, and passes through. He enters also into the glorious land, and many countries are overthrown; but these shall escape out of his hand: Edom, Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He stretches forth his hand also upon the countries, and the land of Egypt does not escape. He has power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Ethiopians follow at his steps.

But tidings out of the east and out of the north trouble him, and he goes forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to sweep away many. He plants the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he comes to his end, and none helps him. The final ruler comes to his end on the very ground he coveted, and no one stands beside him. Compare Revelation 19:19-20, where the beast is captured and cast into the lake of fire.

Let us pray. Lord of history, You wrote the story of kings and empires before they lived. When the nations rage and the powerful exalt themselves, let me rest in the knowledge that You determine what is determined. Give me wisdom to instruct many and strength to do exploits for You. Amen.

Track 12: Chapter 12: The End of the Days

The last chapter completes the vision begun in chapter 10. It looks past the last king and last war to the resurrection of the dead and the reward of the faithful. It also contains the command to seal the book until the time of the end, and the final word given to Daniel himself.

There is no better ending to a book that began with exile and captivity than the closing promise: thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot, at the end of the days.

[SECTION] Deliverance and Resurrection

The reading is Daniel 12:1–3.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*

At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. This is the Great Tribulation that Jesus describes in Matthew 24:21. And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. This is the

clearest Old Testament statement of the resurrection of the dead, both of the righteous and the wicked. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Those who lead others to Christ will share in His glory.

Apply it. Soul-winning has an eternal return. Every person you lead to righteousness is a star that will not dim.

[SECTION] Shut Up the Words and Seal the Book

The reading is Daniel 12:4.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. The prophecy was sealed for the people of Daniel's day, and its full meaning would become clear as the end approaches. Many students see in the increase of travel and knowledge a sign of the nearness of the end, though believers should be careful not to set dates.

By contrast, the book of Revelation is told not to seal the words of the prophecy (Revelation 22:10), because the time is at hand.

[SECTION] How Long?

The reading is Daniel 12:5–7.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *Then I, Daniel, looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And 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 unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. One asks the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? The man clothed in linen lifts both his hands unto heaven, and swears by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

The oath of the glorious Person confirms that the time of suffering is limited. It lasts for three and a half years, and God has numbered each day.

[SECTION] Go Thy Way, Daniel

The reading is Daniel 12:8–10.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand.

Daniel heard but understood not, and asked, O my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? He said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand.

Even Daniel did not understand everything that he wrote, and God did not rebuke him for it. Faith can obey without full understanding. The same events that purify the righteous harden the wicked.

[SECTION] The Days, the Blessing, and the Promise

The reading is Daniel 12:11–13.

[SLOW — READ THE SCRIPTURE]

> *And from the time that the continual burnt-offering shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days.*

And from the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. The 1,290 days are thirty days beyond the 1,260 days (three and a half years) of the tribulation, and the 1,335 days are forty-five days beyond that. Interpreters differ about the purpose of the additional days, which may allow for the judgment of the nations, the cleansing of the temple, and the establishment of the kingdom.

The book closes with a personal word: But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days. After more than seventy years of faithful service in a foreign land, Daniel is promised rest and a share in the resurrection. The prophet who watched empires rise and fall will himself rise and stand.

Apply it. You do not need to know every date to be faithful. Go your way, serve your King, and trust that you will stand in your lot at the end of the days.

Let us pray. Eternal God, You change the times and the seasons, and You hold the end of all things in Your hand. Keep me faithful to the end like Your servant Daniel. Let me turn many to righteousness, and at the last, let me rest and stand in the lot You have prepared for me. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Track 13: Closing

This concludes our study of the book of Daniel. The prophet was told to go his way until the end, for he would rest and stand in his lot at the end of the days. May the God who changes the times and the seasons keep you faithful to the end. Thank you for listening.

He Changes Times And Seasons, by Rev. George H. Stoddard. In His Hands Ministries International.