

GOD WITH US
Part 7: Kings & Prophets to Exile and Return
Judah's Fall and God's Faithfulness

Message 8 – Daniel: His life and prophecies

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon captured Jerusalem in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim king of Judah (2Kings 24:1-4; Dan.1:1), at which time many Jews were taken into captivity, including the young man Daniel. What makes the life, ministry and message of Daniel unique is that he lived and spoke entirely from within the context of captivity in Babylon. We see a devout young Jewish man navigating how to live out his faith and convictions in a climate entirely hostile and opposed to his beliefs, morals and convictions. Further, when Daniel saw visions of the future and made prophecies, he spoke not just to the future of Israel, but to the wider future of nations and kingdoms that would rise and fall throughout human history (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, etc.) all the way to the day when *God will set up His kingdom on earth*. In fact, the central section of Daniel (2:4 – 7:28) was written in Aramaic, the language of the Babylonian empire. Thus, Daniel gives us the broadest picture of human history of any O.T. prophet. His prophecies have been called “the key to understanding biblical prophecy.” In particular, there are many parallels between Daniel’s visions of the future and those found in the book of Revelation, the final book in the Bible.

The first 6 chapters of the book of Daniel focus more on the life and faith of Daniel and his 3 friends in a culture opposed to their beliefs. We see the sovereign hand of God in allowing certain events that tested the faith and convictions of these men, and we see the responsible choices of human beings, as they responded in faith, prayer and courage to the tests that God allowed.

Daniel’s Training in Babylon: Ch.1

After taking many Jews captive, Nebuchadnezzar took the most promising Jewish youths, including Daniel and 3 of his friends who were all of noble decent, and began to ‘convert them’ to the culture and practices of Babylon. Along with his 3 friends, Daniel found himself in a 3-year curriculum of study in the culture, language and literature of Babylon. They were given names that reflected the Babylonian deities, and food from the king’s table. Daniel, however, would not eat the king’s food, possibly because it had been used in

worship rituals to pagan deities, or because it went against the dietary laws of Judaism of that time period.

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way” (1:9).

The chief official feared for his own life if Daniel did not eat the assigned food and the king saw his appearance declining.

“Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would have my head because of you” (1:10).

Daniel boldly but respectfully proposed a “test” for 10 days. He and his 3 friends would restrict their diet to vegetables and water. Then, their appearance would be compared to the other youths. God blessed Daniel and his friends so that at the end of the 10-day test their appearance was *better* than the rest of the group. And at the end of 3-year training period, king Nebuchadnezzar found Daniel and his friends to be ‘at the top of their class’ of students.

“The king . . . found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah . . . he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom” (1:19,20).

We see a theme here that will appear repeatedly in the book of Daniel: Staying TRUE to one’s CONVICTIONS and letting GOD dictate the OUTCOME. One reason we often compromise our convictions is because we are afraid of the possible outcomes – rejection, mockery, hostility, suffering, isolation, etc. Compromise is the attempt to control the outcomes to suit our own desires. Daniel and his friends consistently remained true to their convictions (in spite of great pressure to compromise) regardless of what outcome God might allow to come to them (and they firmly believed that God, not man, was in control of the outcome). Is there some area in your life right now where you are compromising your convictions because you are afraid of the possible outcome of staying true to your convictions?

Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream: Ch.2

Daniel’s status in Babylon rose even higher after he successfully told what King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was about, and then interpreted it when no other wise man could. Daniel praised God for giving him the wisdom to see *and* interpret the king’s dream.

“Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the

discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with Him. I thank and praise You, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, You have made known to me what we asked of You. You have made known to us the dream of the king” (2:20-23).

In the dream, the king saw a large statue with various parts. Daniel interpreted this as a vision of the future kingdoms of the world.

- **Head of gold:** Babylonian kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar.
- **Chest and arms of silver:** Medo-Persian kingdom.
- **Thighs of bronze:** Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great.
- **Legs of iron:** Roman kingdom. (Christ came during this period.)
- **Feet of iron & clay:** Final kingdom of mankind in the last days.
- **Rock that smashes the statue:** God’s eternal kingdom.

After explaining the dream, Daniel gave his God all the glory:

“The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy” (2:45).

Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel to the highest of positions:

“Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men” (2:48).

Daniel’s friends refuse to worship the King’s statue: Ch.3

Perhaps inspired by his dream of the great statue, Nebuchadnezzar had a 90-foot tall golden statue set up (either a statue of himself or of Nebo, the chief Babylonian deity). This may have been Nebuchadnezzar’s attempt to say that his Babylonian kingdom would *endure forever*, contrary to Daniel’s interpretation of his previous dream (i.e., that the Babylonian kingdom would be followed by many others that would overtake it). He commanded all the people to bow in worship before the gold statue. Daniel’s 3 friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow in worship. (Daniel apparently was not present.)

“King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (3:16-18).

The 3 men were thrown into the fire, but to the astonishment of the king and all the onlookers, a 4th “person” appeared with them.

He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods” (3:25).

Whether it was an angelic being (archangels Michael and Gabriel both appear later in Daniel) or God, the point is that *God protected His servants through their trial*. As a result, the 3 men were promoted to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

“Even if” kind of faith trusts God no matter what He determines the outcome to be. The 3 men believed that God would be faithful to take care of them, “even if” He chose not to rescue them from the flames; but to take them through the flames into their heavenly home. Is there some area of your life where God is calling you to exercise “even if” faith? Another practical lesson here has to do with your friendship circle. These 3 friends stood together through the trials of living out their convictions in Babylon. They encouraged each other by the strength of their “even if faith.” Who are the friends who strengthen and encourage you to choose to honor God when the tests are hard?

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the fallen tree: Ch.4

Daniel was again asked to interpret a dream for Nebuchadnezzar – this time about a tree being felled. Daniel bravely told the king the meaning: His sovereign rule would be taken away from him for 7 years, due to PRIDE, and he would be stricken with a disease that would cause him to wander around like a wild animal.

“This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times (years) will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone He wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue” (4:24-27).

God waited patiently for one whole year, giving the king ample time to examine his heart of pride and acknowledge that “God on High” had given him his divine place of power; but Nebuchadnezzar did not repent. He was stricken and became like an animal for 7 years. In the end, he regained his senses and gave glory to the Most High God:

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward

heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified Him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: 'What have You done?' Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride" (4:34-37).

Pride (worship of self) is a repeated theme in the book of Daniel. It is one of the most serious sins, because it is an assertion of one's independence from God or, worse, the assertion that we are our own god and everyone needs to 'bow to us'. In contrast, humility and dependence upon God are qualities that He approves of most. When we become proud, God will often move to humble us. "He is able to humble those who walk in pride." Is there any area of your life where pride has crept in? Any area where you are not giving God the glory; rather, you are becoming proud of your own works such that you look down on others? Ask God to reveal to you any subtle areas of pride. "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time" (1Peter 5:6).

King Belshazzar's pride and fall: Ch.5

Belshazzar ruled Babylon several decades after Nebuchadnezzar (he was likely his grandson). Daniel recorded just one incident involving Belshazzar, and it happened on the last night of his life. He was holding a feast for his nobles and he called for the sacred drinking vessels that his grandfather had taken *from Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem*. While the crowd was feasting and drinking (perhaps praising their gods using vessels dedicated to the worship of Yahweh) suddenly a hand appeared on the wall behind Belshazzar and wrote out the words: MENE – MENE – TEKEL – PARSIN. None of the king's wise men could interpret the words; but the queen reminded the king of Daniel's renown for interpreting dreams and visions during Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

Daniel arrived and recounted for Belshazzar how God had humbled his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. But the faith-journey of his ancestor had no impact upon Belshazzar's heart.

"But you, Belshazzar ... have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine

from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways” (5:22-23).

Finally, Daniel gave the interpretation of the words on the wall:

“MENE: God has NUMBERED the days of your reign and brought it to an end. TEKEL: You have been WEIGHED on the scales and found wanting. PERES: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and PERSIANS” (5:27,28).

Later that same night, Belshazzar was murdered and Darius the Mede assumed the throne.

*Why is it that we often fail to learn life lessons from those who have gone before us? Maybe it is because we are stubborn and must “touch the paint” ourselves. Or maybe we believe that the life experiences of others cannot substitute for our own real-life personal experiences (which is not true! Many kings we have studied chose to break the idol worship of their fathers). Take a moment to reflect upon your family tree (genogram). What trait, habit or experience would you definitely NOT want to carry on? To break the power of the past we must identify the patterns in the lives of those who have gone before us that we see in ourselves. In the book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Pete Scazzero calls this, “Going Back to Go Forward.” Have you taken the time to examine your past enough to know what “sins of the fathers” you need to avoid?*

Daniel in the lion’s den: Ch.6

Darius the new king recognized and respected the wisdom of Daniel, thus he appointed him as 1 of 3 leaders to rule over 120 governors. Daniel quickly distinguished himself among all the leaders, thus the king planned to make him the #1 leader over all. This made the other leaders jealous, so they sought grounds to accuse Daniel before Darius; but they could find no fault in him!

“We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God” (6:5).

They knew that Daniel prayed 3 times a day with his face toward Jerusalem, so they asked the king to sign a law stating that no one could pray to *any god or human but the king himself*, with the penalty of being thrown into the lion’s den (a terrifying and painful death). The king, unaware of their schemes against Daniel, signed the decree (and Daniel’s death warrant).

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (6:10).

The rest of the story is well-known. Daniel was thrown to the lions, but miraculously preserved by God. Not only was Daniel promoted to the #1 position; but God was magnified throughout the kingdom (and Daniel’s enemies ended up in the lion’s den).

Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: “May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.” So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian (6:25-28).

Daniel continued his habit of prayer even after he knew the king’s decree had been signed. He feared God more than he feared man, and he would not budge on his convictions, regardless of the consequences. Daniel stood alone but had complete peace in his heart and mind. Is there some area in your life where God is calling you to stand firm for your convictions? Or, to strengthen and solidify your convictions on some issue? It is never easy to stand up for your convictions. The bottom line: we must fear God, rather than men (see Acts 5:29 where the apostles did this also).

Daniel’s dream of 4 beasts: Ch.7

The last 6 chapters focus on Daniel “the prophet” – his expansive visions and prophecies of the future. Ch.7 sets the stage with a far-reaching dream-vision. *“In this vision, Daniel learned about six different kingdoms: four of them kingdoms of this world, one of them the kingdom of Satan, and the last one the kingdom of Messiah” (Warren Wiersbe, O.T. Prophets, p.282).*

- **Lion:** (7:4) Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar (and son-Nabonidus and grandson Belshazzar.)
- **Bear:** (7:5) Medo-Persian Empire of Darius; Xerxes (husband of Esther, ruler of 127 provinces) and Cyrus.
- **Leopard:** (7:6) Greek Empire of Alexander the Great.
- **Terrifying beast w/10 horns:** (7:7,24) Roman Empire which eventually divided into 10 nations.
- **Boastful horn:** (7:8,11,12,21-26) The final 7-yr kingdom, ruled by a

man who is empowered by Satan himself- 'the Anti-Christ'. He will rule against God Himself and all true believers, 'saints' (Jews and Gentiles). Satan himself, will rule the earth through this man for 7 years of 'great tribulation'.

- **Kingdom of the "Son of Man":** (7:13,14,27) God's eternal rule (promised to king David in 2 Samuel 7:13,16).

Two things stand out in this vision. **First, the "son of man."** Daniel saw a special person (*God the Son*), being given authority by God (*God the Father*), 'the Ancient of Days', to rule the world forever. He is referred to as "one like a son of man" (i.e., one having human likeness).

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (7:13-14).

Daniel saw **the Messiah** (the Christ) being granted divine authority to rule over the eternal kingdom of God. The phrase "one like a son of man" is used 82 times in the N.T. and became extremely important during the life and ministry of **Jesus**. Jesus used the title "Son of Man" to refer to Himself more than any other title. When Jesus used this title, He was NOT simply saying: "I am the son of a man" (i.e., Joseph). Rather, He was claiming to be the divine son of man that Daniel saw in his vision. This explains why the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy (a man, who was claiming to be GOD), when He quoted this very passage at His hearing before the Jewish Council (Matthew 26:63-65). They were all very familiar with Daniel's vision and they knew Jesus was claiming to be THE Son of Man, THE Messiah, GOD the SON, appointed by GOD the FATHER to rule the world.

The second figure that stands out is the little horn that spoke boastfully. Daniel saw a beast with 10 horns (10 kings), but eventually one little horn arose, displacing 3 of the others and boasting of great things. This is a reference to **the Anti-Christ** who will arise in the last days to oppose God's kingdom.

"The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three

kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people (true believers) and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him” (7:23-27).

Summary: A series of empires will rule the world, culminating in one incomparably great empire. One king will assert himself above all others as the “king of kings” (the Anti-Christ). For 3-1/2 years (‘a time, times and half a time’) he will blaspheme God and tyrannize God’s people. Many will be oppressed (and martyred) for their faith (7:25). But finally, he will be overthrown by God’s true “Christ” (Anointed One) Who will battle against and overcome the anti-Christ, and usher in the eternal kingdom of God. Note the similar description of the anti-Christ in Revelation ch.13.

Daniel’s vision of the ram and the goat: Ch.8

This vision focused on the world powers that impacted Israel in the centuries immediately following Daniel, therefore the main purpose of the vision was *Jewish-oriented*. It is unique because Daniel was given the specific meaning of the vision by the angel Gabriel (vv.15-27) so there is no doubt as to what future kingdoms are in view. (It was the angel Gabriel who later visited John the Baptist’s father [Lk 1:19] and Mary the mother of Jesus [Lk 1:26] to announce the arrival of the TRUE King!

- **A ram with 2 horns:** The Medo-Persian kingdom (king Cyrus and Darius 1).
- **A goat with 4 horns in place of 1:** The Greek kingdom, 1st under Alexander the Great; later divided by 4 of his generals.
- **A small horn becomes great:** Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria, who persecuted the Jews and desecrated the Jewish temple in 168 B.C.

Many bible scholars see a dual reference in the “small horn” of Daniel’s vision. Clear historical fulfillment happened in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, a Syrian king during the Roman Empire, who violently opposed the Jews. He sought to exterminate them and desecrated the Jewish temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar (168 B.C.). This happened historically during the 400 ‘silent’ years that the O.T. does not record, prior to the coming of Jesus Christ. Antiochus proclaimed himself to be “god” (Epiphanes means “manifestation”), but the Jews mockingly changed his name to Antiochus Epimanes (madman)! While Antiochus and his actions against the Jews were

the primary historical fulfillment, he was also a precursor of the “true” anti-Christ of the end times who will arise to oppose God’s people.

Daniel’s prayer and the answer: The 70 weeks prophecy Ch.9

9:4-19 Daniel had been studying the Scriptures (the scroll of Jeremiah that had been taken to the Babylonian captives), when he noticed that the length of captivity in Babylon had been specified as 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11,12). He began to fast from food and pray to God with great passion and confess his own sins and identify with the sins of his beloved people of Israel. He recounted the sins of his forefathers ever since God mercifully rescued them out of Egypt and brought them into the land of Canaan. He confessed the sins of his people abandoning their God for the false gods of the Canaanites, and rebelling against the laws that God had given to Moses. He pleaded with God to look on the desolation of their sacred city of Jerusalem, and though He was righteous, to extend mercy and forgiveness for His Name’s Sake.

While Daniel was humbly in prayer before God, the angel Gabriel appeared, bringing Daniel the interpretation of the 70 weeks.

“... while I was still in my prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me... ‘Daniel, I have come to give you understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed’ (9:21-23).

FASTING and PRAYER- Daniel humbly searched his own heart, and the heart of his fellow Jews. He confessed the sins of his forefathers. Going back into our family’s history and recognizing the sins that we have inherited, is essential. But taking it further by confessing them as our own as Daniel did, can usher the mercy and forgiveness and movement of God. Do you feel that you or your loved ones are ‘stuck’ and ‘held captive’? It is time to humble ourselves with fasting and prayer. To ask that God would set our families free from the captivity He has allowed, due to the sins of our fathers and our own sins. Perhaps He will send healing and freedom and renewed faith for us and our loved-ones.

The angel Gabriel was sent by God “as soon as Daniel began to pray”, to answer Daniel’s prayer and to give him a prophecy concerning the future. We don’t know how long Daniel was fasting and praying, but we have his example as an inspiration to pray and believe that God does hear our prayers of humble confession, even though we may not know how He will answer. A portion of God’s answer through Gabriel is the amazing 70-weeks prophecy. The key portion is as follows:

“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place. Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him” (9:24-27).

There are different views on how to interpret this prophecy. One widely accepted line of interpretation is as follows:

v.24 Daniel was told that a period of 70 “weeks” had been decreed by God for the completion of 6 important aspects of God’s program for Israel (note the underline portions in v.24 above). Scholars understand the 70 “weeks” to be 70 *periods of 7 years*, or a total of 490 years. Thus, a specific time-frame is given for the God’s program to be fulfilled – 490 years.

v.25 Daniel was told that the prophetic clock would start ticking at a specific moment: at the issuing of a decree to “*restore and rebuild Jerusalem.*” The arrival of Messiah would happen 69 “weeks” after this decree (= 483 years later). There were numerous decrees issued by Persian kings for the Jews to return and rebuild their way of life. It seems likely that the decree in view here is the one issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus in 445B.C., giving permission to Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls and the city (see the decree recorded in Nehemiah 2:5-8). Using the Jewish custom of a 360-day year, this would place the arrival of Messiah 483 years later, right at the time Jesus was making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of His life.

v.26 After the 69th week (the 483 years) the Messiah would be cut off (some translations read “killed”) and the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed “by the people of the prince who is to come.” Wars and desolations would then follow until the last days. Of course, Jesus was killed at the end of the Passover week, and decades later the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem (70 A.D.).

v.27 Finally the 70th week will come in God’s perfect timing. The “prince” will make a covenant with the Jews, but in the middle of the 70th week (the final period of 7 years) he will break the covenant, abolish Jewish sacrifices and perform abominations in the midst of Israel until the time when his own destruction is decreed by God.

While some interpreters see the 70th week following right after the death and resurrection of Jesus, it is difficult to see how the details of the week-70 events fit with the historical period following the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we combine the description of the 70th week with end-time prophecies found elsewhere in Scripture, it seems to call for a different line of interpretation involving a long pause, or gap between the end of 69th week and the start of the 70th week.

The 70th week (or 7-year period) is the “tribulation period” referred to elsewhere in the Bible. According to the book of Revelation, it will be in the middle of this final 7-year tribulation that the anti-Christ will arise and assert his authority on earth as the prince of the kingdom of Satan (see Rev. 13; Matthew 24:15-21; 2Thess. 2:1-12). The reign of the anti-Christ will be ended when Jesus Christ returns to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev.18 depicts the fall of Satan’s kingdom, while Rev.19 shows the return of Christ to earth). On this view, the 70th week of Daniel has yet to occur. It is a future period of 7 years at the end of human history as we know it.

We are, thus, left with a “gap” between the 69th and 70th weeks of this prophecy. That “gap” is the present age we live in, sometimes called “the age of the Gentiles” (see Luke 21:24, also Romans 11). We could say that Daniel’s prophetic clock has been on “pause” since the end of the 69th week (the death and resurrection of Jesus). The current work of God in drawing humanity to Himself is happening during this pause. But the time will come when God will decree that the prophetic clock starts ticking again with the final 70th week (the final 7 years) leading up to the return of Christ and the complete overthrow of Satan’s kingdom here on earth.

69 weeks (483 yrs) -----↑-----GAP-----70th week (7 yrs)

Decree to
rebuild
Jerusalem

Messiah
comes, is
cut off, or
killed

Gap/pause between
end of 69th week and
start of 70th week.
“Times of Gentiles”

Anti-Christ rules,
then is overthrown
when Christ comes
from heaven

Daniel's final Vision- Ch. 10:1-12:13
More of Israel's Future until Christ's Messianic Kingdom

Ch. 10 begins with the recounting of another vision during the 3rd year of Cyrus king of Persia, concerning a great war. Daniel was so shaken that he began to mourn, fast and to pray for 21 days. He did not know it *but as soon as he began to pray an angel- messenger was sent to come to him*. Yet, there was a conflict in the spiritual realm that was so fierce that Michael the archangel had to help this messenger angel (perhaps Gabriel) overcome the resistance of the evil spirit behind the king of Persia! Michael seems to have been assigned to help Daniel and the Jews (10:21).

Spiritual warfare is real! Ephesians 6:10-18 teaches that there is spiritual warfare going on in the invisible heavens and our prayers are the power that God has chosen to use to bring about victories in the heavenly realms and on earth. It took 21 days of prayer and fasting and an additional 3 days plus the prince of darkness and allow Daniel to receive the final vision and interpretations! Jesus commanded His followers to pray fervently and not to give up! (Lk 18:1). What does God want you to be fervently praying about? What does He want you to give up during your time of fervent prayer? Try committing to a 21 day 'Daniel Fast' where you seek God and believe that He will answer you as you remain faithful and fervent in prayer.

It was on the 24th day that Daniel was standing by the Tigris River, when ONE who seemed to be a figure like the glorious RISEN CHRIST the Apostle John saw (Revelation 1:12-16). His voice and appearance was so over-whelming that Daniel, like the Apostle John, fell on the ground face-down, weak and trembling like a dead man.

“I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless” (10:5-8).

Afterwards it seems that the glorious figure was gone and one like an angel began to speak to Daniel *“to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days” (10:14).*

The near future of Israel: 11:1-35 From the time of Darius the Mede to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (540-160 B.C.). These events depict the long struggle between Egypt (South) and Syria (North) as they vied for control of the Greek kingdom left by Alexander the Great. Roughly 135 prophecies were literally fulfilled in this historical period (showing the accuracy of the book of Daniel).

The distant future of Israel: 11:36 – 12:4 The vision jumps forward to the exploits of the anti-Christ in the last days (11:36-45) and then the time of great tribulation (12:1-4). In this dark period, the light of God's people will shine brightly.

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (12:3).

The final words to Daniel: 12:5-13 It is revealed to Daniel that from the time *“the power of the holy people is broken”* until the completion of these final events, it will take 3-1/2 years (12:6,7). This 3-1/2 years refers to the last half of Daniel's 70th week. As we learned earlier, at the mid-point of the final 7-yr period the anti-Christ will assert himself as king of the earth and, at the same time, he will persecute God's people (see notes on 9:27 above). Before the book concludes, Daniel is given on last piece of intriguing, but mysterious prophetic detail.

“From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days” (12:11,12).

The setting up of the abomination of desolation takes place at the mid-point of the final 7 years. 3-1/2 years later (1,260 days), the end will come and Christ will return to earth. But some important events will happen in the 75 days that follow Christ's return, and the people who live to see these events will be blessed. 1,290 days is 30 days beyond 3-1/2 years (assuming the prophetic years are 360 days). 1,335 days is another 45 days. Daniel (and we) are left wondering why these additional 75 days are so important. We can only guess (since much of biblical prophecy remains mystery). Perhaps in the first 30 days Christ will restore the land of Israel from the devastation of the events of the tribulation period. Perhaps in the additional 45 days He will fulfill His role as judge of the nations (the sheep and the goats parable, Matthew 25:31-46) in preparation for the initiation of His millennial rule on earth. We do know these mysteries were “sealed up” even to Daniel the prophet.

Discussion Questions

1. Daniel and his friends exercised “even if” faith (see box p.795). How did they get to the place where they could trust God “even if” the answer to their prayers was not what they desired. How can you get to the place where you exercise “even if” faith?
2. The book of Daniel emphasizes prayer: Daily prayers (ch.6), prayers for wisdom and insight in a crisis (ch.2), prayers of intercession, confession and repentance (ch.9), prayers of mourning (ch.10). What step(s) can you take to strengthen your prayer life?
3. Daniel was exemplary in his work environment, and was always highly regarded no matter who he worked for. How does Daniel’s example encourage you to live a more exemplary, God-honoring life in the midst of your everyday duties and responsibilities?
4. Daniel’s prophecies are far-reaching, looking to the end of the age, the rise of the anti-Christ, the final tribulation period, and the 2nd coming of Jesus to earth. What sorts of feelings/thoughts arise in you as you look at our current world situation and then look at what the Bible says about the future course of world events?
5. The prophetic picture of the entire Bible indicates that in “the last days” it will be increasingly difficult to live as a follower of Christ because there will be increasing persecution. As you think about your own faith and walk with God right now, what are you doing to strengthen yourself to be prepared to live for Christ in a world that increasingly hates Him (and His followers)? Jesus said: *“You will be hated by all on account of Me” (Matthew 24:9-14).*