

DANIEL THROUGH MALACHI
SURVIVORS

Harmony and Chronology of the Old Testament, Book 4

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Daniel

Captives in Babylon

When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Judah, he forced King Jehoiakim to accept his authority and submit to him, but three years later Jehoiakim rebelled. So Nebuchadnezzar returned, invaded the land, surrounded Jerusalem, and took Jehoiakim as prisoner to Babylon, along with many others. Also, the Babylonian ruler decided to take the treasures of the Temple back to Babylon to place in the temple of his own god.

When the captives arrived in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar asked the official Ashpenaz to select young men of royal descent to educate and train to serve in the palace. The young men needed to be physically well built, handsome, intelligent, self-disciplined, and quick to learn. They would receive the same menu as those who ate at the king's table.

Among the Hebrew captives chosen were four young men: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah. Those in charge of them changed their names to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, thus identifying them as servants of the gods of Babylon.

Daniel had made up his mind not to eat the meat or drink the wine served this special group of young men from different countries. So he asked Ashpenaz for permission to have a simple Hebrew diet.

Ashpenaz liked Daniel and was kind to him, but he said, "If I grant your request and the king sees that you're not as healthy as the other students and finds out that I changed your diet, I'll be executed."

Then Daniel decided to talk to Melzar, who was directly in charge of him and his three friends, and said, "Try us on a Hebrew diet of vegetables and water for just 10 days and see if we're not healthier than the other students. If we look sickly and don't do as well as they do, then you can make your decision, and whatever you decide, we'll do."

Melzar agreed, and at the end of the 10 days Daniel and his friends appeared healthier and did better than those who had eaten the meat and

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drank the wine served them. So Melzar let them stay on their Hebrew diet.

As Daniel and his friends went through their academic subjects, God blessed them, gave them wisdom and skill in learning, and also enabled Daniel to interpret visions and dreams.

When the three-year course finished, the chief official took the students to the king for their final exam. Nebuchadnezzar questioned each of them and found that Daniel and his three friends did much better than any of the others. Impressed, the king made them members of the royal court. He also found that their advice on other questions he asked was 10 times better than that of the astrologers, fortunetellers, and priests.

Daniel served the kings of Babylon for years, as well as Cyrus the Persian, who conquered Babylon and established the Medo-Persian Empire (Dan. 1:1-21).

The King's Dream

It wasn't long after Daniel and his friends completed their education that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that really bothered him. Parts of it made no sense to him, and it bothered him so much that he couldn't sleep. So first thing in the morning he called together the astrologers, fortunetellers, priests, and those who claimed to have power to interpret dreams by talking with the dead.

The king said to them, "I had a dream last night that really troubles me, and I couldn't sleep well most of the night. I need to know what it means."

"Tell us the dream, Your Majesty," his advisers replied, "and we'll explain what it means."

Nebuchadnezzar did not completely trust his advisers. Sometimes he feared that they told him only what they thought he wanted to hear. "If you don't tell me the dream first and then its meaning," he said, "I'll have all of you killed and will turn your houses into dump sites. But if you do tell me the dream and then interpret it for me, I'll reward each of you handsomely and have your names honored throughout the kingdom."

"Your Majesty, tell us the dream, and we'll interpret it for you," they persisted.

"Are you telling me that you can't tell me what I dreamed last night?" Nebuchadnezzar said. "If you can't describe the dream, how do I know your interpretation is right or that you're not just telling me what I would like to hear? If that's the case, then all the powers you claim are not true, and how can I trust the other advice you give me? So you better tell me the dream first!"

The advisers got scared and protested, "Your Majesty, no one can tell another man what he dreamed, and no king has ever demanded such a thing. Only the gods can know what someone dreamed."

Furious, Nebuchadnezzar ordered his advisers killed, even those whom he had not called to the meeting, which included Daniel and his three friends. The king had the death decree written up, he signed it, and the royal guards went through the city to begin to execute all of the royal counselors.

When Arioch, the captain in charge of the king's guards, came to arrest Daniel and his three friends, Daniel asked, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree so quickly? That's not like him. There must be something terribly wrong." Arioch told him what had happened, so Daniel asked for permission to see the king immediately.

Daniel hurried to see Nebuchadnezzar and asked him for a delay, promising to tell him the dream and interpret it for him, and the king agreed.

Then Daniel rushed back to his three friends and told them that the king had given them more time to come up with the dream and its meaning. The four of them prayed as they had never done before, asking God to tell them the dream and what it meant lest they die along with all the other advisers. That night God gave Daniel the same dream He had sent to Nebuchadnezzar and explained the meaning.

Daniel got up and said, "Praise the God of heaven forever and ever! All wisdom and power are His. Controlling time and the seasons, He sets up kings and removes them. He gives wisdom, insight, and understanding, reveals mysteries, and knows what human beings can't. The Lord is the source of all knowledge, and He floods the world with light. O Lord, my God, I thank You and praise You for what You have shown me. You have given me the dream and insight into its meaning. Because you have answered our prayers, now I can help the king."

In the morning Daniel went to see Arioch, the captain of the guard, and said to him, "You don't have to carry out the king's command to kill his advisers, because I'm ready to tell the king his dream and interpret it for him."

So Arioch took Daniel to the king and said, "Your Majesty, I have found someone among the Jewish captives who can explain the dream."

"Can you tell me the dream and interpret it?" the king asked Daniel.

"Your Majesty, no philosopher, astrologer, fortuneteller, or priest can do that," Daniel began. "But there is a God in heaven who knows everything and can explain all mysteries. Let me tell you the dream and interpret it for you, but this is not because of any wisdom that I have. My friends and I prayed last night, and the God of heaven gave me the same dream and told me what it means.

"Before you went to sleep, you were worried about the future of Babylon, so God showed you the future all the way to the end of time. In

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your dream you saw an enormous statue of a man—so huge that it was frightening. Its head was made of gold; its chest and arms, of silver; its waist and hips, of bronze; its legs, of iron; and its feet a mixture of iron and clay.

“After that, you saw a huge stone cut off from a mountain, then fly through the air toward the statue and strike it on its feet, crushing them to pieces. The huge statue fell over, and the stone rolled over it, grinding all the metals to powder. Then a wind blew the powder away. After that, you saw the stone get bigger and bigger until it became a mountain, filling the whole earth.

“Your Majesty, this is what you dreamed—now let me interpret it for you. The head of gold represents your kingdom, which the God of heaven has given you. He has made you a king of kings and given you a mighty army and great honor and respect among the nations. Yes, you are this head of gold.

“But another kingdom will replace yours. It will be greater in scope but inferior, just as silver is inferior to gold. Then a third kingdom will come after it. Though it will be greater in size, it will also be still more inferior, just as bronze is less valuable than silver.

“The fourth kingdom will be one of iron. It will be even more immense but even more inferior in moral worth, even as iron is inferior to bronze. It will crush all opposition, just as iron can crush these other metals. This kingdom will eventually break up into lesser kingdoms. But just as iron and clay do not bond, the relationship among these kingdoms will sometimes be strong and sometimes weak. Their kings will try to hold things together by intermarriage, but it won’t last, just as iron can’t stick to clay.

“That’s when the God of heaven will set up His kingdom, which will destroy all the other ones and last forever. The huge stone you saw represents God’s kingdom. It hit the statue on its feet, grinding the metals to powder, and then growing itself into a huge mountain, filling the earth. Through your dream God is telling you what will happen in the future. That is the dream, your Majesty, and its meaning.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar bowed to Daniel. “Your God is above all other gods,” he said. “Lord of lords and King of kings, He alone knows the future and can explain the deepest mysteries.”

The king rewarded Daniel for telling him the dream and what it meant, gave him many gifts, and put him in charge of all the advisers in Babylon. Also, he made him governor of the nation’s central province, which included the city of Babylon. And at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as his assistants (Dan. 2:1–49).

The King Changes

As time went on, Nebuchadnezzar gradually changed. Becoming proud,

he built a statue to honor his kingdom like the one he had seen in his dream years before. It was about 100 feet high, 10 feet wide, and all gold (not just its head). Nebuchadnezzar wanted to make a statement that the kingdom of Babylon would last forever, so he set the statue up on the plain of Dura outside Babylon.

After he had the huge statue set up, the king invited all the advisers, administrators, treasurers, governors, judges, magistrates, and representatives from other nations for the dedication. When they all got there, the king's spokesman announced in a loud voice: "People of all nations, races, and languages, welcome to the dedication! When the trumpets sound and the music begins, the great king of Babylon wants you to declare your loyalty to him and the kingdom by bowing down to this great statue. Those who refuse to do so will be thrown into the nearby blazing furnace."

When the trumpets blared, everyone bowed down—everyone, that is, except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Those who saw the three men standing up went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, there are some Jews who have refused to declare loyalty to you and Babylon, and they have not bowed down to the statue as you told us to."

The king flew into a rage and ordered his guards to bring the three men to him at once. When they got there, he said to them, "Is it true that you have refused to declare your loyalty to me and Babylon by not bowing down to the golden image I set up? I'll give you one more chance. As soon as the trumpets sound and the music begins, I want you to face the golden statue and bow down to it. If you refuse, I'll have you thrown into the fiery furnace, and no one will be able to save you."

The three Hebrews answered, "Yes, your Majesty, it is true. We did not bow down to the statue, because our first loyalty is to the God of heaven. If He chooses to, He is able to save us, but even if He does not, we will not bow down to the golden statue."

Furious, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter. Then he asked his guards to throw the three men into the fire. So the guards tied them up, hand and foot, and threw them, fully dressed—turbans, robes, and all—into the blazing furnace. The guards got too close to the leaping flames, their clothes caught fire, and they burned to death.

As Nebuchadnezzar watched, he suddenly jumped up and said to his officials, "Look! Didn't we throw three men into the fire?"

"Yes, Your Majesty," they answered.

"But I see four men walking around in there as if nothing had happened, and the fourth one looks like the Son of God!"

Then the king went toward the furnace and called out, "Shadrach! Meshach! Abednego! Come out of there!"

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The three young men came out, and the officials gathered close around them to make sure they were real. The Babylonians saw that their hands and feet were not burned, not a hair on their beards was singed, and their robes didn't even smell of smoke.

Then the king said, "Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! They are so loyal to their God that they were willing to risk their lives for Him! Therefore, I make this decree: Anyone who speaks against the God of heaven will be cut to pieces and his house turned into a dump site. No other god can save like this!"

Then Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon than they had before (Dan. 3:1-30).

The King's Second Dream

Later God gave Nebuchadnezzar a second dream that Daniel had to interpret for him. The king wrote this account of what happened: "May peace be multiplied to people, languages, and nations everywhere. Let me tell you the miracles the God of heaven did for me personally. How mighty are His works! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and He rules forever and ever.

"I was at peace in my palace, enjoying the greatness and splendor of Babylon. Then I had a dream that frightened me, and I couldn't go back to sleep. So in the morning I called together the wise men of Babylon—the astrologers, magicians, and fortunetellers—to interpret the dream for me, but they couldn't. So I summoned Daniel and asked him to explain it for me.

"When he came, I said, 'Daniel, I know that the Spirit of God is in you and that there is no mystery that you can't unravel. I had a dream that really troubled me. In this dream I saw a huge tree, and as I looked, it grew bigger and bigger until it seemed as if it were touching the sky. Everyone in the world could see this tree. Its leaves were beautiful, and it was loaded with fruit. Birds built their nests in it, and animals of all kinds rested in its shade.

"Then I saw a Holy Watcher come down from heaven. He said, 'Cut down this tree! Chop off its branches, strip off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Before you cut it down, drive the birds and animals away. Leave the stump in the ground, put a band of iron and bronze around it, and leave it in the field. Then take away the reason of the man whom this tree represents and let him live in the field as an animal for seven years. The God of heaven, who keeps a watchful eye on all human affairs, has decided this. He gives kingdoms to whomever He wills and sets over them whomever He wishes.'

"This is the dream I had—now tell me what it means. All my advisers

and the wise men of Babylon could not interpret it for me, but I know you can, because the Spirit of God is in you.’

“Stunned by what he had heard, Daniel at first stood there speechless. I waited, then I said, ‘Daniel, don’t be afraid to tell me what the dream means—I want to know.’

“Finally he said, ‘Your Majesty, how I wish the dream applied to your enemies and not to you, but it doesn’t! The tree that you saw with its leaves and fruit to which the birds and animals came represents you. The God of heaven has blessed you, and your kingdom has grown and people admire it everywhere.

“ ‘The Holy Watcher commanded that the tree be cut down but that the stump be left in the field with an iron and bronze band. This decision concerns you, Your Majesty. Your reason will be taken from you, and you will think like an animal. Your officials will drive you out of the palace, and you will live in the field and eat grass like an ox. You will remain that way for seven years until in your heart you know that God rules the world and gives the kingdom to whomever He wants. Just as the stump remains, your kingdom will remain.

“ ‘Therefore, Your Majesty, put away your sins, do what’s right, and be merciful to the poor and needy. Perhaps this will defer the sentence, and you will continue to prosper.’ ”

One year later, as Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his palace overlooking Babylon, he said, “I’m the one who built this great city to show my wisdom and power and for the glory of my name.”

No sooner did the words leave his mouth than a voice from heaven spoke: “Nebuchadnezzar! I am taking the kingdom away from you. Your reason is now gone, and your officials will force you out of the palace and let you live in the field like an animal for seven years. Then you will know that God rules on earth and that He has given you everything you have.”

And that’s exactly what happened. Nebuchadnezzar lost his reason and lived in the fields for seven years. He ate grass like an ox, his hair grew as long as eagle feathers, and his nails looked like the claws of a bird.

At the end of the seven years the king’s reason returned, and he looked up to heaven and said, “Blessed be the most high God, who lives forever and ever! All praise and honor go to Him. His kingdom is an everlasting one, and the people of the earth are as nothing compared to the universe. He commands the armies of heaven, and no one can stand up against Him or question what He does.

“Then my counselors, advisers, and officials came looking for me and gave me back my throne and kingdom. So now I, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, praise the God of heaven and honor the King of kings, who is

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just and does what is right. He humbles those who are proud and powerful” (Dan. 4:1-37).

A New King

After Nebuchadnezzar died, his son-in-law, Nabonidus, and his grandson, Belshazzar, shared the throne. One day Belshazzar decided to have a New Year’s feast with 1,000 lords and nobles and their wives. As they ate and drank together, Belshazzar asked his servants to get the gold and silver cups from the Temple in Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar had brought to Babylon. Everyone filled them with wine and drank from them, praising the gods of gold and silver who had made Babylon great.

Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared up on the wall and began writing in the area of the great hall where the lamps stood. When Belshazzar saw that, he turned pale, his knees began to shake, and he cried out for someone to bring in the magicians, astrologers, and fortunetellers to interpret the words. When they came, he said to them, “Anyone who can tell me what the writing on the wall means, I will dress him in royal purple, put a golden chain around his neck, and make him third in power of the kingdom after my father and me.”

The wisest men in Babylon all tried, but they could not come up with what the writing on the wall meant. Belshazzar didn’t know what to do, and neither did anyone else.

When the queen mother heard that the celebration had suddenly stopped, she came in to find out what had happened. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, she said, “Your Majesty, you look pale, but don’t be so frightened and perplexed. There is someone who can interpret the inscription for you. His name is Daniel. The Spirit of the God of heaven is in him, and he is the one who interpreted mysteries for your grandfather when the wise men couldn’t. I would suggest you send for him, and he will explain the writing on the wall for you.”

When Daniel arrived, Belshazzar asked, “Are you the Daniel who was brought here as one of the captives from Jerusalem and who interpreted mysteries for my grandfather? I have heard that you did, so if you can interpret the handwriting on the wall, I will clothe you in royal purple, put a golden chain around your neck, and make you third in power in the kingdom.”

“I don’t need gifts, Your Majesty,” Daniel answered. “I’ll be happy to interpret the words for you. The God of heaven made your grandfather king of Babylon and gave him power and great glory. Nations stood in awe of him, and whatever he wanted to do, he did, whether it was to execute a man or let him live. But when he became proud, God took away his human

reasoning, and, driven from the palace, he lived in the field, eating grass like an animal for seven years. When in his heart he acknowledged that the God of heaven rules in the world, the Lord gave him back his reasoning powers and his throne.

“But you have not humbled yourself as your grandfather did, even though you knew this. You brought in holy vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem, drank from them, and worshipped the gods of gold and silver. You showed no respect for the God of heaven, who holds your breath in His hand. That’s why He sent this hand to write these words on the wall.

“ ‘MENE, MENE’ is repeated because of its certainty, because the days of your kingdom are numbered. ‘TEKEL’ means that you have been weighed in the scales of heaven and found to be lacking. And ‘UPHARSIN’ indicates that your kingdom has been given to the Medes and the Persians.”

Even though Belshazzar was stunned, he kept his word and put a royal purple robe on Daniel, hung a golden chain around his neck, and announced that the Hebrew was third in power in the kingdom.

That same night the Persians under Cyrus took the city, killed Belshazzar, and placed 62-year-old Darius the Mede on the throne, while Cyrus led his army on to conquer the rest of the kingdom (Dan. 5:1-31).

The Lions’ Den

After Darius took over, he chose 120 governors to help him rule the kingdom. Then he appointed Daniel vice regent of the country, along with two others to whom the governors were responsible.

Because Daniel was very capable, the king made him chairman of the little committee and even considered using him as his personal assistant to help manage the whole kingdom. When the other two vice regents and the governors heard this, they decided to find something wrong with the way Daniel handled things, but they couldn’t find anything, so they decided to focus on his religion.

They went to the king and said, “Your Majesty, as we look at our responsibilities in governing your great kingdom, we feel that it would be easier if, at the beginning of your reign, you would make a decree testing the loyalty of the people. We suggest that no one should petition any god or man except you for anything for at least 30 days. If they disobey, they should be thrown into the lions’ den.”

Darius thought that it was a good idea to test the loyalty of the people, so he wrote up such a decree and signed it into law, and according to the custom of the Medes and Persians, whatever the king signed into law could not be changed.

When Daniel heard about this, he went home, opened the window

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toward Jerusalem, and continued his practice of praying three times a day, just as he had done before. The two other vice regents and the local governors knew Daniel's routine, so they watched to see if he would break the king's law or not. When he did, they went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, didn't you make a decree forbidding petitions to anyone other than you, whether it be god or man, for 30 days?"

"Yes, I did," Darius said, "and it cannot be changed."

Then they told him that Daniel continued to pray three times a day, and they reminded the king that Daniel was a captive from Judah and that all his loyalty was to his people and God, not Darius. Therefore, he should be thrown into the lions' den.

When Darius heard that, he was sorry he had signed that law and did his best to find a way to release Daniel. Although he tried all day, he could find no way around the law once signed.

Toward evening the officials came back and insisted that the law be carried out. Reluctantly, Darius gave his permission, and they arrested Daniel and took him to the lions' den. Before they threw Daniel in, the king went to talk to him. "May the God you love and serve deliver you from these lions!" he said.

Then the men threw Daniel into the lions' den and rolled a stone over its mouth. The king, the vice regents, and the governors who were there sealed it with their seals. Darius returned to his palace, but he was not happy with the decree he had signed. That night, as he thought about Daniel, he couldn't sleep and refused to eat, drink, or be entertained.

First thing in the morning he returned to the lions' den and called down, "Daniel, was your God able to deliver you?"

"Your Majesty!" Daniel replied. "May you live forever! My God has sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me. He knows that I am innocent and have done nothing against the king."

Overjoyed, the king ordered the stone rolled away and Daniel pulled out of the den. When they examined Daniel, they did not find a scratch on his whole body!

Then Darius ordered that the men directly involved in the plot be arrested and thrown into the lions' den, together with their wives and children. In a matter of minutes the lions overpowered them and crushed their bones.

Next the king issued this decree: "Peace to all of you. I am making a law for the whole kingdom that everyone shall respect the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and His kingdom will never end. He saves and rescues whomever He wants. Because He works miracles in heaven and on earth that no other god can, He is the one who delivered Daniel from the lions' den."

Reinstated to his former position, Daniel continued to serve Darius and then Cyrus, both kings of Medo-Persia (Dan. 6:1-28).

Daniel's Visions

Four Beasts

During the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a vision with several scenes that he decided to write down.

“The first vision I had was during the night. I saw the ocean whipped up by powerful winds coming from all directions. Then four huge animals came up out of the ocean, one after another.

“The first one was a lion with the wings of an eagle. The wings were then torn off, and it stood up on two legs like a human being. It stopped acting like a lion and received the heart and mind of a man.

“The second animal was a huge bear. It had three ribs in its mouth, and one shoulder was higher than the other. A voice told it to eat as much meat as it wanted.

“The third animal was a tremendous leopard with four heads and four wings. Nothing could stand in its way.

“The fourth animal was hard to describe. Huge and terrifying, it had large iron teeth that it used to crush and eat everything it killed. It had 10 horns on its head, and as I carefully looked at them, I noticed a little horn that came up, pushed three of the other horns out of the way, and took their place. The new horn had human eyes and a mouth that boasted great things.

“The scene changed, and I had a vision of heaven. Angels put thrones in place for a special occasion. Then the Ancient of Days came and took His seat. He wore a robe as white as snow, and His hair was white as wool. His throne had wheels of fire, and flames shooting in all directions surrounded it. Thousands upon thousands ministered to Him, and millions stood ready to serve Him. The court was called to order, and angels brought in the record books.

“While the judgment was going on, I could hear the new horn on the fourth animal that had pushed the three other horns out of the way boasting of its accomplishments and power. Even though the other three animals had disappeared in the waves, their spirits were prolonged in the fourth animal until its destruction.

“Then the scene changed again, and I saw a man who looked like the Son of God come in a cloudy chariot to the Ancient of Days, who gave Him a kingdom of people from all nations and languages that will never perish.

“All this really troubled me, so while in vision I asked one of the angels standing by the throne what all it meant. ‘The four animals represent four

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kingdoms,' he explained. 'But at the end of time, God's people will make up a kingdom that will last forever.'

"Then I asked him about the horn with the human eyes and boasting mouth that had pushed the three other horns out of the way. This same horn persecuted God's people for some time until the Ancient of Days rendered judgment against it in the heavenly court and gave His people the kingdom.

" 'The fourth animal is the fourth kingdom,' the angel said, 'and the 10 horns are 10 kings that will take over and divide the kingdom among themselves. Then a little horn will come up and push three of them out of the way to make room for itself. Claiming to have the authority of God, it will persecute God's people and will think it has the power to change God's law. God's people will fall into its hands for some time, but then God will summon the heavenly court into session and take away the horn's power. Then He will give the kingdoms of the earth to His people, and that kingdom will stand forever. The Son of God will be their king, and everyone will serve and obey Him and the Ancient of Days.'

"This ended the conversation. Though I was still troubled by what I had seen and heard, I kept it all to myself" (Dan. 7:1-28).

A Ram and a Goat

In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, I had another vision while I was on business for the king in the city of Shushan. One day I was walking along the bank of the Ulai River, and as I looked at the river, I had a vision.

I saw a huge ram standing on the opposite bank of the river. It had two horns, one higher than the other. Then I saw it push north and south, and nothing could stand in its way.

Suddenly a male goat appeared, rushing in from the west. It ran so fast it hardly seemed to touch the ground. A large pointed horn jutted out from its forehead, and the goat charged the ram with such fury that it knocked it to the ground, breaking off its two horns, and then stomped on it. I saw the goat grow bigger and stronger, but at the height of its power and strength, its large horn suddenly broke off, and four smaller horns came up in its place.

One of the smaller horns sprouted a little horn that grew larger and larger, pointing south, then east, and finally toward the Holy Land. It exalted itself against heaven, threw God's people down, and trampled on them. The horn even stood up against the Prince of heaven, stopped the Temple sacrifices, threw the truth about the sanctuary to the ground, and trampled on it. Although it did all this, it still prospered.

Then I saw two angels and heard one angel ask the other, “How long will this go on?”

The other angel answered, “For 2300 days; then the truth of the sanctuary will be restored.”

I wanted to understand more of what the vision meant, so the angel on the other side of the river said to the angel nearby, “Gabriel, help Daniel understand the vision.”

So Gabriel came to talk to me, and when he did, I was afraid. I fell on my knees and bowed with my face to the ground. “Daniel,” he said to me, “you don’t need to be afraid, and you don’t have to understand everything about the vision. All you need to know is that the vision extends to the time of the end.” All this took place while I was still in vision.

Then Gabriel touched me, stood me up, and continued, “Let me tell you some of the things that will happen in the future. The ram and the goat you saw represent two kingdoms. The two horns of the ram depict the joint kingdoms of the Medes and Persians, and the goat stands for the kingdom of Greece. Its pointed horn represents its first king, but he will die, and four kingdoms will rise out of his.

“After this, a bold little king will come from one of the smaller kingdoms. His influence will grow stronger and stronger, and many nations will fight for him. Crafty, he will exalt himself, even standing up against the Prince of heaven. He will persecute God’s people and will prosper, but eventually he will be destroyed, although not by human hands.

“The vision of the 2300 days is true. But you don’t need to understand more than that, because this part of the vision applies to the distant future.”

Then the vision ended, and I felt sick. I did go about the king’s business, but I kept thinking about the vision and wanted to know more (Dan. 8:1-27).

Daniel Prays and Gabriel Explains

I continued to pray and study the book of Jeremiah to know more about the meaning of the vision. Finally, in the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, Gabriel came to help me. According to what Jeremiah the prophet had written, the Jews were to be in captivity for only 70 years, and then they would be allowed to go home.

So I fasted and prayed, “O Lord, You are a great and awesome God. You keep Your promises and have mercy on those who love You and obey Your commandments. We have sinned and have done wickedly. Rebelling, we have turned against the prophets who spoke in Your name to our kings and leaders and to us, Your people.

“Lord, You always do what is right, but we have disgraced You. You

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let us go into captivity and be scattered throughout many lands, to our shame. All of us have sinned—our kings, officials, judges, and leaders—but You are so gracious, always ready to forgive. We have sinned against You, even though we are Your people, by not listening to Your prophets and by refusing to do what they said. So You brought on us what Moses said would happen, punishing Jerusalem for what we did. Even in exile we have not turned to You with prayer, confessing our sins, pleading for forgiveness, and asking You to help us turn from our sins.

“Years ago You showed us Your power by bringing us out of Egypt, and Your power is still the same. Lord, take us out of captivity and bring us home. Don’t continue to punish Jerusalem by letting it lie in ruins. People everywhere point to it and make fun of us.

“O God, please listen to my prayer. People know that Jerusalem is Your city and that Your Temple lies in ruins. For the sake of Your good name, if for no other reason, restore Jerusalem and rebuild Your Temple. We plead with You, not because we’re good, but because You are.

“Please don’t delay in taking us back home. Through the prophet Jeremiah You promised that our captivity would be 70 years, but now Gabriel tells me that You’re extending the time. For Your sake and for the sake of Jerusalem, please don’t do that!”

As I was praying and confessing my sins and the sins of my people and pleading for Jerusalem, Gabriel came to help me. It was time for the evening sacrifice and prayer when he arrived.

“Daniel,” he said, “I have come to help you understand more of the vision. As soon as you began to pray, God asked me to explain the time mentioned in the vision that you’re so concerned about. So I hurried to tell you that God loves you very much, and I’m here to help you understand things more clearly. Listen carefully to what I have to say!

“The 70 weeks you heard spoken about in vision are not the same as the 70 years of your people’s captivity. The 70 weeks have 490 days, prophetically each day representing a year. They are years of probation for your people after they return home. During this time they must turn more fully to God, repent of their sins, and accept His gift of righteousness.

“When the final week of the 70 weeks begins, the Messiah will come to fulfill God’s promise. At the end of that last week, He will return to God. The 70 weeks, or 490 years, will begin when the Persian king issues a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and that’s when the city will be rebuilt, in spite of troublous times and heavy opposition.

“In the middle of that last week, they will turn the Messiah over to strangers to be put to death, but not because of anything that He did. His death will bring the ancient practice of animal sacrifices to an end. During

the last half of that week God will extend one last call to your people to accept His offer of righteousness. Then will come the desolation of Jerusalem by foreign armies” (Dan. 9:1-27).

Daniel Needs More Help

When Cyrus the Persian had militarily consolidated the kingdom, he returned to Babylon and took over the government from Darius. In the third year of his reign I fasted and prayed for three weeks, asking the Lord to help me know the meaning of the rest of the long periods of years mentioned in the previous visions.

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was walking along the Tigris River, I looked out over the water, and suddenly I was in vision. I saw a man standing in the distance, dressed in a white robe with a golden belt around his waist. His whole body radiated light, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes flickered like flames of fire, and his arms and legs looked like the color of polished bronze. When he spoke, his voice sounded like a choir of voices.

None of the other men with me saw this, but they knew that something strange was happening, were terrified, and ran. So I stood there alone and couldn't move. Suddenly all my strength was gone, and I slumped to the ground, totally helpless. I could hear what the glorious Being was saying, but I was totally unaware of anything else going on around me. It was like being in a deep sleep and having a dream.

Suddenly a hand touched me, and Gabriel helped me get up on my hands and knees. I was still shaking when he said to me, “Daniel, God loves you very much. Stand all the way up, and let me tell you what you would like to know. The Lord heard your request the first day you started to fast and pray. I have come to help you understand the meaning of the long years you were so concerned about.

“The reason for the three-week delay is that the prince of Persia refused to listen to me to carry out God's plan to restore Jerusalem. Then Michael, Prince of heaven, came to help me and held in check the evil powers resisting God's will. So now I have come to tell you what will happen to your people in the days ahead, and fill in some of the details of the previous visions.”

When I heard that, I was speechless and bowed my head in grief, because the other visions about my people had not been good. Then Gabriel touched my lips so that I could speak again.

I said to him, “Sir, those visions were terrible, especially the last one—it scared me to death! Just thinking about it makes me lose my strength, and I feel so weak that it seems as if I'm not even breathing. I can hardly talk.”

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Again he touched me, and my strength came back. Then he said to me, “Don’t be afraid—be at peace and take courage.”

So I spoke up and said, “Sir, I now feel strong enough to concentrate and listen. Please tell me more about the long years in the vision.”

“I’ve come just for that,” he said, “but as soon as I do this, I will have to go back to work with the prince of Persia, and then later with the ruler of Greece to make sure that God’s plan for Jerusalem and His people will be carried out. First, let me tell you that no one is strong enough to contend with the forces of evil that control things on earth except Michael, the Prince of heaven. Second, what is written in the Scripture about your people is true” (Dan. 10:1-21).

Gabriel Again Helps Daniel

“During the first year of Darius the Mede,” Gabriel continued, “I was sent to support him. Then Cyrus came back from consolidating his kingdom and took over, and following him there will be four more kings, the last one richer and stronger than the others. This one will attack the king of Greece to expand his kingdom, but the ruler of Greece will defeat him, take over the kingdom of Medo-Persia, and extend his conquests across huge areas, more than any other king before him. At the height of his power, his kingdom will be divided into four parts.

“The southern part of the four will center in Egypt, and the northern part will center in Syria. Over time the northern kingdom will greatly expand, taking over Palestine down to the border of Egypt. Egypt, the king of the south, and Syria, the king of the north, will wage war against each other. Finally, they will make peace and form an alliance, but it will not last. The king of the north will go back home, and not long afterward he will gather a larger army and march against the king of the south, and the king of the south will not be able to withstand him.

“Later another king of the north will take over the territory of Greece and Syria and push into Palestine, even casting his shadow over Egypt. The king of the south will give him his daughter in marriage, but she will not stand by his side. So he will turn his attention to the coastlands in the north, defeat those people, and return home victorious. But his arrogance and pride will be his downfall, and he will be assassinated by one of his own friends. He will be followed by a king who will issue a decree that people in all territories should be taxed.

“He will die peacefully, however, not in battle. The next king will seize the throne by political intrigue, and no one will dare oppose him. Building a huge army, he will grow stronger and stronger.

“The king’s armies will continue to be successful, but his worst enemies

will be those who eat at his own table. Generals with their troops will fight among themselves, and one will become king, persecute God's people, and send an army to subjugate them. The new king's son will gather an even larger army, attack Jerusalem, destroy the Temple, and return with great riches" (Dan. 11:1-28).

A New King

"Then another king will rule the empire," Gabriel said. "He will try to restore its glory, but barbarian hordes from the north will continue to attack the kingdom. To hold the eastern and western parts of the empire together, he will support those who oppose God's covenant and claim to have received authority over the heavenly sanctuary.

"This will produce a new power and a different king of the north. He will seduce those who oppose him with smooth and slippery talk and will lie to God's people. But those who really love God will resist him, and for this they will face torture and death. This will go on for some time, and many will die, but many more will be added to God's people.

"The ruler of this new power will exalt himself above other kings and will claim to speak for God. He will form an alliance with other nations to accomplish his objectives and honor the god of power and wealth—of gold, silver, and jewels.

"This king will respond like a whirlwind against any who resist him. His armies will sweep through many countries like a flood, and he will extend his influence over many nations, including the land of Egypt. He will control the treasures of the world, and his wealth will exceed all the nations of the world.

"News from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will lash out with great fury to protect his kingdom. He will set up the power of his government between the sea and the holy mountain and between God and His people, but he will come to his end, and no one will be there to help him" (Dan. 11:29-45).

The Time of the End

"During the time of the end, Michael, the Prince of heaven, who stands watch over His people, will finish His work in heaven and bring things to a close on earth.

"There will be a time of trouble such as never was before, but God will deliver His people—everyone whose name is written in His book. Many who sleep in the grave will be resurrected, given eternal life, and will shine as bright as the stars of heaven. Others will stay in the grave and will be resurrected sometime later, to their shame and everlasting destruction.

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“For now, Daniel, you need to stop writing, roll up your scroll, and seal it. When the time of the end comes, many will read what you have written. In those days people will be busy traveling here and there, and knowledge will increase.”

Then the scene changed, and I saw two beings standing by the Tigris River. One was dressed in white linen like the Son of man. I heard the other one ask the one in linen how long all these things would take.

He answered, “It will take some years.” I did not understand. So I asked, “Sir, what will happen after these years?”

“At that time many people will purify their lives and take their stand for God,” the glorious Being said, “but the wicked will refuse to change. From the time when the truth of the sanctuary was first taken away to the beginning of the time of the end will be more than 1,000 years. Blessed are those who will live through the years that follow. For now, go on about your work, and soon you will rest with your ancestors. What you have written will be a big help to God’s people during the last days. When the Lord returns, you will be resurrected, along with all the righteous, and will be rewarded for what you have done” (Dan. 12:1-13).