GOOD WORD Schedule
"Daniel"
January, February, March 2020

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GOOD WORD 2020.1	**From Reading to Understanding**
Lesson #1 — January 04	**Luke 24:13–27; Acts 8:26–40**
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Understanding the book of Daniel**.**

Leading Question: How does the book of Daniel make you think in new ways about God and your place in a world ruled by corrupt superpowers?

Bryan Chapell, in his book, *The Gospel According to Daniel: A Christ-Centered Approach*, explains that "Christ's grace does not wait until the last chapters of Matthew to make its appearance." Throughout the book of Daniel, Chapell says, we see God's faithfulness and power to redeem His people, overcome their enemies, and plan their future. We will not see these Gospel truths clearly if we fall into the common but errant approach of making the book of Daniel solely the subject of our end-time debates.

When we read Daniel chapters 1–6, which are largely stories of Daniel's life in Babylonian captivity and learn of his courage and faithfulness we are easily tempted to make him the primary hero of the text. In doing so we neglect Daniel's own message: God is the Sovereign in a world ruled by human superpowers.

The second half of the book, chapters 7–12, which contains prophetic content, can make us susceptible to the error of making Daniel primarily the subject of our debates about eschatology or the end times. These chapters tell of the succession of vast empires and speak about the future of the people of God in visions that are hard to understand. However important the prophecies, we should not become so stressed and combative about the interpretation of particular aspects that we neglect the central message: God will rescue His people by the work of a Messiah. The righteous will be vindicated, evil will be destroyed, and the covenant blessings will prevail because the Messiah will reign. This is the Gospel according to Daniel that should give us courage against our foes, hope in our distress, and perseverance in our trials.

Question: Amid struggles and trials, how can we keep Christ at the center of our lives?

Daniel's origin and family are not mentioned in the Bible, but the year 622 B.C.E. as the year of great spiritual revival in the history of Israel provides a good background to understand something about Daniel living in exile in Babylon. The revival was prompted by the religious reform led by the young king Josiah when the scroll of Moses was found in the temple in Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 34:19-21 says that "When the king heard the reading of the words of the law, he tore his robes and he gave the following orders to … his servants: 'Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found.'" At the order of the king, the feast of Passover was celebrated, and 2 Chronicles 35:18 says that since the time of the Prophet Samuel the Passover was not "observed like this in Israel." As some of the most salient features of Josiah's

reform relate to instructions and laws that are unique to Deuteronomy,[1] commentators and scholars from medieval times to the present have identified the scroll of Moses referred to in the Josiah story with the book of Deuteronomy, or at least a form of it.

In 609 B.C.E., king Josiah lost his life in on the plains of Megiddo in an attempt to stop Pharaoh Necho II from joining the Assyrians in their battle against the surging Neo-Babylonians. The prophet Jeremiah composed a lament for the dead Judean king (2 Chronicles 35:25). The religious reform was soon forgotten by the following kings and instability and fear spread in the land. Judah became a vassal state to Egypt. A few years later, in 605 B.C.E., Nebuchadnezzar II defeated Necho II in the battle of Charchemish. Nebuchadnezzar's army invaded Judah, forced king Jehoiakim into submission, and deported the first group of people, mainly nobles and elites of Jerusalem and Judah. During this invasion, it is believed that Daniel and his friends were taken into exile to Babylon.

Walking almost nine hundred miles from Jerusalem to Babylon, Daniel surely would have pondered such questions: What happened to my people, the people chosen by God? What will happen to me? What will happen to this world? The stories and visions in the book of Daniel tell that God didn't leave Daniel in darkness as to what happens to his people and to the world. As Judah's kingdom came to an end, so will Babylon one day come to an end, and God will establish his kingdom. Beyond the gloom and darkness there is hope.

Question: How do you deal with the tensions and tragedies happening in our fast-changing world?

There is little point in reading the book of Daniel without understanding. In scholarly terms, this is called "hermeneutics," a way of interpreting and understanding the text. To understand the book of Daniel, interpretation is dependent on recognizing its literary styles of writing. The first part (chapters 1–6) is written in story form telling the life of Daniel and his friends in the royal courts of Babylon, and the second part (chapters 7–12) is about prophecies about world empires in apocalyptic literature. The stories are fairly easy to follow. However, apocalyptic literature must be approached in a different way. Apocalyptic writings were written during times of intense persecution and crisis. "It is essentially a literature of the oppressed who saw no hope for the nation simply in terms of politics or on the plane of human history" (D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, p. 17). Apocalyptic literature is full of symbolism and allusions. The object of apocalyptic texts in general is to square the righteousness of God with the suffering condition of His righteous servants on earth.

Although the genre of literature shifts dramatically between Daniel 6 and 7, numerous aspects unite the book and suggest possible ways of viewing its structure. If one reads the text in the original languages, one is struck by the fact that part of the book of Daniel is written in Hebrew and part in Aramaic, the official court language of the Babylonians.

[1] The unique Deuteronomic precepts that are undertaken by Josiah in the description of his cultic reform are: a) destroying the cult of "the host of heaven" (2 Kings 23:4–5, 11, with reference to Deut 4:19; 17:2–3); b) removal of the cultic personnel known as "*kedeshim*" (2 Kings 23:7, with reference to Deut 23:18); c) destruction of the cultic "high places" located outside of God's chosen place, i.e. Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:8, 15, with reference to Deut 12:2, 4–5); d) celebration of a national Passover specifically in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:21–23, with reference to Deut 16:5–6).

Linguistically, the breakdown of the book of Daniel is as follows:

Daniel 1:1–2:4a	Hebrew
Daniel 2:4b–7:28	Aramaic
Daniel 8:1–12:13	Hebrew

Within the Aramaic section, Nebuchadnezzar's vision of four world empires in Daniel 2 is paralleled by Daniel's vision of four world empires, suggesting a structural connection between the two chapters. The Aramaic section is structured in a clear chiastic fashion (a concentric literary structure in which the main point of a passage is placed in the center and framed by parallel elements on either side in "ABBA" fashion). Chapter 1 stands by itself as an introductory unit to the whole book, and the rest of the chapters are structured in such a way that chapter 7 functions as the center and hinge that holds the two parts together.

Chapters 2–7

A1 Four empires and God's coming kingdom (ch. 2)
- B1 Trial by fire and God's deliverance (ch. 3)
  - C1 A king warned, chastised, and delivered (ch. 4)
  - C2 Daniel warned, defiant, and deposed (ch. 5)
- B2 Trial in the lions' den and God's deliverance (ch. 6)

A2 Four empires and God's everlasting kingdom (ch. 7)

Chapters 7–12

A1 Coming of the One "like a son of man" (ch. 7)
- B1 Clash of east and west (ch. 8)
  - C1 Revelation of the "anointed One" (ch. 9)
  - C2 Vision of a Divine Being (ch. 10)
- B2 Clash of north and south (ch. 11)

A2 The rise of Michael (ch. 12)

Zdravko Stefanivic notes that the structure of a text is a vehicle to its meaning. Each of the structural outlines above complement each other in communicating the overall message of the book of Daniel. (*Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise*, p. 29). While earthly monarchs fight to establish their power in the world, God is the true King, "His kingdom will not be destroyed, His dominion will never end. He rescues and saves; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth" (Dan 6:26b–27a).

Questions: What do we do with the parts of Scripture that are not clear? What methods should we use in understanding the Bible? Why has the book of Daniel so often become the happy-hunting ground of cranks with weird theories?

Question: How does the book of Daniel speak best to "the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27)?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Jerusalem to Babylon
Lesson #2 — January 11	Daniel 1
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Integrity and wisdom in Babylon

Leading Question: What does it mean to live with courage and integrity?

The story of this week finds young Daniel marching as a captive on a dusty road from Jerusalem to Babylon. Babylonian official records—*Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*—tell us what happened in the year 605 B.C.E.: *"At that time Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole area of the Hatti [Syria-Palestine] country. For twenty-one years, Nabopolassar had been king of Babylon. On the 8th of the month of Ab he died; in the month of Elul Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, and on the first day of the month of Elul he sat on the royal throne in Babylon."* In the aftermath of the battle of Carchemish, as Nebuchadnezzar the crown prince was busy conquering the lands of Syria-Palestine, the news reached him that back in Babylon his father Nabopolassar had just died. Without a delay, he crossed the desert and reached Babylon in time to sit on the throne of the Babylonian empire. The rest of his army, leading the captives of Judah and Jerusalem among whom was Daniel, would have taken the longer route up north and then turned to the southeastern parts of Mesopotamia toward Babylon.

Deportation of residents from rebellious vassal states was one of the ways Mesopotamian empires maintained control of their territory. This practice was devised, and largely used, during the Neo-Assyrian Empire, especially during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.E.) and the Sargonid kings, and later by the Neo-Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 B.C.E.).

Mass deportations and resettlement of conquered peoples served as a fundamental tool of statecraft, economic organization, and imperial control, in which the elite and craftsmen from defeated polities were deported. By isolating these groups within larger local populations, the Assyrian and Babylonian kings ensured loyalty to the state and minimized the likelihood of resistance among the common people, who were left without their traditional elite. Another goal of deportation was to integrate the defeated elites into service for the kings. This would be achieved by stripping them of their heritage, religion, traditions, culture, and identity.

With specific regard to Babylon's religious world: The city boasted of some 16 temples, 43 cult centers and about 900 chapels. Essagila was the name of the temple to Babylon's patron god Marduk. Another temple, called Etemenanki or the temple of the foundation of heaven and earth, was considered by the Babylonians to be the oldest temple on earth. The holy vessels, that had been taken from the Jerusalem Temple, were placed into the treasure house of Nebuchadnezzar's god Marduk in Esagila. There was an ancient view that earthly conflicts reflect wars in heaven. Thus, when the surrounding people watched the Israelites going into exile together with the holy vessels, they could reason that Yahweh, the God of Israel was taken captive by the Babylonian god Marduk. Most likely, one of the underlying purposes for which the book of Daniel gives an answer is this very question: Were the gods of Babylon able to defeat the God of Heaven and Earth?

The opening lines of Daniel make it clear that the defeat of Jerusalem is not credited to the superior power of the Babylonian king or of his god; rather, it has occurred because "the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand" *(Daniel 1:2, NASB).* Daniel knows that behind and beyond the military power of Babylon, the God of Heaven is leading the march of history. It is this view of God's sovereignty that sustains these young men and gives them strength and courage to face the temptation and pressure of the Babylonian empire.

Question: How does Daniel 1 tell of the young Hebrews' assimilation process into the world and service of king Nebuchadnezzar? Note the choices the young men make in their response.

Out of the royal and noble young men already without defect, good-looking, intelligent, wise, full of understanding, and abilities Ashpenaz was ordered to handpick the crème de la crème (Daniel 1:3–4). Note four ways of how the young men were to become integrated into the service of king Nebuchadnezzar and adapt to the Babylonian royal court:

1. Body/Personality: Ashpenaz, "chief eunuch" (Daniel 1:3–4)
    - Upper-class eunuchs in Assyria, Babylon, and Persia were often exiled men who held great influence over the king and his royal court.
    - The castrated males were in charge of the concubines of royal harems, served in the daily life of the court, and sometimes carried out high administrative functions.
    - A prophecy in Isaiah tells the Judean king Hezekiah: "Some of your sons … will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (2 Kings 20:18; Isaiah 39:7).
    - Castration would be especially serious for Jewish young men in light of the law in Deuteronomy 23:1 that expels castrated men from the assembly of Israel; they are forbidden to marry or, if married, must divorce from their wives.

2. Education: "teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans" (Daniel 1:3–4)
    - Chaldeans: societal class of masters of reading and writing, especially knowledgeable in the sciences of magic, divination, incantation, sorcery, witchcraft, astrology, and astronomy
    - Sumerian: sacred, ceremonial language used from the 3rd millennium B.C. E. on in cuneiform script
    - Akkadian: native language in Assyria and Babylon in cuneiform script
    - Aramaic: international language of business and diplomacy

3. Religion and Culture: food (Daniel 1:5)
    - best meat and wine, implied participation in Babylonian cult
    - unclean food, according to Leviticus 11

4. Identification/Personality: new names (Daniel 1:6–7)
    - Daniel, "God is my judge" — Belteshazzar, "Bel protect the king"
    - Hananiah, "Yahweh is gracious" — Shadrach, "Command of Aku"
    - Mishael, "Who is like God?" — Meshach, "Who is like Marduk?"
    - Azariah, "Yahweh helps" — Abed-nego, "Servant of Nabu"

Questions: Why would Daniel and his friends go along with most of the changes to their lives but not with the king's food? How do you decide when to compromise and when to stay faithful to your convictions?

The process of integration and adaptation for the young Hebrews to life in Babylon was three years. They gained immense and powerful knowledge through their education and experience at the king's court. At the end of the three years, they were tested and found to surpass the Babylonian professionals in their practice of wisdom (Daniel 1:20).

Wisdom, in the context of the Hebrew Bible, is the quality of having a good judgement based on knowledge. It is closely connected to the ability to discern. If knowledge is power, wisdom is the choice to use or apply that power.

Question: How does Daniel 1 speak of "the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27)?

Quotes:

"Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. — C. S. Lewis

"Wisdom is the ability to see life from God's point of view." — Adrian Rogers

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference." — Reinhold Niebuhr

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Mystery to Revelation
Lesson #3 — January 18	Daniel 2
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: A big-picture history lesson

Leading Question: How does the Bible's outline of history convey hope in a world ruled by powerful oppressive forces?

Daniel 2 contains a unique big-picture history lesson, unique in the sense that it does not tell of the past, but rather of the world in advance, "what will happen in days to come" (Dan 2:28). The traditional interpretation of the four successive kingdoms in king Nebuchadnezzar's dream is as follows:

Head of Gold = Babylon
Chest of Silver = Media-Persia
Belly of Bronze = Greece
Legs of Iron = Rome

Questions: What is the most significant aspect of Daniel 2? Is it the prophetic prediction, or the demonstration of the direct intervention of God? This passage is often used to demonstrate the validity of belief in God—but what is it really saying? Did it convince Nebuchadnezzar of the nature and character of Daniel's God? What does it say to us today?

The second part of Daniel 2 is concerned with a kingdom symbolized by a stone and mountain. The section written by Gerald Klingbeil and excerpted from the Adventist Review (October 23, 2013) focuses on the meaning of the stone and the mountain:

"Daniel 2 is a great chapter for seeing the link between God's story and human history. The condensed version goes like this: a king's dream becomes the nightmare of his scholars, who fail to tell him his ostensibly forgotten message from on high. Never one to do things halfheartedly, King Nebuchadnezzar threatens his court scholars with execution if they are not able to recount the dream. Daniel and his three Hebrew friends are informed of this drastic decree that will affect them as well, and after requesting more time, they pray for their lives. During the night God reveals to Daniel the dream and its meaning. Daniel then approaches the court official in charge of the execution and is brought before the king.

Truly this is a real-life suspense story, full of nail-biting moments—yet it is also full of God moments. The first occurs right after Daniel received the vision. I would imagine that everybody (including me) would immediately rush out of the prayer meeting and knock on the door of the king's palace. There is no time to be lost. No precious minutes can be squandered. However, that's not what Daniel does. He settles down and praises God in one of the most significant prayers of praise in all of Scripture (Dan 2:20–23).

Here is another God moment. As Daniel is brought before the irate king he is confronted with the key question: “Are you able to tell me my dream?” What a temptation just to say “Yes” and get on with it—it would have looked great on Daniel’s résumé. Yet Daniel does not fall into this trap, either. His answer is illustrative of the type of person he is and the kind of relationship he has with his Lord. “No, I cannot do that; matter of fact, not one of your scholars can do it, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries” (cf. verse 27). Daniel understands the real balance of power—even at the epicenter of an ancient superpower.

The large statue made of different materials has been a solid staple of Adventist preaching and evangelism for more than 150 years. We have heard about the golden head, the silver chest and arms, the bronze belly and thighs, the iron legs, and the partly iron and partly clay feet. We also recall its end—smashed by a stone cut from a mountain—the remains of the impressive statue became insignificant like chaff on a threshing floor. We may even remember the meaning of the dream pointing to a sequence of four major kingdoms that are finally upended by the establishment of God’s kingdom (verses 37-45). Been there—done that. We know—and yet we often overlook—significant details that may have spoken more profoundly to one of the participants of this incredible drama.

I first saw this when I translated the second chapter of Daniel with my Biblical Aramaic class students—one of the few chapters in the Old Testament that is written in Aramaic. Here is my personal translation of Daniel 2:34, 35, followed by the interpretation of the dream in verses 44, 45: “You watched until *a* stone [indeterminate] was cut—not by human hands—and smote the image at its feet of iron and pottery and crushed them. Then the iron, the pottery, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed altogether, and they were like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind lifted them up, and no place could be found for them. However, the stone that smote the image became *a* huge mountain [indeterminate] and filled all the earth” (verses 34, 35).

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will establish an eternal kingdom, which will not be destroyed; and the kingdom will not be left to another people; it will smite and put an end to all these kingdoms and will be established forever; just as you saw that *the* stone [determinate] was cut off from *the* mountain [determinate]—not from human hands—and crushed the iron, the bronze, the pottery, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what will be after this and (be assured), the dream is certain and its interpretation is trustworthy” (verses 44, 45).

Did you catch it? The descriptive section mentions *a* stone coming from *nowhere* (verse 34) while the interpretive section has *the* stone coming from *the mountain* (verse 45). The translators of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, noticed this discrepancy and thus inserted “from the mountain” in verse 34. The biblical text continues with a surprising description of the dramatic transformation of the stone, which becomes “a huge mountain” (verse 35), filling the whole earth. Clearly this stone is beyond this world: its identity and origin has been of particular interest to biblical interpreters. A quick search in standard commentaries on Daniel brings to light a number of interpretations of the stone/mountain symbolism in Daniel 2. What is Daniel telling us by saying it the way he did? What would a Babylonian king, living in the sixth century B.C. in Mesopotamia, understand by a text involving stones and mountains?

There are few references in Mesopotamian literature to stones used in circumstances similar to the ones found in Daniel 2. In the Gilgamesh Epic, the Mesopotamian Flood story, the main character has a dream about the coming of Enkidu (a wild created being meant to teach Gilgamesh humility) as a meteor that lands at Gilgamesh's feet. We see from Mesopotamian lists that deities and sacred space were often related to stones. Mountains, on the other hand, played a big role in most religions of the ancient Near East, as we can see in the architecture of many temples and tombs. The design of the Mesopotamian ziggurat (or temple) represents an artificial mountain, similar to the shape and design of Egyptian pyramids. Mesopotamian ziggurats were considered to be the actual home of the deity. The names of these temples illustrate the relationship between humans and deity. For example, the ziggurat of Larsa, another city-state in Mesopotamia, is called "house of the link between heaven and earth," while the ziggurat of Kish is known as "exalted dwelling place of Zababa and Inanna, whose head is as high as the heavens." The name of the ziggurat of Nippur is "house of the mountain." Similar, in texts from Ugarit, a site in northern Syria, the home of the gods is linked to Mount Saphon.

The exasperated response of the terrified intellectual elite of Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar's command at the beginning of Daniel 2 is indeed significant: "No one can reveal it [the dream] to the king except the gods, and they do not live among humans" (verse 11). The reference to the gods, not living where mortal beings live, introduces us to one of the main themes of Daniel 2. While the God of Daniel is interested in communicating the future and guides those who trust in Him through difficult times, the gods of King Nebuchadnezzar are not able (or willing) to do the same, since they live far removed from humanity in the high places of mountains or ziggurats.

The God of heaven is different (verses 18, 19, 37, 44). He is able and willing to reveal the future to the king, and the God of heaven does it in a way that the king of Babylon will understand. God wants to guide Nebuchadnezzar from something known to something new. At the same time God is subtly but consistently, undermining familiar religious concepts. The gods do not respond and do not give the necessary wisdom to know the dream of the king or supply its interpretation. The statue, which was so important to the dream and, as we can see later in Daniel 3, also very important to King Nebuchadnezzar, is smashed by a stone that has been cut off from a mountain. In the king's mind the high elevations and mountains were divine meeting places; *who* would be able to cut off a sizable stone that could hit the statue and not only topple it over, but crush it into powder? Who would be stronger than the gods that meet on *the* mountain? It is this great God of heaven, Daniel's God; and once Nebuchadnezzar has understood the meaning of the dream, he falls on his face and worships (verse 46). He does not as yet understand everything about this God of heaven, but he realizes that this God truly is the "God of gods and Lord of kings" (verse 47).

Daniel 2 tells a story of how the God of heaven communicates with individuals living outside the chosen community of faith. As Daniel tells the story, he uses concepts that were known to anyone living in the ancient Near East at the time. Yet these concepts and terminology are not just being used uncritically. Rather, Daniel turns the way people think about religion and history upside down and inside out by unexpected outcomes and surprising effects. Missiologists call this process "contextualization"—the process of "translating" a particular (foreign) concept into a different culture, using concepts and elements that are familiar to this culture.

The stone and mountain references in Daniel 2 are not the only biblical passages that contextualize cultural thoughts and values to meet people where they were. God repeatedly sends messages through His prophets that do not leave unbelievers with their false ideas but take them further—much further by introducing them to the living God. At the end of the day Nebuchadnezzar falls to the ground and recognizes the power and strength of Daniel's God, the God of heaven, so different from his own gods. But the story does not end with this one interaction between Yahweh and Nebuchadnezzar. The book of Daniel describes a long journey that would ultimately result in the king's recognition of Yahweh not only as the God of heaven, but as "the Most High" (Dan 4:32), the one above everything, the one who is actively involved in human history, who appoints and removes kings. He is the God who comes close to Nebuchadnezzar and speaks so he can understand. After all—and above all—the great God of heaven is Immanuel—God with us." (https://www.adventistreview.org/2013-1515-p18)

Question: How does Daniel 2 convey "the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27)?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	**From Furnace to Palace**
Lesson #4 — January 25	**Daniel 3**
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: "Our God is able!"

Leading Question: When should Christians obey the authority of the state? When should they resist?

This is often cited as a great example of divine victory over paganism. But what was really God wishing to communicate?

In Daniel 3, king Nebuchadnezzar seems to believe that size will achieve his goal of reinforcing his power and strengthening his kingdom. He builds a colossal statue made entirely of gold. At 90 feet (27 meters) high and 9 feet (2.7 meters) wide, the size of the idol matches Nebuchadnezzar's pride.

Question: Do we see trust in size in our society today?

Questions: What is the significance of the repetitions in Daniel 3 (seven groups of people, seven types of musical instruments)? Why is the whole machinery of the state assembled to deliver a uniform response?

Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar believed that power would achieve his goal.

Question: Do we see trust in power in our society and church today? Why was Nebuchadnezzar so set on compliance?

A suggested date for Daniel 3 is the tenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, 594 B.C.E. Two texts shed light on the main event that may have taken place in that year. The first comes from official Babylonian records recorded in the Babylonian Chronicles (British Museum):

> In the tenth year the king of Akkad (was) in his own land; from the month of Kislev to the month of Tebet there was rebellion in Akkad …with arms he slew many of his own army. His own hand captured his enemy.

The attempted coup that is described here, must have been very serious, because the leader of the rebellion was able to make his way as far as the throne room and may have engaged the king in a hand to hand combat. There is a good chance that immediately following this most serious threat to his reign, Nebuchadnezzar decided to do something that will make a lasting impression on his subjects and prevent any future uprising against him. An imposing statue was erected that would visibly represent his long-lasting reign. At its inauguration all high-ranking officers of the empire will solemnly pledge their loyalty to the king. The second text dating to the same year comes from Jeremiah 51:59-61.

> This is the message Jeremiah gave to the staff officer Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign. Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon—all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. He said to Seraiah, "When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud"

Zedekiah was the only king of Judah that made a trip to Babylon and came back to Judea safe and sound. Jeremiah also tells us that upon his return home, Zedekiah hosted an anti-Babylonian conference for the countries located in Syria-Palestine (Jeremiah 27).

The stories in Daniel 2 and 3 are closely related. There are several points of similarity tied to the image in the dream and the golden statue, but the differences between the two are obvious: One, the statue in Daniel 3 is in its entirety made of gold, while in Daniel 2 only the head was of gold. Then, there is a difference between the person who "sets up" the lasting kingdom. While in Daniel 2, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed" (2:44), in Daniel 3 it is repeatedly stated (six times, twice in verse three) that King Nebuchadnezzar "set up" the statue to symbolize his enduring kingdom.

The refusal of the three Hebrews to bow down and worship the king's image indicates that they saw this as pagan/emperor worship. They would worship no false God or proud man. The humbling of the king's false vision and worship of a false god (himself) shows that God is still working with him, providing Nebuchadnezzar with confirmation that the Hebrews had the truth about God.

Questions: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego exhibited great courage in the face of extreme suffering. What made them able to choose such courage? Where do you think they found the strength?

Questions: Why didn't God rescue them before they went into the furnace? Is there a situation in your life you wanted God to intervene before it happened, but He allowed you to go through it anyway?

Questions: What is the significance of the fourth man in the fire? What role does "deliverance" play in the book of Daniel?

The three friends of Daniel, despite being bound in their clothes and tossed into the fire, survive the overheated furnace and come out unbound and physically unharmed. In the midst of the fire's damaging flames, there is a fourth person who looks like a man but has "the appearance of a god" (Daniel 3:25) or, literally, "a son of a god." Although the Hebrew text does not tell us exactly who this figure is or what he does in the furnace, he seems to have come to protect and deliver the three friends. In some medieval interpretations, this fourth figure is an angel or Michael. For many Christian interpreters, the language of "a son of god" suggests that the fourth figure is the incarnate Christ.

Nebuchadnezzar's horror at seeing "one like the son of man" with the three unbound "captives" in the fire is easy to understand. God got Nebuchadnezzar's attention. The king's response? He praises God for having preserved His followers. He exalts the faithfulness of the three Hebrews. Then he orders that anyone who speaks against this God is to have his house torn down and themselves chopped to pieces. He speaks of God's salvation but misses the irony in his actions on behalf of the almighty God.

The story of Daniel 3 has inspired resistance for communities facing unspeakable injustice. Jewish activist and holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, reminds readers that we live in a world where our neighbors continue to face the threat of eradication through fire and violence. Wiesel describes seeing the fires of the crematoriums as he and his fellow Jews, crowded into train cars, approached the concentration camp. His life reminds readers that while Daniel's friends survived the fiery furnace, the gas chambers and crematoriums claimed millions more. For him and others who lived through and resisted injustice, Daniel and his friends offered hope for survival. What is more, the story serves as a reminder that we are all called to the work of faithful resistance.

Question: How do you experience the presence of God in the midst of suffering?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Pride to Humility
Lesson #5 — February 01	Daniel 4
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: How to govern: Practice righteousness, show mercy to the poor!

Leading Question: Why do only merciful people find mercy with God?

As Daniel and the exiles left their land for Babylon, Jeremiah commanded the exiles to seek the peace and prosperity of the city and to pray to the Lord for it. "Seek the welfare (Hebrew *shalom*) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare (*shalom*) you will have welfare (*shalom*)." (Jeremiah 29:7 *NASB*). Daniel did just that. In all he did, he added ethical goodness to Babylon—he made it a better place. He served with excellence and integrity—while worshipping and relying on the Lord God. As a result, Daniel not only modeled a good life, he also helped make life better.

Question: What about the call to "seek the welfare (*shalom*)" of the world around us is surprising? Encouraging? Puzzling?

Daniel 4 contains an open letter from the king with a long confession of a personal experience and praises to God in the style of the hymn praises previously seen in the book. Some writers consider this chapter to be a royal edict that was proclaimed throughout the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Although the main event in the chapter is not dated, the context of the story is the time of "Nebuchadnezzar the Builder," or the second phase of the king's reign.

While Jerusalem and its temple lie in ruins, the city of Babylon was brought to architectural perfection under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon was the largest city of the ancient world and contained the Hanging Gardens, which according to the Greeks was one of the seven wonders of the world. The city was also the location of the magnificent temple to the Babylonian god Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar's palaces, and the great Processional Way. The city was surrounded by a wall whose dimensions were about 90 m (300 ft) high, 24 m (80 ft) wide, and 97 km (60 mi) in circumference. According to the ancient historian Herodotus, a four-horse chariot could turn around atop the wide outer wall. Herodotus also states that Babylon was the most powerful and famous empire of the ages. It is not a surprise then that King Nebuchadnezzar was proud of his accomplishments. The Grotefend Cylinder contains the king's own words: "I built the palace, the seat of my royalty, the bond of the race of men, the dwelling of joy and rejoicing." Biblical prophets spoke of Babylon as "the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride" (Isaiah 13:19).

The symbol of the "tree in the midst of the earth" (Daniel 4:10) in Nebuchadnezzar's dream had special significance to the king. Babylon was considered to be "the abode of life" at the center of the world. Out of the Euphrates River grew a cosmic tree, sometimes called Tree of Truth or Tree of Life, connecting the underworld with heaven. In one of his Building Inscriptions Nebuchadnezzar sees his vast empire as a tree providing shade and nourishment to all peoples: "The produce of the lands, the

product of mountains, the wealth of the sea I received in her. Under her everlasting shadow I gathered all men in peace. Vast heaps of grain beyond measure I stored up within her."

Nebuchadnezzar's dream indicated that the king would be cut off from his kingdom for seven years. Here is Daniel's response: "Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.' Belteshazzar replied, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!'" (Daniel 4:19 *NASB*). At the heart of Daniel 4 is the call for repentance in the manner of the prophets of old. The content of repentance is specific: "Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by *doing* righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity'" (Daniel 4:27 *NASB*).

Question: In what way is Daniel's advice to king Nebuchadnezzar remarkable?

In the Hebrew Bible, providing justice means caring for those in society whose needs are not being met; this can mean helping them monetarily and setting up the proper social structures to combat their plight. Daniel thus encourages Nebuchadnezzar to use his great wealth for the poor. Social justice is not only a divine concern for Israel. God calls all nations to implement and embody justice and righteousness. This view of government is in accordance with royal ideology throughout the ancient Near East where legitimate rule is predicated upon "justice" and "righteousness" for the oppressed and lowly. Accordingly, rulers who are unwilling or incapable of maintaining social order in this sense are deposed.

"Anyone who oppresses the poor insults their Maker, but anyone who is kind to the needy honors him" (Proverbs 14:31).

Rabbi Abraham Heschel said, "It is not enough to be concerned for the life to come. Our immediate concern must be with justice and compassion in life here and now, with human dignity, welfare and security" (Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*, 147).

> God's concern for justice grows out of His compassion for man. The prophets do not speak of a divine relationship to an absolute principle or idea, called justice. They are intoxicated with the awareness of God's relationship to His people and to all men. Justice is not important for its own sake; the motivation for justice, and the validity of its exercise lie in the blessings it brings to man. For justice, as stated above, is not an abstraction, a value. Justice exists in relation to a person, and is something done by a person. An act of injustice is condemned, not because the law is broken, but because a person has been hurt. What is the image of a person? A person is a being whose anguish may reach the heart of God (Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 276).

In one of Jesus' parables, the shocking thing about the kingdom of God is that it arrives in a surprising form, not as a mighty tree, but as a humble mustard plant. For the kingdom of God is not a crushing human empire built on might and power, but rather, a humble venture of trust. Christ showed that His gospel is based not on human ambition or pride, but on humble faith in God.

Archaeologists have recovered about fifty tablets with cuneiform inscriptions of ancient Babylon with descriptions and details of Nebuchadnezzar's building projects. The interesting part is, the tablets date from the first eleven years of his reign. Here are a few of the inscriptions:

> I have made Babylon, the holy city, the glory of the great gods, more prominent than before…. No king … has ever created, no earlier king has ever built, what I have magnificently built for Marduk.
>
> I built this palace, seat of my kingship over the mighty kings, … palace of joy, of rejoicing. … In Babylon, I edified it, on top of the ancient trough … with mortar and bricks I secured its foundations.
>
> I built a strong wall that cannot be shaken with bitumen and baked bricks… I laid its foundation on the breast of the netherworld, and I built its top as high as a mountain… The fortifications of Esagila and Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever.

Starting in Daniel 4:28, "the text suddenly switches from the first-person style to the third-person narration, and this third-person perspective will be maintained throughout the account of the fulfillment of the dream (verses 28–33). The switch is entirely appropriate, for the king is supposed to have his mind changed to that of an animal" (Seow, *Daniel*, 71–72).

There are two more pieces of background evidence that shed light on the story in Daniel 4. One comes from a fragmentary cuneiform text published by A. B. Grayson in 1975 that speaks of Nebuchadnezzar's strange behavior. The text says that the king's life appeared of no value to him, that he gave senseless and contradictory council, was not able to express affection to his son or his daughter, could not recognize his family, and participate in the building projects of Babylon. Even though the text is fragmentary it may be related to the king's mental disorder that lasted for a period of time.

At the end of this experience, Nebuchadnezzar praises Daniel's God and serves him with great zeal.

Questions: Why is God continuing to deal with Nebuchadnezzar? What kind of picture of God is he developing?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Arrogance to Destruction
Lesson #6 — February 07	Daniel 5
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Tragedy

Leading Question: Is there a time when it is too late to repent?

The story of the great feast of Belshazzar, the mysterious handwriting on the wall, and Daniel's interpretation has been portrayed in art by Rembrandt (Belshazzar's Feast, National Gallery, London), in music by George Friedrich Handel (Belshazzar oratorio, 1744) and Johnny Cash, in poetry by Lord Byron (Vision of Belshazzar, 1881) and Emily Dickinson (Belshazzar Had a Letter, 1924). It has given us the common expressions, "the handwriting on the wall" and "your days are numbered," indicating a sure and soon danger and end.

In Daniel 4 and 5 we see royal arrogance humbled. Yet the outcome for Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar is totally different. One writes a chapter in the Bible, the other goes down in history as a fool who squandered the greatest empire humanity ever knew.

Question: Why was there such a diametrically opposing result between Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 and Belshazzar in chapter 5?

Daniel 5 contains the biblical story of the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in the year 539 B.C.E. The question is often discussed as to how the city of Babylon was taken by the Medo-Persian army. One version of the fall of Babylon is based on a report from the Greek historian Herodotus, who wrote that the river Euphrates was intentionally diverted so that the soldiers who laid siege to the city could go in by the dry riverbed. This record is fostered by certain biblical passages that talk of the "drying up of the river Euphrates" (Isaiah 44:27). In this way, the exile and return of the Jews from Babylon is modeled after the exodus from Egypt. There too, the story tells of the drying up of the river of Egypt, as an allusion to God's act of salvation at the Red Sea.

Another possibility is that the city of Babylon fell because the soldiers who were sympathetic to Cyrus opened its gate so that the Medo-Persian army could go in without damaging its walls. The words of Isaiah, "to open doors before him [Cyrus] so that gates will not be shut" (Isa 45:1), seem to add weight to this view of the fall of Babylon.

Daniel 5 begins with the words: "King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them." Until the late nineteenth century, these introductory words in the description of the collapse of the Babylonian empire created a problem for scholars because no king named Belshazzar had ever been found on an ancient tablet. In 1861, archaeologist H. F. Talbot published cuneiform tablets from the Moon Temple at Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's birthplace. One of them contained a prayer of the Babylonian King Nabonidus for his eldest son, Belshazzar.

Twenty years later, in 1881, came the publication of another tablet confirming the information found in the already published tablet, plus a brief description of the events recorded in Daniel 5. Of equal value in the 1881 publication is the historical explanation of why Belshazzar is the key royal figure in the Daniel 5 epic. The second tablet notes that Nabonidus had been ill and stayed in Lebanon recuperating before setting out for a campaign against Tema, a desert oasis town on a caravan route about 500 miles south-west of Babylon. Before leaving for Tema, Nabonidus summoned Belshazzar and entrusted the throne to him. They served as co-regents for some three years. Tablets excavated in Borsippa, Iraq, show that Belshazzar executed his power in that he conducted business transactions and administrative functions in Babylon.

Robert Koldewey's excavations on the site of the ancient city of Babylon have unearthed the royal palace in which the ominous banquet would have taken place as well as a number of other objects that illustrate the power and architectural beauty of this ancient city.

The story in the chapter opens with Belshazzar's feast and closes with his death. The speech by the queen-mother is matched by Daniel's rebuke and his interpretation of the cryptic writing on the wall. At the center of the chapter is a face-to-face encounter between two men who most likely bore the same Babylonian name: Belshazzar met Belteshazzar.

Daniel read and interpreted the words written on the wall by a mysterious hand: MENE MENE TEKEL U-PHARSIN. These were four words (MENE is repeated) with a double meaning: (a) we have here commercial language of buying and selling, which was familiar to Belshazzar; and (b) the contextual meaning as referred to in the interpretation.

Daniel provided both as he read the words to Belshazzar and explained their meaning.

MENE: mina, a measurement of c. 600g
TEKEL: shekel, measuring c. 10g
U-PHARSIN: two peras or two half minas, measuring c. 300g

In modern English one would say something like this: "A Dollar, a Dollar, a dime, and a penny."

Looking closer into each of the words for the meaning and interpretation this is what we learn:

MENE derives from the verb, "to count, to determine, to finish." The same verb was used in Daniel 1:5 when king Nebuchadnezzar "counted" or "determined" the daily food rations for the young men studying in his palace university. According to Daniel, the message for Belshazzar was, "God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end." Belshazzar is like a merchandise that has been "counted," "determined," and "finalized."

TEKEL is based on the verb, "to weigh out," "to pay." Daniel interprets, "you have been weighed and found wanting." Belshazzar is weighed and found that he is a fraud.

U-PHARSIN is the plural form of paras, meaning, "to divide," "break up," "shatter to pieces." In the Hebrew Bible, the verb *paras* used in a context of violence: "and break their bones into pieces" (Micah

3:3). The noun that developed from this verb is the *peres,* which is the word for the "eagle," the bird of prey that tears its victims apart. Daniel seems to use the same word in reference to Persia and tells Belshazzar, "your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." In other words, Belshazzar is like a merchandise that falls prey to the Medes and Persians and is torn into pieces.

Questions: What is the significance of the fact that a mysterious writing appears on the wall announcing judgment on King Belshazzar and his kingdom? What lesson(s) did Nebuchadnezzar learn that his grandson did not? How do you pass on life lessons, faith, humility to the next generations?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From the Lion's Den to the Angel's Den
Lesson #7 — February 15	Daniel 6
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Being in the world but not of the world

Leading Question: How can believers be in the world but not of the world?

Daniel 6 recounts the attempt of jealous officials in the court of Darius to eliminate Daniel. He is sentenced to be thrown to the lions but survives because of God's intervention. The many parallels with the story from Daniel 3 are intriguing. Similarities in vocabulary are as follows:

- The list of officials (3:2, 3 and 6:7)
- The Jews "pay no heed to you" (3:12 and 6:13)
- "I make a decree" (3:29 and 6:26)

Similarities in structure and theme in Daniel 3 and 6 are as follows:

- The order to worship false gods (3:1-9 and 6:1-8)
- The faithful refuse the order (3:10-13 and 6:9-18)
- The faithful sentenced to death (3:14-18 and 6:19-24)
- The faithful delivered and the king repents (3:19-28 and 6:25-28)
- The king utters a hymn of praise to God (4:3, 34-35 and 6:26-27)

The two stories are important in the structure of the book. In Daniel 3 only Daniel's friends are mentioned, while he himself is mysteriously absent. In Daniel 6, however, he is subjected to a very similar test and, just like his friends, he is miraculously saved by God.

The event in this chapter is not explicitly dated, but it must have happened shortly after the fall of Babylon, around the year 538 B.C.E.. The territory of the Medo-Persian kingdom stretched between Egypt and India (Esther 1:1). The small kingdom of Judah belonged to its fifth satrapy. The founder of the empire, Cyrus the Great, was known throughout the region as a tolerant emperor, whose generous policies supported the local government laws and freedom of religion.

Daniel 6 begins and ends with Daniel's success at the Medo-Persian court. His arrest and sentence, match his release and his enemies' doom. At the heart of the story is Daniel's deliverance. A saving decree replaces the fatal one. The chapter ends with yet another hymn of praise to Daniel's God.

The main historical problem with Daniel 6 has to do with Darius the Mede. He is mentioned in the Book of Daniel as king of Babylon between Belshazzar and Cyrus the Great, but he is not known to history, and no additional king can be placed between the known figures of Belshazzar and Cyrus. Nevertheless, numerous attempts have been made to identify him with historical figures, with the following being perhaps the best-known candidates:

- Darius the Great (Darius I Hystaspes), c. 550–486 B.C.E. However, this historically known Darius was the third Persian emperor after Cyrus.

- Astyages. Astyages was the last king of the Medes; he was defeated by Cyrus in 550 (or 553), and there is no record of him being present at the fall of Babylon.
- Cyaxares II. Greek writer Xenophon tells of a Median king called Cyaxares, son of Astyages; other Greek historians say that Astyages had no son. Xenophon is not given credence by historians.
- Cyrus. This argument hinges on a reinterpretation of Daniel 6:28, "Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, and the reign of Cyrus the Persian", to read "Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian", making them the same individual. William Shea, an adventist scholar, comments that it would be strange to refer to Cyrus the Persian, as Darius the Mede, and strange also to refer to the same king as Cyrus in some passages and Darius in others.
- Cambyses II. Cambyses was Cyrus' son and his successor as emperor. The Babylonian records indicate that Cyrus installed him as regent in Babylon, but he was not a Mede, his father was not Ahasuerus, and he was probably not sixty-two years old.
- Gubaru (or Ugbaru, called Gobryas in Greek sources), the general who was the first to enter Babylon. Cyrus seems to have given him administrative responsibility for Babylon after its capture. William Shea argues for Gubaru/Ugbaru as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel.

According to Daniel 6:1-6, the new ruler of Babylon organized his kingdom according to Median and Persian rules. He appointed a council of 120 administrators or satraps, placed a triumvirate of three with the highest level of authority over the 120 satraps, and planned to name Daniel the chair over the triumvirate, basically making him Prime Minister of the Medo-Persian Empire.

In chapter 6, Daniel's prayer habit takes center-stage. He takes no precaution to hide or disguise his prayer life or to change his devotional habits during those critical thirty days when the law spoke against him. He prayed three times a day with his windows opened toward the city of Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10).

Before we ask for Daniel's reasons to pray publicly, we must understand the significance of the Laws of the Medes and Persians. These laws go back to most ancient times and have become famous for their varied scope. One of the extraordinary provisions of the ancient Median and Persian laws was that the Great King granted public audiences in the open to his subjects, so that any person of any status could come and present petitions to the king, even petitions against the highest leadership in the empire, including the king himself. By law, the king had to see that such petitions were not obstructed, and a herald would pronounce the direst consequences to any one attempting obstruction against this law. See the record here: http://www.parstimes.com/law/ancient_persia_laws.html.

With regard to the irrevocability of the Median and Persian king's law, as implied or mentioned in Daniel 6 and in the story of Esther, there is no specific historical evidence of such a provision. However, it is important to understand that it took about three months for a message to be carried throughout the entire Medo-Persian empire (see Herodotus, 5:50–54). Thus, the conspiring satraps in Daniel 6 could say, that once the king had issued the decree, there was no mechanism for retracting it. What was irrevocable then was done by those who were able to skillfully manipulate the king.

After learning about the legislation that Darius had signed, Daniel must have thought of his options:

- Obey the new law, making his petitions to the king.
- Appeal to the king to change or repeal the law.
- Cease praying and making petitions to his God for the period of 30 days.
- Limit his prayers to private places where he could not be seen by other people.
- Continue to pray as he had always done.

Questions: Why did Daniel simply not pray out of sight? Is he just stubbornly clinging to religious practices? After all, is not prayer a private matter? Even Jesus advocates for private prayer and expresses disdain for those who pray in public (Matthew 6:1–6). Doesn't he? What compelled Daniel to pray publicly, knowing it would bring him to the lion's den?

The reason for Daniel to pray publicly is in another prayer—Solomon's inauguration prayer of the Temple in Jerusalem in 1 Kings 8:23–53).

> When they sin against You, . . . and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, … if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul … **and pray to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name**; . . . then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven Your dwelling place, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your people (1 Kings 8:46-50 *NASB*, emphasis mine).

Now we understand that Daniel's public prayers have always been an open protest against the empires of the time, first Babylon, and now in Daniel 6, against Media and Persia. Daniel, the captive from Jerusalem, the seasoned politician of the highest office after the king, who has worked all his life for the wellbeing of the world kingdom, and has been a friend to the most powerful ruler (see Daniel 4), has also, for all his life, publicly demonstrated that he and his God do not approve of the dealings of the empire. To overpower and take people's lands, to kill, displace entire people groups, make them slaves, and take them into captivity is against God's will. In his prayers Daniel longs for Jerusalem, the city and the Temple left in ruins.

All his time in captivity, Daniel, in essence, risked his life for taking a knee against the oppressive powers of the empire and for the release of his people. No wonder then, that the law of the empire condemned him to be killed and eaten by lions, the very symbol of the empire. However, Daniel's enemies had not realized that the law of their empire held no power over him, for he had protested it already in front of open windows, day after day, in plain sight. The captive was free, every time he lifted his voice in prayer. Even the empire's lions were incapacitated, for "God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime" (Daniel 6:22). Daniel was not the enemy of the state to be devoured; the agents and accomplices of coercive imperial power were.

Questions: What is the significance of this story? What is the main message you have derived from studying the narrative sections in Daniel 1–6?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From the Stormy Sea to the Clouds of Heaven
Lesson #8 — February 21	Daniel 7
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Suffering is not forever

Leading Question: In what way is a heavenly court system beneficial?

"To Daniel was given a vision of fierce beasts, representing the powers of the earth. But the ensign of the Messiah's kingdom is a lamb. While earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power, Christ is to banish every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion. His kingdom was to be established to uplift and ennoble fallen humanity" (Ellen G. White, 4BC 1171.5).

Daniel 7 tells of a dream and visions in which Daniel sees four wild beasts rising out of the ocean. Three have identifiable forms, while the fourth is a monster of terrifying appearance with ten horns. As Daniel lifts his eyes toward the heavens, he watches a divine court sit in judgment upon the beasts sentencing the first three to loss of power and the fourth one to be slain. A human figure is brought into the presence of the heavenly Judge and is granted universal and eternal kingship.

Context of Daniel 7
Two texts, one biblical and another extra-biblical, are helpful for a better understanding of the background to Daniel 7. The first is a prophetic text, written before Daniel's time, in which symbols of wild beasts are used to describe God's judgment on Israel:

> I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside.
> I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and I will tear open their chests;
> There I will also devour them like a lioness; as a wild beast would tear them
> (Hosea 13:7–8 NASB).

The four beasts listed in this text are a lion, a leopard, a bear and a lion-like beast that is not identified. While Hosea's passage speaks of God's judgment on Israel, Daniel's vision extends to the whole world.

The second text providing insight into the context of Daniel 7 comes from a document known as "Verse Account of Nabonidus." This cuneiform text dates after the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C.E and describes a ceremony that took place in Babylon ten years earlier in the year 549 B.C.E. King Nabonidus was leaving Babylon for Tema (Tayma) and transferred his royal prerogatives to his eldest son Belshazzar:

> After he [Nabonidus] had obtained what he desired, a work of utter deceit,
> Had built (this) abomination, a work of unholiness
> --when the third year was about to begin—
> He entrusted the "Camp" to his oldest (son), the first-born,
> The troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command).
> He let (everything) go, entrusted the kingship to him.
> And, himself, he started out for a long journey,

> The (military) forces of Akkad marching with him;
> He turned towards Tema (deep) in the west.

It was 549 B.C.E., the first year of Belshazzar after King Nabonidus had entrusted the kingship to him and had left Babylon. The priests and aristocrats including Daniel must have been deeply concerned about the state and future of the kingdom. According to ancient records, there was a great deal of discontent and opposition against Nabonidus. He was not a popular ruler of the Babylonian empire. In 556 B.C.E., he had seized power in a coup against the cruel child-king Labashi-Marduk, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. He also angered the priests and commoners of Babylon by neglecting the city's chief god, Marduk, and elevating the moon god, Sin, to the highest status. He rebuilt the temple of Sin in Harran and did not pay attention to Babylon's most important New Year's festival for Marduk. Due to the king's decade long absence, the New Year's Festival ceased completely. It could not be celebrated, since the presence and participation of the king was central to this vital ritual. The Babylonians believed the order of the universe had to be restored every year in order to prevent the cosmos from devolving back into chaos. According to the "Verse Account of Nabonidus" the king was accused of mendacity, madness, and impiety. The stele also states that the country had descended into lawlessness. The king listened to no one. As a result, the common people perished through hunger. Trade was interfered with and prosperity ruined. The nobility was decimated and killed in wars. Farmers were ruined, because the country's arable land was not being protected. This was complicated by the confiscation of property. The Nabonidus Chronicle states that the king went into self-imposed exile in Arabia for a period of 10 years. It would seem that he really had no other viable choice under the circumstances, if he wished to save his crown.

It was in this same year when Nabonidus handed the power to Belshazzar (549 B.C.E.), when the empire was in turmoil, that Daniel had a dream and visions of terrible beasts interjected by images of the Ancient of Days handing the power to the one who looked like a Son of Man. The historical reference in Daniel 7:1 to this first year of Belshazzar indicates that the content of Daniel 7 must be read with the Babylonian empire's political decline in mind in order to understand something of the experienced politician's troubling thoughts as he lay on his bed and contemplated the looming end of Babylon. Does Daniel foresee a time of great distress for his people? The Talmud and ancient Midrash emphasize Belshazzar's tyrannous oppression of the Jews in Babylon. Rabbis interpreted several passages in the prophetic literature as though referring to him and his predecessors. For instance, the passage, "when a man flees from a lion, and a bear meets him" in Amos 5:19, the lion is said to represent Nebuchadnezzar, and the bear, equally ferocious, is Belshazzar.

Question: How do you deal with troubling events and crisis taking place in our world today?

Literary Features in Daniel 7

Another important clue for the understanding of Daniel 7 is to observe the essential and unavoidable comparisons with chapter 2. Culver has summarized the comparisons succinctly in *Daniel and the Latter Days*, p. 124.

> The differences between the dream prophecy of chapter 2 and the vision prophecy of chapter 7 are chiefly as follows: 1) The dream [Daniel 2] was not seen originally by a man of God but by a heathen monarch, hence it was something that would appeal to such a man and which might

be readily explicable to his intellect. The vision [Daniel 7] was seen by a holy man of God, and hence in terms more readily explicable to his intellect. 2) The first presented the history of nations in their outward aspect--majestic, splendid; the second in their inward spiritual aspect--as ravening wild beasts. This might be elaborated to say that the first is a view of the history of nations as man sees them, the second as God sees them.

Since the same general subject is treated in this vision as in the dream of chapter 2 it is natural that the same general principles present in that prophecy should follow here--the same series of powers, the same continuity of rule, degeneration and character of authority, division of sovereignty, and increasing strength of the kingdoms.

In terms of structure, scholars propose the following chiastic plan for Daniel 7 with the heavenly scenes of judgement written in poetic form at the center:

A. Dream (7:1-2)
  B. Four beasts and the horns (7:3-8)
    C. Judgment (7:9-10, 13-14) (written in poetic form)
  B'. The horn and the beasts (7:11-12)
A'. Interpretation (7:15-28)

Another literary feature is important to note: In the vision proper, each of the animals, as well as the little horn, is characterized by one verse each. However, in the interpretational part, the first three animals appear very briefly and in one single verse only. Extensively described are:

1. The little horn (vv. 20–22, 24–26)
2. The judgment, including the saints receiving the kingdom (vv. 18, 22, 26–27)
3. The saints (vv. 18, 21–22, 25, 27)

The above observations are of great importance as they reveal the main message of the chapter:

1. the little horn attacks the saints, the people of God
2. the judgment of God takes place in favor of His saints
3. the kingdom is given to the saints

Interpretation of Daniel 7

The following interpretation of the four animals and the little horn is offered by scholars in the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists:

The four animals (vv. 2-3) represent four world empires that begin with the first in the time of Daniel (Dan 7:17). The sea represents the peoples on earth (Rev 17:15) from which the empires arise. The winds may stand for political events that bring about revolutions, wars, and other problems (Rev 7:1). In number and character these empires remind us of those in Daniel 2.

The lion with eagle wings (v. 4) as king of land animals and king of birds is the same as the golden head in Daniel 2—Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The imagery is found in Babylonian art. However, under Nebuchadnezzar's successors the empire began to lose some of its lion-like characteristics such as boldness and strength.

The bear raised up on one side (v. 5) represents the empire of the Medes and Persians (see Dan 8:3, 20). The three rips could stand for Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt, which were devoured by the new empire.

The leopard with four wings and four heads (v. 6) is a very fast animal. The Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire with unprecedented speed. But Alexander‘s kingdom was divided in four, and later three, parts after his premature death (see Dan 8:8, 21–22).

The fourth animal is indefinable (vv. 7, 19, 23). It corresponds to the fourth empire of Daniel 2 (see Dan 23 2:40). In both cases iron is mentioned. It is the Roman Empire.

The ten horns (vv. 7, 24) are smaller kingdoms, which conquered Rome and came forth from it. Historically, Rome was captured by the Germanic tribes of Western Europe. Some have identified them as the Alemanni, the Anglo-Saxons, the Burgundians, the Franks, the Herulians, the Lombards, the Ostrogoths, the Sueves, the Vandals, and the Visigoths.

The Son of Man in Daniel 7

Daniel also provides a picture of the Son of Man. Jesus used this phrase of himself twenty-seven times in Luke alone. The image of clouds in Daniel 7:13 is reminiscent of Sinai (Exodus 16:10) and is perhaps the basis for the second coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of the heavens (Matthew 24:30). Bock points out how the New Testament development of the term "Son of Man" completes the picture begun by Daniel (see Darrell L. Bock, “The Son of Man in Daniel and the Messiah,” 79-100). He summarizes this New Testament development in the following nine statements:

1. Jesus progressively revealed His messianic understanding of the term.
2. The messianic significance of the term for Jesus is eventually directly revealed by Jesus to the disciples after Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.
3. Jesus fuses the term with other Old Testament descriptions of His mission, specifically the Servant, and thus is able to speak of the Son of Man's necessity to suffer in the suffering sayings which dominate the middle portions of the gospels.
4. As Jesus faces the cross, He begins to reveal to His disciples the background and significance of the term Son of Man in terms of Daniel seven with the apocalyptic sayings.
5. This same background is revealed publicly at His trial before the Sanhedrin.
6. Thus the term is a convenient vehicle for revealing Himself to those who believe, while avoiding the immediate political connotations of the term, Messiah.
7. The usage in John's gospel parallels that of the Synoptics while reflecting a development of themes implicit in both the Synoptics and Daniel seven.
8. The term in its Danielic usage in the New Testament has in view His ultimate victory and apocalyptic return, a significant fact in view of His approaching Passion.
9. Therefore, the term is most appropriate for summarizing Christ's Christology, for in it one like a man who is more than a man exercises dominion and authority to such an extent that he can also be considered divine. As such, He will be the center of a new kingdom, king in a new age when all men will recognize His authority and worship His person. God's sovereign plan of history will culminate in the completion of the Son of Man's mission in eternal victory. His future return in vindication makes this certain, even as He heads for the cross. In the promise of

His victory, disciples can walk in hope and expectation even though He went to the cross. His rule will cause all men to pause at the marvelous grace of God as it is observed that Jesus the Christ, the Son of Man, is truly the greatest One whoever walked the earth.

Judgment in Daniel 7

For Adventist believers the judgment scene in Daniel 7 speaks to the pre-Advent judgment. Pay attention how George Knight speaks of the judgment in his book, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, p. 70:

> There is not the slightest doubt that Daniel 7 has a pre-Advent judgment of or for the saints. But some of us have so much baggage between our ears that it is difficult to focus our eyes on what the text actually says. We should note that the judgment in Daniel 7 has two aspects:
> 1. It is against the little horn.
> 2. It is for the saints. . .
>
> The tragedy is that we made the pre-Advent judgment a fearful thing built upon a less-than-biblical understanding of sin, law, perfection, and even judgment itself. Spiritual insecurity and lack of biblical assurance was the result. "God is out to get you" was the message in the era of bony fingers. But that is not the Bible teaching of judgment. In Scripture the Judge is not against us or even neutral. The Judge is for us: God so loved the world that He gave His only Son for our salvation (John 3:16, 17). John 5:22 even tells us that "the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son." The purpose of judgment in the Bible is not to keep people out of heaven, but to get as many in as possible.

Question: How do you relate to the message of God's judgment?

In the end, the visions and angelic interpretation left Daniel with greatly alarming thoughts and a changed outlook (Daniel 7:28). Yet, as sure as the believer is about God establishing his kingdom, there are still earthly powers ruling with arrogance, boastfulness, and blasphemy, and oppressing God's people. Together with Daniel, we will need to wait and take a closer look into the machinations of beastly powers. As we become just as appalled and sick as Daniel was, we suffer with God's people in order to gain insight into Heaven's answer and solution. The visions are to be continued in Daniel 8 and 9.

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Contamination to Purification
Lesson #9 — February 29	Daniel 8
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: The divine touch

Leading Question: Where is God in a world overcome by horror?

In this lesson study, we look into Daniel 8 from a dual perspective. First, we recognize in Daniel's vision how God's sanctuary has become the target of the attacks by anti-God powers. Second, we will be introduced to the divine hero who comes to comfort and rescue the holy ones of God.

Sanctuary perspective

With regard to the first perspective, the question must be placed, what is the sanctuary? In the Bible, the sanctuary was a structure or a building on earth that marked the place where God came to meet with his people. Since God is holy, and the human beings are sinful, in the sanctuary the sins of the people are cleansed, so that they can be acceptable in God's presence. Sanctuary services in Bible times had the purpose to show how eager God was to do away with the sins of His people so that they could be one with Him. Thus, the sanctuary was central in the life and worship of God's people. Some life-death issues were resolved in that place. In the Hebrew mind the world could not exist without God's temple on earth. The Bible says that God led the Israelites out of Egypt so that they could worship him in the sanctuary (Exodus 4:23 and 15:13, 17). At the time of Babylon's fall, King Cyrus is going to set the captives free so that they would go back home and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). In Jesus' time the destruction of the temple and the end of the world were two concepts that were inseparable in the mind of the Hebrew people (Matthew 24:1-3).

The Jewish work known as the Mishnah or "the second law" contains a number of oral laws. In the tractate named *Yoma* that speaks of the holy days, the Book of Daniel is tied to *Yom Kippurim* or the Day of Atonement. In that text the person whose duty was to read selected biblical passages before the High Priest on the eve of the Day of Atonement, most important festival celebrated in the sanctuary, says the following: "Many times I read before him [the high priest] out of Daniel." Thus, we find an interesting link between the book of Daniel and the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In fact, a good number of sanctuary terms and symbols are scattered throughout this chapter showing that the sanctuary is the central concept of Daniel 8. For example, the GC Sabbath School Lesson mentions the symbols of "a ram and a goat [that] are used because of their connection with the Day of Atonement sanctuary ritual, a time of judgment for ancient Israel. Rams and goats were used as sacrificial offerings in the sanctuary service" (Sunday lesson).

Questions: What is the essential message of the Sanctuary? What are the dangers in making the sacrifice system too objective? What of the concept of ceremonial defilement? How is this relevant today? How is "truth cast down to the ground"? In examining all this material, how can focus be kept on the real issues? What does this all say about God?

Scholars of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists offer the following interpretation of the animals, the little horn, and other elements in Daniel 8:

- The ram with the two different horns represents the empire Medo-Persia (see the bear that is raised up on one side in Daniel 7). This empire expands toward the west, north, and south, conquering other powers. Reaching the Aegean Sea it attempts to enter Europe.
- The he-goat represents Greece, and the first horn is Alexander the Great. With 21–22 tremendous speed ("without touching the ground") he comes from the west and defeats the Medes and Persians (compare with the leopard with four wings in Daniel 7). However, in 323 BC, at the age of thirty-three and at the peak of his power and success, Alexander died. His generals divided the empire among themselves (see the four heads of the leopard). The four kings were Ptolemy, Cassander, Lysimachus, and Seleucus.
- The little horn comes out of one of the points of the compass and becomes a new world empire representing both the pagan and the papal Rome. It attacks the beautiful land which is most likely Palestine. Rome conquered Palestine as well as Egypt in the south and Syria in the east, becoming the new world empire.
- According to the interpretation provided in verse 24, the host of heaven is the true people of God. Stars may point to their leaders and teachers (Dan 12:3). The people of God are being persecuted (see the persecutions of Christians through the Roman Empire and later the Inquisition of the Roman Church).
- The Prince of the host of God is Jesus Christ. The little horn rebels against Him. Rome crucified Jesus. In the Roman Church the preeminence and supremacy of Jesus is limited (due to the worship of Mary and the supposed intercession of the saints).
- In the Old Testament sanctuary system there existed a daily ministry and a yearly ministry. This dual ministry is a type and foreshadowing of the daily and "yearly" ministry of Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. The daily ministry of Jesus is being undermined through additional mediators that the Bible does not know, such as the saints, Mary, priests, and the pope. It is undermined through unbiblical doctrines, such as the confession of sins to a priest and absolution granted by him, the mass as a non-bloody sacrifice, etc.
- The heavenly sanctuary, Christ's ministry there, and God's authority are negatively affected through papal Rome. False teachings are introduced. Scripture is supplemented and sometimes, if not oftentimes, eclipsed by the authority of tradition.
- In Daniel 2 the stone comes without involvement of human hands and destroys all powers. So also the little horn will be destroyed.
- The entire vision, which begins in Medo-Persian time (vs. 2–3) and lasts till the end, includes 26 2,300 evenings and mornings. These 2,300 evenings and mornings are 2,300 years. Daniel does not receive further information and therefore does not understand the time element. After the 2,300 years the heavenly sanctuary will be cleansed. From verse 10 onward the chapter deals with the heavenly dimension. Also, after AD 70 the earthly sanctuary no longer existed. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary corresponds with the Day of Atonement of the earthly sanctuary (verbal and thematic parallels between Daniel 8 and Leviticus 16). The sanctuary and God's people are finally freed from sin; at the same time the Day of Atonement is a period of judgment (see Lev 16 and Dan 7). After the end of the 2,300 years begins the second phase of Jesus' ministry as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. After its completion He will come again and erect His kingdom of glory.

However, based on Daniel 8 we are not able to date the 2300 years. Daniel 9 will furnish more information. In any case: We live in the last time of earth's history, and Jesus is involved in a special ministry on our behalf. Soon he will come again. We want to be ready.

Daniel 8 concludes with the prophet in such great confusion that he became weak and sick, and completely devastated, because there was no one who could explain to him the appalling things he had seen and heard in the vision (Dan 8:27).

Divine Hero Perspective

The time of the vision is the third year of Belshazzar (547 B.C.E.); the location, Susa, a long-established imperial place, capital of the Persian Empire. Both, time and location are provided to signal the imminent change of empires.[2] The broad flow of history including decline and dissolution of world powers was already revealed to the prophet in Nebuchadnezzar's dream image in Daniel 2. At the end, the stone crashed the statue and a kingdom emerged, so different from the one established by Nebuchadnezzar's military forces as only ancient prophetic language was able to convey, "a stone was cut out — but not by hand" — a Hebrew synonym for the intrinsic powerlessness of that kingdom's realm (Dan 2:34, 45). For, "A principle other than power is at work in history, an elusive principle that is not of this world. . . . God's 'hand' represents a different mode of action."[3]

In the realm of the beast of Daniel 7 and 8 a different picture emerges. The sea beasts in Daniel 7 as well as the ram and the goat in Daniel 8, recognized as sacrificial animals of the Temple, escalate their destructive forces. The goat turned unicorn transitions into a four-horned beast, which eventually ends up as a small horn growing large and high with some abnormal features. No wonder, then, Daniel's horror at the end of the vision. Why would temple animals act so out of place? Why would the ram and the goat, whose lives should be exchanged for the lives of people according to the soteriological exposition of the ancient Israelite sacrificial system, become beasts of aggression and instead destroy God's people? How can it be that sacrifices turn into mythical creatures, even become representatives of powers such as Media, Persia, and Greece (Daniel 8:20, 21)? And what about the little horn?

Is it conceivable that the ram, the goat, and the little horn in Daniel 8 are not as much symbols of godless world empires—as the mythical sea beasts were (Daniel 7), but that the vision of Temple animals tells a far more distressing story: Sacrifices, set apart to for offerings on the altar, have turned into power-hungry, violent, destructive empires. A careful examination of the Temple animals' characteristics and actions suggests that the vision in Daniel 8 reframes words, concepts, and symbolic figures in such a way that the prophetic text creates narrative extensions about counterfeit theology and fake philosophical ideas. Daniel's world is in a cataclysmic mode, and the prophet is horrified.

Daniel and his exiled community would have been familiar with the ram not just as an animal raised and dedicated for sacrifices at the Temple but also as a symbolic figure of political leadership, dignitaries, military leaders, and advisers (Exodus 15:5; 2 Kings 24:15; Ezekiel 3:11; 34:17). When the ram was "butting" or "goring" and destroying other animals, it surely did not function as a Temple

[2] Amy C. Merrill Willis, *Dissonance and the Drama of Divine Sovereignty in the Book of Daniel* (The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies Book 520; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 97.

[3] Sigve K. Tonstad, "Timeout: From Daniel to Revelation," in *Spectrum Magazine*, 01 February, 2019.

sacrifice, but it imitated the actions of an ox goring men, women, and children to death with its horns (Exodus 21:28, 31, 32).

In the same way, the goat is not just a sacrificial animal but also an image of kingship familiar from the prophetic books (Isaiah 14:9; Jeremiah 50:8; Ezekiel 34:17; Zechariah 10:3). The goat's violent actions of "trampling" and destruction in Daniel 8 are much closer to the aggression of the Babylonians when they fight and devastate their enemies (Ezekiel 26:11).

Moreover, the little horn, when it "trampled" some of the heavenly host and the stars to the ground, it acts in the way of the rebellious kings of both Babylon and Tyre (Isaiah 14:4-20 and Ezekiel 28:1-19). The motif is characterized by hubris leading the king to elevate himself to the clouds of heaven, even as far as the divine throne, and claim for himself divine power.

There is significant overlap in language and thematic motifs between Daniel 8 and the famous taunt against the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:4-20. Both passages use the term "goat" to refer to earthly leaders, both share the language and motif of hubristic thinking, both employ the concept of self-exaltation up to the host and the stars, and both utilize the motif of casting down to the earth.[4] From the angelic interpretation in the vision, Daniel learns that the little horn is "a king . . ., insolent and skilled in intrigue" (Daniel 8:23). He acts like the king of Babylon in Ezekiel 17:2. When he uses power, which is not his own, to destroy to an extraordinary degree the mighty ones and the holy people (Daniel 8:24), he acts like Assyria, God's servant, but then became a perpetrator against the downtrodden (Isaiah 10:5-14).

"Nothing counterfeit can endure forever," states Abraham Joshua Heschel. There should never be a ram with long-grown horns, one longer than the other; it would be a defect of the animal, not acceptable as a sacrificial animal in the Temple. There should never be a goat with one horn between its eyes; it would be an aberration for sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple, unthinkable in the Hebrew prophet's mind. There should never be a small horn exalting itself even to the Prince of princes, casting down stars and the heavenly host, destroying God's people, throwing truth to the ground. Daniel knew well that a king after God's heart would not build military might, would not expand his kingdom by destroying other people's lives, would not be of great wealth, with storehouses filled with silver and gold, and would never set himself above his people (Deuteronomy 17:14–20). Nevertheless, such "abomination of desolation" has made its throne in the center of the holy place (Daniel 9:27; cf. Matthew 24:15). The vision in Daniel 8 then, is not as much a counter-imperial text as chapter 7 was, speaking out against world empires from Babylon to Rome, as it is a counter-religious prophetic outcry.

> "The prophet is an iconoclast, challenging the apparently holy, revered, and awesome. Beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity, he exposes as scandalous pretentions. . . The prophet knew that religion could distort what the Lord demanded of man, that priests themselves had committed perjury by bearing false witness, condoning violence, tolerating hatred, calling for ceremonies instead of bursting forth with wrath and indignation at cruelty, deceit, idolatry, and violence" (Heschel, *The Prophets*)

[4] Willis, *Dissonance*, 100.

Where is the Ancient of Days when such horrific things happen inside God's own house, done by his own people, to his own people? Where is God in Daniel 8? Some interpreters hold that the character of God seems to disappear in the second half of the book of Daniel.[5] However, a closer study into Daniel's varied visionary modes will help us gain insight into some unexplored spheres of divine presence.

Daniel uses two words to identify visions in both the Hebrew and the Aramaic parts of the book. One is a *mareh*-vision, which is actually an appearance of a human being or one who looks like a human being, the other is a *chazon*-vision often referring to beasts.[6] Whereas the *chazon*-visions filled with ferocious beasts have often caught the attention of interpreters and contributed to elaborate interpretations, the *mareh*—the appearance of a human-like being—may well be the more captivating but also mysterious one. Note how Daniel 8 speaks of such a visionary appearance in the following verses (my translation with emphasis):

> "When I was watching the vision (*chazon*), I, Daniel, was trying to understand, and look! standing in front of me it was like the **appearance (*mareh*)** of a mighty man/strong man/warrior/king (*gebher*)" (Daniel 8:15)
>
> "And I heard the voice of a human between *the banks of* Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give to this an understanding of the **appearance (*mareh*)**" (Daniel 8:16)
>
> "The **appearance (*mareh*)** of the evening and the morning, which has been told, is true; But you, conceal the vision (*chazon*), for it is for many days" (Daniel 8:26)
>
> "I, Daniel, was exhausted/weak and sick for days. Then I arose and did the king's work; but I was horrified of the **appearance (*mareh*)**, and I had no understanding" (Daniel 8:27)

The first appearance is "as the **likeness (*mareh*)** of a **man (*gebher*)**." The Hebrew *gebher* does not simply mean a man in general like *adam*, *ish*, or *enosh*. The word *gebher* contains the element of hero-like strength. A *gebher* without power is a self-contradiction and is as good as dead (Psalm 88:5f.).[7] The appearance of a man in Daniel 8:15 refers to his strength both physically and in his moral stand. He is a powerful warrior, a personified king, a strong one in divine deeds and justice.[8]

[5] Willis, *Dissonance*, 118; Niditch, *Symbolic Vision*, 247; Towner, *Daniel*, 117-18; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 508-9.

[6] "Prophetic texts use *ra'a* for visionary experiences, often parallel with *chaza*. In most cases this parallelism does not suggest synonymy (as in, e.g., Isa. 30:10) but signals a significant semantic distinction, which should always be observed. While *chaza* is a technical term originally denoting a specific form of revelation, which appears to have been associated with the prophetic seers (Nu. 24:4,16; cf., Isa 1:1; Am. 1:1; Mic. 1:1) and later came to be used as a general term for receiving a revelation (Isa. 13:1; 29:10; Ezk. 12:27), *ra'a* belongs to the language of vision accounts." See H. F. Fuhs, "ra'a," *TDOT*, 237.

[7] H. Kosmala, "gabhar," *TDOT*, 377.

[8] H. Kosmala, "gabhar," *TDOT*, 368-69.

The mighty warrior does not carry a weapon, which may come as a surprise to Daniel. Whereas the ram, the goat, and the horn fight violently, destroying the holy place, taking the perpetual offerings and services down, flinging truth to the ground, and prosper in in the midst of destruction, the human-like mighty warrior stands firm without fighting against the evil forces. As Daniel hears celestial voices shout frantically, "Until when is the vision (*chazon*)?" "How long lasts the rebellion, the horror?" (Daniel 8:13), he hears the words, "until 2300 evenings and mornings, and the holy will be made right" (Daniel 8:14). Through it all, the mighty one is just standing. Why doesn't he fight of the evil beasts? Is he a powerless *gebher*, an anomaly?

As the mighty man came near to comfort, Daniel became even more terrified, and fell into a deep sleep. Vaguely, the divine words reach the prophet's ear, but it was the divine touch that set Daniel upright (Daniel 8:17–18). This daring assertion in Daniel 8 about the tender touch and presence of the mighty divine being is woefully neglected in various interpretations (including Adventist interpretations), charts, maps, and time settings about the 2,300 evenings and mornings. It is truly significant to recognize the irony so obviously displayed in the text: violence has overtaken the holy place from within, but God does not respond with violence. Instead, He passionately cares for and revives a terrified elderly captive. Yet, the people of prophetic calling of the twentieth century have tried to find the Truth in determining time and space settings, but have too often missed the divine touch, the heart of divine pathos.

Question: How does Daniel 8 tell "the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27) so that you recognize Jesus even in Daniel's most terrifying vision?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Confession to Consolation
Lesson #10 — March 06	Daniel 9
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Prayer

Leading Question: How does prayer change perspective of perplexing events?

In 539/538 B.C.E., the first year of Darius the Mede (probably the same year that Daniel was thrown to the lions), Daniel studied the writings of Jeremiah and came to an important conclusion: within a few years the 70-year captivity, or the ten sabbatical years during which the land was at rest, was coming to an end. The text from Jeremiah 29:10–11 said: "This is what the LORD says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

Questions: Why is "God's timetable" significant? Why should we study such matters? Is it a question of knowing that God has everything operating according to plan? If so, what is the plan?! What does it really mean, "in the fullness of time, Christ came"? What of unfulfilled prophecy? What are the dangers of overstressing these issues?

Daniel had just lived through the recent fall of Babylon and the ascendancy of the Medes and Persians to world dominion. From the tone of his prayer, one can imagine Daniel's thoughts: "You said 70 years, Lord. When will we be free to go home to Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, and offer the daily sacrifice again?" Thoughts about returning to Jerusalem did not lead Daniel to make demands on God, instead, it led him to confession and repentance, to "prayer and petition in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes" (Daniel 9:3).

Daniel's prayer is often called a model prayer. However, it must be read with the understanding of God's enduring covenant relationship with Israel in mind. The Lord God is the One who surely keeps His covenant and lovingkindness toward His people. Righteousness, compassion, and forgiveness belong to Him alone. It is on this ground that Daniel turns to God with desperate petition, fasting, and confession (Daniel 9:3). "To us belongs open shame" (Daniel 9:7, 8).

It is almost impossible to remove shame once you have been publicly disgraced. It is like an indelible stain on your skin. Daniel and his people were shamed when they went into exile to Babylon. Psalm 89 describes the foreign conquest as God "spurning," "defiling," "scorning," "humiliating," and "shaming" David's royal dynasty and nation of Israel. The shame of exile deeply troubled Israel's prophets. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple caused Jeremiah to lament,

> Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;
> Look and see our disgrace! (Lamentations 5:1)

He bemoaned the shame of God's judgement.

> How the Lord in His anger has humiliated daughter Zion!
> He has thrown down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel . . .
> He has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.
> (Lamentations 2:1, 2; cf. 1:1, 6, 8; 3:30, 45; 5:14–16)

For Daniel and his people was the defining element of captivity, not just physical hardship. And so, Daniel confesses that Israel sinful unfaithfulness left them covered in shame.

> Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day — to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. Open shame belongs to us, O LORD, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. (Daniel 9:7–8)

In the Hebrew Bible shame was not removed by granting forgiveness only. When a name had been defiled, a reputation harmed, a standing damaged, one felt the stigma, the dishonor, the degradation. That is why an immensely powerful and dramatic ceremony had to take place in the sanctuary during which people could feel and symbolically see their sins carried away. The Day of Atonement especially conveyed this act when at the end of all the sacrifice ceremonies the scapegoat would be sent into the desert, to no-man's-land. When an entire people confessed, the individual sinner would be redeemed from shame. A similar ceremony took place when a leper was cleansed. The priest took two birds, killed one, and released the other to fly away across the open fields (Leviticus 14: 4-7). The act was one of cleansing, and had to do with shame being removed.

Does Daniel see any glimmer of hope in the present situation? Yes, but he places his hope in God's mercy and petitions Him to take action for the desolate sanctuary in Jerusalem.

> Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name. (Daniel 9:17-19)

While Daniel was still praying, he felt a touch, again, as it had happened years earlier (Daniel 8:18). And just as it happened then, Gabriel arrived, for the second time, now calling Daniel to pay close attention and gain understanding of the vision, the *mareh,* which was the appearance he had seen in Daniel 8:15, but was left astounded and sick, literally "horrified and with no one to explain" (Daniel 8:27).

It is in Daniel 9:24–27 that the appearance of the heroic man from Daniel 8:15 is finally revealed. He is called the "Messiah the Prince" who is "to finish the transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, bring everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, and anoint the holy of holies." In acting on behalf of His people, His Temple, and His city, another horrific paradox happens: He will be cut off, have nothing, the city and sanctuary are destroyed, and war and desolations take

place. However, at the same time, He will make a firm covenant by stopping sacrifice and offering. Sacrifice animals will no more be oppressors of people. For “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Note: Gabriel, the messenger, is given only four moments in the overarching narrative of biblical history. Gabriel comes twice to Daniel, first, to announce and accompany the appearance of the mighty divine hero (Daniel 8:16), and, then, to explain the work of Messiah the Prince to the troubled but prayerful captive (Daniel 9:21). Gabriel arrives on only two more occasions, once to announce the birth of the Messiah’s forerunner to the old priest Zacharias in the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 1:19), and, for the last time, to bring the news to Mary, the mother of the holy child, the Son of God (Luke 1:26-37).

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Battle to Victory
Lesson #11 — March 13	Daniel 10
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Earthly crisis worked out on a cosmic stage

Leading Question: How does my prayer intersect with God's cosmic concern?

Between Daniel's confessional prayer in chapter 9 and the remarkable vision in chapter 10 a few years passed (539 B.C.E.–536 B.C.E). The events in Daniel 10 are dated to the first month of 536 B.C.E., the third year of King Cyrus. Over the course of these years, Daniel surely pondered over Gabriel's revelatory response about the Messiah who will die a violent death in order to make sure that God's covenant with His people prevails (Daniel 9:22–27). We do not know how Daniel received Gabriel's message at the time, as he does not disclose his reaction (which is different from all other parts in the book of Daniel where we are given insight into his state of mind after an important event or vision). Nevertheless, Gabriel's prophecy about the Messiah must have left him in an unspeakable condition, just as it would be with us when we receive a crucial message for our lives and possibly for those around us. No wonder, many of us struggle to respond or disclose our feelings in such a situation. And, the more important and consequential the message is, the harder it feels, and we take a much longer time to let others know what it means to us. For Daniel, it took about two years until we see him in mourning.

In terms of the international situation in Daniel's world, much had changed for the elderly politician in Babylon and for his people. The first exiles had returned to their homeland in Palestine following the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C.E. Ezra 1:1-3 says:

> In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem."

Cyrus' decree, recorded on a clay cylinder in Akkadian cuneiform script, was discovered in the ruins of ancient Babylon in 1879 and contains the following text (emphasis mine):

I am Kurash [**Cyrus**], King of the World, Great King, Legitimate King, King of Babilani, King of Kiengir and Akkade, King of the four rims of the earth, Son of Kanbujiya, Great King, King of Hakhamanish, Grandson of Kurash, Great king, King of Hakhamanish, descendant of Chishpish, Great king, King of Hakhamanish, of a family which always exercised kingship; whose rule Bel and Nebo love, whom they want as king to please their hearts. When I entered Babilani as a friend and when I established the seat of the government in the palace of the ruler under jubilation and rejoicing, Marduk, the great lord,

induced the magnanimous inhabitants of Babilani to love me, and I was daily endeavoring to worship him.... As to the region from as far as Assura and Susa, Akkade, Eshnunna, the towns Zamban, Me-turnu, Der as well as the region of the Gutians, **I returned to these sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which used to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I also gathered all their former inhabitants and returned them to their habitations.** Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Kiengir and Akkade whom Nabonidus had brought into Babilani to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their former temples, the places which make them happy.

One can imagine the excitement among the exiles, when this proclamation was made. As for Daniel, he could have been more than eighty years old at this time, and Daniel 10 suggests that he left Babylon and lived in the city of Susa. His advanced age would have prevented him from joining those who returned to Palestine.

In Judah, the work on the rebuilding of the temple began with great joy*:*

> When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. (Ezra 3:10, 11)

This excitement, however, did not last long. Soon the people rebuilding Jerusalem were faced with serious difficulties. There was strong opposition especially to the rebuilding of the Temple. Ezra 4:4, 5 says:

> Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. They hired counselors to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

In Persia, Cyrus promoted his son, the crown prince Cambyses, to the position of co-regent. Cambyses was neither favorable nor generous toward the Palestinian provinces and may have even been religiously hostile toward the Jews.

With Gabriel's words about the Messiah, the Temple, and the holy city in mind while at the same time experiencing the upheavals in the newly established Persian empire and hearing about the difficult circumstances from his people in Jerusalem, Daniel decided for a most unusual period of mourning and fasting. Jacques B. Doukhan has noted that Daniel's fasting period happened in the first month of the year, the month of Nisan, when Jews celebrated the festival of Passover and fasting was not in order. During this time, to not eat meat and drink wine was not appropriate as eating the lamb and having four coups of wine was part of the ritual meals for Passover. Only an exceptionally tragic event could have been the reason for a Jew, to violate the Passover rituals. In the case of Daniel, this could very well be news about the interruption of the Temple constructions that warrented his three-week long fast. Also, the length of the fasting time was out of place, as Daniel took three weeks instead of the biblically instructed three days (Exodus 19:10–15; cf. Esther 4;16) (Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 158). At

the end of the three weeks of mourning, on the 24th of the month Nisan, after the week of Passover concluded, a man dressed in linen appeared to Daniel at the Tigris River in an overwhelming vision. Doukahn further observes, "it is certainly not an accident that the vision occurs against the background of Passover, which celebrates the deliverance from Egypt and sets the mood for the Promised Land" (*Secrets of Daniel*, 159).

Question: In what circumstances have you felt the need for a special time of devotion, prayer, mourning and fasting?

The man Daniel saw, was wearing linen, a traditional priestly dress with a golden belt (cf. Exodus 28:4, 5, 8, 39; Leviticus 16:4, 23; Ezekiel 44:17). His face and body are aflame, gleaming like precious stone, eyes like flaming torches, and his voice projects like the sound of a multitude. Everything about him is in the superlative similar to another description of a man wearing linen in Ezekiel 9:2–3, but also has the other marks and is interpreted "as the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1:28). In a similar way, the divine being reappears in the book of Revelation, and there is also associated with the Passover feast wearing the same priestly garment and a golden sash (Revelation 1:13). His voice too resounds like a multitude and he identifies himself as divine: "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of Hades" (Revelation 1:15–18). In other words, the parallelism indicates that Daniel, like Ezekiel and John, had a theophany, where God himself came as human High Priest to him to the banks of the Tigris River.

When Daniel's companions, unable to see the appearance of the man as High Priest (Hebrew *mareh,* in Daniel 10:7, 8, 16), fled in fear, Daniel faced the man alone. As the High Priest man began to speak, an exhausted and fearful Daniel collapsed into a deep sleep. Only because of an act of divine strengthening, Daniel tottered on his legs, and the High Priest man told him to not fear: he was there in response to Daniel's prayer from a few years earlier when Gabriel delivered the messianic prophecy (Daniel 9:23). The High Priest man had heard Daniel's prayer, but the prince of Persia prevented him from coming. Michael intervened and helped against the prince of Persia, and so the High Priest man came to deliver his message to Daniel (Daniel 10:13–14).

The message was about what would happen to Daniel's people in a "time yet to come," which sent Daniel back to the ground, without breath, and in need of an additional divine touch. This time, Daniel is in need of great strength as he is called to be at peace and not be afraid (Daniel 10:19). The message he must understand is so important that it is written in the "Book of Truth" (Daniel 10:21). Michael's fight against hostile forces has been ongoing from the time when Daniel prayed for forgiveness and restoration in the first year of Darius (Daniel 9). This is also the when Cyrus issued the decree that the exiled people could return to their land and rebuild their city and the Temple. It seems that there were forces acting on a cosmic level and trying to hinder this important decree, and God had his hands full in fighting on behalf of His exiled people.

Question: What difference does it make to know that God works on my behalf from a cosmic level?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From North and South to the Beautiful Land
Lesson #12 — March 20	Daniel 11
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Caught between North and South

Leading Question: How to deal with difficult truth in a sensible manner?

Daniel 11 begins with the words of the human-like divine High Priest conveying the truth as it is inscribed in the "Book of Truth" (Daniel 10:21):

> Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all *of them;* as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole *empire* against the realm of Greece. And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his *own* descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and *given* to others besides them. (Daniel 11:2–4)

Daniel receives an extraordinary description of history that concerned the Jewish people from the fourth to the second century B.C.E. Three kings would rule after "Darius the Mede" (Daniel 11:1)[9] and then a fourth one would come who is interpreted as Alexander the Great. Since, historically there were thirteen Persian kings who ruled from Darius the Mede / Cyrus until the demise of the Medo-Persian empire, the number is not to be read in a literal sense. Commentators offer different solutions to the numerical conundrum of "three more kings" and the "fourth one" speaking of the progression from three to four as in Proverbs 30:15–31, or of the number four as the totality of earthly rulers until the time of the end. During much of this time period wars raged over the land of Palestine.

In verses 5–20 the history of the conflicts between the north and the south begins with an alliance initiated by the south followed by an attack on the King of the North. In the second phase of this long conflict the attack is from the north, and the King of the North triumphs over the south. Starting in verse 21 to 35, a transition in style happens as a most "despicable one" arises and replaces the King of the North by actions that surpass all that happened before. In verses 36 to 45, another significant section poses great interpretation challenges so that one commentator wrote that its difficult nature demands "humility and charity" of its interpreters (Hill, *Daniel*, 199).

Among the majority of interpreters, the contemptible person in Daniel 11 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes who eventually turned the Temple in Jerusalem into a pagan shrine, massacred Jews, and burned much of Jerusalem. Gentile priests killed pigs and other unclean animals in the Temple as sacrifices to Zeus; circumcision was outlawed; festivals and Sabbaths were forbidden, and sacred scrolls were burned, and their owners killed (see 1 Macc 1;20–57). Adventist commentators recognize the stylistic break in

[9] The Septuagint has replaced "Darius the Mede" in Dan 11:1 with "Cyrus the Persian" indicating that Cyrus was the Great King of the empire at the time.

the narration from verse 21 onward, but do not identify one single ruler with the "despicable" king but point to similarities between the activities of the King of the North followed by the contemptible person in Daniel 11 and the little horn in Daniel 8, where destructive earthly events culminate in a spiritual battle of cosmic magnitude (Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 168–179; Stefanovic, *Daniel*, 407–422).

Questions: What do you think is most important here? Knowing the identities of the King of the North/South? If not, why is it in the Bible? How do we treat matters we don't clearly understand? What is the larger picture here? Was God condescending in showing to Daniel what would happen? In the light of Daniel's prayer, what does prayer do? What kind of God is at work here?

What are we to make of Daniel 11? Here is how one pastor prayed about it, "Lord, I don't even like reading this chapter. How can I interest [my congregation]?" Later, he found a way of preaching the text and confessed:

> One of my principles of sermon preparation is to outline the passage, but I wondered what outlining the eye-glazing-over details of Daniel 11 would achieve. Another idea struck me. Perhaps a picture would help. I began trying to produce a diagram of who did what to whom and when. Finally the message started to become clear.
>
> Successive generations of northern and southern kingdoms were attacking each other, and cought in the middle was tiny Israel. "North" and "south" were from Israel's viewpoint. Moreover, Isreal wasn't just caught in the crossfire but increasingly cought in the crosshairs. And by the end, she became the singular tartget. That would certainly be consistent with Satan's intent and completely consistent with historical details. . . . But between verses 36 and 40, the imagery departs from the historical record. At the same time the imagery reminds the reader of similar messages in the visions of chapters 2 and 7.
>
> Is God showing a prototype pattern of history that would in many ways repeat itself until the unique close of the chapter just before the end of the current historical era? And was the revealing to mankind that God's people would always be caught in the crossfire and in the crosshairs? Of course! How consistent with that doggedly repeated message of suffering in both Old and New Testaments that also has characterized the history of God's people to the present day. How relevant to my congregation! (Finley and Morsey, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 11").

The story of suffering under oppressive rulers is the story of God's people and one that is often deeply personal. The answer in Daniel 11 is that the times are in God's hands, even appointed by Him (Daniel 11:27, 29, 35), and God is actively refining and purifying his own (verse 35).

Question: How would Jesus explain "the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27) from Daniel 11?

GOOD WORD 2020.1	From Dust to Stars
Lesson #13 — March 27	Daniel 12
	—prepared by Mathilde Frey, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Waiting

Leading Question: Are you watching the clock or the clouds?

Daniel 12 brings the vision to a close with the intervention of Michael in time of unprecedented distress. The deliverance comes to those whose names are written in the book and it comes by resurrection, a rather rare concept in the Hebrew Bible. Death meant to sleep in sheol where no one would praise God (Pss 6:5; 30:9; 115:16–17). However, resurrection is a metaphor in Ezekiel 37 for Israel's restoration, and in Daniel 12 we read of an actual individual resurrection. For Christians, the hope of resurrection is grounded in the completed work of Jesus Christ. Because He suffered, died and was buried, rose again, and ascended to heaven, we have hope. Because he came and suffered, we have a great High Priest who can intercede for us throughout this life (Hebrews 4:14–15).

In Daniel's vision, the linen-clad man, the High Priest, stood "above the waters of the river," while two angels stood on opposite banks. One asked a question we have heard before, "How long?" (Daniel 12:6; cf. 8:13). The response we have heard too, "A time, times, and half a time" (Daniel 12:7; cf. 7:25). Daniel seems to not understand, and so he asked in another way about the outcome of all he had seen. Here, Daniel 12 connects with another prophet who also persisted in asking questions about things that didn't make sense, about God's way of dealing with justice in the world (Habakkuk 2:1–20). God responded to Habakkuk that judgment would come, but it might take a while.

> Then the LORD answered me and said,
> "Record the vision
> And inscribe *it* on tablets,
> That the one who reads it may run.
> For the vision is yet for the appointed time;
> It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.
> Though it tarries, wait for it;
> For it will certainly come, it will not delay."
> (Habakkuk 2:2–3)

Hints of the text in Habakkuk run throughout Daniel's final revelation: it was a vision for a time to come (Daniel 10:14); it awaited its appointed time (11:14, 27, 35); waiting was truly required (12:12), and had to do with some mysterious numbers (Daniel 12:11–12). The 1,290 days is the time between the abolishment of sacrifice and the abomination of desolation. The 1,335 days is the period of the "blessed" who keep on waiting. Stefanovic explaines, that when these two numbers are put together with the expression "time, times, and half a time" which in other places if said to be 1,260 days , then the three numbers, namely 1,260 days, 1,290 days, and 1,335 days appear in a progression and tell of

the delay in the time of waiting (*Daniel*, 448). Doukhan adds, "waiting is the only way to survive. It is the last message Daniel hears from the angel: 'Blessed is the one who waits'" (*Secrets of Daniel*, 189).

Just as Habakkuk needed to trust God to right all wrongs at the appointed time, so the reader of Daniel must trust that no matter how long the delay, God will one day judge the wicked and reward the righteous.

This vision challenges us in many ways. It is rooted in a complex history we hardly know, and it is riddled with interpretive difficulties. It transcends its historical setting of Daniel's time, and yet it is not always clear to us how. Daniel himself failed to grasp all that he heard and saw in his visions (Daniel 12:8; cf. 7:28; 8:27), and that seemed to be no big problem with his heavenly visitors. The time when he "had an understanding of the vision" (Daniel 10:1) was not about numbers, days, and years, but when he recognized the linen-clad man and understood his mission: "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy" (Daniel 9:24).

Questions: What is the main message for us at the end of the book of Daniel? How can we draw comfort from this conclusion to the book of Daniel? How does this parallel Revelation and the conclusion of the great controversy?