

November 28, 1993

"Daniel"  
Book of Daniel

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. Last week we noted that in 722 BC the northern kingdom (Israel) fell to Assyria. Judah (southern kingdom) continued as a national entity until 586 BC when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchnezar, king (606-561 BC) of Babylonia, II Chron. 36:4-20. (Assyria was overcome by Babylonia in 606 BC, and Media-Persia Empire ruled 536-330 BC, Greek Empire 330-146 BC, Roman Empire 146 BC-476 AD+.) Israel as a nation ceased to exist from 586 BC until 1948 AD, some 2534 years. Nebuchnezar's cruelty is best seen in Jer. 39:5-10 when he conquered Judah's last king Zedekiah (597-586 BC) who succeeded Jehoiachin (597 BC, 3 mos.) who succeeded Jehoiakim, 608-597 BC. In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (605 BC), Daniel was taken to Babylon as a young (16?) man some 13 years before Jerusalem was completely destroyed. (Ezekiel was taken there also about 3 years after Daniel in 602 BC.) Daniel served during the reign of two Babylonian kings, Nebuchnezar and Belshazar, and two Media-Persian kings, Darius and Cyrus.

II. Daniel was of noble birth (1:3), very fit physically, well above average intellectually, and comfortable in adapting to new and different situations. He learned the new Chaldean language and culture readily. He was deported and lived with three other Hebrews Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Their names were changed to Chaldean in order to further encourage cultural integration into Babylonian society, 1:7. The one very strong reservation which Daniel held most vigorously was his religious faith. As a Hebrew he objected to violating God's injunction against eating certain unclean meats, Lev. 11:1-47. Daniel means "God is my judge," and he was faithful to his name when influences disputed his early training and beliefs. And so, when he was introduced to the king's choice fare, he requested that he be allowed to eat only vegetables. When his request was refused, he persuaded the king's representative to let the Hebrew youngsters change their diets for just ten days. Daniel won and his reputation soared in the king's household and throughout the area. So great was his faithfulness, ability, and attainments that Nebuchnezar soon "made him to rule over all the province of Babylon and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon," 2:48. Like Joseph in Egypt, one of the blessings of God was his ability to interpret dreams.

III. In chaps. 2 and 4 Daniel interpreted dreams by the kings which the royal astrologers, sorcerers, and magicians could not unveil. In the first, not only did Daniel tell Nebuchnezar what he had dreamed but also the interpretation, a beast whose head represented the present kingdom of Babylon and the kingdoms which were to follow. The king recognized Daniel's God as supreme and promoted him in the king's court. Nebuchnezar made a bust of gold and ordered everyone to bow down and worship it. The Hebrews, of course (Ex. 20:4-5), refused to do so and immediately were forced to suffer the king's command, to be thrown into a fired furnace. Since Daniel was in the King's Palace, he did not go near the image, but his three friends did and were thrown in the furnace. God saved them alive, and,

in fact, was in the furnace with them in the person of his Son, 3:25. In the second dream (chap. 4) Daniel interpreted Nebuchnezar's vision of a tree grown tall and strong as his own reign during which he would become as a beast of the field. The king did immediately become wild and eat grass with the oxen, but his recognition of Jehovah God as the King of heaven restored him to rationality.

IV. Succeeding Nebuchnezar was Belshazar (prince of Bel, i.e., Baal), son of Nebuchnezar, 5:2. Belshazar was a lustful, partying monarch who enjoyed giving large feasts with much alcohol for all his guests. On one such occasion when all his princes, wives, and concubines were gathered, he brought out the sacred, gold vessels which his father had brought from the Temple in Jerusalem to be used for the drinks. At the height of the debauchery, human fingers mysteriously wrote a message on the wall. His soothsayers could not read the message, and Daniel was brought in to interpret. The hand writing on the wall stated: God has judged you and your kingdom, found you short of God's expectations, and now your kingdom will be taken by the Medes and the Persians. That very night the prince of Bel was slain by Darius, the Median king, with whom Daniel fared well. Darius gave Daniel second-in-command responsibilities, but those under Daniel sought to discredit him. They did this by subtly enticing Darius to sign a decree that for 30 days anyone who prayed to any being other than Darius would be fed to the lions. Daniel was discovered to be praying to Jehovah God three times daily. He was fed to the lions, but God saved him. Darius decreed as a result of this miracle that Daniel's God was "alive and steadfast for ever."

V. Chaps. 7-12 of the Book of Daniel are distinguishable from chaps. 1-6 in that the latter tell of a series of visions which the prophet had during the reigns of Belshazar, chaps. 7-8; Darius, chap. 9; and Cyrus, chaps. 10-12. These dreams dramatically outline God's future plans, beginning with Babylon and continuing to the end of the ages. They give a preview of God's redemption and have been called the key to all biblical prophecy. They relate that God is, in fact, sovereign over all the affairs of all mankind at all times. Just as he was in control of Babylon's activities, he has always controlled the destinies of all people in all ages and will do so through the age that ends all ages. Even as Daniel in 2:2 states, "He [God] revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." Central to God's revelation through Daniel was the reference to "the Ancient of days," 7:9,13,22, which has proved to be none other than God in the flesh, Jesus the Christ (Messiah), and our Lord. Since Ezekiel, Daniel, and John (Revelation) all went through similar experiences, (humanly speaking, apparent hopelessness for God's faithful), all three were given similar assurances from God that the culmination of the ages will see God's faithful incomparably rewarded for their faith in God through his Son, Jesus Christ, Ezek. 36-39; Dan. 7-12; Rev. 18-22. Those of us who trust, or those who have ever trusted, Jesus Christ are assured of being cared for eternally, regardless of what happens to anyone else. [As time permits, we will examine Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:26-27; 11:31; 12:1,4,9,11; Ezek. 38:2,14-15,18;39:11-12,27-29; Matt. 24:27-31; I Thes. 4:8-5:11.]

November 28, 1993

"Daniel" Couples Class  
Book of Daniel <sup>Heb. Daniel</sup> Wendell Alford,  
2:4 - 7:28 <sup>Arabic</sup> <sup>Chaldee</sup> Teacher

4:5 PM  
ended  
7:04 PM

crushed  
egypt  
at back  
mesh  
in 605  
p 660

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Revelation  
in an  
unusual

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*only chief god of Assyria*

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*old 170*

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*Apocalyptic  
in the  
revelation  
prophecy  
of the  
end of  
times  
has  
been  
predicted  
in  
scripture*

*Magic was son of Zachariah, son of Peah; Dan. 10:21; Chron. 1:8*

*Lyonsville, N.C. 11/30/40*

*1966 II John 2:1-17*

Jan. 05, 2003

"Dedicated to God"  
Dan. 1

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. The history of the nation of Israel indicates a people who have had a continual "roller coaster" existence. Although he had a singular faith in Jehovah God, Abraham lived a nomadic, hectic life. Moses' era of leading the Israelites was likewise a period of unhappiness, slavery and wandering in the desert. Settling the Promised Land made the judges' and David's leadership a tentative time of continual war and turmoil. From a political or national standpoint Solomon's reign over Israel was its pinnacle of strength and glory. Following that crest of political and material success, the Israeli throne was occupied by mostly immoral, self-centered men of questionable integrity. God sent the prophets during this dire time for the Jews. Jesus, in looking back over Jewish history, divided the long history into the law and the prophets, Matt. 5:17; 7:12. In our generation we have witnessed the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 just following the tremendous humiliation and destruction of millions of Jews by the Germans under Adolf Hitler. What is to be the future of those people with whom God covenanted several millennia ago and to whom he promised such great things? God commissioned the prophets over several hundred years to lead the Jews to expect a Messiah who would save the nation and lead them during a period of blessings in a special Kingdom of God. Today we begin an examination of one of those prophets of God, Daniel, who announced what would happen to the Jews as the history of God's world progresses. God sent his only Son Jesus Christ to earth to fulfill his promise to send a Messiah and set up his own Kingdom, but the Jews refused to accept Jesus as God's Messiah and his Kingdom, Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:7-15; Lk 1:17; Acts 2:22,36. The ekklesia era (the time of the Gentiles) became a period which could have been omitted (from a human viewpoint) had the Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah immediately, for the ekklesia is not mentioned, per se, in the Old Covenant. The Jews' refusal of Jesus gave us Gentiles an opportunity to know and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, Rom. 11:25-36. Therefore, the prophecy of Daniel concerns the Jews and God's plan for them in human history, and Daniel was not permitted to amplify on a period near the culmination of history, Dan. 12:4,9,13. What Daniel could not prophesy in his day, God made a part of his Word (the Revelation) to mankind through his last apostle, John, on the Isle of Patmos in about AD 95-97. If the Lord permits, we shall examine God's final Revelation at some later date.

II. Israel became a monarchy with the first king, Saul, and the nation remained intact, more or less, until after Solomon's death. After his death the kingdom divided into a northern kingdom, Israel, and a southern kingdom, Judah. In about 725 BC Israel ceased being a nation, but Judah continued on. Judah, in about 608 BC, was ruled by Jehoiakim who was placed in that position by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, II Chron. 35:20,22; 36:4. From the other direction (east) came Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who captured Jerusalem in about 604 BC. Nebuchadnezzar disrupted Jerusalem's government by making Jehoiakim, in effect, to be his vassal and took thousands of the "cream"

of Judah's personnel back to Babylon. Among those taken captives were Daniel and three of his friends. Then Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, became a vassal, but he rebelled against Babylon. His uncle Zedekiah became king and also openly rebelled against Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar came personally to Jerusalem. The gory results are recorded in II Kings 25:5-7. At this time most of Jerusalem's people were taken to Babylon and made citizens there. The Jews remained in exile in Babylon for seventy years. When Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Jerusalem, he carried part of the vessels from the Temple back to Babylon where they were used to worship the king's god. The select group of the Jewish captives which were taken to Babylon were the best young men, mentally and physically. Some of these were relatives of King Jehoiakim, vs. 3. Daniel and his three friends were good looking, young (Daniel was perhaps sixteen.), intelligent, and were taught the Chaldean language and literature, vs. 4. (I believe that they were made eunuchs since they were subject to Ashpenaz, master of the eunuchs. Also, Daniel never married.) After these young men were "prepared" to serve the king, they were placed on a diet from the king's table. The standard procedure was to continue this regimen for three years before they gave personal service to the king. The four young Jews were also given Chaldean names to replace their Jewish names: Belteshazzar (Daniel), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego), vs. 7. At the outset of this experience, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself (perform contrary to the Jewish Law which he had been taught as a child, Lev. 10:8-11; 11:41-47), with the king's "unclean" meat and wine. Obviously, Daniel had dedicated himself to his God Jehovah and was determined to practice the faith he professed, vs. 8.

III. At this time Ashpenaz had placed Daniel and the other three under an underling, Melzar (the steward). Melzar agreed to permit the four (at Daniel's insistence) to forego the king's prescribed diet on a trial basis for ten days. They ate vegetables during the ten days, and the results were very favorable. The four continued to advance in knowledge, skill, and literature. Daniel had a God-given special ability to understand a perspective of related facts and the over-view of those relationships. (King Uzziah of Judah had the same ability, II Chron. 26:1-5; Isa. 6:1.) When the three-year preparation period was over for Daniel and the three others, the chief eunuch presented them to King Nebuchadnezzar who was especially favorably impressed with the four and conscripted them for immediate service, vs. 19. At the end of this chapter the statement is made of the exemplary reputation of the four Jewish refugees, "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king asked of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers (advisors) that were in all his realm," vs. 20. Finally, in vs. 21 the Word states that Daniel's political service there continued during the entire seventy years of the Jewish exile in Babylon, until the first year of Cyrus' reign. The dedicated prophet lived about ninety years, but apparently he never returned to his beloved Jerusalem. At any rate, the Bible does not relate that he ever saw again his native land, Judah.

Jan. 12, 2003

"God's Outline of History"  
Dan. 2

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. Last week we noted that the nation of Israel had been overcome, and from Daniel's first chapter that, finally, Judah was taken by the growing empire of Babylon under the awesome Gentile King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and three of his friends were brought from Judah to Babylon and made a part of the king's elite staff of advisors and counselors. Now in Chap. 2 Daniel has become a direct servant and is expected to satisfy every whim of the king's desires. One such eerie desire which the king presented to his staff was a dream that had brought much consternation to the monarch. He had become the leader of what was becoming a world empire rather quickly. He had been king for only two years, and his future bothered him greatly. Under such tremendous pressure, Nebuchadnezzar was losing sleep at night worrying about what to do with his newfound authority. One night he dreamed of an experience which further baffled his view of the future. Since he did not know the dream's meaning, he did what any good leader does. He called together his cabinet of advisors (They were called magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers by the Chaldeans.) and told them of his dream which he wanted them to bring to mind and to interpret. However, he wanted them not only to interpret the dream, but also to conjure up the dream without being told even what the dream was. The results of not bringing the king an answer to his question, were that they would be, "- - if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your homes shall be made a dunghill (ash heap), vs. 5. (Of literary significance is the fact that the Book of Daniel is written in Aramaic from 2:4b through 7:28 rather than Hebrew. Aramaic was the court or diplomatic language used in Babylonian political affairs. Further significance, is the fact that God is saying that the Jews are being removed from worldwide political competition until the end of "the times of the Gentiles,") Lk 21:24; Rom. 11:25.

II. Now back to the dream: Just as destruction would follow not meeting the king's demands, so would fame and reward be given for doing so. For a solution to the king's dilemma, the advisors would be given gifts, rewards and great honor, vs. 6. The men were in a quandary because as they told the king, they would certainly be unable to give an interpretation unless he would reveal the dream. The king accused them of stalling for time (and their lives). They told the monarch that, "There is not a man upon the earth that can solve the king's matter." The king was furious and sent out a decree that his threat be carried out. Daniel, God's prophet, was among those to be destroyed, and when he heard of the decree, he consulted with Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, and asked for a conference with the king. Daniel asked the king for a little time to consider the matter, and he would then reveal to the king the information he desired. The king's favorable opinion of Daniel is evident in the monarch's reaction. While he had refused all the other advisors, he gave Daniel more time to consider the challenge. Daniel went home and conferred with his three companions. They agreed that only their "God of heaven" could reveal the necessary informa-

tion for the king. God revealed the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation to Daniel in a dream. The prophet prayed, "Blessed be the God of heaven for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are his: And he changes the times and the seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that have understanding. I thank thee and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might," vss. 19-23.

III. Daniel went to Arioch and requested a conference with the king immediately. The king listened as Daniel gave, first, his testimony of God, and then the dream and its interpretation. "Your advisors could never have told you the dream or its interpretation, but there is a God in heaven who reveals the secret to Nebuchadnezzar what will happen from now to the latter days," vss. 27-28. "It is not any credit for me (but to my God) that you are receiving this information," vs. 30. "Now here is your dream and what it means: You saw a great image being formed as you watched. The huge image which was formed was immense, glowed brightly and stood [in the general form of a man] before you in awesome splendor. The image had a head of pure gold, his chest and arms were of silver, his abdomen and thighs were of brass, his legs [below the knees] were of iron, but his feet were a mixture of iron and baked clay. You then saw a Stone which was made by other than man's hands strike the huge image at his feet of iron and clay and break the feet into pieces. Following the destruction of the feet, the entire image even through the head of gold was crushed and became like threshing floor chaff, and the wind blew the chaff completely away. The Stone which demolished the image became a huge mountain like the entire earth," vss. 31-35; Matt. 21:42-46; I Pet. 2:4-10.

IV. "The meaning of your dream is this: You, O king, are a king of kings, for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. You are the head of gold. After you another kingdom (the silver) will rise, but of less importance. Then a third empire will rule over the earth which is the brass portion of the image. The fourth kingdom to arise will represent the iron in the image and will be very strong and influential in the earth. A fifth kingdom representing the feet mixed of iron and clay will be divided and partly strong and partly weak," vss. 36-43. The kingdoms are to be diminutive in their order. [As history of the Middle-East and then the entire earth has developed through the millennia, the kingdoms are in this order: Babylon, Medea-Persia, Graeco-Macedonia, Rome, and finally the clay-iron is to be a world empire of Roman influence (built upon the foundation of Rome), but broken into many nations.] The most revealing information in the entire prophecy is in vss. 44-45, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, it shall overcome and supplant all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. This dream is absolute and God's interpretation is trustworthy." King Nebuchadnezzar said, "Your God is the God of gods who alone can [know the future]. Daniel asked that he sit in the king's court and his three friends be heads of provinces. Daniel's faith in God served the four very well.





—gold—BABYLON

—silver—MEDIA-PERSIA

—brass—GRAECO-MACEDONIA

—iron—ROME

—clay inserted—LAST FORM  
OF ROMAN RULE

Jan. 19, 2003

"Facing A Furnace For Faith"  
Dan. 3

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. If King Nebuchadnezzar had been a modern-day believer in Jesus Christ, he would have felt very humble after Daniel interpreted the king's dream to mean that God had been so generous in putting a world empire under his rule. Instead, the Gentile monarch assumed that he himself had been and was responsible for accomplishing such political power and prestige, Dan. 2:20-21. To prove his "self-worth" he took the dream and used it as a basis for making himself a god, in effect. The mechanics of how he implemented such a high opinion of himself was to gather together enough gold to create and erect a gold image ninety feet high and nine feet wide. He placed the image in the expansive plain of Dura which surrounded the Babylonian area. Such a glorious (materialistically speaking) figure would cost many millions (perhaps billions) today. It stood where it could be seen clearly on a fair day with the bright sun reflecting from the gold for scores of miles. [No doubt, it would have made the Tower of Babel, by comparison, a dunghill. I mention the comparison, because both represented some men's desire to attempt to prove themselves superior to, or at least equal to, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth. This same spirit of rebellion against God can be expected on a worldwide basis when time is approaching its end. At that time the person perpetrating such an image of himself will be the one the Bible calls the personification of sin itself, the man of sin, II Thes. 2:1-12. How can such a condition ever come to be? We are seeing in our nation today exactly what brings about such a "strong delusion." Our nation was founded by people who believed in God, most of them Christians. Now we have a growing number of those who are following other religions. Obviously, those religions do not represent our Lord Jesus Christ. Our laws based upon the Constitution guarantee freedom to all, but what happens if some American citizens now believe that their freedom permits them to force, (physically if necessary - what we know as terrorism) other citizens to conform to their own beliefs and actions? (See what Jesus said about such force, Matt. 20:25-28; Lk 22:21-26.) Translate this condition to some future time into a much "smaller" world with a world government in control, and it is therein easy to see that maintaining civil order could require strict enforcement of man's laws.

II. On a much smaller scale we can understand why Nebuchadnezzar made worshiping an image, figuratively himself, the law of the land. He attempted to maintain civil order among his people through promoting a universal religion with himself as a god. To do this consolidating of his people's allegiance to himself, Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree that at the sound of any musical instrument, all who heard were to bow to and worship the gold image which represented him (his authority). To implement this great change among his people, the king first called all of his political leaders together and outlined his plan to them. He expected them to go back among the people and promote his plan in a persuasive way. Among the political principals whom he gathered in the conference were the princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs, and

rulers of the provinces. Later, these same leaders were in attendance at the gala dedication of the image representing the king and his pagan god. Hordes of people were gathered around the image, and the orchestra played. People bowed down and worshiped the image. Leaders were scrutinized to see whether they conformed to the king's decree, and, sure enough, Daniel's three friends did not. The observers reported their "criminality" to the king, "There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; these men, O king, are disregarding you," vs. 12a. The king in rage and fury commanded that they be brought to him, vs. 13. "Are you guilty of not worshiping the image?" the king asked them. "If you are guilty, you shall be cast into the midst of a fiery furnace. Then we shall see if your God will deliver you for disobeying me," vs. 15b. The three, though respectful, told the king that they had not, nor would they ever, bow down and worship the image. Further, "Our God will deliver us from your fiery furnace." FAITH!

III. The king ordered that the smelting furnace be heated to seven times its normal heat. He was so distraught at this open defiance of his decree that he ordered immediate binding of the three Jews. They were bound and thrown into the overheated furnace by strong men dressed in thick mantles, leggings and turbans. Even so, they were killed by the intense heat. The furious king personally was there with his officials to witness the three faithful Jews turn into ash. What he saw was the three, accompanied by a fourth, walk-around in the fire. He asked the officials, "Did not we cast three men bound into the fire? They answered, 'True, O King,' vs. 24. The king said, 'Lo, I see not three, but four, men loose, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt and the form of the fourth is like an offspring of the gods (Son of God),' " vs. 25. What the king saw so astonished him that he himself eased as close to the furnace as he dared (remember several had just been killed by the heat), and shouted the names of the faithful Jews. He begged, "Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come to me," vs. 26. The three came forth from the midst of the fire. We should note especially the care God takes of those who are truly faithful, beyond any shadow of a doubt, to the promise he makes to those who believe him. [Today, during "the time of the Gentiles," that faith is in the righteousness of his only Son, Christ Jesus.] The king and his princes (three had been in the furnace) and other officials all witnessed what God had done for his faithful: Not a blister was on their skins, not a hair on their bodies was singed, their clothing was not charred, and even the smell of fire was not evident on them! Nebuchadnezzar was so flabbergasted that he testified that the God of the three faithful Jews had sent a Savior (an offspring of God) to save the three who had faith that he would deliver them. Further, he issued another decree: Anyone who spoke against the God of the three men of faith would be cut into pieces and their houses burned. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were again promoted. (Where was Daniel, who also had faith in God's promises, during this episode? The Bible does not speak to this question, but he could have been away on business for the king. Even though the Bible does not say, we have no doubt of Daniel's faithfulness.)

I. This chapter includes the Biblical finale of the great King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Late in his reign one can justifiably characterize a period of severe deterioration of his mental stability. He loses his emotional control, and, as often happens to some frail human natures, his lost (spiritually speaking) condition brought about his realizing that only the King of heaven could satisfy the profound emptiness of the human spirit, vs. 34-35. No doubt his reaching this conclusion was influenced by his long association with God's dedicated servant, Daniel. Because of the intricacies of the chapter, I thought it wise to relate the conclusion at the outset. However, the chapter begins with the great King Nebuchadnezzar announcing a proclamation recognizing his submission to "the high God" (reference to Daniel's God). His announcement is sent to "all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth," vs. 1. His exaltation is a pronounced contrast to his proud, even haughty, attitude before the furnace experience with the three faithful Jews, Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego who had declared that they would never worship the king's golden image. The king, a Gentile, felt more favorably disposed toward the God of heaven than did the Jewish leaders in Jesus' first coming to earth, Matt. 21:43. "I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God has done toward me. - - his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation," vss. 2-3. King Nebuchadnezzar was favorably impressed with Daniel's ability to interpret his dreams and the actions which only God could accomplish. [When the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus for "blasphemy," the Lord said to them, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him," John 10:37-38.]. The king of Babylon believed God's works and was willing to believe that God "has dominion from generation to generation," vs. 3b.

II. Now the king of Babylon again had a troublesome dream which made him afraid. As he put it, "I was at rest in mine house and prospering in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me," vss. 4-5. He must have been a compulsive person, because, after his previous experience with dream interpretation and Daniel's abilities, the king again went through the long process of ordering all of his magicians, astrologers and soothsayers to his council chamber for an interpretation of his dream. That effort was fruitless. He then called Daniel (whom he had named Belteshazzar meaning in Chaldean: Bel [Baal], protect his life) and told him the dream. By this time Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel his chief political advisor, because the king said, "I know that the spirit of the holy gods (Spirit of the Holy God) is in thee," vs. 9. The king's dream was of a tree visible to the entire earth. The tree grew to heaven, was strong, had beautiful leaves, had abundant fruit which was food for everyone with need; the animals were refreshed by the shade of the beautiful foliage; and all the birds of the air lived on

its many limbs. The king then saw the watchers who were aware of all the activities related to the tree reaching to heaven. As the sleeping king observed the tree and those watching it, "a holy one came down from heaven and cried aloud, 'Cut the tree down, remove its branches, shake off its leaves, scatter the fruit,' and as this was done, the animals and birds deserted it," vs. 13-14. The holy one from heaven continued, "Nevertheless, leave the stump with its roots and gird it with a band of iron and brass, [because it is to live again.] The grass surrounding the stump will be wet with dew, and the stump will have a beast's heart for seven times (years)." Vs. 17 contains the heart of the message of God in the king's dream, "All of the earth's observers (watchers) can know that future history is to be controlled by the most High God, that he rules the political affairs of mankind and selects rulers whomsoever he will and places them in their respective positions. Those whom he so places are 'the lowest of men.'" [My understanding of "lowest" of men is that world leaders are not concerned with love of humanity but are egotistical and struggle for self-aggrandizement and praise of mankind.] Why does God allow people (watchers) to place such leaders in their positions? Those are the only choices since the one perfect Ruler, Jesus Christ, was rejected by his own kind (humanity). This arrangement, however, is not the final condition of the earth's people. God is now and will always have the final say in mankind's political situations.

III. Daniel was very reluctant to tell the king what the dream meant, but the prophet told him that the tree represented him (the king and his kingdom). The king's enemies will drive him from his position of authority until "seven times (years) pass." That is the message the God of Heaven (most High) has for you. Not only will you be dethroned, but you will become as a beast of the fields. This experience will enable you to realize that God is the real Director of all of mankind's political affairs, even to placing political leaders in their respective positions. Mankind's rulers are ruled by God who, "giveth it to whomsoever he will," vs. 25b. Daniel told the king that he should accept God's sentence and become righteous, break off his sins by showing mercy to the poor. Such a change would prolong Nebuchadnezzar's tranquillity, vs. 27. But the king did not change, and for a year he lived in the palace and kept to himself. One day as he pondered his own greatness, how he was the great self-made leader of the greatest kingdom on earth, Babylon, a voice from heaven said to him, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee," vs. 31. At that hour the king was driven out of the palace and became as one of the beasts of the fields. After seven years the king lifted his eyes to heaven, and his sanity returned to him. He was restored to his throne with full acceptance. He then gives a first person account of his changed attitude, vs. 34-36. "No one can say to him (God), 'Why are you doing thus and so?'" (See also Rom. 9:18-24,30-33.) The king's conclusion: "I praise and extol and honor the King of heaven (God), all his works are truth, - - - those who walk in pride he is able to humble," vs. 37. It appears that King Nebuchadnezzar found Daniel's God at last!

Feb. 2, 2003

"The Wall Tells All-  
Babylon Falls"  
Dan. 5

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. In Daniel, Chap. 4, we noted the account of Nebuchadnezzar's last contribution to the Word of God in the book of Daniel. Today's chapter begins, many years later, with the activity of Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar (Prince of Bel, Baal), who was the son of Nabonidas, the king. The latter was the husband of one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters. Nabonidas was actually the last king of Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar was serving as coregent while Nabonidas was away most of the time attempting to keep his subjects loyal to Babylon. Remember that Nebuchadnezzar had established the largest empire of the world up to that time, and the peoples some distance from the city of Babylon were becoming dissatisfied with paying tribute (taxes). The relationship of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar as grandfather and grandson is related in Jeremiah's prophecy at Jer. 27:5-7. Jeremiah was still in Jerusalem while Daniel was in Babylon, and at Jer. 29:1-13 Jeremiah gives the Jewish captives in Babylon a letter outlining God's will for them during their long (seventy years) period of captivity. God, through his prophet Jeremiah, tells us that when Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law and grandson had sat on Babylon's throne, Babylon would cease to be a kingdom, Jer. 27:7, and the kingdom would be absorbed by others. In Daniel's fifth chapter we will see Jeremiah's prophecy fulfilled. Jeremiah prophesied from c. 626 to 587 BC.

II. One of the dissatisfied nations which was ready to fight rather than pay homage was the people living northeast of Babylon in an area called Media, because it lay between the Caspian and Persian Seas. The people were known as Medes, and later their political and military strengths were overcome by the peoples living along the Persian Sea, Persia. If we recall the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in Chap. 1 when Babylon (gold) was no more, the succeeding empire affecting the Jews would be the Media-Persia forces (silver). We are familiar with the "laws of the Persians and Medes" as exercised during the time of Esther, Est. 1:19. Esther was a beautiful Jewess who was taken as queen by the Persian king, Ahasuerus. Queen Esther and her wise cousin Mordcai influenced the king to thwart Haman's plot to destroy all the Jews throughout the kingdom. The Jewish Feast of Purim is practiced as an annual reminder of God's faithfulness on behalf of his people, the Jews, at that time.

III. So Belshazzar, the co-king of Babylon with his father Nabonidas, decided to have a party (feast) to which he invited his princes and their wives and his own wives and concubines. No doubt Belshazzar as a child had discovered the beautiful and mysterious gold and silver eating and drinking vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had confiscated from the Jewish Temple of God in Jerusalem. No one until now had been sacrilegious and used the sacred vessels, but Belshazzar was less respectful of Daniel's God. Wine flowed freely and the feast continued into the night. As they became drunken from the alcohol from God's holy vessels, they praised their gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone. At the height of the immoral and idolatrous occasion, King Belshazzar saw the finger's

of a man's hand which wrote near the lamp stand on the plastered wall. The king could see the fingers as they wrote. He became ashen; his whole appearance changed; his knees shook and his joints became weak. Belshazzar shouted loudly for his soothsayers to come quickly and read and interpret what the writing meant. They could not. Anyone who could satisfy the king's wishes would be amply rewarded with scarlet clothing (royalty), a gold necklace, and become the third ruler of the kingdom, i.e., directly beneath himself and his father, Nabonidas the king, vs. 7. Belshazzar's demeanor was so pronounced that his leaders did not know what to do. The queen mother, Nebuchadnezzar's aged wife, heard Belshazzar's cries from without and came in to speak to him. "There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods (Spirit of the Holy God): in the days of your grandfather - - light and understanding and wisdom was found in him - -", vs. 11. She named Daniel as the man and told the king that she was sure that he could read and interpret the "handwriting on the wall." Daniel was brought in, and the king asked whether he were one of the Jewish captives. This gave Daniel an open opportunity to witness to the king about how his grandfather compared religiously to his own worship. Nebuchadnezzar had been Daniel's king for about forty-five years (606-561 BC), and now Daniel stands before his grandson who had not been willing to humble himself as his grandfather had done before the "God in heaven," vs. 22. Young Belshazzar knew the humiliating experience which his grandfather had undergone, seven years living among the beasts of the field, before he was humbled to recognize the God of heaven, vs. 4:37. Daniel accused Belshazzar of knowing better than "to lift himself up against the Lord of heaven by using the sacred vessels from God's house to conduct a feast of debauchery. God gives you the very breath that keeps you alive, and yet that same God you have chosen not to glorify," vs. 23. It is God who has written you this message on the wall: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPSHARSIN. The translation follows: "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it. You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting. Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians." When Daniel had finished, even though he had refused the king's reward (vs. 17), they gave him the royal garments, the gold necklace and proclaimed him to be third in the kingdom in command. And why did Daniel not want the gifts? Because he knew that Babylon was finished. That very night Belshazzar was slain by the sixty-two year old Median king, Darius. The gold head of the image had fallen, and the silver arms and shoulders had come to reign.

IV. Just a word from secular history: There were two main reasons, in human terms, which made overcoming the Babylonians by the Medes that fateful night so easy. First, all of the political leaders were saturated with alcohol at the time, and, second, the Medes under Darius were aware of Nebuchadnezzar's ingenious tunnel construction which brought Babylon's water supply into the city. Darius had diverted that portion of the Euphrates which came into the city for human consumption back to the main river bed. He left just enough flowing to float his troops under the wall undetected by the guards at the city gates. As believers in Jesus Christ, we know that God's promises are always kept. At the end of the present world order, another Babylon will also be destroyed by our Lord and Savior, Rev. 18.

Feb. 16, 2003

"God's Absolute Protection"  
Dan. 6

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. We come now to the last of the first six chapters in Daniel's prophecy which consist of an historical account of Daniel's exilic service as a captive from his home, Judah. The beginning of his prophecy indicates that Daniel was taken in the third year of Jehoi-kim, king of Judah, (c. 606 BC). Chapter six relates that Daniel's service continued until the beginning of Cyrus' reign in c. 536 BC, a total of about seventy years. His service spanned the entire length of the Jews' Babylonian captivity, for Cyrus was the king who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem. Daniel was a true representative of Jehovah God in an alien, Gentile world. All the kings under whom he served were made openly aware of Daniel's God, the eternal heavenly Creator. That Daniel's God was the only true and holy God of all was made absolute by the signs and wonders which proves God's protection for those who trust him and his promises. Daniel's uncanny ability to recall and interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams that the king would live for seven years among the wild beasts and then recover; and Belshazzar's sudden death and loss of the Babylonian kingdom to the Medes and Persians. All of these miracles wrought by the God of heaven, Daniel's God, left no chance that any other god was real. Now in this last chapter recounting chronological events in history in Daniel's life we see another most miraculous action of God which further added to the reality of Daniel's (and our) God. Following this final historical chapter (Chap. 6), we learn of God's revelation to Daniel of further details of human history beyond Daniel's time and place (Chaps. 7-12).

II. Darius, the Mede, was now Daniel's political boss, and this king decided to restructure the political organization of the entire kingdom. He divided his kingdom into three territories or regions with a president (like our governors perhaps) over each, and within each region a number of princes (satraps or like our sheriffs perhaps). There were a total of an hundred and twenty sheriffs in all. This governmental structure was somewhat looser than Nebuchadnezzar maintained. Nebuchadnezzar was a "hands on" ruler, or, as we would say, he micromanaged the affairs of state. As Darius kept monarchal control, he apparently delegated more authority to his underlings. One reason he could do this was that he kept Daniel as somewhat "more equal" than the other presidents. And it was precisely this deference or special courtesy which the king held for Daniel that caused the Lord's prophet some difficulty. Evidently, when there was a difference in judgment between Daniel and the other two governors or even one or a group of the sheriffs, Darius gave credence to Daniel's opinion over theirs. This arrangement, over time, created jealousy, and the other political leaders began to pool their thinking about how they could make Daniel appear inferior to themselves in the king's eyes. These malcontents in a conference with King Darius suggested (flattery) that the king sign a decree whereby anyone seeking the favor of any god or any person other than the sovereign Darius himself for a period of thirty days would be placed in the den with the lions for punishment. The statute was drawn up and signed by the king as the law of the Medes



and Persians which made it incontrovertibly absolutely indisputable even by the king. When Daniel knew that the decree had been made effective, he was careful to conduct his daily prayers (thrice daily) in his room. His prayers of thanksgiving were habitual, and his routine involved leaving his west windows toward Jerusalem open. His political enemies determined that Daniel's praying routine was in disobedience to the king's decree, and they tattled to Darius about Daniel's defiance of the unchangeable law of the Medes and the Persians. Old Daniel had been breaking the law three times every day! (civil disobedience) The king was convinced of Daniel's guilt, but he was greatly bothered that he had consented to the law, vs. 14. Darius told Daniel that the God whom you have served continually will deliver you from the lions, vs. 16.

III. Daniel was forced into the den with the lions, and a stone was placed before the den entrance with the king's certification so that not even an order by Daniel could change his plight. The king, however, was so upset over the situation that he did not sleep all night. He would not eat nor could he be entertained by his usual custom of enjoying his private, instrumental musical ensemble. Early the next morning the king rushed to the den and weepingly called to Daniel, asking him whether he had been saved by his God, vs. 20. Daniel remained courteous to the king and assured him that, not only had he been spared from the hungry lions, but Jehovah God had sent a messenger (angel) to comfort him, vs. 22. Darius was overjoyed and commanded that God's prophet be removed from danger and that all those who had contrived this plot against Daniel be cast into the den of lions. And so they were, along with their wives and children who were immediately overpowered by the hungry lions and eaten and their bones crushed. Thereafter Darius issued a decree commanding that Daniel's God be held in awe and honor throughout the entire kingdom. Daniel continued to prosper through Darius' reign as well as that of the Persian, King Cyrus.

IV. What is the significance of Daniel's lions-den experience? We, of course, do not face being thrown in with a pride of hungry lions for our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, but if we are true and faithful in our allegiance to the lordship of our Lord, then we can expect to face humiliation on occasion, II Tim. 3:12. There are at least three reasons for this experience, I believe. **One**, Satan is still alive and well in our day. True, his end is assured by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but, we are, "to be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour," I Pet. 5:8. **Two**, we are assured that God will take care of our every need through every possibility, including physical death itself, if we have placed our faith in God's only Son, Christ Jesus, John 3:16-18. **Three**, when the Jewish remnant is facing annihilation during the Great Tribulation spoken of by Jesus at Matt. 24:1-3,14-15,29-31, they can remember Daniel's safety in the den of lions and his three friends coming through the smelting furnace unscathed. Their faith will turn them to Jesus as God's Messiah, and they will be saved from the fire, I Thes. 1:6-8; Jude 22-23. We believers will be taken up to be with the Lord before the Great Tribulation begins, I believe, I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thes. 4:13-18; 5:2,4,9-11.

Feb. 23, 2003

"The Four Beasts of History"  
Dan. 7

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. Beginning with Chap. 7 Daniel's message (from God) portrays, not the mainly historical narrative of the first six chapters, but the future from Daniel's day to the very culmination of the present world order. In other words, Daniel received God's prophetic view of how he (God) will control mankind's eventual destiny. Chapters 7 through 12 contain visions which God gave to Daniel during the reigns of Belshazzar, Cyrus and Darius over Babylon. For clarity, apparently, Daniel chose to place these visions together at the end of his prophecy rather than integrate them into the historical section, Chapters 1-6. The one prime exception to this pattern of the entire prophecy is the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chap. 2 concerning the image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and iron-clay. Recall that Daniel was very intelligent and well-trained. He was initially chosen for this very reason to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. As each successive ruler over Babylon and its successors, Persia and Media came to power, Daniel was held in high esteem and served as an upper echelon political officer under each leader. Daniel's long life (over 90), his utter devotion to Jehovah God, and his wisdom (perception) gave him much valuable experience which God used to reveal a unique prophetic message for God's people throughout all the years following his death. The importance of Daniel's message to all humanity is attested to by our Lord Jesus Christ's reference to Daniel's prophecy Matt. 24:1-31; Mark 13:1-27. It is clear from these New Covenant references of our Lord that Daniel is prophesying of all the period from then until Jesus' second return to earth for his believers, John 14:1-7. Daniel's prophecy cannot be overly stressed in its importance for understanding all of Bible prophecy. For example, as we shall see in Chap. 9, Jesus' reference to the "times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" is revealed, Lk 21:24; Rom. 11:11; 25-36.

II. As noted above, Daniel was blessed with an intellectual curiosity and a thirst for knowledge of God's will, Matt 5:6. When Belshazzar succeeded his forefather, Nebuchadnezzar, the first change in Babylonian sovereignty took place in Daniel's experience, and his curiosity about the future burned within his mind. In the first year of Belshazzar's reign, the prophet's yearning to know more of God's plan for humanity became so intense that he had "a dream and visions" as he slept. The dream became the singular thought for Daniel so that he could not get it out of his mind. (The original language [Aramaic] states that he was "trampled or stomped" by the dream.) He was then moved to write this chapter of his prophecy. His vision began when the winds from all directions blew upon "the great sea," (Mediterranean). As the winds blew, there came forth four great beasts from the water, and each beast had its own particularities making each one different. The first beast was like a lion with wings. As Daniel observed this beast, its wings were plucked off, and its heart became a man's heart. If we note the life of Nebuchadnezzar again at Chap. 4:16,34, we now know that the first beast was Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian empire. This fact reveals that, therefore, the four beasts beginning

the sequence of rulers in Daniel's visions represent the four metal components of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chap. 2, gold (Babylon), silver (Media-Persia), brass (Graeco-Macedonia), and iron (Rome). Noteworthy is the fact that God's revelation of these rulers and kingdoms relate them to savage beasts. Gold was a lion, silver a bear, brass a leopard or panther, and iron made up of several components. The fourth beast (Rome) was different in that it was exceedingly more powerful (had iron teeth) than the first three. History has unfolded the secrets of the truths which God revealed to Daniel, his prophet. Great was the materialistic glory that was Babylon's with its hanging garden which is today considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city was surrounded by a three hundred foot high wall wide enough for four pairs of horses to pass together side by side. Literacy was high and an expansive library was maintained in Babylon. Indoor plumbing with brass fittings have been discovered by modern archeologists indicating that the Babylonians were people of considerable affluence. The glory of it all was too much for the founder of the wealthy empire, Nebuchadnezzar, and he became mentally deranged and lived like a beast in the woods for seven years. He then became mentally well and was restored to his throne.

III. The second beast was like a bear and represented the silver arms in Nebuchadnezzar's Chap. 2 dream image. This beast represented the Media-Persia empire which Daniel's dream indicated would have "three ribs in its mouth between its teeth." The three ribs were the three kingdoms which would be conquered and controlled by Media-Persia, Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. The bear is a lumbering, slow-moving but powerful force. One of its leaders, Xerxes, led his army of 300,000 troops accompanied by the soldiers' families! No wonder they were so slow! The third beast was likened to a leopard or panther and was the brass of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It came as the Graeco-Macedonian empire with the young Alexander the Great as its leader. His forte as a military genius and strategist was his ability to move a huge military force with kinetic speed and agility. Alexander died in his early thirties from alcohol and venereal diseases after having conquered the entire area. The "four heads" in vs. 6 represent the four-way split of Alexander's empire after his death. His period of prominence came in the biblical intertestamental period between the Old and New Covenants. During this period the Jews underwent severe persecution and abuse under the Egyptians and Syrians. The fourth beast, the iron legs (Rome) of Nebuchadnezzar's image was different in that it covers a longer period and a much larger area than all the other beasts combined. This beast is haughty, proud, pompous and blasphemous. However, all four represent "the times of the Gentiles," Lk 21:24. In vss. 9-14 Daniel is told that there would be an introduction of the Ancient of days by the heavenly throne, vs. 9 (Rev. 1:14; 4; 5). At this point Israel is about to undergo a time of ultimately severe persecution, Matt. 24:21. God at this time will deal with the earth's people in judgment. The nations which have grown out of the "glory that was Rome" are the "ten horns," vs. 20. Born from this group of nations will come "another little horn" who will be the "son of perdition," II Thes. 2:3-4. This ultimate evil one will be in charge of world affairs for a "time and times and the dividing of [a] time," vs. 25. "Time" used here equals one year, and, therefore, "times" equals two years, and "dividing of [a] time" equals a portion of a year equally divided, six months, a total of three and one-half years. This evil one will be against Christ by claiming to be (imitate) Christ, and the Jews will accept him as the Messiah, John 5:43; II Thes. 2:3-4, 11. We who trust Jesus Christ will not be on earth during that three plus years. We will be with our Lord, I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thes. 4:13-18; 5:9-11.

I. Our review last session of Chap. 7 took place in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, and today in Chap. 8 Daniel sees a vision two years later in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. All of the events prophesied in this chapter happened after God's vision to Daniel except the prototype of the final appearance of the "man of sin" (II Thes. 2:3) portrayed in this chapter by "the little horn," Antiochus Epiphanes. The explanation of Daniel's vision was told the prophet by none other than God's messenger (angel), Gabriel himself. Here in Daniel's prophecy Gabriel appears for the first time in the Bible. However, he appears twice in the New Covenant, at Lk 1:5-20 to Zacharias to tell him that Elizabeth will bear John the Baptist, and at Lk 1:26-38 to Mary to tell her that she will bear our Lord Jesus. In both of these appearances in the New Testament, the angel Gabriel actually announces the names of the new infants, John and Jesus. I mention these three relatively rare appearances of Gabriel (He comes again later in Daniel.) in God's Word to lend importance to the vision of God to Daniel in this Chap. 8 of his prophecy. Perhaps the main importance of the events involved in this chapter is the general division which they instituted between the "western world" and the "eastern world," the Orient (Asia) and Occident (Europe). As we have witnessed in our lifetimes, this general division still exists. In recent years (decades) Israel has allied with the West, primarily because the United States and Britain were the chief sponsors of Israel's becoming a nation again at the end of WWII after millennia of the lack of nationhood. From a human viewpoint the United States has sustained Israel's economy since the 1940s with billions of dollars per year. Actually, God's will for Israel as a nation is being fulfilled as he promised Abraham, Gen. 12:1-4. We must, in order to understand Daniel's prophecy, not lose sight of the fact that God has never forgotten Israel as a people, as a nation, Rom. 11:25-32. But Israel's people (the Jews) have, are, and will be persecuted horribly before they accept God's Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Jesus said that at the end, "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be," Matt. 24:21.

II. We should note that the language of the text of Daniel begins again here to appear in Hebrew. Aramaic was used after 2:3 until the beginning of Chap. 8. Daniel's vision in Belshazzar's third year of power appeared to the prophet at Shushan, Elam along the banks of the Ulai River. In the vision he saw on the river bank a male sheep which had two high horns, but one horn was higher than the other. The ram pushed away from Babylon to the west, north, and south but not to the east where Persia was, the bear of Chap. 7. While Daniel pondered the might of the two-horned ram, a "he goat" came from the west with great strength, vs. 5, and "with a notable horn (power) between his eyes." Not only was this "he goat" powerful, but he moved rapidly with his military forces. So fast did he move that Persia (the slow bear) would not even consider defending herself against him, let alone expanding in that direction,

westward. And who was this powerful, agile military genius? None other than Alexander the Great from Greece. His expansion eastward represented the demise of the silver part of Nebuchadnezzar's image and the rise of the Graeco-Macedonia (brass) empire, the four wings (speed, "touched not the ground") of the panther (leopard), Dan. 7:6. When the he goat (Alexander the Great) came into the Babylonian area, he overcame General Xerxes of Persia at a great battle at Thermopylae and his fleet of three hundred ships at Salamis. Thus, the last effort of the eastern forces to expand westward came to an end. In effect, that division still stands today. The "he goat" was very strong, but the great horn was broken at the very height of his power, vs. 8. Why? Alexander the Great was a dynamic, forceful person who worried about running out of "any world left to conquer," but in 323 BC he engaged in a drinking binge which lasted for some time. He was celebrating his entering the great city of Babylon where that famous builder of the first great world empire lived, the legendary Nebuchadnezzar. Even at the young age of thirty-two, his physical system was weakened by the alcohol and a fever resulting from a sexually related disease (noted in Chap. 7). On June 13, 323 BC, (2,322 years ago) the great Alexander, who had never lost a military battle, died of immorality.

III. After Alexander's death, his empire was divided, or, as Daniel put it, "And for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven," vs. 8. The four generals to whom the Graeco-Macedonia Empire was divided were Cassander (Alexander's brother-in-law who took Macedonia and Greece (the European portion), Lysimachus who took a large portion of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Seleucus who took Asia (Near East), and Ptolemy who took Egypt and North Africa. The "little horn" in vs. 9 is not the person with the same designation in Chap. 7, but the "little horn" of Chap. 8 was Antiochus IV, Antiochus Epiphanes, and son of Antiochus the Great. Epiphanes especially hated the Jews, and, as a result, moved into Jerusalem shortly after coming to the throne in 175 BC. He made a deliberate effort to exterminate all Jews (Sound familiar to Hitler?). He could not kill all the Jews, of course, but he humiliated them in such a way that he is likened to the Antichrist who will ally with the Jews surreptitiously at the time of Jesus' return to earth for us believers, John 14:1-3; I Cor. 15:51-52, 58. Epiphanes erected an image of Jupiter in the very Holy Place in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and poured gravy made from hog meat all over the sacred vessels in the Temple. (Remember Belshazzar's misuse of the holy vessels.) He forbade circumcision and observance of the Sabbath under penalty of death. Pagan sacrifices were ordered in every town and village in Judaea, and every month a search was made to discover whether any Jew possessed a copy of the Law or had circumcised his children. It was against this sacrosanct persecution that the Maccabean household under Mattathias rebelled against the Seleucid political leader, Epiphanes, and which eventually brought about the release of Judaea from Syrian control. As bad as this tyrant was, he is hardly worth comparing with the Antichrist who is to come at the end time. The only ones who will escape the evil time that will exceed the misery of all other times, according to our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:21), are those who are trusting the suffering Jesus bore for us, the Good News of his death, burial and resurrection to eternal life.

Mar. 9, 2003  
Expanded

"Daniel's Prayer"  
Dan. 9:1-19

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. The time in history when Daniel had this experience was during the first year of Darius' reign over the Chaldeans, about 538 BC. The prophet was so concerned about what would happen to his people, the Jews, that he gave attention to the information available to him in the writings of the prophets. Daniel is now about ninety years of age, and he wonders how long his people will be without a homeland. He had learned from an earlier vision (in Chap. 8) that the Jews would experience a time of much trouble under "the little horn," Antiochus Epiphanes. How long would the God of heaven permit his people to be humiliated and abused? Daniel did the two things which reveal God's will, he studied God's Word and was thereby led to pray. Of this chapter, the first nineteen verses are given to the prayerful concern of Daniel for him and his people, and the last eight contain the answer for which the prophet prayed. The Word of God which Daniel studied included the prophet Jeremiah. There he learned that the Jews would be exiled for seventy years, vs. 2; Jer. 25:9-13; 29:4-13. This information would indicate to Daniel that the exile period would soon be over. Would God then reestablish Israel as a glorious nation as it was under David and his son Solomon? We should recall, in relation to Daniel's concern about the nation Israel's future, that Jesus' disciples were also concerned about the exact same proposition at Acts 1:28. In the later instance Jesus was about to return to the Father with the promise that he would return for them (and us believers, John 14:1-3) after sending God's Holy Spirit's power to enable them to witness to God's Good News of Jesus Christ throughout the whole world. The disciples asked the Lord then, "Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus told them that their first and immediate priority was to share the Gospel, not to worry about the reestablishment of Israel at that time. We should note, however, that our Lord did not dismiss the possibility that Israel would, in the future, be reestablished. His emphasis was that, at that time, the whole world first receive God's Good News concerning the ecclesia, Matt. 24:14. The "little horn" vision of Dan. 8:9-12 had made Daniel wary of Israel's immediate future. At the end of that vision he "fainted and was sick for days" before he could return to the king's business (Belshazzar's). Even so, none understood the importance of the vision, 8:27. Now he has come under the rule of another king (Darius), and the prophet seeks another message from his God (and ours).

II. After studying God's Word, Daniel, "set my face unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, 'O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and loving kindness to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments,'" vs. 4, and see John 14:15-16. He confessed that he and the other Jews had sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly, rebelled, departed from God's precepts, and not heeded God's servants, his prophets. Daniel further confessed that righteousness belonged to God, but that they, the Jews, were confused at that time, including all the Jews of the diaspora as well as those still in Jerusalem. They had been

scattered because of their trespasses against Jehovah God. Daniel appealed to God's mercies and forgiveness even though they had rebelled against him and refused to obey the voice of the Lord their God. The prophet admitted that their current deplorable condition was of their own choosing, because they had not kept their oath written in the Law of Moses, vs. 11; Lev. 26:14-18. Jerusalem, the Jews' holy city and home, had undergone continuous disaster. They, the Jews, knew the right according to God's will, for he had openly declared his desires for the Israelites in the Law of Moses. It had been written down for all to know, but the people had not conversed with their God (prayed) for strength to turn away from their iniquities and embrace the truth of God, vss. 11-13. The nature of God which Daniel confesses in vss. 14 and 16 is that God is the source of righteousness (See also Rom. 9:30-33.) that pleases the Lord, vs. 14, "the Lord our God is righteous," and vs. 16 "according to all thy righteousness." In vs. 11 Daniel states, "Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law," and in vs. 20, "confessing my sin." [*italics mine-WA*] He said that every Jew had sinned including himself, and agrees with what Paul (God's Word) states at Rom. 3:23, "For all [including Gentiles as well] have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Also, at Gal. 3:22, "But the Scripture hath confirmed all under sin, that faith is needed in Jesus Christ." We shall examine God's response to Daniel's prayer next week.

III. The term "generation" appearing in Mk 13:30-31 can be confusing if not given a proper Scriptural context. Jesus said there, "Truthfully I say to you, that this generation [*my italics-WA*] shall not pass, till all these things be done." (Lk 21:32 provides the same statement.) I bring this to our attention with Dan. 9, because this "generation" is related to "the times of the Gentiles," Lk 21:24. In Psa. 22 which Jesus quoted while paying the sin debts of us believers by hanging and dying on the cross (Mk 15:34), the thirtieth verse states, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord (God) for a generation," [*my italics-WA*]. At Gal. 3:16 God's Word states that Jesus Christ is that seed which fulfills God's promise to Abraham, Gen. 22, especially Gen. 22:18. Further, at Acts 2:40, Peter referred to this generation (current) as a period during which those who are to be made right (reconciled) with God will do so by repenting of their sins and confessing that Jesus is Lord with immersion in Jesus' name as a symbol of that confession. This includes "as many as the Lord our God shall call," (the ekklesia), Acts 2:39b. This period of God's New Covenant (Heb. 8:7-13) is accounted (recounted) by God as a "generation" (a block of time) which is to be terminated by a time of sorrow and desolation spoken of by Daniel in his Chap. 9. Isaiah at 53:10 prophesied that, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him [Jesus]; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his [God's] seed [offspring, Son], he shall prolong his [God's] days, and the pleasure of the Lord [God] shall prosper in his hand." Our Lord Jesus Christ declared Daniel to be a [true] prophet, and that prophet's proclamation at Dan. 9:24-27 to be valid concerning events which are to happen at the end time when Jesus has promised to return for us believers, Matt. 24:15; Mk 13:14.

Mar. 23, 2003  
Expanded

"Daniels Prayer Answered"  
Dan. 9:20-27

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford.  
Teacher

I. Remember that last week God sent Gabriel to enlighten Daniel about the deep, profound concern the prophet had for his people, the Jews. One is reminded of the same earnest desire which Paul had for the same people in his letter to the believers at Rome. In this letter Paul expressed a love for them greater than love of his own life, Rom. 9:1-5. A part of Daniel's inquiry concerned "the holy mountain of my God," the Temple mount in Jerusalem as well as "my people Israel," vs. 20. While praying Daniel was informed by Gabriel, apparently in the form of a man, that he had come to answer the questions he (Daniel) had asked of Almighty God. "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill [the ability to] and understanding," vs. 22. "When you began to plead for understanding, God sent me to satisfy that understanding, because you are greatly beloved. Therefore, give heed to the information in the following vision," vs. 23. Verses 24-27 communicate a volume of information without which much of the end time prophecy (Theologians call it "eschatology.") would have no scriptural key. Jesus referred to this passage specifically at Matt. 24:15 and at Mk 13:14 which give Dan. 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11 extremely important significance, I believe. Gabriel begins his answer to Daniel's plea by saying that seventy sevens (490 years or 70 weeks) are involved in the future of the Jews and Jerusalem. That is the period through which the Jews must finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins (forgiveness, see Matt. 18:22) and reconciliation. Further, the end of that time of seventy sevens will bring in "everlasting righteousness." Also, that long period of time will be concluded by the ending of the prophecy involved in this vision and the anointing of "the holy place, [holy of holies]." The chief confusion of Daniel appears to have been the problem of reconciling the seventy years of captivity in Babylon (prophesied by Jer. 29:10) and the period to be covered by the kingdoms indicated by Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and iron mixed with clay. Daniel was, of course, hoping for a return of the Jews to Jerusalem and the reestablishing of a glorious nation, Israel, as God had promised concerning David, Ezek. 37:1, 21-28; 41-46; John 10:16. As we consider the sheer mathematics of the revelation in these four verses (24-27) of Daniel, we must keep in mind that by no means can we manipulate these figures to determine the day or hour of the coming of our Lord Jesus to earth again for us.

II. Many have attempted to calculate the exact date of Jesus' return, but they (Militz, Alsted, Jurieu, Bengel, Ann Lee, William Miller [founder of the modern Adventist sects], Claas Epp, Ellen G. White, etc.) have been misled. Jesus himself said that God the Father would not reveal that date, Mk 13:32; I Thes. 5:2. I believe that the mystery element (unknown) in the total time frame determining Jesus' return has to do with "the times of the Gentiles" referred to by Jesus at Lk 21:24. When John the Baptist gave his message that the kingdom of God was "at hand," the Messiah, Jesus, was on earth to receive the Jews and to establish that kingdom. However, the evidence is that God would not follow through on his



promise at that time unless Israel as a nation would willingly accept the Messiah, Jesus, Matt. 11:10-19. Nor will he ever, I believe. But during the great tribulation, the Jews can only trust, because complete annihilation will be the only other option, Matt. 24:15-22. The seventy sevens period, then, has been interrupted by the taking out from among the Gentiles a people of God through Jesus Christ and any Jews who will accept Jesus as God's Messiah, Savior, during that time. Peter and Paul are examples of the latter, and the Couples Class are some examples of the former. The interruption of the seventy sevens period in Dan. 9:24 will include the Messiah's coming and a hesitation of the Messiah's reign on earth, vs. 26. Also, Jerusalem will be destroyed, vs. 26. (That happened in 70 AD.)

III. There is one week left of the seventy sevens which were interrupted by the Messiah's being "cut off." That week (seven years) is to take place at the time of Jesus' return to earth. At that time an impostor of Christ will appear who will be the one to whom Paul referred at II Thes. 2:3 as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition." He is the "little horn" of Dan. 7:24-28, the beast of Rev. 13:11-18, and a Roman of Nebuchadnezzar's image of iron and clay, part religious and part political. His title at Dan. 9:26-27 is "the prince" of the people (all unbelievers). This man of sin will make an alliance (covenant) with the Jews at the beginning of the seventieth week (seven years) of Daniel's seventy sevens, vs. 27; John 5:43-47, and immediately after God has removed his ekklesia (all believers) from the earth. In the middle of the seven year covenant ("in the midst of the week", three and one-half years), the "prince," the Antichrist, will break his seven year covenant with the Jews by placing an idol image in the Holy Place in Jerusalem, vs. 27. At that time God's Holy Spirit will not be residing in any of the earth's inhabitants. The lack of God's Spirit and the abominable desecration of the Holy Place will then create the awful period of the "abomination of desolation" referred to at Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:15-26; [Jer. 30:7]; Mk 13:14-23; II Thes. 2:7. At the end of the tribulation, there will be a dark sun, and an invisible moon, and the stars will be in different motions than usual for them. Then will all be made right by Jesus' return to earth with all his ekklesia including the Jews who have come to rely upon the righteousness and lordship of Jesus Christ, Mk 13:24-27; Acts 2:19-21,36; Rom. 9:30-33. The kingdom of God under the lordship of Jesus, his Son, will then be "at hand" again, and, this time, it will be accepted by all of God's people, Rom. 10:13; 11:25-36. We believers cannot know the day or hour when Jesus will come for us, but we can recognize the season or nearness of his appearance, Mk 13:28-31; Lk 21:28; I Thes. 5:4.

IV. In summary, three concepts should be remembered: 1) The seventieth of the seventy weeks is to come after the Messiah, Jesus, is "cut off," crucified, 2) The "times of the Gentiles" will follow when God will select a bride for his only Son's wife, the ecclesia, and, 3) "The prince" (the Antichrist) will, at first, be accepted by the Jews as the Messiah. He will be a Roman, another "little horn" (Dan. 7:8), not the first "little horn," Antiochus, Dan. 8:9.

I. The time in history when Daniel had this experience was during the first year of Darius' reign over the Chaldeans, about 538 BC. The prophet was so concerned about what would happen to his people, the Jews, that he gave attention to the information available to him in the writings of the prophets. Daniel is now about ninety years of age, and he wonders how long his people will be without a homeland. He had learned from an earlier vision (in Chap. 8) that the Jews would experience a time of much trouble under "the little horn," Antiochus Epiphanes. How long would the God of heaven permit his people to be humiliated and abused? Daniel did the two things which reveal God's will, he studied God's Word and was thereby led to pray. Of this chapter, the first nineteen verses are given to the prayerful concern of Daniel for him and his people, and the last eight contain the answer for which the prophet prayed. The Word of God which Daniel studied included the prophet Jeremiah. There he learned that the Jews would be exiled for seventy years, vs. 2; Jer. 29, especially 29:10. This information would indicate to Daniel that the exile period would soon be over. Would God then reestablish Israel as a glorious nation as it was under David and his son Solomon? (Acts 1:6) The "little horn" vision of Chap. 8:9-12 had made Daniel wary of Israel's immediate future. At the end of that vision he "fainted and was sick for days" before he could return to the king's business (Belshazzar's). Even so, none understood the importance of the vision, 8:27. Now he has come under the rule of another king (Darius), and the prophet seeks another message from his God (and ours).

II. After studying God's Word, Daniel, "set my face unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, 'O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and loving kindness to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments,'" vs. 4, and see John 14:15. He confessed that he and the other Jews had sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly, rebelled, departed from God's precepts, and not heeded God's servants, his prophets. Daniel further confessed that righteousness belonged to God, but that they, the Jews, were confused at that time, including all the Jews of the diaspora as well as those still in Jerusalem. They had been scattered because of their trespasses against Jehovah God. Daniel appealed to God's mercies and forgiveness even though they had rebelled against him and refused to obey the voice of the Lord their God. The prophet admitted that their current deplorable condition was of their own choosing, because they had not kept their oath written in the Law of Moses, vs. 11; Lev. 26:14-18. Jerusalem, the Jews holy city and home, had undergone continuous disaster. They, the Jews, knew the right according to God's will, for he had openly declared his desires for the Israelites in the Law of Moses. It had been written down for all to know, but the people had not conversed with their God (prayed) for strength to turn away from their iniquities and embrace the truth of God, vss. 11-13. The nature of God which Daniel confesses in vss. 14 and 16 is that God is the source of righteousness (See also Rom. 9:30-33.) that pleases

the Lord, vs. 14, "the Lord our God is righteous," and vs. 16 "according to all thy righteousness." In vs. 11 Daniel states, "Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law," and in vs. 20, "confessing my sin." [italics mine-WA] He said that every Jew had sinned including himself, and agrees with what Paul (God's Word) states at Rom. 3:23, "For all [including Gentiles as well] have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Also, at Gal. 3:22, "But the Scripture hath confirmed all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Daniel's prayer was heard by God who sent Gabriel again to his prophet about three o'clock one afternoon as he was praying the above prayer, vs. 21.

III. God sent Gabriel to inform Daniel about the deep, profound concern the prophet had for his people, the Jews. One is reminded of the same earnest desire which Paul had for the same people in his letter to the believers at Rome. In this letter Paul expressed a love for them greater than love of his own life, Rom. 9:1-5. A part of Daniel's inquiry concerned "the holy mountain of my God," the Temple mount in Jerusalem as well as "my people Israel," vs. 20. While praying Daniel was informed by Gabriel, apparently in the form of a man, that he had come to answer the questions he (Daniel) had asked of Almighty God. "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill [the ability to] and understanding," vs. 22. "When you began to plead for understanding, God sent me to satisfy that understanding, because you are greatly beloved. Therefore, give heed to the information in the following vision," vs. 23. Verses 24-27 communicate a volume of information without which much of the end time prophecy (Theologians call it "eschatology.") would have no scriptural key. Jesus referred to this passage specifically at Matt. 24:15 and at Mk 13:14 which give Dan. 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11 extremely important significance, I believe. Gabriel begins his answer to Daniel's plea by saying that seventy sevens (490 years or 70 weeks) are involved in the future of the Jews and Jerusalem. That is the period through which the Jews must finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins (forgiveness, see Matt. 18:22) and reconciliation. Further, the end of that time of seventy sevens will bring in "everlasting righteousness." Also, that long period of time will be concluded by the ending of the prophecy involved in this vision and the anointing of "the holy place, [holy of holies]." The chief confusion of Daniel appears to have been the problem of reconciling the seventy years of captivity in Babylon (prophesied by Jer. 29:10) and the period to be covered by the kingdoms indicated by Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and iron mixed with clay. Daniel was, of course, hoping for a return of the Jews to Jerusalem and the reestablishing of a glorious nation, Israel, as God had promised concerning David, Ezek. 37:1,21-28: 41-46; John 10:16. As we consider the sheer mathematics of the revelation in these four verses (24-27) of Daniel, we must keep in mind that by no means can we manipulate these figures to determine the day or hour of the coming of our Lord Jesus to earth again for us. Many have attempted such a calculation, but they (Militz, Alsted, Jurieu, Bengel, Ann Lee, William Miller [founder of the modern Adventist sects], Claas Epp, Ellen G. White, etc.) have been misled. Jesus himself said that God the Father would

not reveal that date, Mk 13:32; I Thes. 5:2. I believe that the mystery element (unknown) in the total time frame determining Jesus' return has to do with "the times of the Gentiles" referred to by Jesus at Lk 21:24. When John the Baptist gave his message that the kingdom of God was "at hand," the Messiah, Jesus, was on earth to receive the Jews and to establish that kingdom. However, the evidence is that God would not follow through on his promise at that time unless Israel as a nation would willingly accept the Messiah, Jesus, Matt. 11:10-19. Nor will he ever, I believe. But during the great tribulation, the Jews can only trust, because complete annihilation will be the only other option, Matt. 24:15-22. The seventy sevens period, then, has been interrupted by the taking out from among the Gentiles a people of God through Jesus Christ and any Jews who will accept Jesus as God's Messiah, Savior, during that time. Peter and Paul are examples of the latter, and the Couples Class are some examples of the former. The interruption of the seventy sevens period in Dan. 9:24 will include the Messiah's coming and a hesitation of the Messiah's reign on earth, vs. 26. Also, Jerusalem will be destroyed, vs. 26. (That happened in 70 AD.) There is one week left of the seventy sevens which were interrupted by the Messiah's being "cut off." That week (seven years) is to take place at the time of Jesus' return to earth. At that time an impostor of Christ will appear who will be the one to whom Paul referred at II Thes. 2:3 as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition." He is the "little horn" of Dan. 7:24-28, the beast of Rev. 13:11-18, and a Roman of Nebuchadnezzar's image of iron and clay, part religious and part political. His title at Dan. 9:26-27 is "the prince" of the people (all unbelievers). This man of sin will make an alliance (covenant) with the Jews at the beginning of the seventieth week (seven years) of Daniel's seventy sevens, vs. 27; John 5:43-47, and immediately after God has removed his ekklesia (all believers) from the earth. In the middle of the seven year covenant ("in the midst of the week", three and one-half years), the "prince," the antichrist, will break his seven year covenant with the Jews by placing an idol image in the Holy Place in Jerusalem, vs. 27. At that time God's Holy Spirit will not be residing in any of the earth's inhabitants. The lack of God's Spirit and the abominable desecration of the Holy Place will then create the awful period of the "abomination of desolation" referred to at Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:15-26; [Jer. 30:7]; Mk 13:14-23; II Thes. 2:7. At the end of the tribulation, there will be a dark sun, and an invisible moon, and the stars will be in different motions than usual for them. Then will all be made right by Jesus' return to earth with all his ekklesia including the Jews who have come to rely upon the righteousness and lordship of Jesus Christ, Mk 13:24-27; Acts 2:19-21,36; Rom. 9:30-33. The kingdom of God under the lordship of Jesus, his Son, will then be "at hand" again, and, this time, it will be accepted by all of God's people, Rom. 10:13; 11:25-36. We believers cannot know the day or hour when Jesus will come for us, but we can recognize the season or nearness of his appearance, Mk 13:28-31; Lk 21:28; I Thes. 5:4.

IV. The term "generation" cited above in Mk 13:30 can be confusing if not given a proper Scriptural context. Jesus said there, "Truth-

fully I say to you, that this generation [my italics-WA] shall not pass, till all these things be done." (Lk 21:32 provides the same statement.) I bring this to our attention with Dan. 9, because this "generation" is related to "the times of the Gentiles," Lk 21:24. In Psa. 22 which Jesus quoted while paying the sin debts of us believers by hanging and dying on the cross (Mk 15:34), the thirtieth verse states, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord (God) for a generation," [my italics-WA]. At Gal. 3:16 God's Word states that Jesus Christ is that seed which fulfills God's promise to Abraham, Gen. 22, especially Gen. 22:18. Further, at Acts 2:40, Peter referred to this generation (current) as a period during which those who are to be made right (reconciled) with God will do so by repenting of their sins and confessing that Jesus is Lord with immersion in Jesus' name as a symbol of that confession. This includes "as many as the Lord our God shall call," (the ekklesia), Acts 2:39b. This period of God's New Covenant (Heb. 8:7-13) is accounted (recounted) by God as a "generation" (a block of time) which is to be terminated by a time of sorrow and desolation spoken of by Daniel in his Chap. 9. Isaiah at 53:10 prophesied that, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him [Jesus]; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his [God's] seed [offspring, Son], he shall prolong his [God's] days, and the pleasure of the Lord [God] shall prosper in his hand." Our Lord Jesus Christ declared Daniel to be a [true] prophet, and that prophet's proclamation at Dan. 9:24-27 to be valid concerning events which are to happen at the end time when Jesus has promised to return for us believers, Matt. 24:15; Mk 13:14; John 14:1-3.

Mar. 30, 2003

"The Jews in the Latter Days"  
Dan. 10

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. It is evident that God in his Word refers to personages in secular history to mark the time of his revelation to mankind. This arrangement establishes the timing of biblical events to the record keeping which men of all persuasions have been diligent in keeping thorough accounts through the ages. Only recently we are seeing a determined effort on the part of some to "rewrite history" to make former events conform to what current strategists want their contemporaries to believe. There are those who profess to be Christians who have added to and/or interpreted the Bible to make it conform to what enhances their own self-interests. But the Lord has maintained a true copy of his Word so that during our day of a profusion and confusion of ideas and communications, we can follow Jesus' admonition, "whoso readeth, let him understand," Matt. 24:15. Another advantage which those who are trusting Jesus' righteousness for being in God's favor is that the Lord has promised the indwelling power and guidance of his Holy Spirit during our time in world history, John 14:22-26; Acts 2:16-18. So now we can peg the time rather closely when God revealed this vision of Dan. 10-12 to us (and particularly to his people, the Jews) as during the third year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia (Iran). As Cyrus (Hebrew transliteration of Cyrus is "Koresch.") Recall Waco, Texas incident.) began to rule the Persian Empire, which he founded, about 540 BC, we are told thereby that the vision begun in Dan. 10 was about 537 or 536 BC. Before King Cyrus died in 530 BC, he showed a kindness to the Jews as noted by some of God's Old Covenant prophets, II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1. Daniel served King Cyrus until during the first year of his reign, Dan. 1:21. Therefore, Daniel could have been in retirement from governmental service with an ample pension when this vision of Chaps. 10-12 occurred in the third year of Cyrus' reign. At Dan. 6:28 we learned that "Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." There were three Dariuses (Dynasties) and one Cyrus.

II. Chap. 10 begins by stating clearly that Daniel had revealed to him a "thing," (word or message), an understanding of a vision which involved a long appointed time. The understanding was communicated to the prophet in a method which is not told to us, but we are told that the message received by Daniel was very sad. In fact, Daniel mourned for "three full weeks," vs. 2. Just how sad was the aged prophet? "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three weeks were fulfilled," vs. 3. He is saying here that he fasted and did not even care for personal hygiene (bath?) for twenty-one days. I believe there are two reasons for the prophet's grief and unhappiness. One, Daniel learned that the Jews' precarious condition would not be helped for a long period, and two, according to the Scripture references cited above (II Chron., Ezra, and Isa.), in Cyrus' first year of reign he gave the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem. However, when Zerubbabel (head of Judah's tribe) prepared to lead the Jews back west to Israel, so few volunteered to return that Zerubbabel had a delay in finishing the Temple which

Cyrus had authorized for sixteen years, Isa. 44:28-45:1. The opposition of the Samaritans to the Jews' return further complicated the operation. The scarcity of the returning Jews was a burden to Daniel, because he loved his homeland and would have loved to return himself. He was now over ninety years of age and retired. (For details of the struggles to erect the new Temple and Jerusalem, review the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah.)

III. After learning of the long time before the salvation of his people, the Jews, Daniel went down along the Tigris River (Hiddekil) bank, and, on April 24 (Nisan), he apparently meditated upon the sad message he had learned. While thinking of the sad situation the Jews, his people, were facing, he looked up and saw a spectacular man in extraordinary attire. The man was dressed in fine linen with a gold band around his chest and a body of beryl (a steel-gray, metallic element). The man's face appeared as lightning, his eyes were as flames, and his arms and feet shined like bright brass. The person's voice sounded like a multitude of voices in unison when he spoke. The majesty and awesomeness of the being was visible to Daniel only, although other people were there also. (See a like instance in Acts 9:1-8.) As the earth shook in the area, the people with Daniel ran for safety. After the others left, the prophet was left alone on the river bank. The vision of this glorious person (vss. 5-9) was so awesome that Daniel's physical strength drained from him. Prostrate upon the ground, the prophet drifted into a deep sleep. Another man (a heavenly messenger) in the vision touched Daniel and brought him upon his all fours and asked him to stand. Daniel stood trembling and heard again that he was "greatly beloved." The man in the vision said an unusual thing regarding how he had been delayed for three weeks because of duties with the prince of Persia (Cyrus, Isa. 44:24 - 45:5). The messenger stated that he had come to reveal to Daniel what would happen to his people, the Jews. At this point the prophet became speechless and bowed his face to the ground. Daniel again became weak, and when he confessed this condition to the heavenly messenger, he again identified Daniel as one "greatly beloved." He touched Daniel, strengthened him, and told him not to fear but be strong, vss. 18-19. The revealer to the prophet of heavenly things again referred to the prince of Persia and said that prince would be followed by the prince of Greece (Alexander the Great). This thought appears to be a reaffirmation of what has been revealed in earlier chapters. The angel then again mentions the angel Michael who is following the orders of the person from heaven described in vss. 5-9.

IV. Just who is the forceful being in this vision (vss. 5-9) of Daniel? I believe that he was the same one who appeared to Peter, James, John, Moses, and Elias in Matt. 17:1-13, who appeared to Paul the Apostle in Acts 9:3-9, and who appeared to John the Apostle in Rev. 1:10-17, i.e., God's glorified Son, Jesus. God's messengers lend mystery to God's activities on earth. At the end time it will be Michael who will lead a force of angels to purge heaven, Rev. 12:7; 20:10, and Satan will oppose him with his angels but lose his last battle. We believers are blessed, I Cor. 2:9-10.

Apr. 6, 2003

"Prophetic Stirrings"  
Dan. 11

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. The general vision which began in Chap. 10 continues through the remainder of Daniel's prophecy. It is very important that the predictions in this prophecy be associated with the Jews, for at the beginning of the vision the one imparting the vision to Daniel said to the prophet, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall happen to thy people, [the Jews] in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days [yet to come]," Dan. 10:14. [My italics-WA] Note also that the angel Gabriel was God's messenger who revealed the vision regarding the fulfillment of the long period of "the times of the Gentiles," Dan. 9:21-27; Lk 21:24. In contrast, the angel Michael is the messenger directly involved in Dan. 10:13, 21 and 12:1. At Dan. 10:21 and 12:1 Michael is mentioned as "Michael your prince," and, "- - at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for [watches over] the children of thy people [the Jews]." Michael is also named in Jude 9 as the messenger of God who withstood the Devil regarding the body of Moses, and at Rev. 12:7 he also is the angel who leads God's forces (God's angels) to war with Satan and his angels. The results of that angelic war is to be the expulsion of Satan and his cohorts from heaven. Driven from heaven, Satan comes to earth with his angels to direct the Antichrist in the great end-time tribulation, Rev. 12:9-12. While we understand that this vision of Dan. 10-12 relates specifically to the Jews, there is an ideological bridge between this portion of Daniel's prophecy and the New Covenant. One of the main promises of the New Covenant is related to the resurrection of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14. At Dan. 12:1-2 Daniel is told that there will be a resurrection of all "thy people" [the Jews], both those who are righteous to everlasting life and those who are not righteous to "shame and everlasting contempt." Resurrection, as such, is not stressed in the Old Covenant. However, the concept is noted elsewhere at Job 14:13-15; Psalms 16:9-10; [Acts 2:25-28]; II Sam. 12:24. And, as we shall see, there are other parallels such as the appearance of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8:9-12) who persecuted the Jews between and Old and New Covenants and the final persecutor of the Jews [and the entire earth], the Antichrist of II Thes. 2:3-4.

II. Note that this Chap. 11 begins with "also" which indicates that the vision begun in Chap. 10 is being continued. An angel (not named specifically) came to Darius the Mede to encourage and strengthen the king. The angel then told Daniel that four Persian kings would follow Cyrus. The four began with Cambyses in about 529 BC and ended with Xerxes who invaded Greece in about 480 BC. When the latter was defeated, Media-Persia ceased being a world empire. The mighty king of vs. 11:3 is the military genius who established his western world dominion beginning in 323 BC, the "he-goat" of Dan. 8:5, Alexander the Great. The "king of the south" is the successor of another of Alexander's generals, Seleucid, vs. 11:6. Vs. 11:7 speaks of another Ptolemy ruler who carried large supplies of gold and silver to Egypt from Syria. His sons were



infighters who practiced incest, greed, and unimaginable intrigue. [I read in our edition (1964) of Britannica Encyclopaedia an article about the fourteen Ptolemys. Truthfully, the information there is far more pathetic (sick) than the worst of our "soap operas." Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) married his own full sister, Arsinoe. We examined Antiochus Epiphanes of the Ptolemy Dynasty in Dan. 8, III, and his attempt to decimate or abolish all the Jews.] To form an alliance between two of the warring families, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt gave his daughter Berenice in marriage to Antiochus Theos of Syria. Antiochus was already married to Laodice whom he divorced. After two years Ptolemy Philadelphus died, and Antiochus Theos put away Berenice with her son and took back his first wife, Laodice. She, then, poisoned Antiochus Theos and ordered the death of Berenice and her son, and afterwards Laodice put her own son, Seleucus Callinicus, on the throne. This complicated interplay between Alexander's successors continues from Dan. 11:3:18 where Daniel is told about "a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease." This "prince" is the rise of the Roman Empire.

III. In about 195 BC Antiochus the Great made a treaty with Egypt and gave his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes in marriage. In 170 BC Epiphanes entered Jerusalem, slew 100,000 Jews, took away the daily sacrifice at the Temple, and placed an image of Jupiter on the Holy Mount, vs. 31. Daniel relates this Epiphanes to a like figure who will appear, "even to the time of the end: because it is for a time appointed," vs. 35. Daniel's prophecy now gives full attention to the "man of sin," "the son of perdition," who is also described by God's Word at II Thes. 2:14, 8-12. Daniel's and Paul's accounts can be seen as the same, because of the similitude of their descriptions. This person will feel no obligation to anyone else, "the king will do according to his [own] will," vs. 36, and, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he is as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," II Thes. 2:4. He will enter into "the glorious land" [Israel], and overcome many countries in the area. At last he will establish his headquarters between "the seas" [Mediterranean] and the "glorious holy mountain" [Jerusalem], but, "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him," vs. 11:45.

April 13, 2003

"Summary And Seal"  
Dan. 12

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. Chap. 12 begins with the assertion of "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time," vs. 1. This reference can only be that same time to which Jesus referred at Matt. 24:21, and see also at Jer. 30:7. Now, note the last part of Dan. 12:1, "at that time thy [Daniel's] people [the Jews] shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book [elected or chosen]." The last clause of Jer. 30:7 (cited above) is, "but he (Jacob's people, the Jews) shall be saved out of it." This salvation of the Jews agrees with Rom. 11:25-32 where Paul (God's Word) quotes Isa. 59:20-21. Note especially Rom. 11:28 and relate it to Dan. 12:1b, "every one that shall be found written in the book," i.e., elected. Among those "elected" will be, I believe, all those who have exercised faith in Almighty God including such notables as Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, etc., listed in Heb. 11. They will join us trusters in Jesus Christ with Jesus, God's Messiah, after Jesus comes for us, Heb. 11:39-40. Daniel wanted to know more details (vs. 12:8), but the Lord said to him, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end," Dan. 12:9,13. We know, through our faith, that Jesus is coming for us and that we are already in God's kingdom because of our acceptance of the lordship of our Lord, Jesus the Christ, Savior!

II. We noted the concept of a resurrection at the end of the age in Dan. 11. Above we stated that the Lord would not reveal to Daniel everything the prophet wanted to know about the final destiny of mankind. Now that the Lord has revealed his spiritual salvation to anyone who will trust his Son, Jesus Christ, and the events at the end of the age through John on the Isle of Patmos, we can understand more of God's will for people of the world. But how will God treat his Old Covenant saints at the end time? To begin such an understanding we should remember the Word at Dan. 12:1 where God promises Daniel that "thy people, (the Jews) shall be delivered," i.e., "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt," Dan. 12:2-3. There were many Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah during his earthly ministry, but God's plan of salvation through Christ was not complete until Jesus said on the cross at his death, "It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost," John 19:30. Following Jesus' death and resurrection "the graves were opened, and many bodies of the [Old Covenant] saints who slept [had died] arose," Matt. 27:52-53. In I Pet. 3:18-21 God's Word tells us that Jesus "went and preached (proclaimed God's truth in Christ) unto the spirits in prison (Old Covenant Jews)." Further, God's Word tells us through Ezekiel that, "the whole house of Israel - - - O my people, I will open your graves and order you to come out. And ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have brought you out of your graves," Ezek. 37:10-14. The only impossible thing for God to do is to tell an untruth! (Numb. 23:19; Heb. 6:18) God said, "For God so loved the world that whosoever believes in him shall have everlasting [spiritual] life [with God]!" (John 3:16)

III. Rev.1-20: What was hidden from Daniel at Dan. 12:9, about 600 years before Jesus revealed the information in the last book of God's total recorded communication to mankind, is uncovered in the Revelation of Jesus through John, the Lord's servant. More and more attention has been given to end-time events since WWII, especially in the last two or three decades. Between the two World Wars many Bible students believed that WWI, which was hailed as "the war to end all wars," would bring in a period of peace. That period of peace would create a world situation in which the Messiah would come and set up his promised Kingdom of God on earth. This possibility of Bible interpretation was, in part, in keeping with the early period of church history in the minds of some. However, Origen (AD 185-254), in contrast, spoke against Chiliasm which doctrine involves a literal exposition of the eschatological pictures of the New Covenant. It includes the teaching of the millennium, the period of one thousand years given in Rev. 20. Later, Augustine (AD 354-430) made his contribution to Christian philosophy after the Roman Empire had high-handedly taken over the Christian Religion as its own under Constantine I in c. AD 323. Augustine essentially made the Christian Church synonymous with the Kingdom of God. In other words, the Roman Church disallowed God's ever maintaining the Jews as a nation and dealing with them as a congregate people again. Further, the Roman Church in 1870 determined the head of that group to be infallible in matters of religious faith and morals. The Roman Church still forbids its members to believe in the millennial period as a kingdom period in which God's early Covenant with the Jews will be fulfilled. (Catechism of the [Roman] Catholic Church, 1994, p. 177, Paragraph 676, "The [Roman] Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the 'intrinsically perverse' political form of a secular messianism.") They take this position because they presume the Roman Church to be the same as the Kingdom of God. I make this point to say that Christendom is far from unified in its understanding of what the Revelation of Jesus Christ involves, Matt. 20:24-28.

IV. In light of the above information I believe that we should reaffirm what God's Word states at Acts 15:13-19; Rom. 11:25-29. There are many other Scriptures which relate the same position. Jesus' Revelation tells of the relatively short period (seven years, Dan. 9:27) in which the entire earth and especially the Jews will undergo a severe persecution of which Jesus spoke in Matt. 24:21. I believe that during that time the ekklesia will have been taken away from the earth to be with the Lord. In addition to this seven-year period of unique persecution in Chaps. 6-18, the prior ekklesia period is given in Chaps. 1-3. Chaps. 4-5 reveal the scene in heaven with the Lord and the ekklesia in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, and his bride, the ekklesia (the called out ones) in Chap. 19; Eph. 5:28-33. Chap. 20 reveals the one thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth.

June 30, 1996

"Stirrings, Summary, And A Seal"  
Dan. 11-12

Couples Class  
Wendell Alford,  
Teacher

I. The general vision which began in Chap. 10 continues through the remainder of Daniel's prophecy. It is very important that the predictions in this prophecy be associated with the Jews, for at the beginning of the vision the one imparting the vision to Daniel said to the prophet, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall happen to thy people, [the Jews] in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days [yet to come]," Dan. 10:14. [My italics-WA] Note also that the angel Gabriel was God's messenger who revealed the vision regarding the fulfillment of the long period of "the times of the Gentiles," Dan. 9:21-27; Lk 21:24. In contrast, the angel Michael is the messenger directly involved in Chap. 10:13, 21 and 12:1. At 10:21 and 12:1 Michael is mentioned as "Michael your prince," and, "- - at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for [watches over] the children of thy people [the Jews]." Michael is also named in Jude 9 as the messenger of God who withstood the Devil regarding the body of Moses. While we understand that this vision of Chaps. 10-12 relates specifically to the Jews, there is an ideological bridge between this portion of Daniel's prophecy and the New Covenant. One of the main promises of the New Covenant is related to the resurrection of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:1-14; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14), and resurrection, as such, is not stressed in the Old Covenant. At 12:2 Daniel is told that there will be a resurrection of all "thy people" [the Jews], both those who are righteous to everlasting life and those who are not righteous to "shame and everlasting contempt." And, as we shall see, there are other parallels such as the appearance of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8:9-12) who persecuted the Jews between and Old and New Covenants and the final persecutor of the Jews [and the entire earth], the Antichrist of II Thes. 2:3-4.

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