EXPOSITION OF DANIEL 12 AND REALIZED ESCHATOLOGY

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Some Preliminary Considerations

To mutilate some lines from Shakespeare's Sonnet 43, "By how many names do we know thee? Let us count the names:" "Kingism," "AD 70 Theology," "Realized Eschatology," "Preterism," "Covenant Eschatology," "Transmillennialism" (trademarked by its advocates in 2001), and likely others. I observed years ago (and have stated many times) that novel doctrine always requires novel terminology to communicate it, and there is no better demonstration of this fact than the foregoing list of terms.

I wrote the following comments about "Realized Eschatology" several years ago:

> This maverick movement would not be worthy of the notice I am giving it here except for two factors: (1) It is a prime demonstration of just how far men can go into error when they grow weary of the old paths of Truth and believe they have discovered some new and radical doctrines that were hidden until they came along. (2) Brethren need to be warned. Some people, including brethren (given the general extent of Biblical ignorance), are so gullible that they will swallow almost anything in religion—even this extreme perversion of the Gospel….(*Gospel Journal* 28).

I caution the reader not to consider "Realized Eschatology" as merely a "doctrine." It is far more. It is a system of theology every bit as much as dispensational premillennialism and Calvinism are. Just as the *1,000-year* passages in Revelation 20[1] constitute the "tail" that wags the entire premillennial "dog," so the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem wags the whole "Kingism" dog. Premillennialism makes the disastrous error of perverting the highly figurative language of the book of Revelation into their subjective literal interpretations. Contrariwise, Transmillennialism perverts the literal terms concerning the fundamentals of the Second Coming, the bodily resurrection, the Judgment, and eternal Heaven and Hell into their highly subjective figurative/spiritual meanings. These heretical systems are equally damnable in their consequences.

Introduction to Daniel 12

The final chapter of Daniel is by far the shortest of the book with only 13 verses.2 However, it is an important chapter, if for no other reason, because it is the last and culminating chapter. a primary rule of biblical exegesis and hermeneutics is that one should not study or interpret any passage of scripture in isolation, but in both immediate and remote context. The importance of this principle is no more clearly demonstrated than in the study of Daniel 12. Indeed, this chapter is but the continuation and conclusion of the vision begun at chapter 10, verse 1. It is

difficult to imagine the basis on which Hugo, the thirteenth century Old Testament chapter-divider, made his beginning point for chapter 12.

Butler is correct in observing as follows: “If the reader would disregard, momentarily, the imposed chapter and verse divisions, and read chapters 10 through 12 as one unit, he would readily observe the continuity of purpose” (450). McGuiggan does not even attempt to outline or deal with chapter 12 apart from chapters 10 and 11 (157–184). This faulty chapter division is especially apparent concerning 12:1–4. A far more logical beginning for chapter 12 would have been with our present verse 5, leaving verses 1–4 as part of chapter 11. This will be readily observable when we begin the exegesis of the text. The exposition of chapters 10 and 11 are not within the purview of this exposition. However, it will be necessary to review those chapters to some extent (especially the closing section of chapter 11) in order to establish the basis of our comments on chapter 12.

I have outlined this chapter as follows:

I. The conclusion of the vision given Daniel by the marvelous (angelic) messenger (see 10:5–6) concerning the future of God’s people (vv. 1–4).

II. Two other persons (likely angels) converse with the messenger (vv. 5–7)

III. Daniel asks the messenger for further information about the outcome of the vision and is given a few additional details (vv. 8–12).

IV. The messenger tells Daniel to go his way with words of assurance for his future (v. 13).

One more comment before diving into Daniel 12: I freely admit that I have been unable to find any approach to this interesting, yet difficult, chapter that is free of all problems. I have chosen the one that seems most satisfying to me. There is room for others to hold a divergent view as long as said view does not involve any contradiction of truths clearly taught elsewhere in the Scriptures. Now, let us study the text of this important chapter.

Exegesis and Exposition of Daniel 12:1–13

Verses 1-4: The Conclusion of the Vision Concerning the Future of God’s People

Verse 1: The opening words, “And at that time…,” connect what is about to be revealed with what has just been revealed. We are made to ask, “At what time?” and to find the answer we must back up into chapter 11. The final verse (45) speaks of someone of great power who would encamp between the sea and the “glorious holy mountain,” but who would meet his end with no rescuer. Obviously, to know what “that time” is we must determine, if at all possible, who this ruler was, what this encampment was, and when it occurred.

I remind the reader that the book of Daniel is apocalyptic in nature, meaning that it contains much imagery and various figures, signs, and symbols. However, it also gives a rather detailed panorama of the sweep of the heathen empires from Daniel's time to some future point and the way God's exiled people would relate to them and be affected by them. It is so detailed and explicit for the most part that the identities of the various empires and even rulers are generally identifiable. The principal reason for the revelation of these events was apparently to give hope to the beleaguered Jews of the captivity. As a captive, displaced people, they were all but hopeless. They wondered if God had completely forsaken them or if there was still the possibility that He would fulfill His promise of a new king of David's seed who would be given the eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12–16; 1 Chr.17:11–14). The meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream answered this question: In the fourth empire from Nebuchadnezzar's, God would set up His kingdom, which would stand evermore (2:31–44).

In that dream and its interpretation (the kernel of the book) the first of these empires was Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, in which Daniel lived. The second was that of the Medes and Persians, which conquered and succeeded Babylon. The third was the Grecian Empire (referred to **by name** in 8:21; 10:20; 11:2, which overwhelmed Persia) under Alexander and his successors. The fourth was the Roman Empire (which rolled over the remnants of Alexander's once-mighty domain). In the days of those kings God would (and did) set up His everlasting kingdom (I have written at some length on Dan. 2 [McClish, *Daniel*, 68–87]). The message of the interpretation of this dream was one of marvelous hope for these downtrodden people.

It is important to note that the time span covered by the book of Daniel is circumscribed and limited by events related to these four empires of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the last of which was the Roman Empire. Although those mighty world empires seemed to be all-powerful and invincible at the apex of their power (with the Roman Empire the mightiest of all), as impossible as it seemed, God would still establish His kingdom which would have no successor (as indeed He did!). This would finally bring the relief and security to God's people for which they yearned. The point I want to keep before us is that just as the **beginning** point of Daniel's prophecy is identified as the Babylonian Empire, the **ending** point is also identified as sometime in the Roman Empire **and no later.**

This necessary premise to understanding the book is evident on at least three other bases besides Nebuchadnezzar's dream: (1) The same limitation of four kings/kingdoms is set forth in Daniel's dream (7:1–8, 17, 23). (2) The book is written to give hope to Daniel's people, that he and they might know what would befall them "in the latter days" (10:14), which we believe to be the final days of Israel as God's Old Testament covenant people. (Remember,

their **covenant** identity as God's people ended at the cross [cir. AD 30, Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:16–17; 10:9–10; et al.] and their **national** identity in God's sight was forever terminated when Titus, the Roman general, besieged and then obliterated Jerusalem in AD 70). (3) In almost the closing words of the book the angelic announcer told Daniel that the "end of these wonders" (i.e., the wonders revealed in chapters 10–12, or perhaps the entire book) would coincide with "when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people." This would be "the time when all these things shall be finished" (Dan. 12:6–7). Thus, when the Jews were finally and irretrievably broken (by the Roman Legions in AD 70), the visions of the book of Daniel would be fulfilled and finished.

I believe McGuiggan is right about this:

> The scope of the book has consistently been from Babylon (at the earliest) to Rome (at the latest). See this in chapters 2 and 7. In chapter 8 we go from Persia to the Seleucids. In chapter 9 we went from Persia to Rome. In chapters 10 through 12 we do the same thing—from Persia to Rome (159).

If I am right in this (and I believe I am), there is not even a toe, much less a leg, left upon which the premillennialist can build a case for his mythical one thousand year literal future kingdom scheme. You see, the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God and the enthronement of His/David's Son, the Messiah/Christ, took place in the days of the Roman "kings"—"in the latter days" of Daniel's people, the Jews, long since passed. In fact, this eternal kingdom (the church of Christ [Mat. 16:18–19]) was established in the first century of our era (McClish, *Daniel* 68–87).

Now, back to the antecedent of *he* in 11:45: Who is this "he"? We get no help in verses 41–44, which oscillate between *he* and *him* several times, but with no fuller identity. Not until we get to verse 40 do we find a more specific identity: *the king of the north*. However, this is so general that we must move yet farther back in the chapter to determine who this is in order to know the time of which Daniel 12:1 speaks.

Note the following review of chapter 11:1–6:

1. Beginning with Darius, several Persian monarchs are introduced (vv. 1–2).
2. A mighty king of Greece (Alexander) would overcome the last Persian and rule an even larger empire (v.3).
3. Alexander's empire would not be given to kindred when he died, but would be divided among four of his generals (v. 4). Within a few years two of these (the Ptolemies and the Seleucids) established dynasties that controlled most of Alexander's former empire.
4. The originator of the Ptolemy dynasty, Ptolemy I Soter (one of Alexander's generals), was strong to begin with and controlled Egypt. He and his successors are called "the king of the South" (v.5). "The king of the north" (v. 6) is a reference to the Seleucid dynasty (begun by

Seleucus I Nicator, another of Alexander's generals, in 312 BC), which controlled much of the former Persian Empire, particularly Syria.

There is general agreement among expositors with these respective identities of "the king of the south" and "the king of the north," **through 11:35**. More particularly, practically all exegetes identify "the king of the north" in verses 21–35 (some say 21–39) with Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the last Seleucid king. However, as indicated below, a wide variety of opinions exists concerning the kingdom/king who is the subject of verses 36–45. Since this identity bears directly and heavily upon the understanding of chapter 12, we must give careful study to it.

There are perhaps a dozen diverse suggestions as to who "the king" of verse 36 might be (Antiochus Epiphanes, a Jewish Antichrist, a single (mythical) New Testament "Antichrist," Antiochus **and** Antichrist [type and antitype], Herod the Great, the Roman Pope/papal system, Mohammed, the Roman Empire, et al.). Most conservative commentators I have read apply verses 36–45 to Antiochus in one way or another (e.g., Barnes 2:207, 240, Butler 434, Copeland 61, Henry 4:1106, Zerr 4:273). Barnes, attempting to avoid the difficulties involved in applying verses 40–45 to Antiochus as a continuation of his exploits from verses 36–39, suggests that they are a "recapitulation" of the material found in verses 21–39 (246–47). At the same time, however, many of the commentators admit the serious difficulties encountered in applying these verses to him. In fact, some demonstrate that one must torture the text to do so (McGuiggan 170–71, Young 246–51).

Without doubt, at **first glance** verse 36 **seems** to refer to Antiochus (the subject of the preceding verses). However, with the difficulties involved in consistently applying this and succeeding verses to him, many commentators believe some different king or government is introduced in this verse. To me, the difficulties involved in assigning a new kingdom/king to verses 36–45—while not totally absent—are indeed fewer than in attempting to assign them to Antiochus.

If this is the case, who then is the most likely ruler or empire under consideration? The answer that makes the most sense is the Roman Empire, for at least three reasons: (1) The Seleucid Empire was thus referred to as "the king of the north" (v. 15, et al) because its capital was northward when compared with the Egyptian Empire of the Ptolemies, referred to as "the king of the south" (v. 25, et al.). However, when compared with Egypt as to direction, Rome could also be appropriately called "the king of the north" (v. 40, which describes "the king" of v. 36). (2) Remember that the period covered by the book of Daniel embraces the time from the Babylonian Empire to sometime in the Roman Empire, during which God would set up his eternal kingdom. To end the book with Antiochus of the Seleucid Empire would be anti-

climactic, drawing the book to a close two centuries before the establishment of the Messianic kingdom—the very source of Israel's hope. (3) To identify the king of verse 36 with anyone **after** the Roman Empire (e.g., a supposed "Antichrist," Mohammed, the Popes, et al.) runs beyond the boundaries of the book of Daniel, as earlier indicated. I conclude with McGuiggan: "There is nothing in the text [vv.36–45] which the Romans couldn't and didn't do," which he stated in an extended discussion of verses 36–45, giving bases for identifying *the king of the north* as the Roman Empire (170–72).

On the basis of our thesis thus far, let us turn our attention to Daniel 11:45, which immediately precedes Daniel 12:1. The Roman authorities are described as being in such a position of power that they can set up their standards at will, including in Judah. This I believe to be the meaning of planting "the tents of his palace between the sea [i.e., the Mediterranean] and the glorious holy mountain [Mt. Zion that housed the temple." Although the Roman power would seem invincible (as had the previous empires), Daniel was not to think it to be indestructible. The time would also come when it would perish with none to rescue it. However, this is not so much a definite prediction in regard to time, but merely a reminder to help Daniel keep things in perspective.

At that time… (Dan. 12:1) refers to the time when the Romans were ruling Palestine. Michael (the archangel, cf. 10:13, 21) was to stand up. His name means, "Who is like God?" and thus appears as the representative of God. He is described as "the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people." It was apparently his function to keep a watchful and helpful eye over God's people. In spite of Michael's help, this would be a time of terrible trouble for God's people, "such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." To what could this refer except the terrible clashes between the Jews and the Romans in the Roman occupation of Palestine that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem as a city and of Israel's national identity in AD 70? Imagine how this sounded to Daniel, who had been through the awful trials of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem. He must have had a hard time imagining times of troubles worse than those, yet that is the message he received. One cannot read this without remembering that the Lord used almost these very words to describe that self-same destruction: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be" (Mat. 24:21). I believe the Messenger to Daniel and the Lord were referring to the same event.

God's true people would be delivered at this time of terror and tribulation. This is not speaking of the fleshly Jews, but of God's spiritual Israel through His Son—Christians. When the Christ died on the cross the Old Testament' authority was slain with Him (Col. 2:14), thus

ending God's **covenant** relationship with the Jews as a race of people. When God set up His eternal kingdom (the church), with His/David's Son on its throne, the church, open to people of all the nations, became the "Israel of God" (Rom. 2:28–29; Gal. 6:15–16; Phi. 3:3). The eternal kingdom (thus, the consummation of God's promise in Daniel 2:44) had been in existence for forty years when the Romans overran Jerusalem in AD 70. Those in the kingdom, not merely Jews according to the flesh, constituted God's people at the time of that great conflagration. Thus I believe those referred to here as "thy people" who would be delivered because they were "found written in the book" were the Christians who escaped Jerusalem before it fell. Indeed, the Lord provided the very signs by which His people would be able to recognize this event and He told them to flee the city for their lives when those signs appeared (Luke 21:20–24;Mat. 24:15–21). The account of Josephus, the uninspired eye-witness, of the lifting of the siege against Jerusalem briefly, thus allowing every Christian in the city to escape, is well-known. This is likely what the Lord referred to in his warning passage: "And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Mat. 24:22). Compare this with the promise to Daniel that those written in the book of life would be delivered.

Verse 2: A resurrection is described in verse 2, but to what does it refer? Many, if not most, expositors believe this is a promise of and a reference to the final general resurrection when all who have lived and died shall be called forth from the tomb, either to eternal bliss or eternal shame. God's Word most certainly sets forth just such a universal bodily resurrection to precede the final universal Judgment (John 5:28–29; 1 Cor. 15:42–54; 1 The. 4:14–17; et al.).

Realized Eschatology proponents deny the straightforward Scriptural doctrine that there will be any such literal, universal, bodily resurrection of those who have died. As with the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, His glorious return, the end of the world, the Judgment, and the beginning of eternal life or death, so with the resurrection. All references to such in Scripture are figurative with only a "spiritual" fulfillment. Kingites aver that all of these came to a head in the one grand event of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. They thus relegate Calvary and Pentecost to secondary status compared to the AD 70 event. In the theological system of the transmillennialist, **all** unfulfilled prophecies preceding that date were fulfilled in that occasion, including the passages that promise our resurrection. To what then do the resurrection passages point? They insist that these refer to the church, which, they allege was "raised" from the "grave" of dead Judaism, and which—surprise!—occurred in AD 70.

The AD 70 hobbyists are the current version of the infidel Sadducees of old, who "say there is no resurrection" (Acts 23:8). We say to them now, as the Lord said to them 2,000 years

ago, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures…” (Mat. 22:29). The Kingites are likewise the modern reincarnation of a pair of false teachers in Ephesus, concerning whom Paul wrote:

> But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying **that the resurrection is past already,** and overthrow the faith of some (2 Tim. 3:16–18, emph DM).

The apostle would doubtless say similar words of those who teach the same deadly and foolish doctrine were he among us today. As then, so now: AD 70 theology constitutes “profane babblings” and “ungodliness”—a spiritual cancer that consumes all who give heed to it. Its imbibers “err concerning the truth” and its teachers “overthrow the faith of some.” Except to refute their errors, these men should be “shunned,” as were those Ephesian apostates.

I do not for a moment give ground to the absurd Scripture-denying error of the realized eschatology folks who “spiritualize” every reference to a resurrection. However, some “resurrections” mentioned in the Bible are figurative rather than literal. I believe the resurrection described in Daniel 12:2 is among them. First, It would seem inexplicably abrupt to move—with no obvious connection whatsoever—from the contextual description of the Jewish state in AD 70 to the general resurrection, which still has not occurred almost twenty centuries from that time. Second, we have emphasized the terminal point of the material in the book of Daniel: in general, sometime during the Roman Empire, particularly, AD 70 (as demonstrated/discussed earlier (and as will be discussed in connection with vv. 6–7). To suddenly introduce the general resurrection here would seem out of place and isolated from every other part of the immediate context—indeed from the entire book. Third, this passage does not describe a universal resurrection, but a limited one. The text says **many** shall awake from their graves, not all, as the Lord stated concerning the literal, general resurrection (John 5:28–29).

Rather, this resurrection has to do with the peculiar fate and future of the Jews of Daniel’s time in some way, but in what way? Ezekiel was the “country prophet,” contemporary with Daniel, the “city prophet,” during the first several years of the exile. His challenge, perhaps even more than Daniel’s, was to give a message of hope to the hopeless and downtrodden common people among the Babylonian expatriates. Although there seemed to be no ray of light to pierce their dark present existence and anticipated future, Ezekiel’s message after the final fall of Jerusalem was one of hope. “This was accomplished not only through explicit promises (28:25; 34:11f; 37:21; et al.), but through the dramatic vision of the resurrected dry bones (37:1–14)” (McClish, *Ezekiel* 202). Could it be that both **Daniel and Ezekiel** described the ultimate revival of Israel in God’s plan (i.e., restoration to Canaan, and longer range—the coming of the

Messiah and establishment of the eternal kingdom) in terms of a resurrection? I believe this is, in fact, the case.

The people of God were so forlorn under the Gentile domination of their exile that it appeared that they had died as a nation, never to rise again. Isaiah used the resurrection figure of the ungodly heathen nations: “They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise” (26:14). Not so with God’s chosen nation—they would rise as it were from their place “in the dust.” It is not God’s fault that the Jews incorrectly assumed that these promises referred to the establishment of an earthly political kingdom with the Messiah as their king. Tragically, literal Israel would reject and crucify the very One who came to give them the ultimate and eternal kingdom of God, even as He tried to teach them that God’s eternal kingdom would be spiritual rather than political.

This “resurrection” of Daniel 12:2 occurred when the Christ came and established His everlasting **spiritual** kingdom (John 18:36, God’s **spiritual** Israel, as noted above). His people were at last given perpetual independence and sovereignty, which overrides all nations and their territorial boundaries (Dan. 2:44). Thus Peter called the church God’s “holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9). It is a great irony in the history of God’s people that old fleshly Israel rejected—and for several years remained the chief persecutor of—God’s new and true spiritual Israel. The great trouble and tribulation of Daniel 12:1 that literal Israel suffered in AD 70 was payment-in-kind in God’s wrath for her rejection of the true King and His kingdom.

That some in this resurrection would be raised to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt refers to the fact that some of the Jews would accept the Savior and others would reject him. Note how similar the prophecy concerning the Christ-child of the righteous and devout Simeon is to the outcome of the resurrection of Daniel 12:2: “Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34). It is a great tragedy that only a remnant of Jews believed and obeyed the Gospel, while the great majority remained (and remain) infidels (Rom. 10:1–3). While I do not believe this resurrection refers to the literal one that shall finally include all men, what is said of those who are raised is true concerning it. There will be only two classes of persons in the resurrection: those raised to everlasting life and those raised to everlasting contempt (Mat. 25:31–46; John 5:28–29).

Verse 3: “They that are wise” (“those who understand,” LXX) is likely a reference to those who have listened to the visions of the book of Daniel, consequently remaining faithful to God, and, if living till the time of the “resurrection” of verse 2, who accepted the Christ and His spiritual kingdom. These would shine as the brightness of the heavens, a promise of their eternal bliss. A blessing is then pronounced upon “they that turn many unto righteousness.”

Their eternal reward is likened unto the endless shining of the stars. These words of the angel to Daniel remind us of the ultimate wisdom of hearing, obeying, and serving the Lord Jesus Christ and of helping as many as possible to walk in the same way.

Verse 4: The angel commanded Daniel to "shut up the words and seal the book." Some think this refers only to the latest vision, beginning in chapter 10. However, I understand it to be of the whole book. Thus, I agree with Kiel: "We understand…the whole book" (9:485) and with Young: "Evidently Daniel had written down his revelations, as he received them. This last revelation formed a conclusion, and the entire body (i.e., the book) was now to be sealed" (257). To shut up the book and seal it means that Daniel is to see that it is protected and preserved until the time of the end. This is not until the "end of time," but the time of the end of the things prophesied in the book. We have seen that this refers in its extremity to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The last part of the verse is very difficult to unravel. It seems to speak of the desire on the part of many to know the events of those times embraced by and prophesied in the book, apart from which they will seek in vain. Young probably makes as much sense as anyone in his paraphrase of the entire verse: "Preserve the book until the end, for it contains the truth as to the future. Many shall go to and fro in search of knowledge, but they shall not find it" (258).

Verses 5–7: Two Persons (Likely Angels) Converse with the Messenger

Verses 5-6: After the vision which began in chapter 10 was concluded, Daniel saw "other two" persons (not otherwise described, but apparently angels), one on either side of "the river." That is, these were in addition to the original Messenger of the vision. We will pause long enough to ask who this glorious Messenger was. He is identified as "the man clothed in linen," which refers to the description of the glorious and awesome one mentioned in 10:5–6. The appellation, "a man," simply means he appeared as a man, in the form of a man, which is the common Biblical description of a Heavenly being who appears to human beings. Some have tried to identify Him with either Michael, the archangel (Jude 1:9; Rev. 12:7) or with Gabriel, another prominent angel (Luke 1:19). However, "the man in linen" is distinguished from them both and is apparently their superior (Dan.10:13; 8:16). I believe the Second Member of the Godhead, the Divine Logos, the pre-incarnate Christ, is the proper identity of this One on the following grounds:

1. There are several similarities between the description of this marvelous One and the "man" seen by Ezekiel at the beginning of his prophetic work who "was the likeness of the glory of Jehovah" (Eze. 1:26–28).

2. There are similarities between Daniel's description of this One and of the transfigured Christ (Mat. 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29).
3. The identification with the description of the crucified, resurrected, all-powerful Christ who walks among the candlesticks is all but unmistakable (Rev. 1:13–18). Further, the mission of "the man clothed in linen" in relation to Daniel and the mission of the risen Christ in relation to John are the same—to reveal future events to them (Dan. 10:14; Rev. 1:19).

"The river" refers to the river Hiddekel, mentioned as the location of Daniel when the last vision of the book began (10:4). This is one of the most famous rivers in the world and is the third river mentioned in the Bible, one of the four to flow out of the Garden of Eden where God placed the first man and woman (Gen. 2:10–15). According to Hackett, who provides a summary of the evidence for the identity, a better-known name for this river is "Tigris" (2:1062).

Verse 7: One of the angels asked the original Messenger how long it would be until the consummation of the events prophesied in the vision. In verse 7 we have the immediate response, made more solemn by the uplifting of His hands and His swearing in the presence of the Father. The response has two parts: (1) The end of these foretold events is somehow measured by or related to "a time, times, and a half" (literally, 1 time + 2 times+ 1/2 time, thus 3-1/2 times). (2) The time of the end is tied to the occurrence of an historical event—the "breaking in pieces the power of the holy people." The 3-1/2 times may be hard to decipher, but there can be little doubt about when the "power of the holy people" was broken. It was when the incomparable trouble and tribulation of the awful destruction of Rome was unleashed on Judah and Jerusalem in AD 70 (v. 1; Mat. 24:21).

What is meant by the 3-1/2 times? This number, along with the numbers of days mentioned in verses 11–12, and other symbolic time periods in the apocalyptic books of the Bible, excite the fertile imaginations of dispensational premillennialists to no end. In their folly, the Second-coming time-guessers erroneously labor over such time elements to no avail. We first encounter this symbolic number in Daniel 7:25 and it is almost universally understood to mean 3-1/2 years. It, or its equivalent in days or months, is found four times in the Revelation (11:2–3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). The earliest Biblical incident that is expressed in this time period is the literal period of 3 years and six months in which Elijah was a fugitive from the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kin. 17:1–18:46; Jam. 5:17). McGuiggan points out the fact that in each of these episodes related to a 3-1/2 year period there is this common theme: It is a time when God's people are suffering, but are still sustained by God in their suffering. Given the fact that 7 is the number for completeness and perfection in the Bible, he theorizes that 3-1/2 stands for something incomplete, short of totality or absoluteness.

In each case tied to this time frame there is a fiendish power which seems absolute and invincible in persecuting God's people. However, it is represented by a number which is far short of absoluteness (i.e., 7); in fact, only half of it (3-1/2). The message, according to McGuiggan, is that in spite of all appearances, no earthly power is absolute and they will all eventually fail. When applied to Daniel 12:7, this means that although the Roman Empire would seem to be so powerful (in its utter crushing and scattering of the Jews) that it would stand without end, like its predecessors, it was incomplete and limited, both in power and duration. Thus, the 3-1/2 times here relates to the nature of the oppressing power (Rome) at the end of the vision, rather than to an actual time element (McGuiggan 180). His view of this passage makes sense to me. However one may view the 3-1/2 years, we may lay to rest all of those vain and foolish attempts based upon them to predict the end of all things. Remember: Whatever might be the meaning of these numbers, **they must be understood as bringing us no farther down the stream of time than the "breaking in pieces the power of the holy people"—AD 70.**

Verses 8-12: Daniel Asks the Messenger for Further Information About the Outcome of the Vision and is Given a Few Additional Details

Verse 8: Daniel did not understand what he had just heard about how long it would be till "the end of these wonders" would transpire. Matthew Henry observed concerning Daniel's perplexity: "The best men are often much at a loss in their inquiries concerning divine things, and meet with that which they do not *understand*" (1115). We are reminded also that here we see demonstrated the fact that, while inspired men might receive and deliver the words of the message revealed to them, they did not necessarily understand the meaning of the words or the message itself (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10–12). Daniel lived about five centuries before the consummation of these events shown to him and he and his people were in captivity. The number of explicit facts and symbols he had been given in such a short period of time must have been all but overwhelming. He may have feared that he would suffer the times of awful trouble of which he had been told. He wanted to be sure of all the details of these matters as much as possible. Daniel pleaded that he might know more particularly exactly what the final outcome of these wonders should be. Perhaps it was hard for him to see the vision end with the breaking of his people.

Verses 9–10: The response of the Messenger initially is one of comfort and consolation, rather than additional information, although He would shortly give some additional hints. Daniel was told to go on his way, reminded that the visions were ended and were to be shut up and sealed till the end (as he had been told in verse 4). Verse 10 is apparently designed to comfort

Daniel by reminding him of the message he had already delivered in verses 1–3. Many would be purified by the fire of tribulation, but the wicked, being ignorant of these foretold events, would continue in their wickedness. While not restated in verse 10, verses 1–3 explicitly stated that righteous and wicked alike would receive their just rewards. There is the promise that those who are wise (the ones who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, 12:3) shall be able to understand. In other words, those who are faithful to God will be able to recognize the foretold events as they occur. In response to Daniel's plea that he did not understand (v. 8), the Messenger promised that enough had been revealed that those who are wise in days to come could understand. Daniel apparently did not need to understand more than he did.

Verse 11: The Messenger doubtless surprised Daniel (as He does us) by giving an additional tidbit of revelation concerning these final events of the prophecy. Something was to occur 1,290 days after a two-fold event: (1) the taking away of the continual burnt-offering and (2) the setting up of the abomination that makes desolate. This is admittedly a passage of extreme difficulty. Numerous attempts have been made to make the 1,290 days (a figure found nowhere else in the Bible) fit some historical period. However, whether taken as days (3 years, 7 months) or as years (day-year theory), no one to my knowledge who attempts to find some specific measurement of time in this figure has supplied anything that fits. Perhaps the best approach is to take the same view of this number as we did of the 3-1/2 years of verse 7. That is, it is not intended to convey a period of time except very indirectly. Its real purpose is to indicate the impermanent nature of something.

To what do the taking away of the continual burnt-offering and the setting up of the abomination that makes desolate refer? Of course, all of those who apply Daniel 11:21–45 to Antiochus Epiphanes believe these two events are describing what he did. They do indeed fit, in almost identical words, the description of what he did in Jerusalem on December 25, 167 BC (Dan. 8:13). In fact, much nearer the context of 12:11, his two abominable acts in the temple are referred to again (11:31). However, this does not necessarily mean that the words in 12:11 refer to his dastardly behavior, **especially if there is someone else who also did these things**. Remember, my thesis is that the Romans and their treatment of the Jews are the subject-matter beginning in 11:36 and continuing into chapter 12. Remember also that under discussion in this chapter is the crushing of the power of the Jews involving a time of trouble previously unknown by a nation.

Now note: (1) While Antiochus interrupted the daily sacrifices of the temple and profaned the sacred precincts of the temple, **so did the Romans** under Titus when they destroyed the city and the temple in AD 70. (2) While Antiochus brought grave suffering on the Jews, he did

not finally break in pieces their power (12:7). (The Maccabeans arose in rebellion against Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC and their efforts eventually resulted in restoring a great measure of Jewish independence for some years, which continued to a degree even until the birth of our Lord.) **It was the Romans**, not Antiochus, who broke in pieces the power of the Jews as a national entity.

(3) The Lord (as already noticed) applied the *abomination of desolation* phrase to the destruction of Jerusalem **by the Romans** (Mat. 24:15). His description in Luke's parallel account defines what desolation He had in mind very specifically: " But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand" (Luke 21:20). These armies and this desolation were most certainly **those of Rome in AD 70**, not those of Antiochus two hundred years before! (4) Matthew and Mark must have known that Jesus was referring to words (and therefore events) from Daniel 12, as demonstrated by their parenthetical statement, "Let him that readeth understand," immediately after His warning about the "abomination of desolation" (Mat. 24:15; Mark 13:14). Notice how closely this resembles what the Messenger said to Daniel in the same breath with his reference to the cessation of the continual burnt-offering and the abomination of desolation: "But they that are wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:10–11).

Since the Lord used these words in warning about **the desolation Rome would inflict on Jerusalem**, I believe this is strong proof that **the Roman destruction is what Daniel 12:10–11 describes.** Matthew probably wrote his book in about AD 60 and Mark probably wrote in about AD 64. Thus, Christians would have been reading these books only shortly before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. (It is almost as if Matthew and Mark were encouraging their readers, especially Jewish Christians, to head the Lord's warnings as repeated from Daniel 12 and thus be among the wise who understood them [v. 10]!)

Now, if I have reasoned correctly thus far, *1,290* cannot refer to an actual number of days or years because the vision only takes us through the AD 70 destruction, and the 1,290 is said to be "from" that catastrophe. These days must be taken as symbolic of something else. Could it be that they are another way of teaching Daniel that although the Romans would seem unconquerable and supreme without end as they broke Israel to pieces at Jerusalem, they really were not? I have indicated this to be my view of the 3-1/2 times of verse 7. I believe it to be here also. God is telling Daniel through His Messenger how to measure the great power of Rome—by 1,290 days. Again, when broken down into times (or years, at 30 days per month, per the Jewish calendar), 3 years and 7 months, **falls far short of 7 times** (absolute, perfect power)! Compare this with Revelation 13:5 where the beast is given authority for only forty-two more

months (3-1/2 years or a time, times, and a half time). The lesson is that the oppressive power of this fourth kingdom, this fourth beast, is limited and it would end, as would (and did) all of the others. If this is the meaning, it is another way of reassuring Daniel that God is in control, not heathen political nations.

Verse 12: This verse is very enigmatic. The purpose of the pronouncement of blessing seems obvious enough: to lend encouragement to the reader to persevere and endure through the times of trial and thus to enter into his reward. However, the way of describing the blessed reward sets before us another puzzling number. The 1,335 days equals 44-1/2 months or 3 years, 8-1/2 months in literal time. The 1,335 days is 45 days (1-1/2 months) beyond the 1,290 days (v. 11). There are no such periods of time to be found elsewhere in the Bible of which I am aware, so there is no help from comparative passages. As with the other measurements of time in this chapter, I also take this one to be symbolic of something other than an actual period of time. Again, I believe we can see what the 1,335 days is intended to convey, namely the reward of the righteous. How it does so is a complete mystery to me. Perhaps we can see a similarity in the symbolic number of 1,000 years in Revelation 20:1–6 that is used to describe the reign of triumphant saints with Christ.

Verse 13: The Messenger Tells Daniel to go His way with Words of Assurance for His Future

The Heavenly Messenger now dismisses Daniel a second (v. 9) and final time, indicating that He has finished the revelation and will speak no more mysteries to him. He must be satisfied with what has been revealed. He was to go his way. After the vision concluded in chapter 8, he fainted and then rose up once more to do “the king’s business,” all the while pondering the meaning of the vision (v. 27). Perhaps this is what the Messenger was telling him to do once more. Another thing he was to do most certainly was to record all of his visions so that they might be shut up and sealed in a scroll, as Daniel faithfully did (12:4).

Daniel was given the assurance that after his rest (i.e., death, I opine), he would receive his reward for faithful service. The word “lot” is a word that refers to that which God allots or assigns in judgment (cf. Jer. 13:25) (Thompson 342). Thus, there is in this assurance the implicit promise of Daniel’s resurrection to receive judgment and eternal life. To this hope all of the faithful of God’s people, whether before or after the cross, cling.

Conclusion

The book of Daniel is one of the most intriguing books ever written. While this chapter contains many mysterious things about which we would like to be more certain, besides its prophetic content, it also contains several practical principles and truths:

1. Those who will be saved are those who are "written in the book" (v. 1).
2. Just as in the figurative resurrection, so in the great final resurrection of all, we will be raised either to everlasting life or everlasting contempt (v. 2).
3. There is great wisdom in turning others to righteousness and those who do this shall be especially rewarded with great glory (v. 3).
4. God has providentially preserved His Word with great care through the centuries (v. 4).
5. God is able to see the future as clearly as the past (vv. 1–11). This chapter, as with all of Daniel, foretells so much historical detail that infidels and liberal critics have said it must have been written "after the fact" by someone using Daniel's good name. For those who believe in the one God of the Bible and in the Bible of the one God, such plain, predictive prophecy poses no problem whatsoever.
6. God is faithful to His promises and will reward those who have diligently served Him (v. 13).

We live in a day of great wickedness, a time in which those who are guilty of the most despicable abominations have great power and influence. These forces threaten to bring a great wave of persecution and suffering upon God's people in the near future if history continues in its present course. Let us all strive to be faithful and to turn as many as we can into the way of righteousness in spite of what evil men may do to us. Only then will we have the assurance of life eternal.

Endnote

[1] All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

[2] The basis for this chapter is material the author wrote for and which appeared in *The Book of Daniel,* ed. Gary Colley (Austin, TX: Southwest Pub, 1994).

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