**The Book of Daniel**

**Chapters 7-12**

**Daniel 7 – Visions of Change**

* King Belshazzar: The setting takes us back to Chapter 5 of Daniel.
* Beasts from the sea – The Sea is understood in much of the Old Testament as a source of chaos.
	+ The 1st Beast – Lion - often associated with Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar)
		- Powerful threat – Wings indicate swift conqueror
		- Transformation of the ruler is the way to conquer the enemy
	+ The 2nd Beast – Bear – also a wild animal that threatens life
		- Uncertain Reference (Medes?)
		- Voice/Command is that of Chaos
	+ The 3rd Beast – Leopard – 4 wings/4 heads
		- 4 Persian kings (Darius, Cyrus, Xerxes, Artaxerxes) in scripture?
		- Or 4 corners of the earth?
	+ The 4th Beast – vague (perhaps War Elephant? Greek)
		- Unclear what the 10 horns represent
		- The Little horn is a clear reference to Antiochus IV

Judgment is swift by the Ancient of Days (In Revelation the Great Battle is also swift/minimized)

Dominion is taken away from the beasts – Empires still exist but they are powerless before God.

* How do we live by faith in the midst of empires while trusting the God who Reigns?

“The violence that is visited upon the people of God (7:21) is a part of the last ruler's attack against God. While the kingdom of God is the one thing certain about the future, the world will resist this kingdom with all it has. The most important thing is that God will break the resistance to God's kingdom and has promised to sustain and keep us in it. "Little horns" have continued to appear in history with sufficient regularity to suggest that Antiochus IV Epiphanes did not exhaust the category.” (enterthebible.org)

**Daniel 8 – The Ram and the Goat**

Daniel is transported (in a vision) from Babylon to the Capital of Persia (Susa)

Symbolism

* The Ram = Persia
* The Goat = The Greeks
* The Single Great Horn likely means Alexander
* 2nd Horn is Cyrus who defeated the Medes (the other horn)
* “not by human hands” – a reference to God

Daniel first sees a destructive ram. Daniel contemplates the significance of the ram (8:4-5), but before he can figure it out, the next empire comes on the scene in the form of a goat and, with violent ease, disposes of its predecessor. The one who thought he could do as he pleased was disposed of by another who sought to do as he pleased. Each kingdom in succession magnifies itself and presumes to control everything. The tyrants attack one another until one of them finally assaults God. His attack is stopped directly by God ("not by human hands"; 8:25). (enterthebible.org)

**Daniel 9 – Angelic Revolution**

Darius son of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) – Historically Xerxes reigned after Darius but the book of Daniel has its own unique sense of history & time.

Daniel 9 opens with Daniel reading Jeremiah's announcement that the exile will last seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10). Many attempts have been made to get the duration of the exile to match the number seventy. The historical exile, from the destruction of the temple in 587 B.C.E. to the initial return in 538 B.C.E., lasted roughly fifty years. By counting from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign in 605 B.C.E., the figure gets closer to seventy. By counting from the destruction of the temple to the commencement of its rebuilding in 520 B.C.E., the number grows even closer to seventy, but still does not meet it exactly. We are probably dealing here with a traditional number for massive devastation, seventy years being a full lifetime.

The destruction of Jerusalem was most difficult for Israel to understand because it was understood to be an act of Israel's own God. In the exile, the Israelites had to face the wrath of God in a way that no other event in history had forced them to do. It was God's "no" to their conduct, their "treachery" against God (9.7). The exilic punishment was for the entire community. Even the prophet Ezekiel was included in the deportation to Babylon. The very nature of sin is that it is not merely a personal matter. The very fabric of life is threatened by its existence. **The idea of corporate responsibility and confession is a difficult concept for a society that places a high premium on individualism**. Daniel's prayer assumes a communal culture.

Daniel's prayer provides a fine model of supplication. Daniel petitions God to act for God's own sake (9:17), out of God's mercy (9:18), and out of regard for the people and city with whom God has identified (9:19). In a sense, God's reputation is on the line, because God has attached God's own name to Israel. However, Daniel has no room for petitioning on the basis of Israel's righteousness. Guilt leads to confession of sins but does not preclude petitioning for changed conditions.

That God responds at all is a sure sign that Daniel is in a covenant relationship with God-there is no doubt about God's forgiveness and acceptance. God's response to Daniel through Gabriel, however, remains cryptic. Unlike such prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah, Daniel receives a vision that needs interpretation. There has been a shift here from preaching prophets to prophets concerned with interpreting the written word. Here the numbers are symbolic of time periods, but the correlations are elusive. Decoding is not as important as emphasizing the repentance and supplication modeled in this chapter. The latter places one confidently in God's covenantal care. Decoding, in contrast, tends to place emphasis on human ingenuity. Petitioning places the interpretation of the vision in divine hands (enterthebible.org)

**Daniel 10 -12 – The Final Vision**

Summary: In Daniel 10 we are told that Daniel had a disturbing vision. The rest of the chapter narrates his encounters with heavenly beings as he is being prepared for an interpretation of the dream. Daniel 11 reveals the content and meaning of the dream. It is filled with descriptions of great violence. Daniel 12 announces the intervention of Michael, a heavenly being assigned to protect the people of God, and the resurrection of the faithful. As a unit, Daniel 10-12 asserts, as have previous chapters, that the future for the people of God will not be easy; **the picture is not at all pretty. But the outcome is certain: the evil rulers of this age will not have the last word.** The closing words of Daniel assure us that God will provide the inheritance that has been allotted for the faithful. (enterthebible.org)

Notes:

1. The events described in Chapter 11 match historical events surrounding the Greek empire.
2. Michael is known as the protector/warrior angel (Gabriel is the messenger)
3. Chapter 12 is the only time resurrection of the dead is foretold in the Old Testament
4. “A time, two times, & a half time” is cryptic – we don’t know the reference/meaning.
5. The book ends with a promise that allows Daniel (and others who resonate with Daniel) to persevere.

**Prayer of Azariah (Abednego**) **1:1-68**

**Prayer of Azariah 1:1** They walked around in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord. 2 Then Azariah stood still in the fire and prayed aloud: 3 "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and worthy of praise; and glorious is your name forever! 4 For you are just in all you have done; all your works are true and your ways right, and all your judgments are true. 5 You have executed true judgments in all you have brought upon us and upon Jerusalem, the holy city of our ancestors; by a true judgment you have brought all this upon us because of our sins. 6 For we have sinned and broken your law in turning away from you; in all matters we have sinned grievously. 7 We have not obeyed your commandments, we have not kept them or done what you have commanded us for our own good. 8 So all that you have brought upon us, and all that you have done to us, you have done by a true judgment. 9 You have handed us over to our enemies, lawless and hateful rebels, and to an unjust king, the most wicked in all the world. 10 And now we cannot open our mouths; we, your servants who worship you, have become a shame and a reproach. 11 For your name's sake do not give us up forever, and do not annul your covenant. 12 Do not withdraw your mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham your beloved and for the sake of your servant Isaac and Israel your holy one, 13 to whom you promised to multiply their descendants like the stars of heaven and like the sand on the shore of the sea. 14 For we, O Lord, have become fewer than any other nation, and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins. 15 In our day we have no ruler, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before you and to find mercy. 16 Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted, 17 as though it were with burnt offerings of rams and bulls, or with tens of thousands of fat lambs; such may our sacrifice be in your sight today, and may we unreservedly follow you, for no shame will come to those who trust in you. 18 And now with all our heart we follow you; we fear you and seek your presence. 19 Do not put us to shame, but deal with us in your patience and in your abundant mercy. 20 Deliver us in accordance with your marvelous works, and bring glory to your name, O Lord. 21 Let all who do harm to your servants be put to shame; let them be disgraced and deprived of all power, and let their strength be broken. 22 Let them know that you alone are the Lord God, glorious over the whole world." 23 Now the king's servants who threw them in kept stoking the furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood. 24 And the flames poured out above the furnace forty-nine cubits, 25 and spread out and burned those Chaldeans who were caught near the furnace. 26 But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions, and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace, 27 and made the inside of the furnace as though a moist wind were whistling through it. The fire did not touch them at all and caused them no pain or distress. 28 Then the three with one voice praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace: 29 "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and to be praised and highly exalted forever; 30 And blessed is your glorious, holy name, and to be highly praised and highly exalted forever. 31 Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory, and to be extolled and highly glorified forever. 32 Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne on the cherubim, and to be praised and highly exalted forever. 33 Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, and to be extolled and highly exalted forever. 34 Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven, and to be sung and glorified forever. 35 "Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 36 Bless the Lord, you heavens; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 37 Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 38 Bless the Lord, all you waters above the heavens; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 39 Bless the Lord, all you powers of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 40 Bless the Lord, sun and moon; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 41 Bless the Lord, stars of heaven; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 42 "Bless the Lord, all rain and dew; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 43 Bless the Lord, all you winds; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 44 Bless the Lord, fire and heat; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 45 Bless the Lord, winter cold and summer heat; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 46 Bless the Lord, dews and falling snow; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 47 Bless the Lord, nights and days; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 48 Bless the Lord, light and darkness; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 49 Bless the Lord, ice and cold; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 50 Bless the Lord, frosts and snows; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 51 Bless the Lord, lightnings and clouds; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 52 "Let the earth bless the Lord; let it sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 53 Bless the Lord, mountains and hills; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 54 Bless the Lord, all that grows in the ground; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 55 Bless the Lord, seas and rivers; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 56 Bless the Lord, you springs; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 57 Bless the Lord, you whales and all that swim in the waters; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 58 Bless the Lord, all birds of the air; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 59 Bless the Lord, all wild animals and cattle; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 60 "Bless the Lord, all people on earth; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 61 Bless the Lord, O Israel; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 62 Bless the Lord, you priests of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 63 Bless the Lord, you servants of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 64 Bless the Lord, spirits and souls of the righteous; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 65 Bless the Lord, you who are holy and humble in heart; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. 66 "Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. For he has rescued us from Hades and saved us from the power of death, and delivered us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace; from the midst of the fire he has delivered us. 67 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. 68 All who worship the Lord, bless the God of gods, sing praise to him and give thanks to him, for his mercy endures forever."