

# **Exile and Restoration**

## **Year 2, Quarter 4**

**Our survey of the Old Testament concludes with a study of the exile (Ezekiel and Daniel), the return of a remnant and the renovation of Jerusalem (Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah), the threat of Jewish extermination (Esther) and Malachi's warnings against revived sinfulness. The quarter ends with a look at Daniel's visions of the future.**

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**Day 1: Introduction**

Ezekiel was both a prophet and a priest (Ezk 1:1-3). He had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. at about 25 years of age. Among the Jews in captivity there was a stubborn, groundless optimism, encouraged by self-seeking false prophets, that God would not destroy Jerusalem and would soon bring them back to their beloved homeland. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were charged with preaching Jerusalem's utter downfall and a lengthy captivity, Jeremiah doing so in Jerusalem and Ezekiel among the captives in the land of the Chaldeans. In our brief overview of Ezekiel we will bypass material similar to that already studied, i.e., Judah's idolatry/adultery (chs 16 and 23), and we will concentrate on concepts unique to the book. (**Note:** Daniel preceded Ezekiel in captivity, being taken in about 605 B.C. But since Ezekiel's prophecies continue the theme of Jerusalem's downfall we will study Ezekiel first, then give attention to Daniel and his life among the Chaldeans and Medo-Persians).

1. Ezekiel was taken captive along with what Judean king (2 Kgs 24:8)?
2. How long had Ezekiel been in captivity before receiving his commission from God?

**Day 2: The Faithful Watchman**

After appearing to Ezekiel in a terrifying form (Ezk 1), God reveals to the young priest his duty, summarized in the phrase "*Thus says the Lord GOD*" (Ezk 2:1-8). Whether Israel obeys God or not, they will know by Ezekiel's work that "*a prophet has been among them.*" As He had done with Jeremiah, God forewarns Ezekiel that the captives will indeed reject his words, but Ezekiel is promised the strength to fulfill his commission (Ezk 3:7-11). God further admonishes him to faithfully warn the people lest he neglect his responsibility and bring guilt upon himself in the process (Ezk 3:18-21).

3. List the various terms describing Israel in Ezk 2.
4. What was Ezekiel's initial reaction to God's appearance to him (Ezk 3:14-15)?
5. Can a righteous man rebel and die in sin so as to be lost (Ezk 3:20)?

**Day 3: Slaughter in Jerusalem**

Ezekiel is given a vision of Jerusalem's abominations in chapter 8. Behind closed doors Ezekiel sees the elders of Israel burning incense to their idols and women weeping for the god Tammuz (Ezk 8:7-14). In the inner court of the temple men were worshipping the rising sun in the east (8:15-16). God then makes a frightening declaration: "*Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity*" (8:18). Thus, in

chapter nine, six men with the battle axes of God in hand approach Jerusalem. One among them is sent throughout the city to mark the righteous in order to spare them from the coming destruction. Then, to Ezekiel's utter horror, the slaughter begins (Ezk 9:3-7). The vision seems to stress two main points: 1) The people are so wicked they deserve extreme punishment. 2) God preserves spiritually, if not bodily, the righteous; no one is overlooked in the midst of His punitive judgments.

"The vision promises immunity from dying, but that's only the pictorial form of the real promise. The real promise and assurance behind the picture is that the invasion is no punishment on the righteous! But, someone replies, what's the difference, the righteous die and the wicked die. God gave them nothing in that case. Ah, there's all the difference in the world between suffering with the guilty and suffering because of guilt" (McGuigan, **The Book of Ezekiel**, p. 97).

6. What did the people say as they worshiped their idols (Ezk 8:12; 9:9)?
7. What kind of men received the preserving mark on their foreheads?
8. What is Ezekiel's concern as he watches the slaughter (Ezk 9:8)?

#### **Day 4: An Insolent View of Prophecy**

The people had heard Jeremiah and other prophets speak for so long concerning God's wrath and punishment that they dismissed the prophecies with scorn: "*The days are prolonged, and every vision fails*" (Ezk 12:22). God's longsuffering is interpreted as approval; His prophets are despised and their words rejected. Therefore, God declares "*the days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision... I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed*" (see Ezk 12:23-28). God's patience has run out; the rebellious people are beyond any hope of repentance.

9. How would God lay the proverb of the people to rest?
10. How is this attitude reflected in regard to the end of the world (see 2 Pet 3:2-4)?
11. What other saying of the people dismissed the words of the prophets (Ezk 12:27)?

#### **Day 5: The Wickedness of a Nation**

God declares to Ezekiel that He will punish any nation which persists in wickedness (Ezk 14:12-20). When His patience is exhausted, not even the influence of men like Noah, Daniel and Job will save it. Judah has reached this point (Ezk 14:21-23).

12. Who would Noah, Daniel and Job be able to save in a nation of extreme wickedness?
13. When Ezekiel sees the spared remnant, what would he then know (Ezk 14:23)?

**Day 1: Ezekiel's Unusual Behavior**

Ezekiel must have been considered a strange character by his fellow exiles. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel is instructed by God to act out many of the features of his prophecy. He is reminiscent of a child playing “army” in 4:1-3 as he depicts the coming siege of Jerusalem. He lays on his side a total of 430 days and consumes only a small portion of bread (8-10 oz.) per day along with about a quart of rationed water (Ezk 4:9-17). Further, God initially commands Ezekiel to bake the bread using human waste as fuel but later rescinds this disgusting condition. Ezekiel does other unusual things: he shaves his head and beard and dispenses with the hair in a variety of ways (Ezk 5:1-4); he digs a hole in the wall of his dwelling and carries his belongings out (Ezk 12:1-7); he eats with quaking and trembling (Ezk 12:17-19). Perhaps the most bizarre behavior, certainly the most difficult, was God’s command that Ezekiel not grieve over the death of his wife (Ezk 24:15-27). These things were understood by the people to be of prophetic significance.

1. What caused God to change his mind about Ezekiel’s cooking fuel (Ezk 4:14)?
2. What did God desire Ezekiel to be to the people (Ezk 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27)?

**Day 2: The Soul Who Sins Shall Die**

Ezekiel 18 contains some fundamental principles concerning man’s relationship with God. The passage stresses individual free will and accountability. It is important to note that this declaration does not represent a new law or principle, for Moses said, “*The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin*” (Dt 24:16). In Ezk 18:5-20, three generations of men are considered: a righteous father, his wicked son, and his righteous grandson. While domestic environment and parental influence are certainly significant factors in a person’s development, God says that these can be overcome by either good or evil. The case of the wicked man who repents and does right is then addressed (Ezk 18:21-23). God is ready and willing to forgive such a man. Conversely, a righteous man who becomes corrupt will not be acceptable to God upon his earlier righteousness: “*All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered*” (18:24).

These principles seemed unfair to the Israelites (Ezk 18:25-29). God reaffirms that judging each man and woman according to their own merits is the only fair way to deal with creatures of free choice. What a wonderful thing that God evaluates each of us upon the merits of our own behavior and continually extends to us the opportunity to change for the better! It is Israel - and their modern day Calvinist counterparts - who advocate the devilish doctrine of inherited guilt and limited atonement.

3. What was the proverb and how did it shift blame away from the present generation?

4. From what does God not receive pleasure (Ezk 18:23, 32)?

### **Day 3: A Heart of Flesh**

After Jerusalem's fall (Ezk 33:21-22), the latter prophecies of Ezekiel concentrate upon future restoration and blessing. God promises to regather Israel in the land of promise and bless them as before (Ezk 36:22-38). In this blessed future, Israel will have "*a new heart ... a new spirit ... a heart of flesh*" (36:26). As previously noted, such prophecies have a limited literal application but find their fulfillment in those Israelites who will one day live under the reign of the Messiah (comp. 2 Cor 3:3; Heb 8:10-12). Note the phrase "*Then they shall know that I am the LORD*" (36:23, 36, 38). This is one of the key phrases in the book of Ezekiel being found in one form or another some seventy times (you may want to highlight the phrase as you come across it).

5. For whose sake would God restore Israel in the future (Ezk 36:22, 32)?

6. What does mean to have a heart of flesh?

### **Day 4: Gog: the Representative Enemy of Israel**

The future resurrection of Israel is depicted in Ezk 37:1-14, and David is restored to the throne (in the Messiah - Ezk 37:24-25). But where is the comfort in this? Israel fell once; its kings were killed, cities razed and inhabitants taken captive. Will the Messianic kingdom be similarly overthrown by the faithlessness of its citizens? Will invading armies again plunder, pillage and rape and murder? God stresses the permanence and invincibility of the kingdom by reference to an imaginary enemy, Gog, and his attack upon "*a peaceful people, who dwell safely ... without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.*" (Ezk 38:1-17). The size of Gog's army is exaggerated - "*coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud ... a great company and a mighty army*" (38:9, 15) – indicating an enemy of infinite strength. God vows to destroy Gog and his allies through His traditional means: confusion, pestilence, rain, hail, fire and brimstone, etc. (Ezk 38:18-23). The people of God today enjoy spiritual peace and security.

7. Who calls the army of Gog against God's people that it might be defeated (38:16-17)?

8. T/F God's kingdom is well fortified with walls, armies, horses, weapons, etc.

### **Day 5: The Defeat and Burial of Gog's Army**

Gog is overthrown without battle; God defends His people (Ezk 39:1-10). The slaughter is so great that it takes all Israel seven months to bury the dead (39:11-16). Compare this imagery with that of Revelation 16:12-14; 17:15-18; 19:17-21 and 20:7-10. This apocalyptic style conveys the truth that God's kingdom will stand to the end of time.

9. How were the circumstances of Ezekiel's day and the Christians in Revelation similar?

**Day 1: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of Future Empires**

While Ezekiel prophesied among the captives, Daniel's assignment takes him to the center of Chaldean government in the wondrous city of Babylon. Through this great prophet and statesman God stresses two main principles: 1) He is in total control of all nations, and Israel should not conclude that their present distress is due to His impotence or neglect; 2) God's kingdom will not be established immediately but only after a succession of empires cross the world's stage. As these principles are illuminated, many other lessons are reinforced such as commitment to purity (Dn 1:8), loyalty to God (Dn 3:16-18), exemplary living (Dn 6:4), and vindication of the innocent (Dn 6:22-23).

When God relates to Daniel the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation, he sounds the keynote of the book: *"He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings"* (Dn 2:20-22). The main message of the dream: God will delay the establishment of His kingdom to the days of the fourth world empire to come (Dn 2:36-45). The Babylonian kingdom will fall to the Medo-Persians; they, in turn, will succumb to the Greeks and Alexander the Great; and the mighty Roman Empire will then rule the earth. *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed ... and it shall stand forever"* (Dn 2:44).

1. These events refer to what general time frame (Dn 2:28-29, 45)?
2. Who gave Nebuchadnezzar his throne (Dn 2:37-38)?
3. What did Nebuchadnezzar admit about God after Daniel's interpretation (Dn 2:47)?

**Day 2: Lesson from the Furnace**

The impression made by Daniel upon Nebuchadnezzar soon fades as the Babylonian king sets up a golden image and institutes a national day of worship (Dn 3:1-7). Nebuchadnezzar threatens Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego with death and issues an impudent dare, *"And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"* (Dn 3:15). After their deliverance (Dn 3:19-25), Nebuchadnezzar glorifies God and decrees that no one should disparage Him (Dn 3:28-29).

4. Describe the attitude of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in Dn 3:16-18.

**Day 3: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation and Restoration**

Daniel 4 contains a first-person account of Nebuchadnezzar's discipline by the hand of God. Although the heathen king had amazing demonstrations of God's power revealed to him through Daniel and his friends, note that Nebuchadnezzar does not become a



monotheist - a believer in God alone. First, he has learned nothing from the previous failure of his astrologers and magicians for he retains their services (Dn 4:6-7); secondly, reference is made to Daniel's Chaldean name, Belteshazzar, "according to the name of **my god**" (Dn 4:8). Still, Nebuchadnezzar admits of Daniel that "I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you" (Dn 4:9, 18). With great reluctance, Daniel explains to the king that God is going to drive him temporarily insane because of his extreme arrogance (Dn 4:24-27). After Nebuchadnezzar's restoration, he again praises God (Dn 4:34-37).

5. What plea does Daniel make to Nebuchadnezzar (Dn 4:27)?
6. What words of the king activate the curse against him (Dn 4:30; comp. Dn 5:20)?
7. What did God want Nebuchadnezzar - and all people - to know (Dn 4:17, 25-26, 32)?
8. What has Nebuchadnezzar learned about the kingdom of God (Dn 4:3, 34)?

## **Day 4: The Fall of Belshazzar and Babylon**

Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon and co-regent with his father Nabonidus, was a profligate, insolent and weak ruler. On the very night when Cyrus' Medo-Persian army invades the city (October 12, 539 B.C.), Belshazzar is profaning the vessels of the temple in drunken revelry (Dn 5:2-4). God sobers the king up with the "handwriting on the wall," declaring the end of the Babylonian kingdom (Dn 5:5-12). Daniel thus condemns Belshazzar: "But you ... have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven ... and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified" (Dn 5:22-23).

9. What happened to Daniel during the reign of Belshazzar (Dn 5:11-12)?
10. What did the words written on the palace wall mean (Dn 5:25-29)?

## **Day 5: The Decree of Darius**

In the last main biographical anecdote of his life Daniel is framed by his jealous enemies and sentenced to death by a reluctant King Darius (Dn 6:1-15). Daniel's character has apparently made an impression upon this Persian king, for upon execution of the sentence Darius declares (hopes?), "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you" (Dn 6:16). After an anxious night, the king rejoices to find Daniel unharmed by the lions (Dn 6:18-23). Darius has now learned the lesson impressed upon Nebuchadnezzar: "For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end" (Dn 6:26). Thus God through Daniel witnesses to heathen and Israelite alike the power and perpetuity of His rule. We will study Daniel's visions (chapters 7-12) at the end of the quarter.

11. Briefly relate how Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius were weakened by pride.

**Day 1: Cyrus' Policy of Repatriation**

The odds against the prophecies of Israel's resettlement being fulfilled were enormous. The Babylonian and Persian Empires were vast and powerful; the policies of expatriation had been practiced for 200 years, thus disturbing national and cultural cohesion; Jerusalem was in ruins, the temple destroyed and the walls in rubble. Cyrus, however, was wise enough to see that continued enforced exile would render his empire weak through rebellion and resentment. Through his own idolatrous superstitions, God "*stirred up the spirit of Cyrus*" to not only repatriate the people to their homelands but provide resources to rebuild their temples (Ezra 1:1-4; Cyrus refers to this motivation on the Cyrus Cylinder in the British Museum). Thus Jehovah demonstrates His control over heathen kings to accomplish His will. The first return in Ez 1:5-11 occurs about 538 B.C.

1. What prophet's words are fulfilled by the seventy year duration of captivity?
2. How many returned to Jerusalem in the first group (Ez 2:64)? How does this small number fulfill Scripture (e.g. Is 11:11, 16)?

**Day 2: Laying the Foundation of the Temple**

Under the leadership of Joshua (priest) and Zerubbabel (governor), the returned exiles begin the overwhelming task of rebuilding Jerusalem and reinstating worship (Ez 3:1-7). In 536 B.C. the foundation of the temple is laid amid great shouts of joy and thanksgiving (Ez 3:8-11). The joy, however, was not unanimous, for the elderly Jews who remembered the glory of Solomon's temple wept over its loss and lamented the comparative modesty of the present effort (Ez 3:12-13; comp. Haggai 2:3).

3. As the people resumed worship, whom did they fear (Ez 3:3)?
4. Upon whose authority did the people begin gathering materials for the temple (3:7)?

**Day 3: The Rebuilding Stops**

In spite of the decree of Cyrus favoring the Jews, the Samaritans vigorously opposed the reconstruction of the temple and succeeded in intimidating the Jews into abandoning the project (Ez 4:1-5, 24). This delay lasted about fourteen years, until the year 520 B.C. There is a textual difficulty in placing the letters of accusation found in Ez 4:6-23. Since they are apparently sent to the kings Ahasuerus (486-464 B.C.) and Artaxerxes (464-423 B.C.) and concern the rebuilding of the city and the walls, it appears the historian who wrote the book of Ezra includes them at this point to further illustrate the years of consistent opposition to the restoration of Jerusalem. At any rate, the people fall into a faithless malaise which threatens the continued fulfillment of God's promises.

5. What request did the Samaritans make? On what basis did they make the request?
6. Will the efforts of God's people ever be free from such resistance?

#### **Day 4: Work on the Temple Resumes**

Through the prophetic encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah, Joshua and Zerubbabel are finally persuaded to recommence the work on the temple (Ez 5:1-2). This, of course, rekindles Samaritan opposition and a letter of inquiry is sent to King Darius (522-486 B.C.) concerning the matter (Ez 5:3-17). God, who often lacks only a man or woman of courage to whom He can lend assistance, providentially provides a response from Darius favorable to the rebuilding (Ez 6:1-12). The record of Cyrus is located - and the laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be altered (Dn 6:8, 12, 15; Esth 8:8) - thus Darius sanctions the temple reconstruction and warns Tattenai against further interference.

7. What else was Tattenai commanded to do by Darius (Ez 6:8-9)?
8. What did Darius hope for in the rebuilding of the temple (Ez 6:10)?
9. Who was watching over this whole process (Ez 5:5)?

#### **Day 5: The Temple Completed**

Now unimpeded, the Jews diligently work until the completion of the temple in 516 B.C. (Ez 6:13-18). Shortly thereafter, the Passover feast is observed (Ez 6:19-22). God is credited with turning the heart of Darius toward them (Ez 6:22); He has used Cyrus and will use Artaxerxes in the future (in allowing Ezra's return) to provide for and protect His people as they seek to restore their nation and capital city.

In this account of the return of the captives and rebuilding of the temple, we should be impressed by the fact that "*with God nothing will be impossible*" (Lk 1:37; comp. Mt 19:26). When God promises a thing, we can be assured it will come to pass. When God's assurances appear farfetched or unlikely, let us remember that our God holds all nations and kings in the palm of His hand; our Savior is "King of kings; Lord of lords." God's will cannot be overthrown. Let us be filled with courage and optimism knowing that, regardless of how things may seem to the human eye, God is in control and He will fight for His people.

10. What were the people following in their efforts to restore worship (Ez 6:18; 3:2)?

**Day 1: “Consider your Ways!”**

After work on the temple lay dormant for sixteen years, God raised up a prophet by the name of Haggai in the second year of King Darius (520 B.C.). Haggai’s main task was to reinvigorate the temple rebuilding project. This he does by communicating messages of God to the people over a four month span. *“In some form he uses the appeal ‘saith Jehovah,’ ‘the word of Jehovah of hosts,’ and similar expressions twenty-six times in the ... thirty-eight verses. This appeal to the divine origin of what he said stirred the people, moved their hearts, and got results”* (Hailey, **Commentary on the Minor Prophets**, p. 298).

In the first message (Hag 1:1-11), God questions why the people had found the time and resource to build their own homes while His temple lay in ruins. Like their ancestors, these returned captives did not recognize the chastisement of God in the things they suffered. God commands the people to *“go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified”* (Hag 1:8). The people could not be blessed in the land until the temple was restored to its central place in their lives.

1. How had God chastised the people because of their procrastination?
2. Discuss the need to put spiritual things first in our lives.

**Day 2: “I Am with You”**

The people faithfully accept the rebuke of God and resume work on the temple (Hag 1:12-15). God, in His divine wisdom and mercy, recognizes that His people need words of encouragement from time to time. He now speaks to them as He did to Joshua before Jericho, *“I am with you ...”*. The man or woman who is so secure and so filled with trust can accomplish great things for the Lord.

3. Who did the people begin to fear more than their enemies around them?
4. How long did it take after Haggai’s first prophecy to commence the rebuilding?

**Day 3: “My Spirit Remains Among You”**

About a month after work begins anew on the temple, another word of encouragement comes from Jehovah (Hag 2:1-5). When Solomon built the first temple, he was a powerful king who commanded all the resources of a great nation and built an opulent, expertly crafted temple. It seems that the present reconstruction falls far short of the original (2:3). The people are few, their resources scarce and their enemies powerful. This invites discouragement. God assures them that His Spirit remains among them; they are still His people and they are working by His approval and favor. But He also adds a note

which points to the glory of the Messianic future (Hag 2:6-9). The shaking of heaven and earth is reminiscent of Isaiah's creation of a new heaven and new earth, which spoke of the changes to come under the Servant. Reference to "all nations" coming to the Desire of All Nations also raises the Messianic flag (comp. Is 2:2; 56:7). God refers to a future day, unforeseeable by the present returned exiles, when the temple will be glorified and changed from stone to flesh, the spiritual body of the Messiah (1 Cor 3:16-17; Heb 3:6; Eph 1:22-23). The author of Hebrews makes application of Hag 2:6 to the kingdom of Christ: *"whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.' Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since **we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken** ..."* (Heb 12:26-28).

5. What does God urge Zerubbabel, Joshua and all the remnant to be?
6. How might the work of God today be "in (our) eyes as nothing?" What should we remember if this is the case?
7. What would the glory of the latter temple bring (Hag 2:9)?

## Day 4: A Turning Point

The next prophetic message, two months later, reveals how things had been during the return from captivity sixteen years previously (Hag 2:10-19). The land had not been fruitful; the investment of work had yielded less than what was reasonably expected. Why? Because the people were yet defiled from their captivity, their hearts were not fully devoted to God, and their presence in the holy land polluted it. But because of their renewed zeal and determination to build God's house, *"from this day forward I will bless you."*

8. According to the questions in Hag 2:12-13, is it easier to pollute or purify?
9. Write down the times of each of the prophecies and the day when rebuilding started.

## Day 5: Zerubbabel: God's Signet

Zerubbabel is more than the governor overseeing the reconstruction of the temple; God declares his vital connection to the Messiah who is to come some 500 years later (Hag 2:20-23). Zerubbabel is the grandson of Coniah, the last descendant of David to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem and prosper (see Jer 22:24-30). Zerubbabel is blessed by carrying on the lineage of David unto the Messiah (Mt 1:12).

10. What similar figures describe Zerubbabel and Coniah (Hag 2:23; Jer 22:24)?

**Day 1: Introduction and Visions of Comfort**

As we have seen in Ezra, Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai; the two worked together in giving guidance, inspiration and confidence in the rebuilding of the temple (Ez 5:1; 6:14). We would be wise to consider Homer Hailey's assessment of this book:

“It is the longest and most obscure of all the Minor Prophets and is the most difficult of any of the Old Testament books to interpret. When this is recognized, one should approach an interpretation of it with prayer and humility, acknowledging his own limitations and knowing that he cannot afford to be dogmatic” (**Minor Prophets**, p. 318).

Zechariah's first prophecy is dated to the month prior to the “turning point” prophecy of Haggai; viz., Haggai's third prophecy wherein Jehovah promises future blessings (Zch 1:1-6; Hag 2:10ff). It appears that Zechariah's admonition to avoid the mistakes of their fathers is taken to heart. Zechariah's second prophecy is the first of eight consecutive visions given to Zechariah at once. In the first vision Zechariah sees four horsemen who report that “*all the earth is resting quietly*” (Zch 1:8-11). In the second vision (Zch 1:18-21), the “horns” or hostile world powers that had scattered Israel are being subdued.

1. What had overtaken Israel's disobedient fathers?
2. Where had the horsemen been? What do you think this means?

**Day 2: The Measuring Line**

The measuring of Jerusalem or the temple in apocalyptic literature (Ezk 40:3; Rev 11:1) seems to indicate God's knowledge and protection of His people. In Zch 2:1-5, Zechariah sees a man who is about to measure Jerusalem. His task appears to be interrupted by an angel who declares that the Jerusalem to come will not be measurable, “*as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it.*” The Messianic flavor of the passage is strengthened by the many nations which become the Lord's people (2:11).

3. What will be around spiritual Jerusalem? And in her midst?

**Day 3: The Crowning of Joshua**

The next two visions of Zechariah are directed toward the two present leaders of the people: Joshua and Zerubbabel. In Zch 3:1-5, Joshua appears before the Angel of the Lord in polluted garments, symbolizing the past sins of the priesthood and Israel in general. Satan, as in the episode with Job, is also present and accuses Joshua before God. God, however, indicates that He has forgiven the people and restored to them His good

favor. To illustrate this, Joshua is arrayed in rich robes and a clean turban. In a “real life” setting, Zechariah is instructed to make a crown of silver and gold and place it upon Joshua’s head (Zch 6:9-15). This crowning of a priest suggests the merging of priesthood and kingship that will occur in the future when the Branch comes.

4. Who rebuked Satan when he accused Joshua (comp. Jude 9)?
5. What would the Branch build?
6. What would have to change before a priest could sit on the throne of David?

## **Day 4: The Lampstand and Olive Trees**

This vision (Zch 4) concerns Zerubbabel and God’s assurance that he would see the temple through to completion: *“Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone ... The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish it”* (4:7, 9). Zechariah sees in vision a lampstand with a bowl on top, seven lamps and two olive trees on either side of it. The olive branches drip oil into pipes which apparently connect to the bowl, thus symbolic of an endless supply of oil to keep the lamps continuously burning. These two trees are “the two anointed ones,” apparently Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the governor. What great encouragement these visions must have been to Israel in the midst of enemies who were desperately trying to derail the rebuilding project.

7. Zerubbabel would not be successful by \_\_\_\_\_ but by \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Day 5: The End of Fasting**

In their grief over the downfall of the nation, the captives had instituted several fasts (Zch 8:19): the fourth month (when Nebuchadnezzar breached the walls - Jer 39:2); fifth month; seventh month (when Gedaliah was assassinated - Jer 41:1-2); and tenth month (when the siege began - Jer 39:1). In regard to these fasts, the people inquire of God: *“Should I weep ... and fast as I have done for so many years?”* (Zch 7:1-3). God’s answer is undoubtedly startling: *“Did you really fast for Me - for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves?”* (Zch 7:5-6). Their fasts appear to be nothing more than self-indulgent pity parties rather than reflections upon the disobedience which led to their destruction and a determination not to repeat the mistake (Zch 7:7-14). God then paints a picture of a spiritually restored Jerusalem (Zch 8). Note the Messianic “keys”: the holy mountain (8:3); they shall be My people (8:8); strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem (8:22). This idyllic picture of a prosperous city at rest and peace foreshadows the church.

8. What kind of character does God expect of His people (Zch 7:9-10; 8:16-17)?
9. How was the picture in Zch 8:23 fulfilled in the early days of the church?

**Day 1: The Coming King**

Zechariah adds several vivid details which add color to the Messianic sketches previously drawn by Isaiah and others. The Messiah will be a king with a common element. His transportation will not be that of royal coaches and stately steeds but “*a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey*” (Zch 9:9). All four gospels relate this incident from Jesus’ life but Matthew (21:5) and John (12:14-16) specifically apply the prophecy of Zechariah to it. Neither will the Messiah ride a war horse arrayed with armor and weaponry: “*I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations ...*” (Zch 9:10). Peace has been a common theme in Messianic prophecy: Zch 8:19; Hag 2:9; Is 9:6-7; 57:19; etc. This is an element of prophecy that the Jews had such difficulty accepting in Jesus. He was not a zealot, a warrior, a David to the Roman Goliath. His goal was to establish atonement and principles of character that would foster peace among men and peace between man and God.

1. When in the life of Jesus is Zch 9:9 fulfilled?
2. What kind of peace has come into the world as a result of Jesus’ rule?

**Day 2: Thirty Pieces of Silver**

Zechariah prophesies an incident pertaining to the rejection and betrayal of the Messiah (Zch 11:4-14). While it is difficult to sift through the details of the prophecy, the overall gist indicates that God will one day give up the flock of Israel to slaughter. This is due to their rejection of the faithful shepherd who is despised and insulted by being offered wages equal in value to an injured slave (Ex 21:32). Zechariah, at God’s instruction, throws the thirty pieces of silver into the temple for the potter. This scene is reproduced in the actions of Judas and the chief priests (Mt 27:1-10). (See additional note on p. 18)

3. What did the potter’s field become known as (Mt 27:8)?

**Day 3: The Pierced One**

Zechariah looks to the future when great mourning and lamentation would overwhelm the people for the wrong done to God (Zch 12:10-14). Israel had “pierced” God with their idolatry and immorality, but they would pierce Him in a literal sense when the Messiah would be killed. John refers to this passage as Jesus’ body is lanced by the Roman guard after His death (Jn 19:33-37).

4. How did the crowd at Jesus’ crucifixion react after He died (Lk 23:48)?
5. What great lamentation occurred at Megiddo (2 Chr 35:20-25)?



## Day 4: The Stricken Shepherd

Zechariah also speaks directly concerning the effect of the Messiah's death upon His followers (Zch 13:7-9). The Messiah would be a Shepherd, and His sheep will scatter when He is stricken. Jesus Himself quotes this passage (Mt 26:31, 56; Mk 14:27) when speaking of His upcoming arrest. Following the tragedy of the Messiah's death, God will bring a refining fire upon His people.

6. The Shepherd is called "the Man who is \_\_\_\_\_."

7. What will God say to the one-third that survives the fiery testing?

## Day 5: Reign of the King

Zechariah closes his book of prophecy with an idealized view of the King and His conquest over all His enemies (Zch 14). God will bring the nations of the earth against Jerusalem to judge both His unfaithful people and the nations themselves (14:2-3). God will spare a faithful remnant, cleaving the Mount of Olives in two as a way of escape (14:4-5). Living waters would flow east and west from Jerusalem continually and the Lord's universal reign would be established (14:8-9). Under the rule of the King "*Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited*" (14:11). Those who fought against Jerusalem would be overthrown and God's people would gather the spoils of their defeated enemies (14:12-14). The nations will be totally under the dominion of the King: either they will worship Him or suffer drought and plague (14:16-19). "*And there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts*" (Zch 14:21). The scene portrayed here is very similar to passages in Revelation which idealize victory of the persecuted saints over their Roman enemies. The images are not literal; they reflect spiritual blessing and victory of the Lord's church in terms considered ideal under the old testament economy.

The ability to sift through such figurative imagery and appreciate the underlying messages and principles is, I believe, a test of a believer's motives and desire for truth. God expected the Jews to read these anticipations of the future and see them in Christ. In this most of them failed. The advocates of premillennialism fail the same test today. Are we insightful and studious enough to appreciate the spiritual concepts cloaked in Jewish garb?

8. What is the living water that perpetually flows from Jerusalem (the church)?

9. Who is the King (Zch 14:16)? Does this say anything about the deity of Jesus?

10. Can you find a new testament application of Zch 14:9?

**Special Note:** *Why does Matthew attribute the prophecy of the purchase of the potter's field to the prophet Jeremiah rather than Zechariah (Mt 27:9)?* There is no easy and sure answer to this problem of which I am aware. Noted below are some possible explanations offered by scholars along with some objections. Each student of the Scriptures must make his own investigation and draw his own conclusions:

1. Matthew suffered a lapse of memory and named the wrong prophet. **Problem:** This explanation denies the infallibility of inspiration.
2. A later scribe, using abbreviations for the prophets' names mistakenly wrote Iriou (Jeremiah) instead of Zriou (Zechariah). **Problem:** While there are scribal errors in Biblical manuscripts, it is assumed without foundation that abbreviations were being used at the time of the copyist's mistake.
3. According to the Jewish arrangement of the OT, Jeremiah was the first book in the section known as the "Book of the Prophets." Thus, reference was made to Jeremiah in a generic sense (or as a title) when the actual quotation came from Zechariah. **Problem:** I have not been able to verify that ancient Jewish compilations placed Jeremiah first; the lists I have seen place Isaiah first. Beyond that, such a method of reference seems highly inaccurate and misleading.
4. Matthew says the words *spoken* (not written) by Jeremiah were fulfilled. Matthew thus implies that Jeremiah originally spoke the prophecy and Zechariah later wrote it. **Problem:** Why refer to an unrecorded act of a prophet when a direct and detailed account had been written? Such does nothing to verify the divine origin of the Scriptures since one cannot *prove* that Jeremiah said it. Besides, "spoken" is a common reference to what was written: Mt 2:17; 3:3; 24:15; 27:35, etc.
5. Jeremiah speaks of a potter who reshapes marred clay into a new form (Jer 18), and he breaks a piece of pottery to indicate that God will shatter the nation of Israel (Jer 19). Zechariah takes this imagery and builds on it, thus completing the prophecy begun by Jeremiah. Matthew then only refers to the original, root prophecy when he attributes the statement to Jeremiah. **Problem:** While there are similarities between Jeremiah and Zechariah, one cannot show a concrete connection between Zechariah's and Jeremiah's prophecies. Further, why would Matthew refer to the prophet who gave the "generic" prophecy when he had quoted the "specific" form of Zechariah? (Compare, however, Mark's reference to Isaiah (in the better manuscripts) in Mk 1:2-3 when the quotation is a combination of Mal 3:1 and Is 40:3.)

Many other fanciful and far-fetched explanations have been suggested. We must be careful to not lose sight of the larger issue: a prophecy written 500 years before Jesus was fulfilled in amazing detail by men hostile to Jesus. Such fulfillment of prophecy could not have been manipulated or manufactured, for the forces who so acted would have been unwilling participants in such a scheme. The only conclusion is that they unintentionally carried out their predicted behavior according to the foreknowledge of a higher power - God.

**Day 1: The Jewish Queen**

The book of Esther is an entertaining short story full of drama, intrigue, courage, and reversals of fortune capped with a “good guys win” ending. While the story contains valuable lessons on moral integrity, the folly of pride, and the reward of honorable behavior, the main importance of the book concerns the preservation of the people of God. Nothing will prevent God’s prophecies from being fulfilled, not even an edict by the most powerful nation on earth authorizing the extermination of the Jews.

The Persian king Ahasuerus (uh haz yoo EE russ) has been identified as Xerxes (ZURK-seez), who reigned from 486 to 464 B.C. In Es 1, Ahasuerus deposes Queen Vashti for her refusal to parade herself before his guests. Vashti’s moral scruples open the door to Esther’s elevation as queen (Es 2:1-18). A subplot develops when Esther’s cousin Mordecai saves Ahasuerus from assassination (Es 2:19-23).

1. What concern led to the banishment of Queen Vashti (Es 1:17-18, 20)?
2. Describe the relationship of Mordecai and Esther (Es 2:7, 10-11, 20, 22).

**Day 2: The Plot Against the Jews**

The capacity of the human heart to devise evil is truly staggering. Haman, a high official of Ahasuerus, schemes to murder all the Jews throughout the Persian empire simply because one man, Mordecai, refused to bow down to him (Es 3). Ahasuerus consents to the decree which is to be implemented in eleven months’ time. Mordecai appeals to Esther to use her power and influence to save the Jews (Es 4). This puts the Queen in a difficult position: to approach the King without being summoned is a capital offense unless he grants mercy to his supplicant. Further, the edict has been instigated by the King’s prime minister, and such laws of the Persians could not be revoked or amended (Es 1:19; 8:8). These seemed to Esther to be insurmountable obstacles. Nevertheless, Esther bravely determines to intercede for herself and her people: *And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!*” (Es 4:16).

3. What is your view of Ahasuerus’ leadership from Es 3:8-11, 15?
4. What confidence did Mordecai have (Es 4:14)? Discuss applications for today.

**Day 3: The Humbling of Haman**

God’s providential control over the affairs of men is clearly evident in Es 5-6. Esther finds favor in her appearance before Ahasuerus, even as the Israelites had found favor with Cyrus (initial return from captivity) and Darius (completion of the temple). Esther

invites both the King and Haman to banquets on succeeding days. After the first banquet, Haman returns home and gloats of his greatness to his family and friends. This he does to soothe his feelings after the despised Mordecai again refused to bow to him on his way home. Haman's associates console him with the suggestion of publicly hanging Mordecai on the following day. That very night, however, King Ahasuerus cannot sleep and so has the Persian chronicles read to him (Es 6) wherein he learns of Mordecai's previous heroics. He inquires of his prime minister, who has come to ask permission to execute Mordecai, "*What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor*" (Es 6:6)? Haman, thinking that he was the object of such honor, suggests a royal parade through the capital city. What a sickening feeling it must have been for Haman to hear the rejoinder, "*Hasten, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew ... Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken*" (Es 6:10).

5. How would you describe Haman's attitude from Es 5:11-13?

6. How did Haman's wife and friends interpret the events of the morning (Es 6:13)?

#### **Day 4: Esther's Successful Maneuver**

Never did the warning "*let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*" have greater application than to Haman. When Esther begs for her life and the lives of her people, Ahasuerus indignantly demands to know who would dare threaten such a thing (Es 7). Having successfully "packaged" the situation as a danger to the King's own wife, and thus exciting the protective passion of her husband, Esther boldly accuses the prime minister: "*The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!*" In one of the greatest ironies of all time, Haman is hanged on the very gallows he made for Mordecai. This, however, does not solve the problem of the edict against the Jews. Ahasuerus thus authorizes a companion edict empowering the Jews to defend themselves against attack (Es 8). What began, then, as a threat of extermination ends with the addition of many proselytes.

7. What happened to Mordecai after Haman's execution (Es 8:1-2, 15)?

8. How much time had elapsed between the issuing of the two edicts (Es 3:12; 8:9)?

9. Would the edict of extermination apply to Jews in Jerusalem?

#### **Day 5: The Victory of the Jews**

As the dreaded day of warfare approaches, the Jews enjoy public and political favor due to Mordecai's advancement (Es 9:1-4). As a result, over 75,000 of their enemies are destroyed across the Empire (Es 9:5-17). The book closes with the institution of the Feast of Purim in remembrance of the great victory wrought by God for His people (Es 9:20ff) and an additional note of Mordecai's greatness among the Persians (Es 10).

10. Can you find any evidence that God commanded or approved Purim as a feast?

**Day 1: Ezra: Man on a Mission**

In the year 458 B.C. Ezra returns from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ez 7:1-10). He has learned from the captivity what God hoped all Jews would: that they were guilty of rebellion and sin, that they needed to repent, and that He would bless them as they tried to restore the nation. Ezra is a motivated, determined man; he sees what needs to be done and applies himself to the task: *“For Ezra had prepared his heart to **seek** the Law of the LORD, and to **do** it, and to **teach** statutes and ordinances in Israel”* (Ez 7:10).

1. How long did the trip take from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ez 7:9)?
2. What roles did Ezra fill (Ez 7:6, 11)?
3. What did Ezra first prepare before making the journey to Jerusalem?

**Day 2: The Favor of Artaxerxes**

Once again God encourages the assistance and support of a heathen king for the sake of His people (Ez 7:6). Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464-424 B.C.) provides the legal authority for Ezra to return to Jerusalem and act in the best interest of the nation (Ez 7:11-26). Artaxerxes gives permission to return (7:13-14), provides funding for the temple and its service (7:15-20), authorizes traveling provisions (7:21-22), gives tax relief for those who minister in the temple (7:24), restores civil and religious government (7:25) and judicial power (7:26). These powers of self-government are crucial to the restoration process.

4. What concerned Artaxerxes in Ez 7:23 (comp. Ez 6:10)?
5. What does Ezra acknowledge about Artaxerxes' favorable disposition (Ez 7:27)?

**Day 3: The Perils of the Journey to Jerusalem**

Ezra makes an interesting admission in Ez 8:21-23. It appears that he has spoken boldly and confidently about the power and provision of Jehovah to Artaxerxes, so much so that he was *“ashamed to request ... an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road ...”*. This boast puts Ezra and his traveling caravan to a test of faith. God, of course, responds with protection and safe passage to Jerusalem (Ez 8:31-36).

6. How might our words sometimes challenge our convictions?
7. What did the priests do with the silver and gold gifts for the temple (Ez 8:29, 34)?

## **Day 4: The Problem of Pagan Inter-marriage**

The euphoria of the homecoming is soon shattered by a crisis that threatens the welfare of all Israel. Many among the returned captives have taken heathen wives “*so that the holy seed is intermingled with the peoples of those lands*” (Ez 9:1-2). A stunned Ezra sits in silence until the evening sacrifice whereupon he pours out his heart in confession of sin (Ez 9:5-15). This is not an infraction that can be excused because of extreme circumstances; the situation must be addressed: “*Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!*” Surely this obstacle of repenting from unlawful marriages was no smaller than that faced by people today who are married without God’s approval. The seriousness of severing such ties is matched only by the seriousness of the crime of pagan intermarriage or of adultery.

- 8.** What does Ezra fear will happen if the people do not repent of their sin (Ez 9:14)?
- 9.** To what degree had God punished the people (Ez 9:13)?
- 10.** How do the sins of his people affect Ezra (Ez 9:4, 6; 10:1)?

## **Day 5: Foreign Wives Put Away**

The conscience of the people is tender toward the sin which they have committed and they are moved by Ezra’s grief and mourning. Shechaniah gives Ezra a needed word of encouragement and vows the nation’s support in the reform (Ez 10:1-4). A valuable lesson is thus demonstrated here. We have studied about righteous, reforming kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah who destroyed idols but did not succeed in turning the hearts of the people back to God. While leaders are responsible to lead, they cannot effectively do so if the people refuse to follow. This is true of kings, presidents and elders of the Lord’s church. The best leaders are powerless against obstinate, self-willed people. A national assembly is called to address the issue (Ez 10:5-8). The people readily submit to the instruction and admonition of Ezra, but because of the magnitude of the task and the inclement winter weather they appeal for tribunals to be held to investigate and judge individual cases (Ez 10:9-17). The matter took three months to resolve.

- 11.** Upon what did the hope of Israel rest (Ez 10:2-3)?
- 12.** What attitude(s) must be present before a sinner repents (Ez 10:3, 14)?
- 13.** Who opposed the suggested procedures in rectifying the problem (Ez 10:15)?
- 14.** How would you respond to the following: “Even though my wife (or husband) was previously divorced without scriptural grounds, surely God would not ask me to separate from her (or him) and our children! We’ll just repent of the sin and stay together for the children’s sake. God would not want us to break up our home.”

**Day 1: Nehemiah's Zeal for Jerusalem**

Nehemiah, like Daniel, Esther and Mordecai before him, attains a high position in the Persian government. Nehemiah receives news in 445 B.C. that, in spite of the work of Ezra (who returned in 458 B.C.), Jerusalem is still in poor condition (Neh 1:3). Nehemiah grieves over his homeland (Neh 1:4-11) and petitions King Artaxerxes for permission to return (Neh 2:4-10). Nehemiah's request is granted and he comes to Jerusalem with determination to rebuild both the walls and the morale of the people (Neh 2:11-20).

1. Describe Jerusalem 90 years after the first captives returned (Neh 1:3; 2:3, 13, 17).
2. What did Nehemiah do before making his request of King Artaxerxes (Neh 2:4)?
3. In whose help did Nehemiah have confidence (Neh 1:11; 2:8, 18, 20)?

**Day 2: Rebuilding the Walls**

A specific account of the rebuilding is related in Neh 3. Note the mention of various Jews who made repairs near their homes ("in front of his house," 3:10; "opposite their house," "by his house," 3:23; see also 3:28-30). In other words, everyone cleaned up his own back yard. But the task required more than backbreaking labor, for when the enemies of the Jews realize that "*the people had a mind to work*" (Neh 4:6) they instigate all kinds of opposition to impede their progress. They first try to humiliate and belittle the people (Neh 4:1-3). Failing that, they attempt a frontal assault (4:7-8, 11-12). When word of their plans leaks, the Jews are frightened but Nehemiah encourages them with his faith and fortitude (4:13-14, 20). The work of God often has to be done with a brick in one hand and a spear in the other (Neh 4:17).

4. What great leadership characteristics does Nehemiah possess?
5. What can we learn from Neh 4:9 about defending ourselves against enemies?
6. What did the people do with their clothes (Neh 4:23)?

**Day 3: Completion of the Wall**

As the walls near completion Nehemiah's enemies change their tactics by seeking to attack him personally (Neh 6). They try unsuccessfully to entice him into an ambush (6:1-4), then bait him by slandering his motives (6:5-9). Impugning an opponent's motives is always the tactic of those who cannot legitimately sustain their position. Next, a secret informer attempts to frighten Nehemiah into taking refuge in the temple, thus violating the law and bringing reproach upon himself (6:10-14). Nehemiah's courage, wariness

and wisdom save him from falling into these traps. Thus, “*the wall was finished ... in fifty-two days*” (6:15). But even this did not completely deter his enemies, for a propaganda campaign is waged on behalf of Tobiah by those Jews who were loyal to him (6:15-19). Even as these Jews were sympathetic toward the wrong side, so today there are Christians who criticize opposition to false teaching or the discipline of sinful members especially when such involves their families. Christians must discern truth from error and lovingly but diligently combat sin and those who engage in it.

7. What reason does Nehemiah give in rejecting a meeting in the plain of Ono?
8. How should we respond when people “invent things” against us (Neh 6:8-9)?
9. Why were some in Judah allied with Tobiah (Neh 6:18)?

#### **Day 4: Restoring the Law**

With the temple now rebuilt and the walls of the city restored the people are in a frame of mind to attend to spiritual renewal. Thus on the sixth day after the walls were completed (Neh 6:15; 8:2), Ezra joins with Nehemiah to reeducate the people in the Law of Moses (Neh 8:1-8). In addition to the public reading Levites among the crowd “*gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading*” (Neh 8:8). The people first mourned and wept and then rejoiced “*because they understood the words that were declared to them*” (Neh 8:9-12). The Feast of Tabernacles is then restored by the nation (8:13-18), and after more reading and study the people confess their sins (Neh 9:1-3). Thus God has succeeded in bringing about both the physical and spiritual restoration of the remnant according to His prophecies.

10. How long did the people gather to hear the Law read (Neh 8:3, 18; 9:3)? Why do you think they were so enthusiastic?

#### **Day 5: Further Reforms**

Nehemiah remained in Judah for twelve years, returning to Persia in 433 B.C. (Neh 13:6). In the absence of his strong leadership the nation regressed spiritually, and Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to “clean house” again. Tobiah, one of Nehemiah’s arch enemies, has literally moved into the temple and Nehemiah evicts him (Neh 13:4-9). The Levites and temple service have been neglected (13:10-13), the Sabbath has been profaned (13:15-22), and intermarriage has crept in again (13:23-28). God’s people in all times need strong leaders such as Nehemiah who have vision and courage and whose influence inspires confidence in and commitment to the Lord.

11. What did Nehemiah hope from all his efforts (Neh 13:14, 22, 31)?
12. Scan through Nehemiah 13 and note all the “action” verbs pertaining to Nehemiah. (i.e., “I threw” - 13:8; “I commanded” - 13:9). What does this tell you about him?



**Day 1: Israel's Half-Hearted Service**

Conditions addressed by Malachi reflect a moral and spiritual laxness among the returned captives similar to the days of Nehemiah. Thus Homer Hailey locates the date of the prophecies between 445-432 B.C. He also notes concerning this last book of the OT:

“God had fulfilled His part of the promises; He had done all He could. He had chastised by the captivity; He had brought back a remnant and had settled them in their land; He had graciously forgiven their sins; He had shown His ability and disposition to keep His glorious promises to them. There was nothing more to be done or said by the Lord until they would show a different disposition toward Him. Therefore, with the close of the Book of Malachi no word more could be said until the coming of Him whom God had promised and through whom God’s final word would be spoken” (**Commentary on the Minor Prophets**, p 403).

God condemns the Jews for offering blemished sacrifices (Mal 1:6-14). They considered worship a weariness and a drudgery. God chastises them for offering to Him what they would not dream of offering to their governor.

1. In what ways were the sacrifices blemished?
2. What would have been better than offering such sacrifices (Mal 1:10)?

**Day 2: Marital Transgression**

God is also angry with the returned remnant for embracing the very sin that started their slide some 500 years previously - intermarriage with heathen women (Mal 2:10-12). Further, it seems the men are misusing the provision of divorce to mistreat their wives (Mal 2:13-16). It may be that they were divorcing their faithful Jewish mates to take gentile wives. At any rate, God characterizes their behavior as treachery and violence and states unequivocally that He hates divorce.

3. What did the mistreatment of their wives result in (Mal 2:13)?
4. How should a man consider his wife (Mal 2:14)?
5. What sinful emotions/actions usually accompany the dissolution of a marriage?

**Day 3: The Messenger of the Covenant**

Malachi, like so many of his prophetic brethren, looks to the future when the people would faithfully serve the Lord (Mal 3:1-6). This will not occur among the Jews as a

civil/religious nation under the Law of Moses but only as each Israelite acknowledges and submits to the Messiah to come. He is called the “Messenger of the covenant” and His appearance will be announced by a specially appointed herald (Mal 3:1). The Messiah/Messenger will cleanse the worshipers so that their offerings will be acceptable.

6. Who specifically will be purified by the Messenger (Mal 3:3)? What had the priests done to anger God (Mal 2:1-2, 7-9)? Who are God’s faithful priests now (1 Pet 2:5)?
7. Who is the one who will prepare the way for the Messenger of the covenant (Mal 4:5-6)? Who fulfilled this role (Mt 11:13-14; Lk 1:13-17)?
8. What does God not do (Mal 3:6)? What warnings/comfort come from this fact?

#### **Day 4: “Will a Man Rob God?”**

Note the irony of Mal 3:8-10. The people have desired some small profit by withholding tithes and offerings in the proper measure and/or quality as demanded by God. But what is the nature of God? To bless abundantly those who give generously to Him: *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove Me now in this ... if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”* The people have come to feel that there is no advantage in serving God (Mal 3:13-15). True, their return to Jerusalem had been filled with hardship and opposition, but these difficulties were due to their disobedience. How easy it is to find fault with God and rationalize the futility of serving Him when the problem lies with us! It is only when we have confidence and trust in God’s goodness and care that we will let go and give to Him all that is His due.

9. What challenge does God issue to the Jews - and to us - which is echoed in Mt 6:33?
10. How might we be inclined to “rob God” today?

#### **Day 5: The Judgment and the Book of Remembrance**

Malachi also echoes the theme of judgment along with many of his fellow prophets (Mal 3:16-4:3). God has exercised many judgments upon mankind which have clearly demonstrated the advantages of serving Him and the disadvantages of rebellion. Malachi refers to a book or ledger wherein God keeps an accurate record of those faithful to Him. This concept is not uncommon in the Scriptures (Ps 56:8; 69:28; Phil 4:3; Rev 20:12). All men must live with an awareness of judgment and the knowledge that God keeps accurate records of our lives.

11. What qualities were possessed by those written in God’s book (Mal 3:16)?
12. What classes of people does God distinguish (Mal 3:18)? What does Jesus call them (Mt 25:32-33)?

**Special Note:** A proper and thorough treatment of this portion of Daniel is beyond our survey format; we will only be able to look at the highlights. Some difficulties presented in this passage:

- 1) The literary form is apocalyptic, like portions of Ezekiel, Zechariah and Revelation. Our removal from the events of the day, the predisposition of our Western thinking toward logic, order and literalism, and the general emotional stability of our culture combine to make apocalyptic literature seem bizarre and confusing.
- 2) The images foretell an historical period that is generally unfamiliar to us. Chapters 8 and 11 tell of the Greek empire under Alexander the Great and its fragmentation at his death. If Daniel's visions are to make any sense, we must study the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings and the impact they had upon the Jewish nation from about 300-150 B.C. It would be helpful if students would engage in additional reading on the history of the period for their own benefit since class time will be too limited for detailed discussion.

### **Day 1: Daniel's Dream of Beasts**

Daniel's dream in Dn 7:1-14 enlarges upon Nebuchadnezzar's dream of ch 2. Daniel dreams of four beasts, the last of which is "*dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong ... devouring, breaking in pieces ... and speaking pompous words*" (Dn 7:7-8). This beast is judged by the "Ancient of Days" then slain and its body burned (Dn 7:9-11). In contrast, "One like the Son of Man" comes to the Ancient of Days and receives universal, everlasting dominion (Dn 7:13-14). Daniel is as disturbed by this dream as Nebuchadnezzar was by his earlier dream (Dn 7:15; 2:1-3, 12).

1. T/F Daniel determined to write every detail of his dream.
2. From where did the four beasts come?
3. How is the appearance of the One who receives eternal dominion different from the first four kingdoms?

### **Day 2: Daniel's Dream Interpreted**

Daniel's request for interpretation of the dream is granted (Dn 7:15-28). The four beasts are successive kingdoms which are to arise out of the earth (Dn 7:17, 23): the Babylonian (which is very soon to fall), Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman. While "*the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever*" (7:18), it will not be without struggle for the fourth kingdom "*was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them*" (7:21, 25). The picture here is very similar to the imagery of Revelation (Rev 6:10-11; 12:5-6, 13-17; 13:10; etc.), strengthening the conclusion that the

antagonist of John's apocalypse is in fact the Roman Empire, the fourth beast/world kingdom of Daniel's prophecy. Assurance is given, however, that the threatening kingdom will be destroyed and the saints of the Most High victorious (Dn 7:26-27).

4. From where do the beasts/kingdoms arise (Dn 7:3, 17)? From where does the everlasting kingdom of the Son of Man and the saints originate?
5. Describe the horn of the fourth beast which causes so much trouble.
6. How does Daniel feel after the interpretation of the dream?

### Day 3: The Ram and the Goat

The people and events described in Dn 8 are very specific and concern a time yet 200-400 years in the future, thus verifying the divine origin of the Scriptures. Let's note the three major elements of the vision (Dn 8:1-14):

**The Ram** (Dn 8:3-4): Daniel sees a ram with two horns, the newer horn being higher than the first. The ram is dominant, conquering to the west, north and south.

**The Goat** (Dn 8:5-8): Daniel now sees, coming from the west, a swift and powerful goat with a great horn. The goat attacks the ram, breaks its horns and tramples it underfoot. But the goat's great horn is broken, and four other horns grow up in its place.

**The "Little" Horn** (Dn 8:9-14): The vision now focuses upon a little horn which grows south, east and toward the "Glorious Land." "Because of transgression," dominion is given to this horn to take away the daily sacrifices and cast truth to the ground. The opposition against the sacrifices and sanctuary lasts for a significant time before the sanctuary is finally cleansed by God.

7. Describe the goat's attack of the ram. Does it seem to be a casual encounter?
8. What did the "little horn" cast down from the heavens and trample? Why was he able to do this?

### Day 4: Gabriel's Explanation of the Vision

Gabriel explains to Daniel that *"the vision refers to the time of the end ... I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be"* (Dn 8:17, 19). Daniel is further told to *"seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future"* (Dn 8:26). To what time does Gabriel refer?

**The Ram** (Dn 8:20): We are clearly told that the ram represents the combined kingdom of Media and Persia. The Persians would be the higher horn, for history reveals that Media held greater power early and was then surpassed by the Persian kings, the

first of which was Cyrus. The Medo-Persian Empire would expand to the west, threatening the Grecian city-states across the Aegean Sea.

**The Goat** (Dn 8:21): The goat is plainly identified as the kingdom of Greece. The first king is Alexander the Great, and his attack against the Persian Empire is well-documented in history. Alexander was carrying out a personal mission begun by his father, Philip II, to avenge the Persian encroachments against Greece. In a very short time Alexander subdued the Persian Empire from Greece to the Indus River (the border of India).

Upon Alexander's untimely death at 33 years of age, his vast but fragile empire split into four parts under four different kings: Cassander (Macedonia), Lysimachus (Thracia), Ptolemy I Soter (Egypt) and Antigonos (Asia) (see map). In 315 B.C. Cassander, Lysimachus and Ptolemy formed an alliance against Antigonos, who was interested in gaining control of Alexander's entire empire. After defeating Antigonos in battle (301 B.C.), his kingdom was given to Seleucus I Nicator, Ptolemy's victorious general.

**The Little Horn** (Dn 8:22-25): In 175 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes ascended to the Seleucid throne. As a result of growing corruption among the Jews, God allowed Antiochus to attack Jerusalem. Eighty-thousand were killed; the temple was pillaged; practice of the Law of Moses was forbidden, and possession of a copy of the Law was declared a capital offense. The altar was desecrated by the offering of swine and the temple converted to the worship of Zeus which involved drinking, revelry and sacred prostitution. Thus the persecution of Antiochus IV was a dire threat to Israel's continuance.

9. When would Antiochus come to power (Dn 8:23)?

10. Describe Antiochus' character (Dn 8:23-25).

## Day 5: The "Seventy Sevens"

Daniel, aware from the prophecies of Jeremiah that the captivity is reaching its end, offers a lengthy prayer of confession to God on behalf of the nation (Dn 9:1-19). His prayer is interrupted by Gabriel who praises and comforts Daniel and then gives him a revelation of the future which has caused untold confusion and controversy ever since (Dn 9:24-27). What shall we make of these "seventy weeks"? The difficulty of this passage does not rest primarily upon *what* will happen but *when*. How one views this time-frame will determine how one interprets the events themselves.

Everyone views the 70 "weeks" (literally, "seventy sevens") in some figurative fashion; no one considers it 490 days. The most common approach is to assume that each day equals 1 year, thus constituting 490 years. Then the mathematical juggling begins. Some begin with Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 539 B.C., but 483 years (69 "weeks") falls short of the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Others adopt the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 B.C. (Ez 7:1ff) which gets closer to the time of Christ but leaves other details hanging. Premillennialists begin with the decree in Neh 2:1ff and the year 445 B.C., then go on to declare a gap or pause between the 69th and 70th week and the rapture,

tribulation, etc. during the 70th week. These speculations and manipulations ought to make us very wary when trying to force numerical values where they are not intended.

The “seventy” seems to be borrowed from the 70 years of captivity about which Daniel had been praying. Seventy sevens is used by Jesus to signify a concept rather than a literal number; i.e., that forgiveness must be complete, offered as many times as necessary upon repentance (Mt 18:21-22). The thought of the 70 weeks might then be that there is a definite, complete time decreed by God until the end of the Jewish commonwealth. Before this end would come, however:

- 1) Jerusalem would be restored “in troublesome times” (v 25).
- 2) Messiah would come but then be cut off (v 25-26a).
- 3) A covenant would be confirmed bringing to an end sacrifice and offering (v 27).
- 4) Jerusalem would be made desolate (v 24a, 26b, 27b).

The idea seems to be that the appearance and demise of the Messiah is inseparably tied to the end of the Jewish nation and system. While Daniel is told to seal up his vision, these events leading to the end of the Mosaic economy are on the horizon. Granted, many things must first befall Israel; they must “finish the transgression” (v 24) and they must yet be purified specifically by the trials of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

Jesus evidently refers to Dn 9:27 in speaking of the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (Mt 24:15). Apart from mathematical calculations, it does seem that Jesus confirms that the seventy sevens of Daniel conclude with the visitation of judgment upon the holy city. Daniel is asking that the 70 years of captivity be finished and Jerusalem restored but the ultimate transgression of Israel has not yet occurred. It is not to be found in choosing Baal or Asherah over Jehovah but in rejecting the Anointed One. God’s answer to Daniel’s prayer describes events far worse than what Israel had heretofore endured. But all is not lost, for in the rejection of the Messiah there will be “reconciliation for iniquity” and the bringing in of “everlasting righteousness” (Dn 9:24b).

**11.** What is God’s assessment of Daniel (Dn 9:23)?

**12.** Is there any specific reason to think that each day of the seventy weeks equals one year?

**13.** Why would Jerusalem be ultimately destroyed?

**Note:** The original of this page is a hand-drawn map of the kingdoms formed after Alexander's death.

**Day 1: Daniel's Angelic Visit**

The occasion of Daniel's final visions was the third year of Cyrus, 536 B.C. Some Jews had taken advantage of Cyrus' edict to return to Palestine but many others found Persian life too comfortable to abandon. Those who did return encountered resistance from the Palestinian population. Daniel seems concerned about this state of affairs. He mourns, prays and neglects his physical care for three weeks as he ponders the significance of these developments (Dn 10:1-3). As a prelude to Daniel's final visions, a heavenly being who appears to bear all the characteristics of an angel appears to Daniel to strengthen and encourage him (Dn 10). Note the physical and psychological effect upon Daniel of receiving such a visitation (Dn 10:8-11, 15-17). The angel strengthens Daniel and encourages him with words of heavenly approval (10:11-12, 18-19). This episode contradicts those who speak flippantly today of seeing angels and hearing messages from God.

Of particular interest is the angel's account of his activities. Such ideas are unique in Scripture, but similar thoughts are presented in the apocalyptic literature of Revelation (see Rev 12:7-9). We must be careful not to engage in curious speculations. In Dn 10:12-14, the angel explains his delay in arriving. It is unlikely that "prince of the kingdom of Persia" refers to a human, for no human prince, army or even nation in the Scriptures is any match for an angel of God. As the angel Michael is then described as "one of the chief princes," it is consistent to regard the prince of Persia as an angelic being, one who stands in opposition to God. Exactly what kind of influence and how he wields it over the Persian monarchy is not clear, but this angel has been charged with counteracting such influence. This conflict of angelic beings lasts the same length of time as Daniel's humility and prayer - 21 days. Finally, the angel is assisted by Michael and prevails.

In Dn 10:20-11:1 the angel indicates that he will resume this heavenly struggle with the prince of Persia after leaving Daniel, and that conflict will be followed by the coming of the prince of Greece. This seems to indicate an ongoing struggle between Divine and Satanic forces in the heavenly realm that has an impact in the affairs of men. The significance of this could be reflected in the figure of the dragon in Rev 12:1-5. It would seem that Satan has employed all sorts of governments and schemes through the ages to destroy the glorious woman, i.e., the righteous remnant through which the Messiah would eventually enter the world. From the moment God prophesied that salvation would come through the seed of Abraham, Satan's objective was to destroy that seed. This is the story of the Old Testament. Here in Dn 10, efforts are being made through Persia and will be made later through Greece to destroy the remnant of Abraham's descendants. All of the wonders of the spiritual world, the terrific battle between Satan's forces and God's angels, with Daniel's people as the prize, all combine to cause the prophet great distress.

One other piece of information is given: whereas Michael had come to the aid of the revealing angel in the struggle with the prince of Persia, the situation had been reversed



in the first year of Darius the Mede. This shows concert and cooperation between heavenly beings as God's will is being carried out.

1. Describe Daniel's condition as he saw the angel.
2. How did God feel about this great prophet?
3. How long did Daniel pray before his prayers were heard by God?
4. When will these prophecies be fulfilled (Dn 10:14)?

## **Day 2: Division of the Greek Empire**

Daniel 11 is truly remarkable for its prophetic precision. It is so detailed in reference to events yet 300+ years in the future that liberal theologians and others hostile to the inspiration of the Scriptures insist it was written *after* the events it foretells. We will only be able to touch on some of the highlights:

**Dn 11:2-4:** Reference is made here to prominent future kings of Persia, particularly Cambyses, Darius I Hystaspis and Xerxes. But the Persian dynasty will be supplanted by the rule of Alexander the Great. Upon his death, the Greek Empire will be fragmented and four rulers, none of whom are Alexander's heirs, will seize power.

**Dn 11:5-6:** The king of the South, Ptolemy I, will eventually be made subordinate to his general Seleucus Nicator, who will be given the territory of Antigonus. The Seleucid Empire will become great. After several wars between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms, the daughter of Ptolemy II, Berenice, was given to the Seleucid king Antiochus II in a politically arranged marriage. Antiochus, Berenice and the infant son born to their union, are eventually poisoned by Antiochus' scorned first wife, Laodice.

**Dn 11:7-10:** "A branch of her roots," i.e., Berenice's brother Ptolemy III, rises to power in Egypt and, in retribution for his sister's murder, marches against Seleucus II, the son of Laodice and Antiochus II. Ptolemy III was victorious in the Laodicean War and, according to v 8, outlived Seleucus II by four years. Seleucus II is succeeded by three sons who all rule: Seleucus III, Antiochus III "the Great" and Seleucus IV Philopater. Antiochus III attacks the Egyptians and restores his southwest border beyond Palestine.

**Dn 11:11-13:** Antiochus III suffers a disastrous defeat by Ptolemy IV Philopater at the city of Raphia in 217 B.C. Ptolemy, however, did not fully capitalize on his victory. Instead of fortifying his kingdom, he lives a wasteful and self-indulgent life until his death. In the meantime, Antiochus regroups and renews his attack against Egypt; this time he is successful.

5. What led to the Laodicean War?
6. What land lies between the warring kingdoms of the Ptolemies and Seleucids?

### **Day 3: More Unrest in Israel's Future**

It is clear from Daniel's prophecies and their confirmation by secular history that the Jewish people had a difficult time in the three centuries preceding the advent of the Messiah. They were caught in the middle - literally - of kingdoms vying for power.

**Dn 11:14-16:** Certain militant, pro-Seleucid Jews aid Antiochus III against the king of Egypt, thus inviting their own trouble which would come under the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus III besieges and takes the city of Sidon and drives the Egyptians completely out of Palestine. Jerusalem welcomes Antiochus with open arms, and Antiochus rewards the adoring city with three untaxed years.

**Dn 11:17-19:** The latter years of Antiochus III are marked with humiliation and defeat. He gives his daughter, Cleopatra, as wife to Ptolemy V in an attempt to gain an advantage within the Egyptian court. This backfires, however, when Cleopatra sides with her husband instead. Antiochus is then foolish enough to attack the territory of Rome and suffers two crushing defeats at Thermopylae and Magnesium. Forced to pay a crippling amount of tribute to Rome for his audacity, Antiochus is murdered by the Elamites while attempting to rob their temples for revenue.

**Dn 11:20:** This verse refers to a man named Heliodorus who was appointed as a special empire-wide tax collector to pay the annual Roman tribute. Heliodorus later slays Seleucus IV, son and successor of Antiochus III.

**Dn 11:21-28:** This section deals with Antiochus IV Epiphanes who rules Syria from 175-164 B.C. History details the deceit and shrewdness of this ruler. Antiochus has a suspicious connection to the murder of the infant heir to the throne. Antiochus uses flattery, bribes, falsehood and any other dishonorable means to secure his throne and gain advantage over his enemies. The Jewish high priest, Onias III, is deposed and slain by Antiochus in favor of his pro-Hellenist brother, Jason. Antiochus will have some early success against the warring Ptolemaic brothers - Physcon and Philometor.

7. What is the "Glorious Land" (Dn 11:16)?

8. Why would Antiochus III attack the fortress of his own land (Dn 11:19)?

9. How would Antiochus IV Epiphanes gain the throne (Dn 11:21)?

### **Day 4: The King of the North Further Considered**

**Dn 11:29-35:** Antiochus IV Epiphanes suffers humiliation at the hand of the Romans when Popillias Laenas orders him from Egypt. Unable to challenge Roman power, Antiochus retreats but vents his rage upon Palestine and Jerusalem. The temple is defiled and the people forced to accept Greek culture. But certain zealous Jews, particularly the Maccabean family, engage in guerrilla warfare against the Syrian forces and inspire

many Jews to remain loyal to traditional Judaism. Israel will continue to suffer under Gentile occupation “to refine them, purge them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.” The faithful Jews must remember that God is in control and the abominations of Antiochus IV are being exercised under the permissive watchfulness of God.

**Note:** Dn 11:36-45 presents a great challenge to proper application. While the context seems to continue with Antiochus IV Epiphanes as the subject, the details do not have historical parallel. While some far-fetched suggestions are offered to explain the passage, it seems reasonable to view the king of the North as the collective rulers of the Roman Empire. The strength of this view is that it harmonizes with Daniel’s earlier prophecies; the weakness is that it requires an abrupt change of subject in v 36. The following comments are offered with some reservations.

**Dn 11:36-39:** The character of the king: blasphemous, supreme over all gods, unbribed selfish ambition, violent, warmongering. For all his vileness and treachery, he “*shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.*” This reflects a view of Roman kings seen earlier in Daniel (7:20-22; 9:26-27). Daniel has stated repeatedly that God is in control of empires and rulers, and whatever happens is only by His allowance. If the subject has extended to the Roman Empire, this would refer to God’s ultimate wrath against Israel for rejecting their Messiah.

**Dn 11:40-45:** “At the time of the end” (see 11:27, 35-36, 40, 45) must be carefully considered. Those who say the king of the North is the Antichrist make this refer to the end of the universe. But Daniel has consistently stayed within the bounds of the four coming empires and has focused upon the eventual establishment of God’s spiritual kingdom; he has not ventured into questions about the end of all things. He is preoccupied with the **first** coming of Christ rather than the **second**. At the provocation of the king of the South, the king of the North passes through the land “like a whirlwind.” The victory is overwhelming, on a scale far beyond anything recorded of Antiochus’ incursions into Egypt. Historically, the Ptolemies did not attack Antiochus. Further, Antiochus did not take Libya and Ethiopia. In spite of great success, the king of the North is not without enemies though he continues to subdue them (v 44). If speaking of Rome, the events described fit the overthrow of Antony and Cleopatra by Octavian. Octavian entered the Glorious Land upon the invitation of Herod the Great after the defeat of Mark Antony at Actium in 31 B.C.

**10.** How long would the king of the North prosper (Dn 11:36)?

**11.** What would happen to him, as happens to all kings who oppose God (Dn 11:45)?

## **Day 5: A Resurrection and Daniel’s Final Instructions**

**Dn 12:1-4:** The emphasis is upon the “people”: Michael is “*the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people*”; “*at that time your people shall be delivered*” (Dn 12:1); “*when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered*” (Dn 12:7; see also

Dn 11:32-33). Add to this the phrases “the time of the end” (12:4) and “the daily sacrifice” and “abomination of desolation” (12:11) and it sounds less and less like 12:1-3 is referring to the general resurrection. Further, 12:2 says “many,” not all. Some liken this resurrection to that of Ezk 37 which is spiritual, not the physical resurrection at the end of time. The resurrection in Dn 12 would be the return of the proper leader over Israel, the Messiah. Over 600 years will have passed since a proper descendant of David would sit enthroned; Israel had been ruled over by one tyrant after another and had suffered miserably in the interim. But now, the vision says, the rightful ruler will be restored to the throne but not without tribulation (12:1). The passage indicates that not all the people would recognize or appreciate the nation’s spiritual resurrection. To them it would be an occasion of shame and everlasting contempt (12:2).

**Dn 12:5-13:** The response of the linen-clad angel is important in determining the scope of this vision and the book in general. The phrase “time, times, and half a time” seems not to refer to a measure of length but a quality; a complete period which satisfies God’s purposes. The holy people, Israel, were to be shattered as a nation but not until they had fulfilled their purpose for which God had set them apart. Though Daniel hears the message he is dissatisfied with his grasp of what has been delivered. He asks for a final clarification, whereupon it is stated that the whole process would result in purification for the righteous and the wise would understand. Daniel is told go his way and be satisfied for “*the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*”

The last portion of Daniel’s prophecy, 12:11-13, is again difficult. In the apocalyptic style of writing, the numbers are not literal. The removal of the daily sacrifice and the consequent abomination of desolation seem to set in motion the end of the Jewish nation. 1290 days is marked as the duration, and the one who waits and endures beyond this time, to 1335 days, will be blessed. What particular significance these numbers have is uncertain. Perhaps they indicate a fixed, limited duration; their “days are numbered” we might say. The Jewish nation would be brought to its end as a covenant people of God, but the true Israel of God - Christians - would endure. A final word to Daniel: he will now rest with his inheritance assured.

**12.** Who would be delivered from the trouble to come (Dn 12:1)?

**13.** What would happen to the power of the holy people (Dn 12:7)?

**14.** Who is encouraged to understand the words of prophecy (Dn 12:10; Mt 24:15)?

**Final Note:** While certain specifics of prophecy, especially that given in apocalyptic language, can be very difficult to apply, we must focus upon the “big picture.” Israel, Abraham’s fleshly posterity, has many days of trial and tribulation ahead. God is controlling human affairs so that Israel will be both purified and preserved until “the fullness of the times.” When the nation fully serves its purpose - presenting the Messiah to the world - it will be shattered as a special covenant nation. The faithful are urged to read and understand Daniel’s prophecies so that they will not despair in the dark days to come. With the Old Testament now complete, we turn to its fulfillment in Christ.

**Note:** The original of these pages is a detailed, hand-drawn timeline of events concerning the Syrian and Egyptian kingdoms after Alexander.

