

DANIEL & ROMANS
COMMENTARY

THE
MOODY
BIBLE COMMENTARY



A ONE-VOLUME COMMENTARY *on the* WHOLE BIBLE
by the FACULTY of MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

General Editors

MICHAEL RYDELNIK
MICHAEL VANLANINGHAM

PRAISE FOR *THE MOODY BIBLE COMMENTARY*

This commentary is concise. It takes into account the latest scholarship and is directed to all who are interested in the meaning of the text. It helps all of us understand the practical application of Scripture. This will be a commentary that stays on my desk and is used often.

ERWIN W. LUTZER
Senior Pastor, The Moody Church, Chicago

The Moody Bible Institute has been my proudest association for more than four decades, and *The Moody Bible Commentary* is one more reason why. This is the perfect resource for a layperson like me, and I expect it to inform my study, my devotions, and my writing for years to come.

JERRY B. JENKINS
Novelist and chairman of the Board of Trustees, Moody Bible Institute

I'm thrilled that *The Moody Bible Commentary* is available. What a tremendous resource for everyone who loves studying the Bible and values teaching the "whole counsel of God." This remarkable work provides verse by verse exposition of both the Old and New Testaments by solid, trusted evangelical scholars who believe deeply in the inerrancy of the Scriptures and power of the Word to transform lives. It is quickly becoming an invaluable part of my reference library. I highly recommend that you add it to yours.

JOEL C. ROSENBERG
New York Times best-selling author and Bible teacher

The Moody Bible Commentary has all the ingredients—a trustworthy organization with an unshakeable confidence in God's Word, credible biblical scholarship, user-friendly language, and contemporary application. Get a copy for yourself and use it as you study God's Word for your own soul, and prepare to share its life changing message with others.

JAMES MACDONALD
Pastor, Harvest Bible Chapel

For so many people, the name "Moody" is synonymous with the word "trust." Having a Bible commentary that is written by the faculty of Moody Bible Institute means you can trust what you are reading to be accurate as well as edifying. This commentary is a "must-have" in the Parshall library.

JANET PARSHALL
Nationally syndicated talk-show host

The Moody Bible Commentary is a very readable resource, helpful to the layman, Bible study teacher, and serious student alike. The introductory material to each book provides excellent information, and the actual commentary offers a verse-by-verse explanation of the text and deals with the important words. *The Moody Bible Commentary* enables the reader to come to a clear understanding of Scripture that will be helpful for personal knowledge, spiritual growth, and ministry.

PAUL ENNS, ThD
Professor and Director, Tampa Extension
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Moody Bible Commentary offers a user-friendly way to understand God's Word. Christians everywhere will find it an indispensable resource for unlocking the meaning of the text. This volume is destined to become a modern classic.

RAY PRITCHARD
President, Keep Believing Ministries
Author, *An Anchor for the Soul*

Once again, Moody Publishers, the name you can trust, has provided Bible students and teachers alike a comprehensive biblical resource that will help them to understand and communicate biblical truths effectively. It is a must-read tool for every Christian's library.

TONY EVANS
President, The Urban Alternative
Senior Pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas

Here in one volume is skillful theological wisdom and commentary from God's library of sixty-six books. This is a gift for laypeople who serve Jesus without having had the privilege of formal biblical training.

JILL P. BRISCOE, DLitt
Author and speaker

The Moody Bible Commentary is a dependable, dynamic, understandable, verse-by-verse study of the entire Bible. The contributors are teaching scholars who have given their lives to accurately teach God's Word. I can't wait to order my personal copy and learn from it.

GEORGE SWEETING
Chancellor Emeritus, Moody Bible Institute

Moody Bible is a name you can trust and this *Moody Commentary* is a book you can trust. It's concise, biblically solid, deals with current theological issues, and provides quality scholarship in understandable language. I highly recommend it!

CHIP INGRAM
CEO and Teaching Pastor, Living on the Edge

What a great addition to the library of anyone who seeks to probe the riches of God's Word—for application, edification, and transformation. Who better to write it than the faculty of Moody Bible Institute! I add my enthusiastic endorsement to the many others who will find this to be a valued companion in the study of God's Word.

JOSEPH M. STOWELL
President, Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, MI

The Moody Bible Commentary provides the reader with a great reference, an overview, a synthesis, an outline, and detailed notes that address difficult or thorny passages. You don't have to be a scholar to benefit from this resource. One can (almost) never have too many commentaries, so add this volume to your library. It will serve you for years to come.

MICHAEL EASLEY
Teaching Pastor, Fellowship Bible Church, Nashville, TN

© 2014 by
THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE
OF CHICAGO

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, Copyright ©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked *ESV* are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. Copyright © 2000, 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked *NIV* are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, *NIV*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations marked *NLT* are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked *HCSB* are taken from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Managing Editor: Allan Sholes

Editors: Christopher Reese, Paul Brinkerhoff, Philip Rawley, Jim Vincent

Interior Design: The Livingstone Corporation

Proofreaders: Peachtree Editorial Services

Cover Design: Smartt Guys design

Cover Images: Ruins, scroll:123RF / Loaves & fishes: Thinkstock / Camel riders: iStock

Produced with the assistance of The Livingstone Corporation (www.LivingstoneCorp.com).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

[CIP data to come]

ISBN: 978-0-8024-2867-7

We hope you enjoy this book from Moody Publishers. Our goal is to provide high-quality, thought-provoking books and products that connect truth to your real needs and challenges. For more information on other books and products written and produced from a biblical perspective, go to www.moodypublishers.com or write to:

Moody Publishers
820 N. LaSalle Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60610

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America

Copyrighted Material - Not final copy



THE
MOODY
BIBLE COMMENTARY



MICHAEL RYDELNIK AND
MICHAEL VANLANINGHAM
GENERAL EDITORS

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO



CONTENTS

Foreword.....	9
Contributors.....	11
Acknowledgments.....	13
List of Abbreviations.....	15
Introduction.....	19

The Old Testament

Genesis.....	25
Exodus.....	111
Leviticus.....	175
Numbers.....	215
Deuteronomy.....	263
Joshua.....	313
Judges.....	353
Ruth.....	391
1 Samuel.....	399
2 Samuel.....	443
1 Kings.....	479
2 Kings.....	519
1 Chronicles.....	553
2 Chronicles.....	583
Ezra.....	637
Nehemiah.....	653
Esther.....	681
Job.....	695
Psalms.....	743
Proverbs.....	883
Ecclesiastes.....	971
Song of Solomon.....	987
Isaiah.....	1005
Jeremiah.....	1103
Lamentations.....	1189
Ezekiel.....	1203
Daniel.....	1279
Hosea.....	1315
Joel.....	1331
Amos.....	1341

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Obadiah.....	1357
Jonah.....	1361
Micah.....	1369
Nahum.....	1379
Habakkuk.....	1387
Zephaniah.....	1397
Haggai.....	1405
Zechariah.....	1413
Malachi.....	1439

The New Testament

Matthew.....	1449
Mark.....	1515
Luke.....	1549
John.....	1605
Acts.....	1665
Romans.....	1741
1 Corinthians.....	1771
2 Corinthians.....	1807
Galatians.....	1827
Ephesians.....	1845
Philippians.....	1857
Colossians.....	1867
1 Thessalonians.....	1877
2 Thessalonians.....	1891
1 Timothy.....	1895
2 Timothy.....	1905
Titus.....	1913
Philemon.....	1917
Hebrews.....	1921
James.....	1947
1 Peter.....	1957
2 Peter.....	1967
1 John.....	1973
2 John.....	1987
3 John.....	1991
Jude.....	1995
Revelation.....	1999
Scripture Index.....	2029
Subject Index.....	2140

Dedicated to the students of Moody Bible Institute,
who have committed to studying God's Word
and given us, the general editors and contributors,
the honor and privilege of teaching it to them
and then watching them go out to teach it to
others around the world.



*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not
need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*

2 Timothy 2:15

Theme Verse of the Moody Bible Institute



CONTRIBUTORS

Louis A. Barbieri Professor Emeritus of Theology, Moody Bible Institute, *Mark, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude*
BA, Westmont College; ThM, ThD, Dallas Theological Seminary

Michael J. Boyle Associate Professor of Pastoral Studies, Moody Bible Institute, *Nahum*
(BS University of North Dakota; ThM Dallas Theological Seminary; DMin, Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary)

James F. Coakley Professor of Bible, Moody Theological Seminary, *Numbers, Deuteronomy*
BA, Calvary Bible College; MDiv, ThM, Grace Theological Seminary; DMin., Covenant Theo-
logical Seminary; ABD University of Stellenbosch)

Charles H. Dyer Professor-at-Large of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*
BA, Washington Bible College; ThM, PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary; Graduate Study,
Institute of Holy Land Studies, Jerusalem

David Finkbeiner Chair and Professor of Theology, Moody Bible Institute, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*
BA, Bob Jones University; MA, MDiv, Biblical Theological Seminary; PhD, Trinity Interna-
tional University

John K. Goodrich Assistant Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Hosea*
BA, Moody Bible Institute; MDiv, ThM, Talbot School of Theology; PhD, Durham University

Daniel D. Green Professor of Pastoral Studies, Moody Theological Seminary, *Micah, Revelation*
BA, Michigan State University; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; DMin, Trinity Evangelical
Divinity School

John F. Hart Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *John, James*
BS, West Chester University; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; ThD, Grace Theological
Seminary)

John A. Jelinek Vice President and Dean, Professor of Theology, Moody Theological Seminary,
Leviticus, Amos
BRED, William Tyndale College; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; ThD, Grace Theological
Seminary

John M. Koessler Professor of Pastoral Studies, Moody Bible Institute, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*
BA, Wayne State University; MA, MDiv, Biblical Seminary; DMin, Trinity International
University

Walter McCord Assistant Professor of Bible, Moody Theological Seminary, *Obadiah*
BS, Pennsylvania State University; BS, Philadelphia College of Bible; ThM, Dallas Theological
Seminary; ABD, Dallas Theological Seminary; ABD, Indiana Wesleyan University

John T. McMath Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute–Spokane, *Judges*
BA, Whitworth College; MDiv, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary; STM, Dallas Theo-
logical Seminary; DMin, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary

William H. Marty Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Acts*
BA, Biola University; MDiv, Denver Seminary; STM, ThD, Dallas Theological Seminary

Eugene J. Mayhew Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, Moody Theological Sem-
inary, *Job*
BRED, Detroit Bible College; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; ThD, Grace Theological
Seminary

- Winfred Neely** Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Studies, Moody Bible Institute, *1 and 2 Samuel*
BA, Trinity College; MA, Wheaton College Graduate School; DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Bryan O’Neal** Professor of Theology, Moody Bible Institute, *Nehemiah*
BA, Moody Bible Institute; MA, Purdue University; PhD, Purdue University
- Gerald W. Peterman** Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*
BDes, University of Florida; MDiv, MA, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; PhD, King’s College, University of London
- Michael A. Rydelnik** Professor of Jewish Studies, Moody Bible Institute, *Song of Solomon, Daniel, Joel, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*
Diploma, Moody Bible Institute; BA, Azusa Pacific University; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; DMiss, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Ronald Sauer** Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Hebrews, 1, 2 and 3 John*
BA, Mississippi College; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; PhD, University of Manchester, England
- Harry E. Shields** Adjunct Professor of Pastoral Studies, Moody Theological Seminary, *1 and 2 Kings*
BA, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Tim M. Sigler** Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Song of Solomon*
BA, Faith Baptist Bible College; MA, MDiv, Faith Baptist Theological Seminary; PhD, Trinity International University
- James Spencer** Vice President and Dean of Distance Learning, Moody Bible Institute, *Isaiah*
BS, University of Illinois at Chicago; MA, Wheaton College Graduate School; MDiv, Moody Theological Seminary; PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- William D. Thrasher** Professor of Bible and Theology, Moody Theological Seminary, *Jonah*
BS, Auburn University; ThM, ThD, Dallas Theological Seminary
- J. Brian Tucker** Associate Professor of New Testament, Moody Theological Seminary, *Ezra*
BS, Lee College; MA, Liberty University; MDiv, DMin, Michigan Theological Seminary; PhD, University of Wales, Lampeter
- Michael G. Vanlaningham** Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Matthew, Romans, 1 Corinthians*
BA, Nebraska Wesleyan University; MDiv, Talbot Theological Seminary; PhD Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Gerald D. Vreeland** Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute–Spokane, *Joshua*
BA, Oregon State University; MDiv, ThM, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary; PhD, Trinity International University
- Michael G. Wechsler** Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute, *Genesis, Ruth, Esther, Psalms*
BS, Rutgers University; MA, Trinity International University; PhD, University of Chicago
- Walter White Jr.** Former Alumni Director and faculty member, Moody Bible Institute, *Zephaniah*
Diploma, Moody Bible Institute; BA, University of Illinois; ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary
- David L. Woodall** Professor of New Testament and Greek, Moody Theological Seminary, *2 Corinthians*
BA, Cedarville College; MDiv, ThM, Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary; PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Kevin D. Zuber** Professor of Theology, Moody Bible Institute, *Exodus, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Luke, 1 and 2 Thessalonians*
BA, Grace College; MDiv, ThM, Grace Theological Seminary; PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School



FOREWORD

You are holding in your hands one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken in the storied history of the Moody Bible Institute. Seven years in the making, this major work, the *Moody Bible Commentary*, provides an outstanding new tool to help laypeople and pastors alike grow in their knowledge of God's Word and understand how its timeless principles apply to life today.

Unlike many other commentaries, this resource represents a consistent theological approach to the Bible. All thirty contributors are members of the stellar faculties of Moody's undergraduate school or its seminary. They bring a careful, literal hermeneutic to the Word, mining the biblical text for fresh insights into its meaning. However, they do not require the reader to possess skills in Hebrew or Greek. They highlight the truths in a clear, concise manner, providing transliterations of words from the text so that everyone can benefit from their research.

As you make use of this valuable work, you will appreciate its simple format. Each book of the Bible is skillfully introduced, providing the reader with an understanding of the historical setting, the author, the audience, and any interpretive issues. An outline for each book is provided, allowing you to trace the argument or story line of the book. This outline is then incorporated into the text of the commentary so that you can continue to follow the progression of thought in each Bible book.

The comments on the text are concise but insightful. Writing from a conservative, evangelical perspective that reaches across denominational lines, the authors tackle the knotty issues as they emerge in the text. Difficult passages are not ignored. Debated topics are honestly discussed, and, when scholarship yields no clear consensus as to meaning, the authors do not artificially create one. In addition, contemporary issues addressed by the Bible are clearly noted. Thus, in reading, you will find a wonderful weaving of biblical scholarship, theological insight, and practical application.

At the Moody Bible Institute, we seek to richly equip people with the truth of God's Word. We believe that every person's greatest need has always been, and continues to be, a saving relationship with God made possible through a deepening knowledge of His revelation in the Bible. We recognize that not everyone can sit in our classrooms and absorb the teaching of our fine faculty. This commentary, in a real way, extends their instruction to your home, your classroom, your pulpit, and your life.

May this volume help you grow in your knowledge of the Word and, through application and obedience, become "complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

J. PAUL NYQUIST, PhD
PRESIDENT, *The Moody Bible Institute*



INTRODUCTION

“In order to understand the Bible, you must read it.” This is an axiom that we both firmly believe. A secondary principle to which we both hold is, “If you didn’t understand it the first time, read it again.” More than anything else, the understanding of the Bible requires reading it, and then reading it some more. For many generations, committed believers held to the principle of the clarity of Scripture. Among other things, this simply means that if followers of Jesus the Messiah read the Bible, they can understand it. Nevertheless, there are some qualifications for this general principle:

1. Understanding the Bible requires effort—we need to work at studying the Scriptures.
2. Understanding the Bible will take time—we won’t get it all immediately.
3. Understanding the Bible requires that the Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds to the Scriptures.
4. Understanding the Bible will happen only if we are willing to obey it.
5. Understanding the Bible will never be complete—we can always learn more.

Having said this, we all need some help from time to time to understand the Scriptures. A person may be reading the Bible for his or her own personal time in the Word and run across a phrase or a word, and wonder, “What does that mean?” Or a Sunday school teacher or small group leader might be preparing a Bible Study and wonder, *How does this passage fit with the paragraph that went before it?* Or pastors or teachers might encounter people confused by a particular verse and might need some help clarifying its meaning. It is for these reasons, and many more, that all of the contributors for this resource have worked so hard to produce *The Moody Bible Commentary*. We want to help that reader, Sunday school teacher, home group leader or pastor have a better understanding of the Bible. Of course, there are many good commentaries to which the Bible student could turn. What makes this commentary distinctive?

The Moody Bible Commentary is trustworthy. For generations Moody Publishers has had the slogan, “The Name You Can Trust.” That derives from being the publishing house of the Moody Bible Institute, an institution that has maintained its commitment to the truth of the Word of God since 1886. Since the founding of Moody Bible Institute, there have been countless attacks on the veracity of Scripture, innumerable attempts to undermine its teaching, and significant challenges to its authority. Nevertheless, in all that time, the administrators and professors at Moody Bible Institute have maintained a commitment to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible as the very Word of God. This high view of Scripture, along with a determination to practice first-rate biblical scholarship, has made Moody the name you can trust. Thirty faculty members of the Moody Bible Institute have worked together to produce *The Moody Bible Commentary* with explanations that are reliable.

The Moody Bible Commentary is understandable. The authors and editors have striven to explain the Scriptures in a simple and clear way. They defined theological terms, clarified the meaning of difficult biblical words, identified ancient sources with which readers might be unfamiliar, and gave the geographical locations of ancient biblical cities and towns. Although the writers engaged in excellent scholarly research, they made sure that readers would not need a commentary to help them understand this commentary.

The Moody Bible Commentary shows the logic of biblical books. Too often people read the Bible without regard for its literary context or structure. But the writers of Scripture, under the superintending work of the Holy Spirit, wrote inspired text with great literary artistry. Therefore, all biblical books have literary structure and strategies. One distinctive feature of this commentary

is that it follows the structures that are inherent in the biblical books themselves. The commentary on each biblical book has an outline in its introduction. The body of the commentary follows that same outline structure so a reader can follow the structure throughout that specific book. Moreover, the commentary itself traces the flow of thought, showing how each individual section fits in the overall argument of the biblical book. In essence, *The Moody Bible Commentary* will provide a road map through each book of the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary deals with difficult verses. Sometimes the most frustrating aspect of using a commentary is that it complicates the explanation of difficult or disputed verses and fails to offer help precisely where it is most needed. The authors and editors worked hard to be alert to the possible difficulties in a text and its interpretation, and to address those issues clearly. Of course, every reader finds different questions and sees different difficulties. Nevertheless, this commentary hopes to answer the more perplexing questions. For example, does a particular Bible passage seem to contradict another? Not if it is the inspired Word of God. Also, readers of Scripture are often perplexed by biblical prophecies, wondering when and how these were or will be fulfilled. When these apparent contradictions or perplexing difficulties questions present themselves, this commentary will address those issues. After all, if a commentary does not address the hard or unclear verses, then it really is not much help at all.

The Moody Bible Commentary uses a normal interpretive method and applies it consistently. By “normal” as opposed to “literal” we mean that the method that governs this commentary understands the words of the text in a normal way. Unless there is a good reason to think otherwise, a phrase or expression is interpreted according to what appears to be its plain sense. If there is a figure of speech or symbol, then it is interpreted with sensitivity to that figurative expression. For example, Jesus is not a literal shepherd (see Jn 10:11), but this metaphor describes the ways in which Jesus acted and vividly describes His kindness and spiritual leadership. However, even in the case of figurative language, there is usually some spiritual or physical reality the biblical author is conveying for which he employs the figure of speech.

Virtually all biblical interpreters agree with this “normal” approach. However, all do not apply it consistently, particularly in prophetic passages. A distinctive feature of this commentary is that it understands much of prophecy in its literal sense and even prophetic symbols are recognized as referring to a genuine reality. As a result, this approach to interpretation will affect how the commentary understands Israel, the church, and the end of days. In our view, this method of interpretation is the least subjective and easiest way to understand the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary sees the Old Testament as a messianic text. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples about “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Lk 24:44). In commenting on this passage, A. T. Robertson once remarked, “Jesus found himself in the Old Testament, a thing that some modern scholars do not seem to be able to do” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 2 [Nashville: Broadman, 1930], 294). Even though much of contemporary scholarship does not believe in direct predictive Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, this commentary does. It presumes that God could and did reveal the messianic hope to the writers of the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, it consistently shows how these prophecies make sense in their literary context, pointing to the coming of the future Redeemer. Additionally, this commentary shows how the New Testament refers to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of these predictions, identifying Him as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

The Moody Bible Commentary is based on the original languages of Scripture. The commentary uses the New American Standard Bible as its English language Bible text. When you see quotations from the biblical text in the commentary, they are in bold and taken from the NASB. We chose this translation for the commentary because it is, at the same time, among the more literal and readable translations of the Bible available. However, the commentary authors did not rely on the translation of the NASB. Rather, in their research and study, they used the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible. As a result, there are places where a commentary might point out a more favorable translation of a word or phrase. The authors explain why this particular translation is preferred and often show how a different English version may understand it in the same way or, if necessary, include their own translations of that phrase or word. As a result, this commentary provides a fresh exposition of the biblical text based on the original languages of Scripture.

The Moody Bible Commentary is user friendly. A variety of elements make this commentary easy to use. Besides using understandable language, it is a one-volume commentary. By limiting it to just one volume, the commentary can be the one book on your shelf to which you can turn when you need help understanding the Bible. Of course there are times when readers will want to study a particular passage in greater detail. Therefore, the contributors included in-text citations, directing readers to works they can use for deeper study. Also, for those who would like greater depth in their study, there is a list of recommended works at the end of each individual commentary. Other helpful elements include an introduction to each book of the Bible, dealing with key features, such as author, date, recipients, historical setting, theological issues, place in the canon, and an outline. There are also maps of the Bible lands as they relate to the Scriptures and helpful charts that clarify the biblical text

Other aids are included to help with your own personal study and deeper application. Of course, there are subject and Scripture indexes to help readers locate or return to key themes and issues as needed. At various points throughout, there are cross references to key Bible passages that discuss related issues (typically shown with cf. and the Bible verses). Also included are notes directing the reader to other parts of the commentary for further discussion of the same issue if it is discussed elsewhere. In addition, each chapter in the commentary includes some points of application for today's reader, reflecting the Scripture's teaching that it remains a light to guide our paths (Ps 119:105) and is useful in daily life "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Tm 3:16). Overall, this commentary wants to give you an accessible resource that will readily open the Bible for you, making simple what some might think is overly complex.

Most of all, we want to encourage you never to substitute reading this commentary for actually reading the Bible. All of us, editors and contributors alike, want to support your reading of the Bible by helping you understand it. But it is the actual reading of the Bible that will transform our lives. We concur with the wisdom of Proverbs: "He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord" (Pr 16:20).

MICHAEL A. RYDELNIK
MICHAEL G. VANLANINGHAM
GENERAL EDITORS



DANIEL

MICHAEL RYDELNIK

INTRODUCTION

The book of Daniel is set during the Babylonian captivity. The book opens after King Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Judah (605 BC) when he brought Daniel and his friends to Babylon along with other captives of the Judean nobility. Nebuchadnezzar assaulted Judah again in 597 BC and brought 10,000 captives back to Babylon. In 586 BC he once again besieged Jerusalem, but this time destroyed the city and the holy temple and exiled the people of Judah to Babylon. Daniel's ministry began with the arrival of the first Jewish captives in Babylon (605 BC), extended throughout the Babylonian captivity (539 BC; see Dn 1:21), and concluded sometime after the third year of the Medo-Persian king Cyrus the Great (537/536 BC; see Dn 10:1).

Author. The critical view of the book of Daniel is that it was written by a second-century BC Jewish author who chose to use the name of the prophet Daniel as a pseudonym. This naturalistic perspective denies the possibility of authentic foretelling. Since the book contains many precise predictions of events in the second century BC, critics think that it must have been penned after that time by someone other than Daniel to appear to be predictive.

The traditional view maintains that Daniel the prophet did indeed write this book. Internal testimony supports this claim. In the text itself, several times Daniel claimed to have written visions (8:2; 9:2, 20; 12:5). Passages containing third-person references to Daniel do not dismiss the fact of his authorship, since other biblical authors at times speak of themselves in the third person (for example, Moses in the Pentateuch). Moreover, God speaks of Himself in the third person (Ex 20:2, 7). Other ancient authors, such as Julius Caesar in *The Gallic Wars*

and Xenophon in *Anabasis*, refer to themselves in the third person. The prophet Ezekiel refers to the prophet Daniel (Ezk 14:14, 20; 28:3) as well. Jesus Christ also attributes authorship of the book to Daniel (Mt 24:15).

Date. The critical view maintains a date of 165 BC in the Maccabean period, primarily because of the precise prophecies related to that time period. It views the historical sections as mere fiction, written much later than when the events allegedly transpired. R. K. Harrison points out that this critical approach became the standard understanding of the book so that "no scholar of general liberal background who wished to preserve his academic reputation either dared or desired to challenge the current critical trend" (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969], 1111).

The traditional view asserts that the book was written just after the end of the Babylonian captivity in the late sixth century BC. It holds that the book contains a factual recounting of events from the life of Daniel as well as supernatural predictions of events that took place during the intertestamental period and other prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled.

The traditional understanding is supported by *manuscript evidence*. Fragments from the book of Daniel were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls—this would be unexpected if the work had just been written. *Linguistic evidence* also supports the early date. For example, the use of Aramaic in Daniel appears to fit a fifth- to sixth-century BC date because it is parallel to the Aramaic of Ezra, the Elephantine Papyri, and other secular works of that same period. The use of Persian loanwords would not discredit the traditional view since Daniel's final composition

would have taken place in the Persian period. It is not surprising to find Greek words in Daniel since the Greek language had already begun to spread even prior to the conquests of Alexander the Great. *Historical evidence* also supports the early date. For example, Daniel accurately described Belshazzar as coregent with another king (Nabonidus) (cf. Dn 5:7, 16, 29), a fact that was lost until modern times. It appears that the late date view is driven by a categorical rejection of supernatural prophecy and not by objective evidence.

Some have argued that because the Jewish canon of the Hebrew Bible places Daniel in the Writings, Daniel must have a later date (165 BC). This wrongly assumes that the Hebrew canon developed progressively and that the Writings were the last section. An argument against this assumption is that an early book like Ruth, most likely written in the preexilic period, was also included in the Writings. It is wrong to view the canon as having a haphazard or progressive arrangement. Rather, it was formed with literary purpose and structure. Therefore, Daniel is not in the Writings because of a late date but because of its contents. It follows Esther and precedes Ezra/Nehemiah (in the Jewish canon) because the narratives of Daniel fit within the same time period as the events of these other books. Also, Daniel was one of the wise men of Babylon and Persia, so it made sense for those who ordered the canon to include his book in the section of the Bible that contained wisdom literature. Regardless, the LXX and Josephus (*Contra Apion* I, 38–39) both place Daniel among the Prophets, which most English versions follow. Since Josephus preceded the Masoretic division of the Bible by several centuries, its placement in the Writings has no bearing on its date.

Purpose and Theme. The theme of the book of Daniel is the hope of the people of God during the times of the Gentiles. The phrase, “the times of the Gentiles,” used by Jesus (Lk 21:24), refers to the time period when the Jewish people lived under ungodly, Gentile, world dominion, between the Babylonian captivity and the Messiah Jesus’ return. The hope that the book promotes is that at all times “the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind” (Dn 5:21). The book’s purpose was to exhort Israel to be faithful to the sovereign God of Israel during the times of the Gentiles. Daniel accomplishes this by recounting examples of godly trust and

pagan arrogance, as well as predictions of God’s ultimate victory.

The genre of Daniel is narrative, defined as “the recounting of events for the purpose of instruction.” This narrative contains history, prophecy, and apocalyptic visions. Apocalyptic literature refers to revelation by God given through visions and symbols with a message of eschatological (end-time) triumph. Although Daniel contains apocalyptic elements, it is not an apocalyptic book. Rather it is a narrative with apocalyptic visions included.

Some have noted that the book of Daniel contains both history (chaps. 1–6) and prophecy (chaps. 7–12) and divide the book accordingly. However, a better way to view the structure of the book is based on the two languages it uses: Dn 1:1–21 (Hebrew); Dn 2:1–7:28 (Aramaic); and Dn 8:1–12:13 (Hebrew). The Hebrew sections pertain primarily to the people of Israel, while the Aramaic part, using the international language of that time, demonstrates God’s dominion over all the Gentile nations. (See the chart “Structure of the Book of Daniel.”)

Background. The covenantal background of Daniel relates to God’s unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants (Gn 12:1–7; 13:14–15; 15:18; 17:7–8; 26:2–3; 28:13; 35:12; 1Ch 16:16; 2Ch 20:6–7). When God added the Mosaic law, He expanded the land promises made to the patriarchs with a land covenant that promised the people of Israel material blessing in the land of Israel if they obeyed the law (Dt 28:1–14). However, if Israel disobeyed, God promised that He would discipline the nation. If they still disobeyed, God promised to drive them from the land of Israel into captivity (cf. Dt 28–30, especially 28:63–68). Despite the discipline of dispersion, God swore that He would never break his promises to Israel (Dt 4:31). Further, He promised that in the last days He would give Israel a circumcised heart and regather the Jewish people from all the lands in which they were scattered (Dt 4:30; 30:1–10).

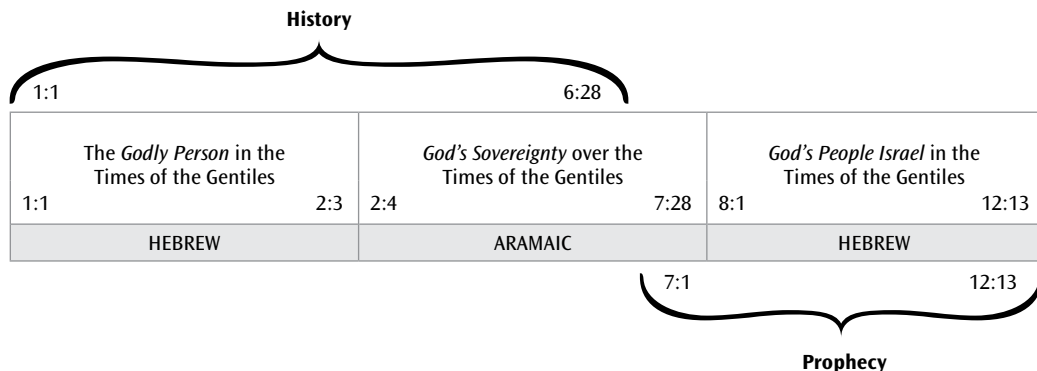
The events in the book of Daniel occurred during the dispersion of the Jewish people to Babylon, and many of the prophecies pertain to their ultimate regathering at the end of days.

Contribution. Daniel’s book establishes the validity of predictive prophecy and lays the foundation for understanding end-times prophecy as well as the book of Revelation in the

NT. But, most important, it emphasizes that the Lord God has dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth, even in evil days when wicked empires rule the world. Two key words in the book are *king* (used 183 times) and *kingdom* (used 55

times). Above all, Daniel teaches that the God of Israel is the Sovereign of the universe, “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation” (Dn 4:34).

Structure of the Book of Daniel



OUTLINE

- I. The Godly Remnant in the Times of the Gentiles (1:1-21; in Hebrew)
 - A. Daniel and His Friends in the Babylonian Captivity (1:1-7)
 - B. Daniel and the King's Food (1:8-16)
 - C. Daniel and the Lord's Reward (1:17-21)
- II. God's Sovereignty over the Times of the Gentiles (2:1-7:28; in Aramaic)
 - A. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and the Wise Men of Babylon (2:1-49)
 1. The King's Disturbance (2:1-3)
 2. The Wise Men's Difficulty (2:4-11)
 3. The King's Decree (2:12-13)
 4. Daniel's Delay (2:14-16)
 5. Daniel's Prayer and Praise (2:17-24)
 6. Daniel's Revelation and Interpretation before the King (2:25-45)
 7. The King's Response to the Dream and its Interpretation (2:46-49)
 - B. Daniel's Friends and the Fiery Furnace (3:1-30)
 1. The King's Demand to Worship the Statue (3:1-7)
 2. The Young Men's Refusal to Worship the Statue (3:8-23)
 3. The Lord's Deliverance from the Fiery Furnace (3:24-27)
 4. The King's Recognition of the God of Israel (3:28-30)
 - C. Nebuchadnezzar's Pride, Madness, and Repentance (4:1-37)
 1. The Prologue: A Declaration of Praise (4:1-3)
 2. The Story: A Dream Comes to Pass (4:4-34a)
 - a. The King's Dream (4:4-18)
 - b. Daniel's Interpretation (4:19-27)
 - c. The Dream's Fulfillment (4:28-34a)
 3. The Epilogue: A Declaration of Sovereignty (4:34b-37)
 - D. Belshazzar's Feast and the Writing on the Wall (5:1-31)
 1. The Feast of the King (5:1-4)

2. The Writing on the Wall (5:5-9)
3. The Advice of the Queen (5:10-12)
4. The Meeting with Daniel (5:13-29)
5. The Fall of Babylon (5:30-31)
- E. Daniel in the Lions' Den (6:1-28)
 1. The Plot against Daniel (6:1-9)
 2. The Prosecution of Daniel (6:10-14)
 3. The Punishment of Daniel (6:15-18)
 4. The Protection of Daniel (6:19-24)
 5. The Praise of Daniel's God (6:25-27)
 6. The Prosperity of Daniel (6:28)
- F. Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (7:1-28)
 1. Daniel's Vision (7:1-14)
 2. The Angel's Interpretation (7:15-28)
- III. God's People Israel in the Times of the Gentiles (8:1–12:13; in Hebrew)
 - A. Daniel's Vision of the Ram and the Male Goat (8:1-27)
 1. The Vision of the Ram and the Goat (8:1-14)
 2. The Interpretation of the Vision (8:15-27)
 - B. Daniel's Prayer and Vision of the Seventy Weeks (9:1-27)
 1. Daniel's Prayer of Contrition (9:1-19)
 2. Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Weeks (9:20-27)
 - C. Daniel and His Final Vision (10:1–12:13)
 1. Daniel's Reception of the Vision (10:1–11:1)
 - a. The Setting of the Vision (10:1-3)
 - b. The Messenger of the Vision (10:4-9)
 - c. The Hindrances to the Vision (10:10-13)
 - d. The Purposes of the Angelic Visit (10:14–11:1)
 2. The Angel's Explanation of the Vision of Persia, Greece, and the False Messiah (11:2–12:3)
 - a. The Predictions of the Persian to the Maccabean Periods (11:2-35)
 - (1) The Predictions about the Persian Kings (11:2)
 - (2) The Predictions about Alexander the Great (11:3-4)
 - (3) The Predictions of the Hellenistic Period (11:5-35)
 - (a) The Period of the First Seleucids and Ptolemies (11:5-6)
 - (b) The Period of Ptolemy III (11:7-9)
 - (c) The Period of Antiochus III (11:10-19)
 - (d) The Period of Seleucus IV (11:20)
 - (e) The Period of Antiochus IV (11:21-35)
 - b. The Predictions of the End of Days (11:36-45)
 - c. The Comfort of the Chosen People (12:1-3)
 3. The Angel's Final Instructions to Daniel Concerning His Prophecies (12:4-13)
 - a. The Sealing of the Book (12:4)
 - b. The Time of the End (12:5-13)

COMMENTARY ON DANIEL

I. The Godly Remnant in the Times of the Gentiles (1:1-21; in Hebrew)

The first chapter of Daniel serves as an introduction to the entire book, identifying its setting, Babylon, and the main characters of the narrative, particularly Daniel. Since the book is designed

to urge Israel to remain faithful to God despite living under ungodly, Gentile, world dominion, the first chapter demonstrates how faithfulness is to be maintained. Daniel and his friends represent Israel's faithful remnant that remain true to the Lord despite the pressures of a pagan society.

A. Daniel and His Friends in the Babylonian Captivity (1:1-7)

1:1. While Daniel records that these events took place **in the third year of the reign Jehoikim**, Jeremiah writes that it was in the fourth year (Jr 25:1, 9; 46:1). Most likely Daniel used the Babylonian system, which did not count a king's year of accession to the throne, while Jeremiah used the Israelite system of counting, which did include the accession year, thus making it the fourth year. The events took place during the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar (whose name means *O god Nabu, protect my son*), king of Babylon (605–562 BC), apparently when he was still coregent with his father and just after his victory in the battle of Carchemish (605 BC, on the modern border of northwest Syria and southeast Turkey). This battle established the Babylonian Empire's dominance and ended the Assyrian Empire's role as a world power.

1:2. Although Nebuchadnezzar viewed his defeat of Judah as a victory for his gods, Daniel recognized that it was **the Lord** who **gave Jehoikim king of Judah** over to the Babylonians (cf. 2Ch 36:5-6). The secular ancient historian Berosus (Hellenistic-era Babylonian writer, third century BC) mentioned these events when he wrote that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Hatti-land (meaning Syro-Palestine). After this initial conquest of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar would take more captives in 597 BC and then destroy Jerusalem and exile Judah to Babylon in 586 BC.

The Babylonian captivity fulfilled the covenant God had made with Israel when they were about to enter their land (Dt 28–30). In it, God promised that if Israel obeyed His commandments, He would bless them in the land of Israel. However, if they disobeyed, God assured Israel that He would discipline them with expulsion from the land. Just as Moses had foretold (Dt 31:29), Israel and Judah, for the most part, disobeyed the law, engaging in idolatry (Jr 7:30-31; 16:18), and neglecting the Sabbath and sabbatical years (Jr 34:12-22). So the Lord expelled the northern tribes of Israel from the land by the hand of the Assyrians (721 BC) and the southern tribes of Judah to Babylon.

At the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion, the king took **vessels of the house of God** (Dn 1:2; 2Ch 36:7) fulfilling what Isaiah had predicted when Hezekiah had shown the temple treasures to the Babylonian king a century before (cf. Is 39:2, 6). Nebuchadnezzar brought these to **the land of Shinar**, using the old word

for Babylon as an allusion to the rebellious behavior surrounding the original building of the city and tower of Babel (Babylon) in Genesis (Gn 11:1-9).

1:3-5. **The king ordered** that some of the nobility of Judah be brought to Babylon to be trained so they could serve as leaders when Nebuchadnezzar would take all of Judah captive. **Ashpenaz**, described as **chief of his officials**, literally means "chief of the eunuchs." Since by this time the word had come to mean "royal official," most likely Ashpenaz was not a eunuch, nor did he make Daniel and his friends literal eunuchs.

Although Daniel and his friends were called **youths**, the Hebrew word literally means "children" or "boys." Here it probably refers to teenagers of around age fifteen. The Judean captives were to learn **the literature and language of the Chaldeans**, a reference to an ancient university-style education in Sumerian, Akkadian, and Aramaic. At that time, Babylon was the most cosmopolitan city and the seat of academia in the known world. They were also to be given **the king's choice food and wine**, indicating their privileged status as counselors in training, despite being captives.

1:6-7. To assimilate the Judean captives, **the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel** ("God is My Judge") **he assigned . . . Belteshazzar** ("Bel Protect Him"), **to Hananiah** ("God Has Been Gracious") **Shadrach** ("The Command of Aku"), **to Mishael** ("Who Is What God Is?") **Meshach** ("Who Is What Aku Is?") **and to Azariah** ("The LORD Has Helped"), **Abed-nego** ("Servant of Nebo"). These new Chaldean names replaced their Hebrew names, exchanging those that referred to the true God of Israel with others that referred to the false gods of Babylon.

B. Daniel and the King's Food (1:8-16)

1:8. **Daniel made up his mind** that he would be faithful to God's law even in a foreign land. **Made up his mind** literally means, "set upon his heart" and refers to a deep inner resolve. Daniel decided **that he would not defile himself** with meat from the king's table because the Babylonian diet at that time included nonkosher meat such as horseflesh and pork. With regard to **the wine**, Daniel would not want to drink what had been offered to Babylonian gods as a libation. So he asked Ashpenaz for permission to abstain from the royal diet so **that he might not defile himself**.

1:9-10. God gave Daniel **favor and compassion** with Ashpenaz, indicating that it was not merely Daniel's winsome personality but divine intervention. Nevertheless, the Babylonian official risked his own life if Daniel and his friends were to look **more haggard** (lit., "thin") than the other captives because of their diet. In that culture, appearing thin was a sign of illness, not health. If the four young Jewish captives were deemed ill because of mistreatment by Ashpenaz, Nebuchadnezzar would likely kill him, since the king was notorious for decreeing death for those who displeased him (2:12; 3:13-15).

1:11-14. Daniel demonstrated his wisdom by asking **the overseer** (better translated "guardian," since he was there to protect and provide care for the youths) **whom** Ashpenaz had assigned to them if they could eat a diet of **vegetables and water** for a trial period of **ten days**. The word for **vegetables** refers to that which grows from seed and would include vegetables, fruits, and grains. The guardian agreed to the experiment, after which he would observe **the appearance** of the youths compared to those **eating the king's choice food**.

1:15-16. **At the end of ten days** Daniel and his friends looked **fatter** (i.e., healthier) but this is not a biblical endorsement of vegetarianism (cf. Gn 9:3). Rather, God in His providence made them healthy and strong so they could remain faithful to the Lord. Since they were fit, they were allowed to continue their diet.

C. Daniel and the Lord's Reward (1:17-21)

1:17. Daniel and his friends received several rewards for their faithfulness to God. First, they were granted superior wisdom. All gifts come from God but **these four youths** received a special endowment of **knowledge** (referring to academic skill) and **intelligence** (meaning "good sense"). Additionally, **Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams**, a point included to show Daniel's prophetic ability and superior gifting as well as to prepare the reader for the events in the next chapter and the rest of the book.

1:18-19. As a second reward for their faithfulness, God granted Daniel and his friends special service to the king. At the end of their education, King Nebuchadnezzar **talked with them** and found them superior to all the other recent graduates of the King's academy. As a result, **they entered the king's personal service** at the king's court.

1:20-21. God gave yet a third reward for faithfulness to Daniel and his friends—a successful

ministry. This is evident in that the king found their counsel significantly superior (**ten times better**) to that of the wise men of Babylon.

Throughout the book of Daniel, there occur six different expressions for the king's counselors. The first two, used here, are **magicians and conjurers**. The word *magician* comes from a root that means "engraver" and refers to those who engraved Babylonian religious activities and astrological movements of the stars onto clay tablets. The word *conjurer* refers to those who used spells and incantations to communicate with the spirit world. No wonder then that Daniel and his friends, by avoiding such occult practices and instead seeking wisdom from the true God, were wiser than the king's pagan counselors.

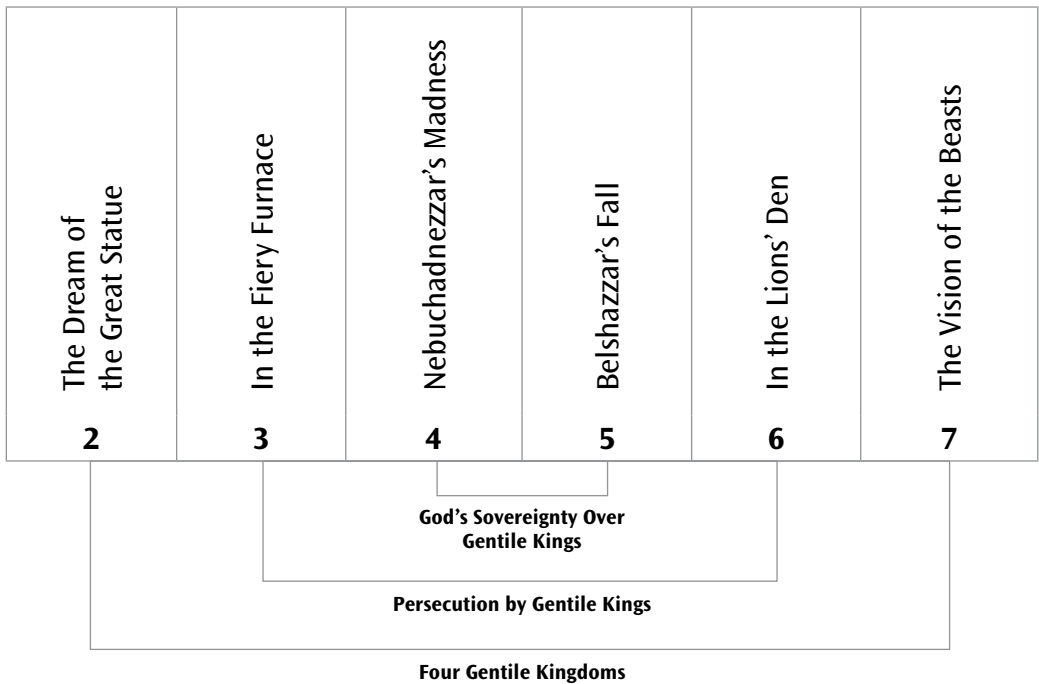
Daniel's successful ministry is also evident in the length of his service. He lived to see the end of the exile, serving the Babylonian kings until **the first year of Cyrus the king** (539 BC) of Persia. Once the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, Daniel continued as a counselor to the Persian king (cf. 10:1; 536 BC), resulting in more than 70 years of service.

In 1924, in an event made famous by the 1981 movie *Chariots of Fire*, Olympic runner Eric Liddell sat out a race because of his convictions as a follower of Jesus Christ. Later on, as he prepared to run the 400-meter race, a man slipped him a note that contained the words of 1Sm 2:30, "Those who honor Me I will honor." Liddell won the gold medal and broke the world record for that race at that time. As it was true for Liddell, for Daniel and his friends, and for the faithful remnant of Israel, it will be true for any follower of Christ—the Lord will honor those who honor Him.

II. God's Sovereignty over the Times of the Gentiles (2:1-7:28; in Aramaic)

Having portrayed Daniel and his friends as models of the way the godly remnant is to live in the times of the Gentiles (Dn 1:21), the book of Daniel next addresses (in chaps. 2-7) God's continued ultimate rule over the world despite Gentile world dominion. Since chaps. 2-7 pertain to God's revelation about the Gentile nations, they were written in Aramaic, the international language in those days. The structure of this section is chiasmic (A B C C' B' A') with chaps. 2 and 7 each referring to the four kingdoms of this world, chaps. 3 and 6 dealing with persecution by Gentile kings, and chaps.

Chiastic Structure of Daniel 2–7



4 and 5 containing God's special revelation to pagan kings.

Chapter 2 tells the story of King Nebuchadnezzar's disturbing dream of a **great statue** (2:31) and Daniel's revelation and interpretation of it. In so doing, it reveals the empires that would dominate Israel and the world during the times of the Gentiles. The primary message of chap. 2 is that the God of Israel is greater than the greatest of men.

A. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and the Wise Men of Babylon (2:1-49)

1. The King's Disturbance (2:1-3)

2:1. The chapter opens with King Nebuchadnezzar having had troubling **dreams**, and therefore he called upon his wise men to interpret them for him. Since it is later revealed in the chapter that there was only one dream, the plural used here indicates that the king had a recurring dream. Since Nebuchadnezzar considered the dreams significant, he was **troubled** by them and could not sleep.

The events of Dn 2 took place **in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign**, which would appear to be a historical contradiction in that Daniel's three-year training program (1:5) began

in Nebuchadnezzar's first year (1:1). The problem is resolved if, as is likely, Daniel was using Babylonian reckoning: Daniel would have arrived as a captive and entered his first year of training during the year reckoned as Nebuchadnezzar's accession year (605–604 BC); Daniel's second year of training would have been during the year reckoned as the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (604–603 BC); Daniel's third and final year of training would have been during the year reckoned as the second of Nebuchadnezzar's kingship (603–602 BC). Therefore, the king sought interpretation of his dreams in 602 BC, shortly after Daniel had completed his three-year education.

2:2-3. As a result of the king's disturbing dreams he called for the court wise men to interpret for him. (For the meaning of **magicians** and **conjurers**, see notes on 1:20-21.) The Hebrew word used for **sorcerers** comes from the Akkadian word meaning "practitioners of sorcery or witchcraft." The word **Chaldeans** is both a general ethnic term for the Babylonian people and a specific term for priests who served as astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men in the king's government. It is used in the secondary

sense here, referring to the king's astrologers/wise men.

2. The Wise Men's Difficulty (2:4-11)

2:4. The text states, using Hebrew, that **the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic**. Although this is the actual language with which they spoke to the king, the words **in Aramaic** also function as a literary marker. At this point in the narrative, the language switches from Hebrew to Aramaic and continues in Aramaic until 7:28.

2:5-6. The king demanded that the wise men not only interpret the dream but that they also reveal its contents. Failure to meet the king's conditions would bring death to all the royal counselors whereas successful identification and interpretation of the dream would bring the wise men great honor and reward.

Some versions translate the phrase **the command from me is firm** as "the dream is forgotten." But to do so, they must emend (change the letters of) the Aramaic text. It is better to keep the text as it is and translate it as referring to the certainty and finality of the king's demand. Nebuchadnezzar withheld the facts of the dream not because he could not remember them, but because he wanted to test his wise men.

2:7-10. The wise men repeated their request for the king to reveal the dream to them. Yet the king was skeptical of his royal counselors—he sensed that they claimed supernatural knowledge without supernatural ability. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar demanded that they disclose what could only be known by supernatural revelation. The counselors insisted that this sort of request was unprecedented and that **not a man on earth** could provide such knowledge. Their objection provides a narrative introduction for Daniel's entrance into the story as the man who could and would receive supernatural revelation directly from God and thereby disclose and interpret the dream.

2:11. The wise men admitted that what the king wanted could only be obtained through the **gods whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh**. This is a candid confession that despite all their incantations, magic, and astrology, they were not capable of receiving supernatural revelation.

3. The King's Decree (2:12-13)

2:12. The king became indignant and very furious at the failure of his counselors to identify his dream. The words **wise men** are used as a general term for all the king's counselors

who, except for the Jewish captives, gained their knowledge via occult means.

2:13. Daniel and his friends were also subject to execution only because they were in the class of wise men, not because they had participated in any of the discussions with the king. They had likely avoided associations with the wise men to prevent being tainted by their occult practices. Moreover, they were probably not previously consulted because of their relative youth and inexperience, having only just been appointed to government service.

4. Daniel's Delay (2:14-16)

2:14-16. When **the captain of the king's bodyguard** (a word that would be better translated "executioners") came to slay Daniel with the other wise men, Daniel asked why the king's **decree was so urgent** (or more accurately, "so harsh" as in the HCSB). He then requested the king to grant him **time**, with the full confidence that he would **declare the interpretation to the king**. Unlike the other wise men, Daniel was not stalling. He had full confidence that the God of Israel would reveal both the contents and meaning of the dream to him.

5. Daniel's Prayer and Praise (2:17-24)

2:17-19. Daniel informed his Jewish companions of his need, and then together they sought help from the true **God of heaven**. The title **God of heaven** is used four times in this chapter (2:18, 19, 37, 44) and nowhere else in the book. It is a fairly common name for the God of Israel in the postexilic writings (Ezr 1:2; 5:11-12; 6:9-10; 7:12, 21, 23; Neh 1:4-5; 2:4, 20) although it is not limited to this period (cf. Gn 24:3, 7; Jnh 1:9). This chapter uses this title to emphasize that only the God of heaven is omniscient (cf. Dn 2:20-22) and capable of revealing **this mystery** even as the pagan wise men recognized (2:10-11). Moreover, Babylonians worshiped the luminaries but the God of Israel was over all of them, hence called the **God of heaven**. The word **mystery** refers to a secret that can only be known by divine revelation. In response to their prayers, the dream **was revealed to Daniel**.

2:20-23. When God revealed the king's dreams, Daniel "blessed the God of heaven" (v. 19). Daniel's song of praise emphasizes that God is sovereign over the political affairs of humanity because **He controls the times and the epochs and removes kings and establishes kings** (v. 21). Moreover, Daniel recognizes that God alone can give revelation by giving **wisdom to wise men** and by revealing **profound** (lit., "deep")

and hidden things, even the king's mysterious dream. Daniel was careful to **give thanks and praise** the **God of his fathers**, recognizing that the ability to interpret dreams did not generate from within himself but rather his **wisdom and power** came as a gracious gift from God.

The point of the first half of chap. 2 is that the God of Israel is greater in wisdom than the greatest of men, since He was able to reveal the king's dream, with its sovereign plan for the nations, to His servant Daniel. The God of heaven is vastly superior to all the great Babylonian Empire's false gods, who were not able to reveal the king's dream to all the wise men of Babylon.

2:24. With his knowledge from God, Daniel showed his compassion for his pagan colleagues, telling the executioner not to **destroy the wise men of Babylon**. He also told the king's executioner that he would **declare the interpretation**, and by implication, the contents of the dream to the king.

6. Daniel's Revelation and Interpretation before the King (2:25-45)

2:25-27. Having been brought to the king and asked if he was able to **make known . . . the dream . . . and its interpretation**, Daniel asserted that no pagan soothsayer could **declare it**. The word translated **diviners** contains the idea of "cutting" or "determining" and refers to a person who is able to determine another's fate.

2:28. Daniel attributed revelation to God alone, who is able to reveal mysteries. His statement that God has revealed **what will take place in the latter days** indicates that the king's dream would find its complete fulfillment only in the end times.

2:29-30. Daniel gave glory to God, who alone is omniscient. Thus, He **reveals mysteries** and can disclose **what will take place** in advance. Daniel was also self aware, recognizing that he was merely an instrument of God, not someone with more wisdom than **any other living man**.

2:31-45. Daniel described the king's dream of **a single great statue** (2:31-34), consisting of several parts. Each part was made of different elements and represented a different empire in historical succession. **The head of that statue was made of fine gold** (2:32a) and represented the kingdom of Babylon (605–539 BC) (2:37-38). **Its breast and its arms were silver** (2:32b) and symbolized the Medo-Persian Empire (539–331 BC) (2:39a). **Its belly and thighs were bronze** (2:32c) and stood for the Greek Empire (331–146 BC) (2:39b). The **legs were iron** (2:33a) and referred

to the Roman Empire (146 BC–AD 476 in the West and 1453 in the East) (2:40). The feet were mixed of **iron and clay** (2:33b) and represented a yet future continuation or revival of Rome (2:41). It will divide into ten parts but with less cohesion than the original Roman Empire (2:42-43). The material of each section of the statue decreases in value but increases in strength. The decreased value may refer to the decline of morality or lessening political influence with each succeeding kingdom. The increased strength of the metals refers to the harsher domination each successive kingdom would impose. Daniel also described a **stone . . . cut out without hands** which would shatter the statue (2:34). It represents a final kingdom that would grow into **a great mountain and fill the whole earth**—this is the kingdom of God (2:35, cf. v. 44-45).

Critical scholars, primarily because of their denial of predictive prophecy, divide the four kingdoms into Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece (alleging that the book Daniel was written in 165 BC so it could not have foreseen the Roman Empire). This interpretation is doubtful because of its historically inaccurate division of the Medo-Persian Empire into two separate empires, a division that is rejected even within the book of Daniel itself (cf. 8:20 where the lopsided ram represents the unified Medo-Persian Empire).

A select few interpreters, while maintaining a sixth-century date for the book of Daniel, hold an alternative view that the four kingdoms are to be identified as the Assyrian, Median, Medo-Persian, and Greek Empires (cf. John H. Walton, "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29.1 [Mar 1986]: 25–36). This is certainly incorrect in that Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and founder of the Babylonian Empire, that he represents the first kingdom (**you are the head of gold**) (2:38). Moreover, to justify this alternative view, Assyria and Babylon must be conflated into one empire. But the book of Daniel ignores Assyria and treats Babylon as the first kingdom of the times of the Gentiles.

Most interpreters who accept the reality of predictive prophecy view the four kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Rome is then conquered by the kingdom of God. In seeing the fourth kingdom as Rome, these interpreters assert different opinions about the meaning of the stone. Some view it as a spiritual kingdom, embodied in the Church, which

gradually conquered the Roman Empire. Others view it as a future, earthly kingdom, to be established when Messiah Jesus returns and institutes his physical rule that will fill **the whole earth** (2:35) and **never be destroyed** (2:44). According to this view, the Roman Empire will continue to exist until the end of days. According to some, the Roman Empire continues through its persistent influence in Western Civilization, existing until the end of days and the establishment of the kingdom of God. A more likely explanation is to recognize a prophetic gap, beginning with the fall of the Roman Empire (Rome I) and lasting through the establishment of a revived Roman Empire at the end of days (Rome II). The leader of this kingdom will be the little horn of Dn 7:8, 24-25. The destruction of this last phase of the Roman Empire will come with the establishment of the kingdom of God.

The evidence that there will be a literal, earthly, end-of-days kingdom of God and not merely the Church spiritually overtaking human governments is, (1) that all the previous kingdoms depicted in the statue were earthly; (2) that there was no coalition of conquered kings or kingdoms as described in 2:41-42 in the Roman Empire at the Messiah's first advent as would be required if the Church were the kingdom; (3) that the stone, which represents the kingdom of God, destroys earthly kingdoms, yet the Lord Jesus did not do this at His first advent; (4) that the advent of the kingdom of God is described as a sudden overturn of earthly kingdoms, not the gradual transformation through the influence of the Church, and (5) that this vision is parallel to the four beasts described in chap. 7. All agree that in chap. 7 the kingdom arrives with the return of Jesus the Messiah—so should it be the same with the coming of the kingdom of God here in chap. 2 (cf. Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, edited by E. Ray Clendenen [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003], 100-101).

Daniel's second chapter demonstrates that the God of Israel is greater than the greatest of men. In 2:1-24, it shows that He is greater in wisdom than all. In the second half of the chapter (2:25-45) it emphasizes that the God of Israel is greater in power than all the great earthly kings and kingdoms. In the end, God will establish His kingdom that will never be shaken.

7. The King's Response to the Dream and its Interpretation (2:46-49)

2:46-47. The king's initial response was to give **homage to Daniel**, but he also recognized

that God was the source of Daniel's supernatural knowledge. Although King Nebuchadnezzar gave honor to the Lord as one of many gods, even as **God of gods** and **Lord of kings**, he did not yet recognize the God of Israel as the one and only true God. He merely included the God of Israel in his pantheon of gods.

2:48-49. The ending note that the king **appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon** provides the setting for the events that will be described in the following chapter.

Even as Daniel previously praised the God of heaven upon the revelation of the dream (2:20-23), so the king also responded to Daniel's revelation of his dream with an outburst of praise to God (2:47). Worship should be the response of any follower of the Messiah Jesus when encountering God's supernatural revelation in His Word, the Bible. Daniel expresses it well: "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him" (2:20).

B. Daniel's Friends and the Fiery Furnace (3:1-30)

The events of Dn 3 probably took place shortly after Daniel explained the king's dream (cf. Dn 2) although some have estimated that it could have been 10 or even 20 years later. Babylonian records indicate that there was a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar during the tenth year of his reign, and so this may have led to the king's desire for the loyalty test described here. The purpose of this chapter was to give the faithful remnant of Israel a model of standing firm for the God of Israel in the face of pagan Gentile oppression.

1. The King's Demand to Worship the Statue (3:1-7)

3:1. Nebuchadnezzar **made an image of gold**, much like a colossus, not of solid gold but more probably overlaid with it. Most likely, this statue reflects the king's desire to have an actual replica of the image he saw in his dream (cf. 2:31-33). In that image only the head representing Babylon was made of gold. Therefore, the king had a statue built covered entirely in gold so as to negate the earlier message of a temporary Babylonian Empire. Since a size of 90 feet high and nine feet wide (the equivalent dimensions of a **height of sixty cubits and a width of six cubits**) would make a grotesque distortion of a human body, it is more likely this was an image placed on a large pedestal.

The location of the statue was **on the plain of Dura**, a site that has not been conclusively identified. It was not in the city of Babylon but on a plain somewhere in the province. Perhaps Daniel was not involved in the events here since he remained in the capital city “at the king’s court” (2:49) while other officials, including his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were called to Dura to show their loyalty. No doubt, had Daniel been there, he too would have refused to bow to the image.

3:2-3. Nebuchadnezzar . . . sent word to assemble all the officials of the realm **to come to the dedication of the image**. Seven offices are mentioned specifically, but the exact meaning of each position is unclear other than that they are listed in descending order of rank. The use of the Persian loanword for **satraps** does not necessarily imply an anachronism since Persian inscriptions have been discovered from the neo-Babylonian era. Moreover, by the time Daniel completed this book, the Persian period had already begun so it would not be surprising for him to use Persian words.

3:4-5. Upon hearing the music, all present were **to fall down and worship the golden image**. Six specific instruments are mentioned, three of which (**lyre, psaltery, and bagpipe**) are the only Greek loanwords in Daniel. This also should not imply a date for Daniel in the later Greek period because even Assyrian inscriptions, predating the Babylonian period, refer to Greek instruments and musicians (Gleason Archer, “Daniel,” EBC, edited by Frank E. Gabelein [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985], 21).

Although some conjecture that the image was of Nebuchadnezzar himself, this is unlikely because the Babylonians did not believe their king was divine. More likely, the image was of a Babylonian god, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar’s patron Nabu or the chief Babylonian god Marduk. Despite ancient paganism tending to tolerate a panoply of gods, here Nebuchadnezzar made this demand for worship of his god as a form of a loyalty oath to him personally.

3:6-7. Those failing to worship the image would be incinerated in **a furnace of blazing fire**, a punishment that Nebuchadnezzar had also used on two Judean false prophets, Zedekiah and Ahab (Jr 29:22). This was a normal Babylonian penalty as seen in the Code of Hammurabi, Sections 25, 110 and 157. Perhaps this furnace was built to smelt the gold for the image Nebuchadnezzar had made. The king’s threat

was sufficient to make all the officials present there, except the three Jewish young men, worship **the golden image**.

2. The Young Men’s Refusal to Worship the Statue (3:8-23)

3:8-12. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the false god, **certain Chaldeans** maliciously **brought charges** to the king. The word **Chaldeans** is both a general ethnic term for the Babylonian people and a specific term for priests who served as astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men in the king’s government. It is used in the secondary sense here, referring to the king’s astrologers and wise men. Likely these were the governmental officials who had been summoned to the plain of Dura.

Their motive in denouncing the three faithful Jewish men was not devotion to the king’s demand but a hatred for the Jewish people. They sought to accuse **the Jews** (3:8) and they referred to **certain Jews whom you have appointed** (3:12). Were it not hatred for God’s chosen people, their accusation would have been about some royal officials without mention of their ethnicity. Hatred of the Jewish people has been a persistent sin in the Bible from Pharaoh to Haman. It reflects a hatred of the God of Israel and is expressed through oppression and even attempts at genocide of His people (Ps 83:2-5). By saying that these Jewish men did **not serve your gods or worship the golden image**, the wise men were accusing them of disloyalty, another anti-Jewish slur, which persists to this day.

3:13-18. The enraged king offered Daniel’s friends a second chance to worship the idol, but they persistently refused. They were confident that the true God was **able to deliver them from the furnace of blazing fire**. The Aramaic imperfect verb *yesezib* (“He can deliver, rescue”) in this context indicates possibility and not certainty. They were saying that God may deliver them or He may choose not to rescue. It was His choice. Their faith was not limited to belief in a miracle but also included trust in God’s sovereignty. They asserted that if God chose not to deliver them from this punishment but would allow them to become martyrs for Him, they would still refuse to serve the king’s **gods or worship the golden image**. This is one of the strongest statements of faith in the entire Bible. They trusted the Lord to decide their destiny while still being faithful to Him.

3:19-23. The infuriated king gave **orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated**, an idiom for “as hot as possible.” When the appointed guards cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego into the furnace, the heat was so intense that its flames **slew those men who carried** God’s three faithful servants to the furnace. This indicates that there was no naturalistic explanation for the survival of the three.

The ancient furnace was shaped like an old-fashioned milk bottle and built on a small hill or mound with openings at the top and side. The ore to be smelted would be dropped in a large opening at the top and wood or charcoal would be inserted in a smaller hole on the side, at ground level, to heat the furnace. There would have been two other small holes at ground level in which to insert pipes connected to a large bellows to raise the temperature of the fire. (Archer, “Daniel,” 56). Some have estimated that this furnace could reach a temperature of 1,800 degrees fahrenheit (Miller, *Daniel*, 115, 122). Most likely this furnace was used to smelt the gold ore and bricks for Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. Thus, the three men **fell into the midst of the furnace** (3:23) from the top and the king was able to see into the furnace (3:24-25) from its side opening.

3. The Lord’s Deliverance from the Fiery Furnace (3:24-27)

3:24-25. When the king looked into the furnace, he **was astounded** to see **four men . . . walking about** in the furnace, and the **fourth** looked **like a son of the gods**. This may have been an angel or even more likely, the Angel of the Lord, meaning a pre-incarnate appearance of the Messiah. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that a pagan king would have understood this. Rather, his statement is indicative of the glorious appearance of the deliverer whom he saw. The faithful reader is to understand who was in the furnace even though the pagan king did not.

3:26-27. Having called the men out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar and all his government officials saw that **the fire had no effect on their bodies**. Not only did the fire fail to burn their hair and clothing, they did not even have **the smell of fire** on them. Hebrews 11:34 cites this miracle of faith, referring to those who “quenched the power of fire.”

4. The King’s Recognition of the God of Israel (3:28-30)

3:28-30. King Nebuchadnezzar continued on his odyssey of faith, begun in Dn 2. There

he learned that the Lord is a true God, powerful enough to reveal secret dreams and to control the destinies of nations. In a sense, he recognized the God of Israel as a part of the panoply of gods. However, in Dn 3, Nebuchadnezzar learned that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were “servants of the Most High God” (3:26), indicating that he saw the God of Israel as the one who is greater than all other gods. Even so, he remained a polytheist, believing in many gods. Despite Nebuchadnezzar’s praise of **the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego** for His deliverance and the king’s prohibition against saying **anything offensive against** the God of Israel (3:28-29), he still had not come to a full knowledge of the one and only true God.

The three young men remained faithful to the true God despite intense pressure to acquiesce to idolatry. They experienced the promise of Is 43:2: “When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.” Thus, they became a model to the faithful remnant of Israel in the times of the Gentiles as well as to any person today who has become a follower of the Lord Jesus. Despite living in a pressure-packed society that consistently invites disloyalty to the Lord, His followers can be assured of His presence in the midst of the fire. God is fully capable of supernatural deliverance from the intense heat of pressure or to bring His faithful ones safely home to Him.

C. Nebuchadnezzar’s Pride, Madness, and Repentance (4:1-37)

1. The Prologue: A Declaration of Praise (4:1-3)

4:1-3. The text does not indicate when the events of Dn 4 took place nor is it significant to the interpretation of the passage. Nevertheless, King Nebuchadnezzar most likely had his dream (see v. 5) about ten years before the end of his 43-year reign. Then, God in His grace allowed the king one year to repent followed by seven years of madness. Once he came to his senses, the king lived approximately two to three years before dying in 562 BC.

Daniel has included this chapter as a formal letter sent by Nebuchadnezzar himself to his empire. No doubt, the king did indeed write the letter, but it is Daniel, as author of the book, who chose to include it. It would be unlikely that the king would switch from writing about himself in the first person (4:1-27, 34-37). Yet Daniel, as the author of the book and personal

confidante of the king, was uniquely aware of the king's experience. Therefore, he most likely wrote the section that speaks of the king in the third person (vv. 28-33) and records his time of mental illness. The chapter is structured in three sections: (1) a *prologue* in which the king praises the true God (4:1-3); (2) a *narrative body* (4:4-34a), which recounts (a) the king's dream, (b) Daniel's interpretation, (c) the king's illness and repentance; and (3) an *epilogue* in which the king declares his own recognition of the sovereignty of the true God (4:34b-37). Of course, the chapter is written from the perspective of the king looking back at **the signs and wonders which the Most High God** had done for him (4:2). Therefore, this prologue reflects what the king had already come to understand by the end of the chapter—that God's **kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation**.

2. The Story: A Dream Comes to Pass (4:4-34a)

4:4-34a. The story covers a period of eight years, beginning with the dream, the year afterward, and then the seven-year period of mental illness.

a. The King's Dream (4:4-18)

4:4-7. King Nebuchadnezzar once again had recurring dreams that alarmed him. Therefore, he called the four classes of wise men to interpret his dream (for the meaning of **magicians** and **conjurers**, see the comments at 1:20-21, for **Chaldeans** see 2:2-3 and for **diviners** see 2:27). Unlike the dream of Dn 2, the king **related the dream to them** but similarly **they could not make its interpretation known** to him.

4:8. Daniel finally came before the king—perhaps he was away from the palace when the previous wise men appeared before the king or maybe he was only brought to deal with problems beyond the ability of the ordinary wise men. No matter, the king recognized that **a spirit of the holy gods** was in Daniel. This translation reflects the perspective of a pagan king but since the king is relating this from the perspective of a chastened king who knows that God alone can reveal what is hidden, it might be better to translate the phrase “the spirit of the Holy God is in him.”

Beginning in this verse and throughout the chapter, Daniel is most frequently called by his Babylonian name **Belteshazzar**, likely because it was written from the perspective of the Babylonian king, not a Hebrew exile.

4:9-13. Nebuchadnezzar related his dream to Daniel, describing what he saw as **a tree . . . great** and which **grew large and became strong** **And its height reached to the sky**, a figure for an exceptionally tall tree. A similar expression was used in Gn 11:4 for the tower of the city of Babylon, the top of which was to reach “into heaven.” The tree provided **food** and shelter for all the **creatures** of the earth. The king also saw an angel, here called a **watcher, a holy one**.

4:14-18. The angel in the king's dream announced that the tree would be cut down but that **the stump with its roots** would remain **in the ground**, indicating the continuation of life. The stump was to have **a band of iron and bronze around it**, indicating the protection of the stump. The tree plainly represents a man (the king) because the angel declared that **his mind would be changed from that of a man to that of a beast's for seven periods of time** or for seven years.

b. Daniel's Interpretation (4:19-27)

4:19. Daniel **was appalled for a while** and **his thoughts alarmed him** upon hearing the dream because he understood its meaning. As a loyal servant of the king, Daniel was alarmed about the dreadful discipline that would befall the king.

4:20-26. The **tree** represented King Nebuchadnezzar who would be given a mental illness that would cause him to live outdoors like **the beasts of the field** and feed on **grass . . . like cattle** for seven years. This would last until King Nebuchadnezzar repented of his pride and **recognize[d]** that **the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes**. Rather than taking credit for his own accomplishments, the king needed to recognize God's sovereignty in placing him in his position. When the king would acknowledge that **it is Heaven that rules**, God would restore his sanity and realm to him. This is the only place in the OT where **Heaven** is a metonymy for God. This usage became commonplace in intertestamental literature, the NT, and Rabbinic literature.

4:27. Daniel advised the king to repent with the hope that this might stay God's discipline. To do so, the king was to separate himself from his sins **by doing righteousness**. Some have understood the Aramaic word for “righteousness” as a reference to giving charity. In post-biblical Hebrew and Aramaic this word does indeed begin to include “giving charity” within its range

of meaning. However, this use in the book of Daniel would be too early for that definition and would merely mean “justice.” Rather than calling for good deeds as a means of salvation or even of staying temporal judgment, Daniel exhorted the king to acknowledge God’s rulership by faith, and having done so, to **break** with his **sins** and live in conformity to God’s righteous (or just) standard.

c. The Dream’s Fulfillment (4:28-34a)

4:28-30. One year later, Daniel’s predictions were fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar, who had no fewer than three palaces in the city of Babylon, was **walking on the roof** of one of them. Seeing the magnificent city, he was overcome with its grandeur and became consumed with pride. He called the city **Babylon the great**, a phrase echoed in Rv 17:5 and 18:2.

According to Herodotus (a Greek historian who died c. 425 BC), Babylon was the most glorious city of the ancient world. He recorded that Babylon’s outer walls alone were 56 miles long, 80 feet wide and 320 feet high. Nebuchadnezzar was a great builder and expanded the city to six square miles. He also beautified it with magnificent buildings, temples, and palaces. Within the city there were some 53 temples to various gods, many containing massive gold statues. The main sacred procession street passed from the famed Ishtar Gate to the Temple of Marduk, with its adjacent *ziggurat* rising 288 feet into the sky. A 400-foot bridge spanned the Euphrates River and united the eastern and western halves of the city. On the northwest corner of the king’s primary palace sat one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Built on terraces, it more properly should be called overhanging gardens. Whether the ancient historian exaggerated or gave a precise depiction, the city of Babylon was indeed the largest, most populated, and greatest city in the known world at that time. Perhaps it was on the roof of the Hanging Gardens with a view of his glorious city that Nebuchadnezzar became filled with pride.

The king’s overwhelming pride is evident in his exclamation: **Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built . . . by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?** (italics added, v. 30). Note Nebuchadnezzar’s emphasis on himself and his failure to give God the credit and the glory for giving all of this to him. Many years later, Paul would upbraid the Corinthians for their pride by asking, “What do you have that

you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1Co 4:7). Herein lies the problem with pride: it takes credit for what God alone has done.

4:31. After a year of patience (4:28), God enacted His discipline at the very instant that Nebuchadnezzar had become fully consumed with his pride, even **while the word was in the king’s mouth**. As evidence that God alone is the source of human accomplishment and authority, Nebuchadnezzar’s **sovereignty** was taken away and the king descended into the abyss of mental illness.

4:32-33. Nebuchadnezzar was driven to live with **the beasts of the field**, apparently suffering from boanthropy, a rare mental illness in which people believe they actually are cattle. Hence, he began **eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew**. One modern case of boanthropy resulted in the patient growing long matted hair and thickened fingernails, much like Nebuchadnezzar, whose hair grew **like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws** (Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1116–17).

Critics contend that secular history has no record of Nebuchadnezzar’s mental illness, thereby challenging the historicity of this account. However, it is questionable as to whether an ancient Near Eastern despot would place his bout with insanity into official court records. Moreover, Eusebius, the church historian (d. AD 339), citing Abydenus, a third-century BC Greek historian, referred to a time, late in Nebuchadnezzar’s life when he was “possessed by a god” (Praeparatio Evangelica IX, 41, cited by Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973], 121–22), a possible secular reference to the events of Dn 4. Also, third-century BC historian Berosus possibly referred to these events when he spoke of an illness that befell Nebuchadnezzar just prior to his death (Wood, *Daniel*, 122).

Critics have questioned whether the Babylonian Empire could function while mental illness incapacitated its king. Yet, excellent administrative leadership, such as provided by Daniel, would certainly have kept the kingdom intact.

4:34a. The nature of boanthropy is not such that the sufferer cannot reason or understand what has befallen him. So, it was possible for the king to realize that his own pride had caused his insanity and therefore, repent. Hence, when **Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes toward heaven**

in repentance for his pride and acknowledged the Most High God, his sanity returned to him fully and instantly.

3. The Epilogue: A Declaration of Sovereignty (4:34b-37)

4:34b-35. As an epilogue to the narrative, Nebuchadnezzar glorified God, using words that describe not only his own realization but summarize the theme of the book of Daniel: He recognized God's **everlasting dominion**, His eternal **kingdom**, and His sovereignty over all **the inhabitants of the earth**.

4:36-37. Having repented, Nebuchadnezzar finds his sanity returned, and the Lord also restored his **majesty** and **sovereignty** over Babylon. The very last sentence of the chapter summarizes the message of this story: **God is able to humble those who walk in pride**. Although some have disputed that the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar actually did come to a saving knowledge of the true God, it appears that he did. In his 40-year journey of faith, Nebuchadnezzar accepted the God of Israel into the panoply of gods (2:47), recognized Israel's God as the Most High God (3:26), and ultimately repented of his pride and submitted to the God of Israel's sovereignty over the world and his own life (4:34-37). Therefore, near the end of his life, Nebuchadnezzar experienced salvation when he came to know and follow the God of Israel.

Too often, people take credit for their own skills, status, or success. It would be wise to learn the lesson of Nebuchadnezzar and acknowledge that all these come from the Sovereign of the universe, not ourselves.

D. Belshazzar's Feast and the Writing on the Wall (5:1-31)

The developments in Dn 5 took place some 23 years after the events in the previous chapter. Nebuchadnezzar had died in 562 BC, shortly after his time of insanity and subsequent repentance. After his death, a series of intrigues and assassinations resulted in several obscure kings ruling Babylon until Nabonidus took the throne (556–539 BC). Earlier critics questioned the historicity of Belshazzar, since he was unknown in secular documents. However, beginning in 1914, 37 separate archival texts have been discovered, documenting the existence of Belshazzar as crown prince. Discovered ancient texts also confirm that Nabonidus spent much of his reign in Arabia, leaving Belshazzar in Babylon, to rule the empire as coregent.

1. The Feast of the King (5:1-4)

5:1. Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles most likely to bolster the morale of the nobility after Nabonidus had experienced a crushing defeat at the hands of the Persians. Ancient Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon confirm that Babylon fell while a great feast was in progress (5:30). Excavations in Babylon have uncovered a large throne room that could have easily accommodated one thousand nobles.

5:2-4. While feasting, Belshazzar **gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels** which had been **taken out of the temple** 47 years earlier. By drinking libations to Babylonian gods with vessels devoted to the true God of Israel, Belshazzar was acting in an unusually aggressive and blasphemous way. **Nebuchadnezzar** was called Belshazzar's **father**, even though Nabonidus was his father. Most likely, Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter to establish his own claim to the throne of Babylon, making Nebuchadnezzar the grandfather of Belshazzar. The Aramaic word translated "father" could refer to a grandfather, ancestor, or even a predecessor to a king without any lineal tie whatsoever.

2. The Writing on the Wall (5:5-9)

5:5. It was precisely at that moment, when the king and his nobles were mocking the God of Israel, that **the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing . . . on the plaster of the wall**. This was not a vision merely seen by Belshazzar alone but a miracle seen by all present. Even afterward, the wise men called to interpret could still see the words written on the plaster wall. According to the archaeologist who excavated Babylon, the Babylonian throne room (see 5:1) had walls covered with white gypsum (or plaster), fitting the description contained in Daniel (cf. Robert Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*, [London: Macmillan, 1914], 104).

5:6-7. The writing on the wall so terrified Belshazzar that **his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together**. Therefore, he **called** for the wise men and offered great honor if any of them could interpret the words on the wall. He even proposed to make the successful wise man **third ruler in the kingdom**, after Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

5:8-9. None of the **wise men could read the inscription or make known its interpretation**, following the pattern of the book (cf. 2:3-13, 4:7). Consistently, the wise men of Babylon were

incapable of interpreting God's messages—only Daniel, God's prophet, was capable of doing so (1:17).

3. The Advice of the Queen (5:10-12)

5:10. The queen who entered the banquet hall was the Queen Mother, not the wife of King Belshazzar since all his wives were already present with him (cf. 5:3).

5:11-12. Daniel was approximately 80 years old at this point and was either retired or forgotten. The Queen Mother, who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, remembered Daniel's extraordinary spirit and his abilities to interpret dreams, explain enigmas, and solve difficult problems during her father's reign. Therefore, she advised her son to call Daniel to declare the interpretation of the writing on the wall.

4. The Meeting with Daniel (5:13-29)

When Daniel was brought before the king, he did not demonstrate the same level of respect that he had consistently shown to Nebuchadnezzar. Instead, he rebuked Belshazzar for his brazen attitude and failure to learn from Nebuchadnezzar. Rather than remembering the lesson of humility before the God of Israel that his father had learned, Belshazzar had brazenly mocked the true God.

5:13-17. Upon hearing the king's offer to honor him and make him the third ruler in the kingdom, Daniel refused to accept any gift, telling the king to give his rewards to someone else. This was not because Daniel was rude or arrogant but rather indignant at the king's disregard for Nebuchadnezzar's lesson of humility before God and his blasphemous use of the temple vessels.

5:18-24. Writers of historical narrative frequently communicate the essential message of a text through dialogue. In this case, Daniel's words served as a rebuke for Belshazzar for his failure to learn from the experience of Nebuchadnezzar (as described in Dn 4). Daniel reviewed for Belshazzar that the Most High God had granted sovereignty to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar's predecessor. Also, that God had humbled Nebuchadnezzar when his spirit became . . . proud by afflicting him with boanthropy until he recognized the sovereignty of the God of Israel. Daniel reprimanded Belshazzar because he had not humbled his heart, even though he knew all this. According to ancient Babylonian texts, Belshazzar had served in the government of King Neriglissar (who ruled Babylon from 560–556 BC) in 560 BC indicating

that he had been old enough to be aware of the events at the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life. Instead of learning to submit to the Almighty, he used the temple vessels to blaspheme God and so exalted himself against the Lord of heaven. The specific sins Daniel cited were pride, blasphemy, idolatry, and failure to glorify the true God. For this reason, the inscription was written on the wall with a message of judgment and doom.

5:25-29. The three words on the wall were Aramaic as follows: **MENE** (numbered), **TEKEL** (weighed) and **UPHARSIN** (divided). They indicated that Belshazzar's days were numbered and his kingdom would come to an end, that his reign had been weighed and found deficient, and that Babylon would be divided among the Medes and Persians.

Although the third word was written on the wall in the plural form (**UPHARSIN**), Daniel explained its meaning by using the singular form (**PERES**). The prediction that Belshazzar's kingdom has been divided does not indicate that the Babylonian Empire would be divided equally by two kingdoms (**Medes and Persians**) but rather that Babylon would be destroyed or dissolved and taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire. The third word on the wall (**UPHARSIN**) has the same letters as the Aramaic word for "Persian," and was used as a play on words, indicating that the kingdom would fall to a Persian army.

5. The Fall of Babylon (5:30-31)

5:30. Having lost a brief skirmish outside the walls of Babylon, Belshazzar had retreated to the city and made light of the coming Persian siege. The Babylonians had 20 years of provisions, and the city was a seemingly impregnable fortress. Nevertheless, Darius diverted the waters of the Euphrates and entered below the water gates. He took the city that same night without a battle and killed Belshazzar. Xenophon noted that the city fell while the Babylonians were in the midst of a drunken feast. The kingdom of Babylon fell just as foretold by Daniel in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue (2:39). The head of gold (Babylon) had fallen and was replaced by the chest and arms of silver (Medo-Persia) (2:40).

5:31. The identity of Darius the Mede who received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two is uncertain. Some believe that he was Gubaru, the governor of Babylon (cf. J. C. Whitcomb, Jr., *Darius the Mede* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1959]). and called Darius because it was not a personal name but an honorific title, meaning

“royal one” (Archer, “Daniel,” 76–77). Others maintain that **Darius the Mede** was an alternate title for the Persian emperor, Cyrus the Great, also viewing the word **Darius** not as a name but as a royal title (J. M. Bulman, “The Identification of Darius the Mede,” *WTJ* 35 [1973]: 247–67). Both of these identifications are possible, but there is no conclusive evidence for either. Regardless, Darius the Mede was not a fictional character but an actual historical figure.

God did not intend for Nebuchadnezzar alone to learn to honor the true Lord of heaven (cf. Dn 4:37). He also expected Nebuchadnezzar’s descendants to glorify Him as well. Unlike Belshazzar, who ignored the humbling of his predecessor, followers of Messiah today must learn the lesson of humility, exalting the Lord above all in their lives and recognizing His granting of every good gift.

E. Daniel in the Lions’ Den (6:1–28)

In one of the most well-known stories in the book, Daniel was cast into the lion’s den for his faith. Since Daniel was about 15 in 605 BC, when the Babylonians brought him as a captive to Babylon, and since the events in Dn 6 most likely took place in the second or third year after the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon in 539 BC, Daniel would have been approximately 82 years old when he was cast into the lions’ den (see the chart, after the comments on 6:28, on Daniel’s age throughout the events in the book). He was an old man, not a teenager, as is often pictured in Bible storybooks and sermons.

1. The Plot against Daniel (6:1–9)

6:1. Darius began organizing the newly conquered Babylonian Empire and immediately decided **to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom**. According to Herodotus, there were 20 satrapies in the Medo-Persian Empire (3.89–94), while the book of Esther records that the Persian Empire had 127 provinces (Est 1:1; 8:9). It can be assumed that the **120 satraps** identified here are not to be understood as one satrap for each particular section of the entire empire, but rather lower officials who helped rule over the entire empire or just over that part of the empire that was formerly Babylonian.

6:2. The king appointed **three commissioners** over the 120 satraps, to assure that the 120 government officials would properly collect taxes without any embezzlement or corruption. For the three administrative leaders, the king needed men with trustworthy reputations and so chose **Daniel** as one. He must have heard

of Daniel’s reputation or perhaps he may have been aware of Daniel’s interpretation of the writing on the wall on the night Babylon fell.

6:3. Quickly, Daniel **began distinguishing himself** as a superlative administrator because of his **extraordinary spirit**, a phrase previously used to describe him (5:12). Therefore, **the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom** as prime minister.

6:4–5. The king’s choice of Daniel created jealousy in the other court officials and they wished to denounce Daniel. Since Daniel was both diligent and honest in his work, **the commissioners and satraps** could not find any **negligence or corruption . . . in him**. Therefore, they sought to create a law sure to contradict Daniel’s faith in order to entrap him.

6:6–7. When these corrupt officials approached the king, they falsely claimed that **all government officials supported the proposal that for 30 days anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides the king would be cast into the lions’ den**. By agreeing to this law, Darius had not claimed deity but rather adopted the role of a priestly mediator. His goal was to unite the Babylonian realm under the authority of the new Persian Empire.

6:8–9. The irrevocability of **the law of the Medes and Persians** is confirmed elsewhere in Scripture (Est 1:19; 8:8) and secular literature (Diodorus of Sicily, XVII:30).

2. The Prosecution of Daniel (6:10–14)

6:10–11. Even though the law prohibiting prayer had gone into effect, Daniel still prayed with his **windows open toward Jerusalem**. Jewish people in exile always pray toward Jerusalem—even today—just as Solomon had directed in his prayer of dedication for the temple (1Kg 8:44–49). Daniel prayed **three times a day** either because this was his own personal devotional habit or perhaps because the Jewish custom of morning, afternoon, and evening prayers had already been established. Daniel prayed not out of rebellion to the king but out of obedience to the greater command of God. As the apostles would later say, “We must obey God rather than men” (Ac 5:29). So great was Daniel’s reputation for spiritual commitment that even his enemies knew that he would obey God rather than the king’s edict.

6:12–14. The conspirators reminded the king of his injunction and notified him of Daniel’s behavior. As a result, the king **was deeply distressed** at hearing of Daniel’s disobedience, not

because Daniel had defied him, but because the king now understood that the true purpose of the law was to entrap Daniel. As a result, the king was **exerting himself** to find a way **to rescue** Daniel—but he was trapped by his own law and could not deliver Daniel.

3. The Punishment of Daniel (6:15-18)

6:15-16. Since **the law of the Medes and the Persians** could not be overturned, Daniel was thrown **into the lions’ den** as punishment. The Persians used mutilation by lions as one of several brutal forms of execution. The king hoped that the **God whom Daniel constantly serve[d]** would **deliver** him.

6:17-18. The word for **den** could also be translated “pit.” Daniel was cast into a pit over which **a stone was brought** and **the king sealed it with his own signet ring** and the **rings of his nobles**. The king then **spent the night fasting** without **entertainment**, presumably praying to his own gods for Daniel.

4. The Protection of Daniel (6:19-24)

6:19-23. Early the next morning, when the king came to inquire of Daniel’s condition, Daniel told the king that **God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths**. God uses angels to accomplish his purposes, including protection of His people (Ps 34:7; 91:11; Heb 1:14). He did so for Daniel’s three friends in the furnace many years before this incident (3:25). As on that occasion, this may have been not merely an angel but the Angel of the Lord (i.e., a pre-incarnate appearance of the Messiah) who rescued Daniel.

Daniel was not claiming perfection in declaring that he **was found innocent before** God. Rather, Daniel claimed that his allegiance to

God, even above the king, made him guiltless in this matter. Nevertheless, it was not Daniel’s works that brought him deliverance from God but his faith, **because he had trusted in his God**.

6:24. The king punished those **who had maliciously accused Daniel** by casting them into the lions’ den with **their children and their wives**. Although executing family members is exceptionally cruel, according to Herodotus, this was a common Persian practice (*Histories*, 3.119).

5. The Praise of Daniel’s God (6:25-27)

6:25-27. Just as King Nebuchadnezzar did before him (4:2), so Darius issued a decree to **all the peoples, nations and men of every language** (cf. 4:2) declaring praise to the God of Daniel. Darius recognized the greatness of God: that **He is the living God**, eternal, sovereign and powerful, and able to rescue his people, even as **He delivered Daniel from the power of the lions**. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Darius came to a saving faith at this point but instead accepted the God of Israel into the panoply of gods.

6. The Prosperity of Daniel (6:28)

6:28. Now secured as prime minister, Daniel continued his government service **in the reign of Darius and . . . of Cyrus the Persian**. Although some have maintained that the citation of both kings would indicate that Darius could only be identified with Gubaru and not as Cyrus the Persian (cf. 5:31), it is possible to translate this verse as “during the reign of Darius, *even* Cyrus the Persian.” This translation could be understood as a biblical historical notation, clearly identifying “Darius the Mede” as an alternate name for Cyrus. Once again the identification of Darius the Mede is inconclusive.

Daniel’s Ages

(All approximate based on the conjecture that Daniel was about 15 when taken captive to Babylon)

AGE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS	YEAR & REFERENCE
15	when brought to Babylon	(605 BC, Dn 1)
18	when called to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream	(602 BC, Dn 2)
50	when called to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s vision	(570 BC, Dn 4)
67	when dreaming of the four beasts	(553 BC, Dn 7)
70	when receiving the vision of the ram, the goat, and the horns	(550 BC, Dn 8)
81	when called to interpret the writing on the wall	(539 BC, Dn 5)
81	when visited by Gabriel with the message of 70 weeks	(539 BC, Dn 9)
82	when cast into the lions’ den	(538 BC, Dn 6)
83	when receiving the vision of future events	(537 BC, Dn 10-12)

Pressure to deny the Lord still exists for those who want to live for Him. Resistance to those forces can present terrifying results—loss of jobs, relationships, or in some parts of the world, life itself. Nevertheless, Daniel’s trust in the Lord to deliver him (6:23) is a model for living in a pressurized world. Hebrews 11:33 says that by faith, some, like Daniel, even “shut the mouths of lions.” When the strains and pressures of life cause fear of contemporary lion pits, just as in Daniel’s life, faith is the key to commitment and deliverance.

F. Daniel’s Vision of the Four Beasts, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (7:1-28)

Daniel 7 is one of the most important chapters in the whole OT. Located at the center of the book of Daniel, it is an essential guide to biblical prophecy. Moreover, the vision of the Son of Man is the centerpiece of OT revelation concerning the Messiah.

The King’s dream of the statue in chap. 2 and Daniel’s vision in chap. 7 form a parenthesis (or an *inclusio*) for the Aramaic section of Daniel. Written as a parallel, the two chapters should be interpreted in light of each other (see the chart comparing the two visions near the comments on chap. 7). One reason for repeating the similar information in these two chapters is that they offer differing perspectives on the same material. Chapter 2 presents the world kingdoms from a Gentile perspective, with the use of glittering metals to show the grandeur and glory of the world kingdoms. Chapter 7 views the Gentile empires from the perspective of the Jewish people, envisioning them as violent and destructive beasts. Another reason for the repetition of the content in these two visions is to confirm the certainty of the predictions. As Joseph said, Pharaoh’s dreams were repeated because “the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about” (Gn 41:32).

The vision was included in the book to give hope to Israel in captivity, informing the nation that life in the times of the Gentiles would get worse for God’s covenant people, but ultimately the messianic kingdom would be established.

1. Daniel’s Vision (7:1-14)

7:1. Daniel received this vision **in the first year of Belshazzar**, the Babylonian king who was overthrown in Dn 5, who became coregent with Nabonidus in 553 BC. Assuming Daniel was about 15 in 605 BC when he was exiled to Babylon, he would have received this vision

when he was approximately 67 years old. The events described in this chapter preceded those of Dn 5 but were placed here at the end of the Aramaic section to form a literary *inclusio* with chap. 2.

7:2. The **four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea** refers to the convulsions of the Gentile nations in the times of the Gentiles. The chapter later indicates that the sea represents “the earth” (7:17) from which the four kingdoms arise. Moreover, “the sea” is frequently symbolic of Gentile humanity in other biblical passages (Is 17:12-13; 57:20; Rv 13:1, 11; 17:1, 15).

7:3. The **four great beasts** represent the four nations (7:17) previously identified in the vision of the statue in Dn 2 (cf. 2:31-45). Here animals are used as symbols because images from the animal kingdom, even today, commonly represent nations. These four beasts are increasingly violent, perhaps indicating the growing moral degeneracy of the respective kingdoms they represent.

7:4. The **lion with wings of an eagle** represents the Babylonian Empire. The winged lion was a fitting symbol because some biblical passages represent Nebuchadnezzar as a lion (Jr 4:7; 49:19, 22; 50:17, 44) and others as an eagle (Jr 49:22; Lm 4:19; Ezk 17:3; Hab 1:8). The Babylonian Empire used lions to represent itself, and statues with winged lions were common there. The famous Ishtar gate of Babylon was decorated with lions. Perhaps the plucked-off wings represent Nebuchadnezzar’s madness and the lion standing **on two feet like a man** and receiving **a human mind** indicates his restoration.

7:5. The lopsided **bear with three ribs . . . in its mouth** represents the Medo-Persian Empire and its three main conquests: Babylon (539 BC); Lydia (546 BC); and Egypt (525 BC). Its lopsided nature expresses the Persian dominance in this joint empire. Some have argued that the bear represents the Median Empire alone and not the combined Medo-Persian (cf. C. Marvin Pate and Calvin Haines, *Doomsday Delusions* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995], 65; also Walton, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel,” 30–31). This is highly unlikely in that, at no time after the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, did the Median empire exist as separate and distinct from the Persian empire. Moreover, the book of Daniel never views the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians as two distinct empires but consistently links them together (for example, in 8:20, the two-horned ram “represents the kings of Media

and Persia,” and 6:8, 15 refers to “the law of the Medes and Persians”). It would be decidedly inconsistent of Daniel to link the two empires as one in these other chaps. but view them as separate kingdoms in chaps. 2 and 7. Finally, the text of Daniel identified the successor kingdom to the Babylonians, not as the Medes, but as the Medo-Persians, when Daniel told Belshazzar, “your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians” (5:28). Although critical scholars and a few evangelicals have interpreted the second kingdom as just referring to the Medes alone, the overwhelming history of interpretation within both the Church and Judaism, have identified the second kingdom as Medo-Persia.

7:6. The flying **leopard** represents the Greek Empire. Its **four wings** refer to the great speed of Alexander’s conquests and its **four heads** represent the four principle sections of the empire: Greece and Macedonia, Thrace and Asia Minor, Syria and Babylon, and Egypt and Israel. Some have identified the leopard as Persia, stating that “the brilliant, swift-moving armies of Cyrus defeated the ponderous, bearlike Median empire” (Pate and Haines, *Doomsday Delusions*, 66–67; Walton, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel,” 31). This view fails in that the second empire is identified throughout Daniel as the united Medo-Persian Empire (see the comments on 7:5), so this third beast must represent the kingdom of Greece. Additionally, the use of a leopard is more appropriate as a symbol for Greece than Persia in that Alexander conquered the known world in just 10 years. Cyrus, however, took approximately 30 years to complete his conquests and never did conquer Greece. That was left to his son, Cambyses II, who conquered Egypt, Nubia, and Cyrenaica after Cyrus’s death. Additionally, in light of the next chapter plainly stating that Alexander’s kingdom would be divided into four (8:21-22), the four heads of this beast more suitably represent the division of Alexander’s Greek Empire among four generals and in four sections rather than four Persian kings (Cyrus, Artaxerxes, Xerxes, and Darius III Codomannus).

7:7. The **fourth beast**, characterized as **dreadful and terrifying**, represents the Roman Empire. This beast is only described by its external appearance in a limited way (**large iron teeth**) but more so by its fearful character. That **it devoured and crushed and trampled** points to Rome’s conquests. This beast **was different** from the previous three because it was more powerful

and had a longer dominion. Also, with regard to this beast, it appears that there will be a yet future or revived Roman Empire with **ten horns**, perhaps representing the ten parts of this future kingdom, much in the same way that the statue had ten toes (2:41-43). **Horns** commonly represent kings or kingdoms in Scripture (Ps 132:17; Zch 1:18; Rv 13:1; 17:12) as the angel’s later interpretation plainly indicates (Dn 7:24).

As discussed in the comments at 2:31-45, the fourth kingdom continues to the end of days, when it is replaced ultimately by the kingdom of God. To explain this, some affirm that the Roman Empire has continued through its persistent influence in Western civilization, and thus will exist until the end of days and the establishment of the kingdom of God. A more likely explanation is to recognize a prophetic gap, beginning with the fall of the Roman Empire (Rome I) and lasting through the establishment of a revived Roman Empire at the end of days (Rome II).

Some have objected that it is more suitable to identify the fourth kingdom with Greece rather than Rome, with its ten horns representing the 10 independent states in the third century BC descended from the initial four divisions of Alexander’s empire: Ptolemaic Egypt, Seleucia, Macedon, Pergamum, Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Armenia, Parthia, and Bactria. (Pate and Haines, *Doomsday Delusions*, 68–69; Walton, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel,” 31–33). However, in light of the above arguments for taking the second kingdom as Medo-Persia (see the comments on 7:5) and the third as Greece (see the comments on 7:6), it seems essential to view this fourth kingdom as Rome. Moreover, this kingdom “will devour the whole earth” (7:23), a more appropriate description of Rome than Greece. Additionally, in both chaps. 2 and 7, the fourth kingdom is said to be displaced by the kingdom of God (2:34-35, 44-45; 7:26-27). But the Greeks were displaced as a world power by Rome and not by the kingdom of God, making this proposed interpretation unlikely. Finally, Daniel’s precise prophecies of Greece (8:8, 22; 11:3-4) do not view the Greek Empire as dividing into 10 kingdoms but into four and then focus on just two of them, the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms (11:5-35). This makes it unlikely that Daniel has the 10 successor kingdoms to the quadripartite kingdoms of Greece in view here.

7:8. **Another horn, a little one** represents a king from the fourth kingdom who starts small

in power but becomes dominant. It appears that this king takes power gradually sometime yet in the future, in the revived Roman Empire. He extends his authority over **three of the first horns** by pulling them out **by the roots**, indicating conquest over three of the 10 fellow kings. Since the future kingdom of God destroys the little horn and replaces his fourth kingdom, the little horn's defeat of the three kings is yet future. It does not refer to Antiochus the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes' defeat of Cappadocia, Armenia, and Parthia (so Walton, "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel," 33–34). This interpretation requires the conflation of the little horn into two kings (Antiochus the Great and Antiochus IV Epiphanes), but the text describes the little horn as just one king (7:24).

The little horn's **eyes like . . . a man** indicates its shrewdness, and its **mouth uttering great boasts** points to its blasphemous boasting against God (7:25). This little horn is not to be identified as a Roman or Greek king from the past, but he is a future world ruler. Scripture calls him "the prince who is to come" (9:26), the king who "will do as he pleases" (11:36), "the man of lawlessness," "the son of destruction," (2Th 2:3), "the beast," (Rv 13:1-10), and "antichrist" (1Jn 2:18).

7:9-10. Daniel then saw God as **the Ancient of Days** (referring to His eternal nature) in blazing glory, taking His throne as judge, even as **the court** of heaven (v. 10) was convened in the presence of **myriads upon myriads** of angels. **His vesture** (clothing) **was like white snow**, indicating His holiness and moral purity (Is 1:18; Rv 1:14). His **hair was like pure wool**, symbolic of old age, an apt description for the eternal God.

God's **throne was ablaze with flames**, indicating God's just judgment. That the throne had fiery wheels describes it as a chariot (cf. Ezk 1, 10), a common description of the thrones of both kings and gods in the ancient Near East. The **river of fire . . . flowing** from the throne demonstrates that God's wrathful judgment would be poured out upon the wicked. An innumerable number of angelic beings **were attending Him**, ready to do God's bidding. The entire scene is of the righteous Judge sitting in judgment in the **court** of heaven, with **the books . . . opened** (Ex 32:32; Dn 12:1; Lk 10:20; Rv 20:12), in which every human thought, word, or deed was recorded. Although all will stand in judgment before the Ancient of Days, the emphasis here is to promise God's righteous and wrathful judgment on the little horn and his kingdom described in the previous verses.

7:11-12. The destruction of **the beast** by **burning fire** refers to end of the fourth kingdom, the revived Roman Empire, with the return of the Messiah and the coming of His kingdom. The **rest of the beasts** would maintain some continuity even when the fourth beast has its dominance. But **the fourth beast**, and whatever remained of the other three beasts that preceded it, will be destroyed by **burning fire** of judgment when the Messiah comes and establishes His kingdom.

7:13-14. Having defeated and destroyed the four kingdoms of the times of the Gentiles, **the Ancient of Days** granted **One like a Son of Man** to receive **a kingdom** in which **all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him**. Although some have maintained that the Son of Man is the archangel Michael or even just a collective personification of the "saints of the

Comparison of Daniel 2 and 7

VISION	STATUE	FOUR BEASTS
CHAPTER	Two	Seven
BABYLON	Head of Gold	Winged Lion
MEDO-PERSIA	Chest and Arms of Silver	Lopsided Bear
GREECE	Belly and Thighs of Bronze	Four-Headed, Four-Winged Leopard
ROME I	Legs of Iron	The Terrifying Beast
ROME II	Feet of Iron and Clay/Ten Toes	Ten Horns on the Terrifying Beast
THE FUTURE FALSE MESSIAH		The Little Horn
GOD'S KINGDOM	The Stone Cut without Hands	The Son of Man Given the Kingdom

Highest One” (7:18), this one is none other than the divine Messiah Himself. Jesus understood it to be a messianic title (see the comments on Mt 8:18-22; Mk 14:61-62) and used it to speak of Himself. The high priest considered Jesus’ usage of the title to be blasphemy (Mk 14:64), demonstrating that it was a term for deity. Later Rabbis saw it as one of the names of the Messiah (*b. Sanhedrin* 98a). The phrase **Son of Man** is used of the Messiah because He will fulfill the destiny of humanity (Ps 8; Heb 2:5-18) while at the same time being deity.

2. The Angel’s Interpretation (7:15-28)

7:15-16. Alarmed by the ferocious animals in the vision, Daniel asked **one of those who were standing by**, most likely one of the myriads of angels he had seen, for help in understanding the vision. The rest of the chapter contains the angel’s interpretation of Daniel’s vision.

7:17-18. Having identified the four beasts as the four kingdoms, the angel indicates that **the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom**. Perhaps **the saints of the Highest One** refers to the faithful of all ages, but more likely it is a reference to Israel, describing the nation when it turns in faith to their Messiah Jesus (Zch 12:10; Rm 11:26). The literal covenant people will **receive the kingdom**, emphasizing that Messiah’s final kingdom will be “a literal, earthly kingdom, replacing the previous empires of men” (Archer, “Daniel,” 93).

7:19-24a. After Daniel requested a more in-depth interpretation of the fourth beast (7:19-22), the angel explained that the fourth kingdom, in its future state, **will devour the whole earth**, depicting world domination. The identity of the **ten kings** might not be literal but rather a figure for completeness. In light of the literal nature of the numbers in this chapter (four kingdoms, the four successor kingdoms of Greece) and the number ten’s linkage with the ten toes in the dream of the great statue (2:40-43), more likely this refers to an empire with a literal confederation of **ten kings** (Rv 17:12-13).

7:24b-26. **Another** king, the antichrist (cf. 7:7-8), described in the vision as the little horn, will arise and take control of this last human empire by **subdu[ing] three kings**. He will be characterized by blasphemy (**speak[ing] out against the Most High**), anti-Semitism (**wear[ing] down the saints of the Highest One**), religious corruption (**he will intend to make alterations in times and in law**). His oppressive rule will last for **a time, times, and half a time**, three and one-half years,

or the second half of the future tribulation (cf. Rv 7:14). Some consider that this was fulfilled when Antiochus oppressed the Jewish people from 167–164 BC. This is unlikely since that period was for only three years and not three and one-half. Since this has not yet been fulfilled, it is better to view this oppression as still future. When the heavenly **court will sit for judgment**, the antichrist **will be taken away and destroyed forever**.

7:27-28. The Son of Man will take his throne and rule over His **everlasting kingdom**. Then **the people of the saints of the Highest One**, namely the believing remnant of Israel, will receive this kingdom under the authority of their Messiah, the Son of Man.

Daniel was terrified as he reflected on the powerful and cruel nations that will govern the world during the times of the Gentiles. Followers of Messiah today also gasp at the totalitarian governments in various parts of the world and the persistent oppression of the Jewish people and believers in Jesus. Yet Daniel’s hope as described in this chapter is still available, namely, the coming of the Son of Man in glory to establish His kingdom on earth. While great nations will arise in wickedness, the kingdom of God will be established in righteousness. With this message, the section of Daniel (chaps. 2–7) about God’s sovereignty over the times of the Gentiles ends.

III. God’s People Israel in the Times of the Gentiles (8:1–12:13; in Hebrew)

Having shown God’s ultimate authority even when it appears that ungodly nations control the world, the book returns to the Hebrew language in Dn 8:1–12:13, and it now turns to describing God’s people of Israel during the times of the Gentiles.

A. Daniel’s Vision of the Ram and the Male Goat (8:1-27)

Daniel 8 does not reiterate the message about all four great kingdoms and their end-time significance (as in Dn 2 and 7). Rather, this vision predicts events about the second and third world empires and focuses on events that would take place from the sixth through the second centuries BC.

1. The Vision of the Ram and the Goat (8:1-14)

8:1. Daniel received this vision in the **third year of the reign Belshazzar the king** who became coregent with Nabonidus in 553 BC. Assuming Daniel was about 15 in 605 BC when he was exiled to Babylon, he would have received

this vision in 550 BC when he was approximately 70 years old. Although the events in this chapter precede those described in Dn 5, they are included here because of the literary focus on Israel in the times of the Gentiles.

8:2-4. Daniel's vision places him in **Susa . . . beside the Ulai Canal**, a location not under Babylonian control but which would become the future capital of Persia. As in the previous chapter, Daniel sees a vision of animals that stand for world empires. First, he saw **a ram**, representing the Medo-Persian Empire (8:20). It **had two horns**, to represent the two nations in this confederated empire. **One was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last**, signifying the dominant status of Persia in the empire even though it originally was the weaker kingdom. The ram in this text is comparable to the chest and arms of silver in the vision of the statue (2:32, 39) and the lopsided bear in the vision of the four beasts (7:5).

8:5. Daniel also saw **a male goat**, representing the Greek Empire with a **conspicuous horn** representing Alexander the Great (8:21). It came **from the west, crossing the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground**, referring to Alexander's speedy conquest of the entire Near East in only three years. The male goat, in this vision, represents the same kingdom as the belly and thighs of bronze in the vision of the statue (2:32, 39) and the four-winged and four-headed leopard in the vision of the four beasts (7:6).

8:6-7. The goat **struck the ram and shattered his two horns** indicating the Greek Empire's crushing defeat of Medo-Persia (331 BC).

8:8. Although **the male goat magnified himself**, at the height of his power, **the large horn was broken**, referring to Alexander's sudden death at the peak of his greatness (323 BC). The **four conspicuous horns** that replaced him describe Alexander's four generals (Cassander over Macedon and Greece, Lysimachus over Thrace and Asia Minor, Seleucus over Syria and Babylon, Ptolemy over Egypt) that divided the Hellenistic Empire.

8:9-12. As opposed to the little horn that would come from the fourth kingdom (Rome) described in Dn 7:8, a different **small horn** emerged out of one of the four kingdoms that divided the Greek Empire. This one was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 BC), ruler of the Seleucid dynasty, who conquered surrounding areas to **the south** and to **the east** but especially dominated **the Beautiful Land** of Israel.

He caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall . . . and . . . [he] trampled them. The depiction of the host and stars provides a symbolic reference to the Jewish people (cf. Gn 22:17; 37:9). His trampling of the stars refers to Antiochus's brutal persecution of the Jewish people from 170–164 BC. Antiochus blasphemously presented himself as **equal with the Commander of the host**, God Himself (also called the "Prince of princes" in 8:25). He also stopped **regular sacrifice** and defiled God's **sanctuary**, the holy temple in Jerusalem (167 BC) by offering a swine to the pagan god Zeus on the altar in the holy of holies. He would **prosper**, but only temporarily.

8:13-14. An angel announced that the time of Antiochus's defilement of Israel would only be for **2,300 evenings and mornings**. This is a reference either to the 2,300 full days from Antiochus's appointment of the murderer Menelaus as high priest (171 BC) to the rededication of the temple under Judah Maccabee (164 BC) or to a total of 1,150 morning and 1,150 evening sacrifices from the defiling of the temple (167 BC) to its rededication (164 BC). In either case, Antiochus's defilement would last only until the temple would be rededicated by Judah Maccabee, an event still celebrated by Jewish people today during the festival of *Chanukah* (English, "dedication") (cf. Jn 10:22-23).

2. The Interpretation of the Vision (8:15-27)

8:15-16. Daniel did not understand the vision and so received the interpretation from the angel **Gabriel**, only one of two good angels (along with Michael) who are named in Scripture. Gabriel would also give the message of Daniel's 70 weeks (9:24-27) and announce the birth of John to Zechariah (Lk 1:19) and the birth of the Messiah Jesus to Mary (Lk 1:26).

8:17-22. Gabriel addressed Daniel as **son of man**, but does not use the Hebrew equivalent of the Aramaic title given to the Messiah (7:13). Rather this phrase emphasizes the human weakness and mortality of Daniel. Gabriel also indicated that the vision referred **to the time of the end** (vv. 17, 19). This might seem unexpected since the events predicted all took place between the sixth and second centuries BC and do not appear to be end-time events. But chap. 7 and 8 were intentionally placed next to each other and both mention a little horn. In this way, the author established a deliberate typological relationship—Dn 7 referring to the

end-time antichrist and Dn 8 referring to the second-century BC Antiochus IV Epiphanes. While a different character, Antiochus is similar and deliberately presented as a type of the future antichrist. Readers through the ages would identify him as the little horn of Dn 8 but also recognize that he would typify the end-time antichrist. So, although Dn 8 directly referred to Antiochus, this vision pertains to the end-times as a type deliberately intended by the author of Daniel. Gabriel interpreted Daniel’s vision of the beasts as explained above, to refer to the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires as well as the fourfold division of Alexander’s empire.

8:23-25. After his summary explanation of Daniel’s vision, Gabriel expanded his description of Antiochus. He would rise treacherously, being **skilled in intrigue**, taking the throne through deceit against the rightful heir, his nephew Demetrius. His great **power** would not be his own but have a satanic source. This demonic power would enable him to **destroy to an extraordinary degree**, devastating the land of Israel and the Jewish people. This power will cause him to **prosper and perform his will**, defeating **mighty** rulers and generals and destroying many of God’s **holy people** Israel. Additionally, this king will **magnify himself** enough to oppose God, **the Prince of princes**. Nevertheless, he will ultimately and suddenly be **broken** and not by **human agency**, but rather by God. This refers to his death not through assassination or battle but by God. According to *1 Macc* 6:8-16, Antiochus IV died of sorrow and sadness in Babylon after

being defeated in the battle of Elymais and also receiving word that his forces had been crushed in the land of Israel.

8:26-27. Gabriel instructed Daniel to *seal up the vision* (not to **keep the vision secret** as in the NASB). This sealing was not to hide its meaning from the faithful readers of Scripture but to secure it for safekeeping into the distant future. The predictions would need to be read for many years because the vision **pertains to many days in the future**, both the time of Antiochus, which would be some 400 years after the vision, and the time of the antichrist, which is yet future and typified by Antiochus. **Astounded at the vision**, Daniel went back to serving the king in Babylon, where he was physically present at the time of the vision.

The message of Dn 8 to the faithful of Israel was that God would indeed allow Gentile nations to be instruments of discipline of His chosen people. Nevertheless, God promised that He would also deliver them from the oppression of these Gentile nations. Followers of Messiah Jesus ought to remember this lesson, never siding with the anti-Semitism of the nations but always with the Lord, in His love and protection of His people.

B. Daniel’s Prayer and Vision of the Seventy Weeks (9:1-27)

1. Daniel’s Prayer of Contrition (9:1-19)

9:1. Daniel received this vision in **the first year of Darius** which was 539/538 BC. If Daniel was approximately 15 when he went into captivity, he would have been around 81 years

Antiochus IV as a Type of the Antichrist

Antiochus (8:9) and antichrist (7:8) are symbolized by horns that were “little” or “small” at the beginning.
Antiochus was a “stern-faced king” (8:23), and antichrist will have an “imposing” look (7:20).
Antiochus was “a master of intrigue” (8:23), and antichrist’s brilliance is suggested by the “eyes” of the horn (7:8, 20).
Antiochus had great power (8:24); antichrist will have even greater power (11:39; 2Th 2:9; Rv 13:7-8).
Antiochus was energized by Satan (8:24); antichrist also will be empowered by Satan (2Th 2:9; Rv 13:2).
Antiochus destroyed thousands (8:24); antichrist will destroy more (Rv 13:15; 16:13-16).
Antiochus prospered for a short time (8:24); antichrist also will prosper for a brief period (11:36; Rv 13:7).
Antiochus persecuted the Jewish people (8:24); antichrist will also persecute (7:21, 25; Rv 12:13).
Antiochus was a deceiver (8:25); antichrist will be a master deceiver (2Th 2:9; Rv 13:4, 14; 19:20).
Antiochus was proud (8:25); antichrist will be a megalomaniac (7:8, 11, 20, 25; Rv 13:5).
Antiochus blasphemed God (8:25); antichrist will also blaspheme God (7:25; 11:36).
Antiochus was not killed by human hands (8:25), nor will the antichrist be (2Th 2:8; Rv 19:19-20).

old at the time of the vision. That Darius was called **the son of Ahasuerus** is not an anachronistic reference to Xerxes (485–465 BC), the later Persian king mentioned in the book of Esther (Est 1:1). The name Ahasuerus was most likely a Persian royal title rather than a personal name and refers to an ancestor of Cyrus the Great or Governor Gubaru (cf. comments on 5:31).

9:2. Although the book of **Jeremiah the prophet** was completed only a generation before the events described in Dn 9, Daniel already recognized it as Scripture, or **the word of the LORD**. Jeremiah predicted that **the desolations of Jerusalem** would last for **seventy years** (Jr 25:11-13; 29:10), so Daniel calculated that since the first captives had been taken to Babylon in 605 BC, at this time, some 67 years later, the 70 years were nearly complete.

9:3. Daniel's **prayer** was with **fasting, sackcloth and ashes**, three customary ways to express contrition (Ezr 8:23; Neh 9:1; Est 4:1, 3, 16; Jb 2:12; Jnh 3:5-6).

9:4-19. Daniel prayed to the **LORD** his God (the Hebrew name Yahweh is translated LORD in English). This name of God is used seven times in Daniel but only in this chapter (9:2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14 [twice], 20). Since Daniel's prayer emphasized God's faithfulness, it was appropriate to use the name Yahweh because it is associated with the covenant-keeping nature of the God of Israel (Ex 6:2-8). Daniel's prayer of contrition begins with *worship* of the covenant-keeping God (9:4), continues with *confession* of Israel's sin (9:5-14), and concludes with a strong *plea* for the Lord to deliver Israel from captivity (9:15-19). The author included this prayer not as a mere record of the humble prayer of the godly Daniel, but also as a model prayer for Israel in the times of the Gentiles and for contemporary believers to follow.

9:4. *Worship.* Daniel began his prayer by addressing God as **Lord** (*Adonai*, meaning "Master" or "Sovereign One"), glorifying Him as **great and awesome**. The word **great** refers to God's grandeur and importance while **awesome** comes from the verb "to fear," indicating God is the one to be feared. Moreover, Daniel recognized the Lord as one **who keeps His covenant**, a reference to the Abrahamic covenant in which God promised to preserve the Jewish people and provide them with a land (Gn 12:1-7; 15:18-21). Daniel acknowledges God as one who keeps **lovingkindness**, a word describing God's special characteristic of "loyal love" to those with

whom He is in a covenant relationship (Dt 7:9, 12). Moreover, God's "loyal love" is frequently linked with His forgiveness and mercy (Ex 34:6-7; Ps 103:4). The covenantal and merciful aspects of God's love are prominent in this passage. Finally, these gracious benefits are for **those who love Him and keep His commandments**.

9:5-14. *Confession.* Although always faithful and obedient to the Lord, Daniel confessed the sins of the nation, notably including his own, showing his identification with the guilt of his own people.

9:5-6. Daniel began his confession of sin, specifying the nature of Judah's waywardness by citing six different characteristics of disobedience to God. (1) Daniel admitted that all Israel had **sinned**, a word that means "to miss the mark" (Jdg 20:16) of God's righteous standard. (2) Also, they had **committed iniquity**, a word that refers to being twisted or bent and indicates that they had behaved perversely or crookedly. (3) Daniel recognized that Israel had **acted wickedly**, meaning they had committed crimes against people and God. (4) Daniel said they had **rebelled**, using a word emphasizing the wickedness of knowingly disobeying God and defying Him. (5) He confessed that they were guilty of **turning aside**, a verb that refers to apostasy from God. They had done so by abandoning God's **commandments**, as found in the Mosaic law. This apostasy was the underlying problem, causing the above-mentioned sinful behaviors. (6) Additionally, Daniel confessed that the entire nation, from royalty to commoners, had **not listened** to the exhortations of God's prophets, whom God had sent as covenant enforcers, reminding them to obey the law.

9:7-8. Having confessed Israel's sins, Daniel moved to describing the consequences of those sins. He does this by contrasting God and Israel. **Righteousness** belongs to the **Lord**, meaning that God is holy in completely adhering to His own just standards. In contrast, Israel was characterized by **open shame** (vv. 7 and 8) for departing from God's holy and just requirements. While shame in English is generally an inner quality, the Hebrew word indicates public disgrace. All classes of Judah experienced disgrace by their public dispersion among the nations.

9:9. In the center of this confession, Daniel identified the sole hope upon which he and the rest of Judah could depend, namely, that while rebellion belonged to Judah, **to the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness**. The Hebrew

word for God's **compassion** is rarely used of humanity and commonly used of God. It refers to the deep, tender love and pity that a parent feels for a child (Ps 103:13) which God in His sovereignty chooses to bestow. The word for **forgiveness** is used solely of God, never being used of human forgiveness. It refers to the pardon that God alone can provide to those who rebel against Him. Both words are plural, intensifying the expression of the depth of God's pity and pardon.

9:10-14. Daniel's confession identified the nature and consequences of Judah's disobedience as well as their only hope. Daniel also cited God's absolute justice in His discipline of Judah. God was righteous in His judgment because Israel had disregarded **the prophets** and disobeyed the **law**. As a result, God sent the nation into exile, in fulfillment of His **oath . . . written in the law of Moses** (Lv 26:27-33; Dt 28:63-68). The great **calamity** that befell Judah and Jerusalem was in direct fulfillment to the warnings found in the law, that if Israel failed to obey God's commandments, eventually God would "scatter [them] among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth" (Dt 28:64). In contemplating Judah's dispersion, Daniel expressed no bitterness toward God for their suffering, noting that **the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done**.

9:15-18. Plea. Daniel concluded his prayer with a plea for God to forgive and restore Judah and Jerusalem. His plaintive request is based on God's reputation and His merciful character but not on any merit found in Israel. At the outset of His plea (v. 15), Daniel reminded God of the exodus, when God had established Himself as the faithful God of the covenant, who remembered Israel and brought them **out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand**. At that time, God had

made a name for Himself among the nations as the God of Israel. Israel often appealed to God's reputation as the nation's Redeemer when calling upon Him to show mercy and compassion (cf. Ex 32:11-14; Nm 14:11-19). Daniel appealed to God to **turn away His anger** and His **wrath** from **Jerusalem** and His **holy mountain** (v. 16). Evoking the Aaronic benediction (Nm 6:24-26), he begged the **Lord, let your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary** (v. 17). Despite God's justice in sending Israel into exile, Daniel pleaded with God not on the basis of Israel's **merits** but on God's **great compassion** (v. 18). God's forgiveness and restoration was not derived to be from human works but God's grace alone.

9:19. With heightened and growing passion, Daniel begged God to act. Repeating the vocative, **O Lord**, three times, Daniel implored God to **hear, forgive, listen and take action**. Ultimately, Daniel's plea for the Lord to act without **delay** was based on Jerusalem (**Your city**) and Israel (**Your people**) being called by His **name**. Once again, God's reputation was the basis of Daniel's plea for the restoration of the Jewish people to their land.

2. Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Weeks (9:20-27)

9:20-23. While Daniel was still praying, the angel **Gabriel** appeared for a second time in the book of Daniel (8:16). Here he is called a **man**, not an angel, because he appeared in human form. He arrived at **about the time** when **the evening offering** would have been offered had the temple still stood, or between 3 and 4 p.m. Gabriel came immediately in response to Daniel's fervent and humble prayer because God **highly esteemed** Daniel.

9:24. The vision Gabriel recounted referred to a sum total of **seventy weeks**, which some

Daniel's Vision of the 70 Weeks

<p>Israel's Sabbatical Violations</p> <p>70 Weeks of Years 70 x 7 = 490 Years (Lv 26:34-35, 43; 2Ch 36:21)</p>	<p>Israel's Captivity</p> <p>70 Years (Jr 25:11; 29:10)</p>	<p>Israel's Prophetic Destiny</p> <p>70 Weeks of Years 70 x 7 = 490 Years (Dn 9:24-27)</p>
---	--	---

Israel's Past



Daniel's prayer looked backward

Daniel's Day
Dn 9:1-2



Daniel's vision looked forward

Israel's Future

have interpreted as a symbolic number. However, in the context, at the opening of the chapter, Daniel recognized that the 70-year captivity referred to literal time (9:2). Therefore, it is more likely that the 70 weeks also refer to a literal number.

The word **weeks** in Hebrew refers to a unit of seven, or a heptad, with its meaning determined by the context. Sometimes it refers to a period of seven days but here it denotes a period of seven years. The reasons for this are (1) that in this context Daniel was concerned with years not days (9:2); (2) that in the Hebrew of Dn 10:2-3, Daniel specified that he was fasting for “three entire weeks” to distinguish from the weeks of years described in the previous paragraph (9:24-27); (3) that the broken covenant of the 70th week leaves three and one-half periods of desolation and destruction, and this amount of time is described as three and one-half years in parallel passages (7:25; 12:7; Rv 12:14).

Why did the message of the angel, pertaining to 490 future years, come when Daniel was pondering the end of the 70-year captivity? Judah’s captivity lasted 70 years because the nation had failed to keep the sabbatical rest of the land 70 times (Lv 26:34-35, 43). Thus, 70 years of captivity provided the land with the 70 Sabbatical rests it had missed (2Ch 36:21). Therefore, the context of Daniel’s considerations was not merely the 70-year captivity but the cause of that length of time, namely, 70 weeks of years (i.e., 490 years) when the land had not experienced its rest. While Daniel’s prayer was focused on the past period of 70 weeks of years and the end of the 70-year captivity, the angel came with a message about the future, also about a period of 70 weeks of years. (See the chart “Daniel’s Vision of the 70 Weeks.”)

By the completion of the 490-year period, six objectives would be accomplished in a comprehensive way. The first three objectives pertain to dealing with sin: first, finishing **transgression** refers to bringing an end to Israel’s history of rebellion against God; making **an end of sin** brings it to a halt by final judgment; and making **atonement for iniquity** refers to the Messiah’s once for all death for sin. The final three relate to consummating prophetic events by bringing in a kingdom of **everlasting righteousness**, fulfilling all **vision and prophecy**, and setting apart **the most holy place** (lit., *the holy of holies*), referring to a yet future, literal, millennial temple (cf. Ezk. 40–48). All six of the purposes will be

fulfilled completely for Israel by the time of the return of the Messiah and the establishment of the messianic kingdom.

9:25. The first part of the prophecy predicts that from a particular future starting point until the coming of the **Messiah the Prince**, there would be 69 weeks of years. The Hebrew word *mashiach* (**Messiah**) is commonly and accurately translated as “anointed.” It is used 39 times in the Hebrew Bible, generally with another noun, such as “the anointed priest.” The word also has a technical meaning, commonly translated as “the Messiah” and defined by W. H. Rose as “a future royal figure sent by God who will bring salvation to God’s people and the world and establish a kingdom characterized by features such as peace and justice” (W. H. Rose, “Messiah,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003], 566). Although some believe that the term did not develop this technical meaning until after the close of the OT canon, this is not so. Besides its specialized usage here and in 9:26, there are at least 10 other OT passages that use the technical term “Messiah” (1Sm 2:10, 35; 2Sm 22:51; 23:1; Pss 2:2; 20:6; 28:8; 84:9; 89:51; Hab 3:13; see Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Old Testament Really Messianic?* [Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2010], 2–3). Here the Messiah has the additional title, “the Prince.” The Hebrew word means “ruler” or “leader” and derives from the idea of “one who goes before.”

Some have argued (Pate and Haines, *Doomsday Delusions*, 73) that the word “anointed” cannot have a technical messianic sense in this context since it lacks the definite article. They have also maintained that the word “anointed” is more suitable for describing a priest (Lv 4:3). Furthermore, they assert that the word “prince” is also used of a priest (Neh 11:11; Jr 20:1). Thus, they conclude that this verse refers to Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest after the captivity.

However, in Hebrew, proper nouns, names, or titles such as “Anointed One” or “Messiah” need not have the article. Furthermore, the Hebrew word *mashiach* was not used of a high priest “beyond the Mosaic period and whenever it was used it was always clarified by juxtaposition with the word ‘priest’” (J. Paul Tanner, “Is Daniel’s Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 2” *BibSac* 166 [July–Sept 2009], 323)—like “the anointed priest.” And while the word

“prince” may be used of a priest, it is a rare usage (only three of 43 times). In fact, it is used in a prediction of the coming Messiah in Is 55:4. For these reasons, throughout the history of interpretation, overwhelmingly, the Church has understood “*mashiach nagid*” to refer to the Messiah the Prince. Ancient Judaism also understood this passage as messianic. According to the Talmud (AD sixth-century rabbinic writing), when, in the first century BC, Jonathon ben Uzziel wanted to write a Targum (paraphrastic commentary) on the Writings (including Daniel), it was said that the Bat Kol (voice of heaven) stopped him, because Daniel contained the fixed date of Messiah’s coming (Megillah 3a). Although this is merely a legendary account, it demonstrates that ancient Rabbis interpreted Dn 9:24-27 as of the Messiah. It seems that only tendentious interpretation, seeking to avoid the messianic understanding, explains it otherwise.

The starting point of the prophecy is **from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**. Some scholars who seek to minimize the messianic predictions of the OT maintain that the word “decree” is literally “word” and therefore refers to Jeremiah’s prophetic word (Jr 30:18-22; 31:38-40) issued in 587 BC about Jerusalem’s restoration (Pate and Haines, *Doomsday Delusion*, 72–73). This would see the fulfillment in 538 BC with Joshua the high priest under Zerubbabel. However, the Hebrew word for “decree” is *debar*, which means “a word” or “thing.” In this context, it is used in the general sense of a word from a king, i.e., **a decree**, and in no way requires the interpretation of a “word” from the Lord or a prophet. Second, the passages cited from Jeremiah do not refer to the return from captivity but are eschatological, looking forward to the end-time restoration of Israel. Third, it is entirely arbitrary to choose 587 BC as the date that Jeremiah gave his oracle. In fact, even if Dn 9:25 referred to Jeremiah’s prophetic word, the dating in Jr 29:1-3 indicates that the year was 597 BC, making the proposed fulfillment ten years late. Finally, at the outset of this chapter, it is clear that Daniel does not have these verses from Jeremiah in view but rather, Jr 25:11-13; 29:10, which speak of a 70-year, not a 49-year captivity.

Among those who interpret this passage as referring to Messiah, some identify this with Cyrus’s decree allowing the captives to return (2Ch 36:22-23; Ezr 1:1-3) in 539/538 BC and interpret the 69 weeks of years symbolically. Thus, the period of time from the decree until the

coming of the Messiah is merely described as a symbolic length of time. Three factors make this interpretation especially problematic. First, Cyrus’s decree was for the captives to return to the Holy Land from Persia, not for the restoration of Jerusalem. Second, Daniel understands Jeremiah’s prediction of the 70 years of captivity to be literal years and so calls into doubt treating these numbers symbolically. Third, there would be no significance to this prediction since any amount of time could be used to fulfill it.

Others suggest that the starting point is Artaxerxes’ first decree in 457 BC (Ezr 7:11-26) and calculate that the 69 weeks (483 years) were fulfilled at Jesus’ baptism, when He began His public ministry. However, this particular decree only provided a call for more exiles to return, the restoration of the temple’s utensils, and permission to appoint civil leaders (Ezr 7:11-26). It did include the most essential element mentioned here, namely, a decree for the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The most likely starting point was Artaxerxes’ second decree in 444 BC, authorizing Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh 2:1-8). This decree fits the requirement of the prediction since it was indeed for the restoration of Jerusalem. Moreover, the restoration was carried out **in times of distress** just as Daniel predicted (v. 25) and Nehemiah described (Neh 4:1–6:14).

The calculation of the prophecy is as follows: There will be a period of **seven weeks** of years (49 years) followed by **sixty-two weeks** of years (434 years), making a total of 69 weeks of years or 483 years from the decree until the coming of **Messiah the Prince**. The seven-week period (49 years) most likely pertains to the time it actually took from the issuing of the decree until the restoration of Jerusalem. The total of 483 years (69 weeks) should be calculated as specific biblical/prophetic years of 360 days each. The starting point of the prophecy would have begun on Nisan 1 (March 5), 444 BC, followed by 69 weeks of 360 day years or 173,880 days, and culminated on Nisan 10 (March 30), AD 33, the date of Jesus the Messiah’s triumphal entry (Lk 19:28-40) (cf. Harold W. Hoehner, “Daniel’s Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology,” in *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977], 115–139).

Those who seek to reject the messianic interpretation deny that the **seven weeks** and the **62 weeks** are consecutive, totaling 69 weeks of years. Rather, they maintain that a Hebrew disjunctive

accent mark (called an *athnach*) requires the two periods to be concurrent. Then, they date the beginning of the 62 weeks in 605 BC and see its fulfillment 434 years (62×7) later in 171 BC when Onias III, the high priest was murdered (Pate and Haines, *Doomsday Delusions*, 73).

In response, it seems that they build far too much on an extremely small accent. First, the Hebrew accents were added quite late—AD 800–1000—and were not part of the inspired Hebrew text. Second, the ancient versions (LXX, Theodotion, Symmachus, the Peshitta, Syriac, Vulgate) do not reflect the disjunctive accent found in the Hebrew text but treat the seven- and 62-week periods as a single period of 69 weeks. Third, although the scribes who added the accents and vowels faithfully followed Jewish tradition, it is likely that in the Rabbinic and Church Fathers eras (second-third centuries AD), polemical interaction between Christians and Jews over the messiahship of Jesus led to the adaptation of the Jewish understanding of messianic texts such as this one. It is likely that, at that time, Jewish interpreters added the disjunctive accent to avoid the identification of Jesus as Messiah the Prince. Several centuries later, Jewish scribes, seeking to consolidate the Hebrew text, incorporated the accent as the tradition that they received into the Hebrew Bible as it stands now (Roger T. Beckwith, “Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah’s Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation,” *Revue de Qumrani* 10 [1979–81]: 541); Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 35–36). Thus, it is better to view, with all the ancient versions, the seven- and 62-week periods as one single 69-week period. The reason the 69 weeks were divided into two continuous periods was to recognize the purpose of the original decree (**to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**) and identify the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem at the end of the seven weeks of years.

9:26. The second feature of the prophecy is to predict several events that would follow the seven weeks and the **sixty-two weeks** (or the total of 69 weeks). First, **the Messiah would be cut off**, a prediction of the death of the Messiah. Thus, the book of Daniel, written in the sixth century BC, contains predictions not only of the precise date of the Messiah’s coming (9:25) but also of the Messiah’s death sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This was fulfilled when Jesus the Messiah was crucified in AD 33 (AD 30 according to some

interpreters, a date, however, that does not easily fit the historical conditions at the time of Jesus’ death). Second, **the people of the prince who is to come would destroy the city** of Jerusalem and the second temple. **The prince who is to come** is distinct from **Messiah the Prince** but instead is a reference to the future ruler described as the little horn in Dn 7, also known as the beast or the antichrist. He, himself, will not be the one who destroys Jerusalem and the temple, but rather it is his people who will do it. Since previously Daniel (cf. 7:7–8) viewed this ruler as coming from the fourth major world power, or Rome, this prophecy predicts that the Romans would destroy Jerusalem, as they did in AD 70. Third, there appears to be a significant time gap from the end of the 69th week to the beginning of the 70th week, as is common in prophecy. The beginning of the 70th week is yet future.

9:27. The third part of the prophecy is the prediction of the final seven-year period, or the 70th week, which will begin when **he** (the coming prince or the antichrist) **will make a firm covenant of peace with the many** in the leadership of Israel. Although some consider this prince to be Christ, establishing the new covenant and ending the OT sacrificial system, it is inconceivable that Messiah would be the one who would commit the abomination of desolation. Therefore, he is more accurately identified as the antichrist, who will desecrate the future temple and stop worship in it. This covenant is yet future and will mark the beginning of a time of oppression of the Jewish people called “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jr 30:7) or the tribulation period (Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24). **In the middle of the week**, or after the first three and one-half years, the antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, leading to a time of unprecedented persecution of the Jewish people (Mt 24:21; Mk 13:19) as well as followers of Jesus (Rv 7:14) that will last for another three and one-half years (Dn 7:25; Rv 11:2–3; 12:14; 13:5).

When the antichrist breaks his covenant, he will also **put a stop to sacrifice** in the yet-to-be rebuilt temple (Dn 7:25). In desecrating the temple and declaring himself to be God (2Th 2:4; Rv 13:5–7), he is said to be one who comes **on the wing of abominations** and **makes desolate** (or as the one who commits “the abomination of desolation” (see the comments on Mt 24:15 for evidence supporting the as-yet future fulfillment of the abomination, and the unlikely

fulfillment either under Antiochus or in 70 AD). The Antichrist's oppression and abominations will continue until God's decree of a **complete destruction . . . is poured out on the one who makes desolate** (11:45; Rv 19:20).

A few evangelicals have identified the coming Prince, not as the antichrist but Antiochus Epiphanes, leaving open the possibility that there would be multiple fulfillments of the same prediction, including Titus in AD 70 and the future antichrist (Pate and Haines, *Doomsday Delusion*, 74–75). However, this contradicts a basic interpretive rule that any biblical text has only one intended meaning. Second, when Jesus spoke of “the abomination of desolation” after the time of Antiochus, he viewed it as yet future (Mt 24:15). Finally, although Antiochus did indeed desecrate the second temple as a prefiguration of the future antichrist (Dn 11:31), in this verse it speaks of a desecration after the destruction of the second temple (9:26). Therefore, this indicates that the **one who makes desolate** will do so in a yet future temple, not the one that Antiochus defiled and Titus destroyed. Finally, the figure here is linked to the little horn of chap. 7. In Dn 9:27, this **one who makes desolate** breaks his covenant in the middle of the 70th week, leading to three and one-half years before the **decreed** final judgment is poured out on him. In Dn 7:25, the little horn carries out his oppression of Israel for three and one-half years. Significantly, after the judgment of the little horn, his dominion will be destroyed (7:26) and replaced by the messianic kingdom (7:27), an event not yet fulfilled in the defeats of Antiochus or Titus. Thus, identifying the **one who makes desolate** with Antiochus does not fit the context and literary evidence of the book of Daniel.

Daniel's concern at the outset of the chapter was God's restoration of the people of Israel to the land of Israel after 70 years of captivity. But God's concern was not with the past or present but with the future. Therefore, he sent an angel with a message about His prophetic program for Israel, including the Messiah's advent, death, return, and the restoration of Israel. Much like Daniel, followers of Messiah can become frustrated at the decay, desecration and corruption of contemporary society and long for God to take action immediately. Nevertheless, those who have trusted in Jesus can be encouraged that God has the big picture in view and that He will certainly fulfill His prophetic calendar and establish His kingdom on earth.

C. Daniel and His Final Vision (10:1–12:13)

The last three chapters of Daniel form a single unit, containing Daniel's final vision. Daniel 10:1–11:1 contains the description of Daniel's reception of the vision, 11:2–12:3 includes the angel's explanation of the vision, and 12:4–13 marks the angel's final instructions to Daniel regarding his prophecies. The entire three-chapter section was designed to give the faithful remnant of Israel hope and confidence during the times of the Gentiles.

1. Daniel's Reception of the Vision (10:1–11:1)

Daniel 10 functions as a prologue to the detailed vision explained in the next chapter. Although merely an introduction, it contains “important facts relative to angels and demons and their respective interests in the people and work of God” (Wood, *Daniel*, 264).

a. The Setting of the Vision (10:1-3)

10:1. Daniel received this vision **in the third year of Cyrus**, which was in 536 BC. Assuming Daniel was about 15 when taken captive (605 BC) he was approximately 84 years old at the time of this vision. The vision was about a **great conflict** in the future, described in Dn 11:2–12:3.

10:2. Possibly, Daniel **had been mourning** because of the poor conditions of the returned captives. The Samaritans were opposing reconstruction of the temple and the work had been stopped (Ezr 4:5, 24). Daniel's mourning period was **for three entire weeks**. The Hebrew text contains the words “weeks of days” to distinguish it from the weeks of years in the paragraph immediately preceding this one (9:24-27).

10:3. Daniel engaged in a partial fast, rejecting **tasty** (or rich) **food** such as **meat or wine**, recalling his decision as young man not to eat from the king's table (1:8-16). At this time, it was not because the food had been offered to the gods but as a spiritual discipline to intensify his prayers.

b. The Messenger of the Vision (10:4-9)

10:4. Daniel **was by the bank of the great river . . . the Tigris**, some 20 miles from Babylon when he received the heavenly messenger. At his advanced age of 84, Daniel had not made the difficult and demanding journey to Israel with the other Jewish returnees but instead remained in government service in Babylon.

10:5-6. Daniel saw an angel in the form of a **certain man** with a glorious appearance. This was not the pre-incarnate Messiah (despite his

similarity with Christ's appearance in Rv 1:12-16) because the Messiah would not need help from the angel Michael, as this angel did.

10:7-9. The Hebrew for **I, Daniel, alone saw the vision** is emphatic: *"I saw, I, Daniel, I alone."* His companions sensed a powerful and terrifying presence but saw nothing, so they ran and hid (cf. Ac 9:3-7).

c. The Hindrances to the Vision (10:10-13)

10:10-13. As the vision came to Daniel, he was weakened and fell **into a deep sleep** (10:9). Therefore, the angel strengthened and informed Daniel that God had heard him **from the first day** of the three weeks of prayer and had immediately sent the angel to answer him. Some interpreters have identified the angel as Gabriel, an unlikely conclusion since the text does not identify him as such. The angel had only arrived after **twenty-one days** because **the prince of the kingdom of Persia** had withstood him. The Persian prince had to be supernatural to oppose this angel and evil to oppose God's purposes. Therefore, he was a demonic spirit seeking to influence Persia's political affairs and oppose God's purposes. Other biblical passages also teach of unseen spiritual forces influencing principalities and world powers (Ezk 28:11-19; 2Co 10:3-4; Eph 6:12). The angel was able to prevail over the demon associated with Persia only when the angel **Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help** him. Michael (whose name means "who is like God?") is the guardian angel of Israel (cf. Dn 10:21; 12:1; Rv 12:7) and designated an archangel in the NT (Jd 9).

d. The Purposes of the Angelic Visit (10:14-11:1)

10:14. The angel revealed that the first purpose of the vision was to reveal what would happen to Israel **in the latter days**. Although many of the predictions in Dn 11 pertain to events in the intertestamental period, they shift dramatically (11:36-12:3) to events related to the return of Christ. Even those fulfilled earlier, such as the abominations of Antiochus IV, have a deliberate typological significance to point to the last days.

10:15-19. The angel's second purpose in coming was to strengthen Daniel. Although Daniel was in **anguish** because of the vision and without **strength**, twice the angel **strengthened** him, first by his touch (10:18) and second with his words of encouragement (10:19).

10:20-21. As the angel prepared once again to **fight against the prince of Persia**, he informed

Daniel that afterward he would also take up the battle against **the prince of Greece**, the demonic power seeking to control the Greek Empire and oppose God's purposes for that nation and Israel. This is an allusion to the prediction that Greece would follow Persia as the next major world power (8:4-8, 20-22). The angel's third and final purpose was to reveal **what is inscribed in the writing of truth**, a reference not to a particular earthly book but rather to God's heavenly decrees regarding the future of the nations of the world.

11:1. Although the linen-clothed angel visited Daniel "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia" (10:1), he revealed to Daniel that he had arisen as an **encouragement and a protection** for Michael in the first year of **Darius the Mede**. Whether Darius the Mede is used as the alternate name for Cyrus or as the title of Gubaru (see the discussion at 5:31), the angel's point was that he had begun his work of encouragement and protection of Michael not when he brought word of the vision but two years earlier, in the year Cyrus began his reign (539 BC). God is concerned for and active in the political affairs of humanity and in the protection of the Jewish people.

2. The Angel's Explanation of the Vision of Persia, Greece, and the False Messiah (11:2-12:3)

Daniel 11 contains some of the most precise predictions in the entire Bible, so much so that it has led many scholars to claim that it was written as a pseudo-prophecy after the events actually took place. But if God is omniscient, knowing the end from the beginning (Is 46:10), and capable of foretelling future events, then there is no problem with predictive prophecy. The first part of the chapter predicts events in political history from Daniel's time (536 BC) until the Maccabean period (164 BC) (11:2-35). The second section of the vision contains end-time predictions of the antichrist, the tribulation, and the resurrection of humanity (11:36-12:3).

a. The Predictions of the Persian to the Maccabean Periods (11:2-35)

(1) The Predictions about the Persian Kings (11:2)

11:2. The angel predicted that there would be **three more kings . . . in Persia**, namely Cambyses (530-522 BC), Pseudo-Smerdis (522 BC), and Darius I Hystaspes (522-486 BC). Xerxes I would be the **fourth king with far more riches** than the others.

(2) The Predictions about Alexander the Great (11:3-4)

11:3-4. The **mighty king** predicted was Alexander the Great (336–323 BC) and, as prophesied, his kingdom was **parceled out toward the four points of the compass**, referring to the division of his empire between his four generals, rather than **his own descendants** (cf. comments on Dn 8:8).

(3) The Predictions of the Hellenistic Period (11:5-35)

These verses contain predictions covering approximately 160 years, from 323 BC to 164 BC. The predictions are limited to the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid Hellenistic kingdoms rather than all four divisions of Alexander's empire, because these two alone relate to Israel (10:14).

(a) The Period of the First Seleucids and Ptolemies (11:5-6)

11:5. The **king of the South** is Ptolemy I Soter (323–285 BC) of Egypt, who was outstripped by **one of his princes**, Seleucus I Nicator (311–280 BC). Seleucus I had abandoned Ptolemy I to become ruler of Babylonia, Media, and Syria, and establish the Seleucid kingdom, which surpassed in greatness that of Ptolemy's Egypt.

11:6. Tensions between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms would continue. **The king of the South**, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BC) would make **an alliance** with **the king of the North**, Antiochus II Theos (261–246 BC), sealing the **arrangement** by giving his **daughter**, the Ptolemaic princess Berenice, to marry Antiochus. Yet the agreement would not continue nor would Berenice **retain her position of power**, as Antiochus's former wife Laodice would murder Antiochus, Berenice, and their child.

(b) The Period of Ptolemy III (11:7-9)

11:7-9. **One of** Berenice's family members (lit., "a shoot from her roots"), her brother Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 BC) would avenge her murder by storming Antioch, **the fortress of the king of the North**, Seleucus II Callinicus (246–226 BC), and killing Laodice. Ptolemy III would even seize Seleucid **gods** and valuables and bring them back **to Egypt**.

(c) The Period of Antiochus III (11:10-19)

11:10. The **sons** of Seleucus II, Seleucus III Ceraunus (226–223 BC) and Antiochus III (223–187 BC) would **wage war up to** the Ptolemaic **fortress** Raphia in southern Israel.

11:11-12. **The king of the South**, Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–203 BC) of Egypt would counter-attack **the king of the North**, Antiochus III

(219–218 BC). Although both would command large armies, the result would be a great victory for the Ptolemies. As a result of his success, Ptolemy IV's **heart** would become **lifted up** (arrogant) and slaughter **tens of thousands** of Seleucid troops. Nevertheless, he would not be able to maintain his dominance over the Seleucid kingdom.

11:13-15. Fifteen years later, **the king of the North**, Antiochus III, would raise an even greater army and attack the Ptolemies in Phoenicia and Israel. Antiochus III would receive support from Jewish rebels (here called **violent ones among your people**) and some Ptolemies against **the king of the South**, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203–181 BC). Antiochus III's forces would win a resounding victory, even capturing the **well-fortified city** of Sidon (199–198 BC).

11:16-17. Antiochus III would make **the Beautiful Land** of Israel a possession of the Seleucid kingdom in 198 BC and force a peace agreement on the Ptolemies. Antiochus III would give his **daughter** Cleopatra to Ptolemy V as a wife, hoping to control the Ptolemaic kingdom through her. This failed because Cleopatra helped her Ptolemaic husband and did **not take a stand** with or support her father, Antiochus III.

11:18-19. Antiochus III would then **turn his face to the coastlands** around the Mediterranean Sea but would be defeated by the Roman **commander** Lucius Cornelius Scipio at Thermopylae (191 BC) and then Magnesia (190 BC). This would force Antiochus to focus on his own country where he would **stumble and fall and be found no more**. Antiochus tried to pillage the temple of Zeus in Elymais and was killed by a mob that was defending the temple.

(d) The Period of Seleucus IV (11:20)

11:20. The king who would arise **in his place** was Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 BC) who would send **an oppressor**, his tax collector Heliodorus to the temple in Jerusalem (**the Jewel of his kingdom**), to collect money with which to pay the heavy indemnity he owed to Rome. After his short reign, Seleucus IV was killed **not in anger nor in battle** but by poison from his tax collector.

(e) The Period of Antiochus IV (11:21-35)

This longer section predicted the rise and reign of the despicable king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 BC), who was previously predicted as the little horn in 8:9-12, 23-25 (cf. the comments there). He is emphasized in this section for two reasons: First, he would have a

terrible and oppressive effect on the Jewish people. Second, his reign is designed as a pattern of the future world ruler who would also oppress the Jewish people, namely, the antichrist.

11:21. Antiochus IV was not directly in line to be king but would nevertheless **seize the kingdom by intrigue**, while the rightful heir, Demetrius, was held in Rome. The prediction called him **a despicable person** because of his hatred of the Jewish people, his attempt to destroy Judaism, his desecration of the temple, and megalomania, calling himself by the divine title *Epiphanes* (Manifest One, Illustrious One). People of that time also called him *Epimanes* (madman).

11:22. Despite Ptolemy VI Philometor (181–146 BC) attacking with **overflowing forces**, Antiochus IV would be able to defeat them and also to depose **the prince of the covenant**, the Jewish high priest Onias III.

11:23-24. Antiochus IV would **gain power** by sharing the wealth of his conquests, distributing **plunder, booty and possessions** to his followers.

11:25-26. Referring back to the war with Ptolemy VI (11:22), the vision predicted that not only would the power of Antiochus IV defeat Ptolemy VI, but also that **schemes . . . against him** (Ptolemy VI) by his own followers would cause **his army** to be destroyed.

11:27-28. After the defeat of Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VII took control of Egypt. Then, **both kings**, Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI, would meet and **speak lies to each other at the same table**, to plot Ptolemy VI's restoration to the throne. After initial limited success, in **the end**, they would fail. Then, Antiochus IV, having plundered Egypt, would return to his land, with **his heart . . . set against the holy covenant**. En route home, he would attack Israel, kill 80,000 Jewish men, women, and children, and plunder the holy temple (169 BC).

11:29-30. Antiochus IV would launch another attack against Egypt but this time, **ships of Kittim** (cf. Nm 24:24), the Roman fleet led by Gaius Popilius Laenas, would force him to withdraw in humiliation.

11:31-32. Antiochus IV would once again attack Israel (167 BC) while returning to Syria, this time desecrating **the sanctuary** in Jerusalem. Antiochus would prefigure the future antichrist's actions (9:27; 12:11) by doing **away with the regular sacrifice** and committing **the abomination of desolation**, dedicating the holy temple to Zeus and offering a pig on its altar.

In response, **the people who know their God will display strength and take action**, a prediction of the Maccabean revolt (cf. comments on 8:13-14).

11:33-35. The Maccabees would experience suffering in their battle with Antiochus—some would die **by sword and by flame**, while others would experience **captivity and plunder** (cf. Heb 11:35-38). The phrase **the end time** literally reads “time of the end” and refers to the end of Antiochus's oppression of the Jewish people, not to the end of days. At that time, the Maccabees would defeat Antiochus, rededicate the holy temple in Jerusalem, and establish the festival of Chanukah (Dedication), which the Lord Jesus celebrated (Jn 10:22) and Jewish people still observe today.

b. The Predictions of the End of Days (11:36-45)

At this point, the predictions shift away from Antiochus IV and begin to focus on the end of days. The king now in view (11:36-45) is the future antichrist, already identified as the little horn (cf. 7:8, 20) and “the prince who is to come” (9:26). Since there is no clear-cut change in 11:36, some have seen this as a continuation of the description of Antiochus. There are several reasons to see a different, end-times king in view here. First, the actions predicted of this king cannot be attributed historically to Antiochus IV. There is no evidence that Antiochus exalted and magnified “himself above every god” (v. 36), or that he showed “no regard for the gods of his fathers” (v. 37), or honored “a god whom his fathers did not know” (v. 38). Antiochus minted coins with the inscription, “King Antiochus, God Manifest” and with an image of Zeus or Apollo on the reverse side. Additionally, Antiochus was generally devoted to the Greek gods, and he specifically erected a statue of Zeus and required sacrifices to be made to it. He also advocated the worship of Dionysius in Jerusalem (2 *Macc* 6:7). Second, Antiochus IV is considered a king of the North (11:26-28), but the king in view here will be opposed both by a king of the North and South (11:40). Third, the author has already established a clear cut type/antitype relationship between Antiochus and the antichrist, calling them both “little horns” in adjoining visions. (In Dn 7 the little horn is the antichrist, and in Dn 8 the little horn is Antiochus IV—see notes on 8:17-22 and the chart on Antiochus IV on p. 1302; see also Andrew E. Steinmann, “Is the Antichrist in Daniel 11?” *BibSac* 162 [April–June 2005], 195–209.)

11:36-39. This is a description of the future antichrist. He will be authoritarian (he **will do as he pleases**), self-exalting (he **will exalt and magnify himself**), blasphemous (he **will speak monstrous things against the God of gods**), temporarily successful (he **will prosper until the indignation is finished**), irreligious (he **will show no regard for the gods of his fathers**), opposed to Christ (will show no regard for **the desire of women**, a reference the longing of Jewish women to give birth to the Messiah), warlike (he **will honor a god of fortresses**), and manipulative (he **will give great honor to those who acknowledge him . . . parcell[ing] out land for a price**, lit., “as a reward”).

11:40-44. During the great tribulation, the antichrist will engage in world war. Attacked in a pincer movement from both the North and the South, he will still be successful, entering **countries** and conquering them. He **will also enter** Israel, **the Beautiful Land**, ignoring some nations that are in alliance with him but conquering others, including **Egypt**, Libya, and Sudan (NASB **Ethiopians** but literally “Cushites” referring to Sudan). **Rumors** of nations from **the East and from the North** coming to attack will both **disturb** and infuriate him, leading him to pursue a course of genocidal war against his enemies, especially **many** of the Jewish people (cf. Zch 13:8-9).

11:45. The antichrist will establish his military capital in Israel, pitching **the tents of his royal pavilion between the Mediterranean Sea** and the city of Jerusalem, situated on **the beautiful Holy Mountain**. There the nations of the earth will gather (Zch 14:2) at Mount Megiddo to begin the campaign of Armageddon (Rv 16:13-16). At that time, when the nation of Israel calls on the Messiah Jesus, He will return (Mt 23:37-39) to deliver them, and the antichrist **will come to his end, and no one will help him**.

c. The Comfort of the Chosen People (12:1-3)

12:1. At that time refers to the events predicted in the previous paragraph (11:36-45), which details the antichrist’s furious attempt “to destroy and annihilate” the Jewish people (11:44). Then, the archangel **Michael . . . who stands guard over the Jewish people, will arise** to their defense (cf. comments on 10:12-13; Rv 12:7). This will be necessary because the great tribulation (the second half of Daniel’s 70th week, Dn 9:27) will be a **time of** unprecedented

distress . . . since there was a nation. Messiah Jesus Himself alluded to 12:1 when He said, “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will” (Mt 24:21; see the comments there). Despite the horrific nature of the persecution of Israel, the result will be that the surviving remnant of the Jewish nation will turn in faith to their Messiah Jesus (Zch 12:10; Rm 11:25-27) and He will deliver them. These Jewish people who **will be rescued** are called those **found written in the book**, a reference to the heavenly book of life in which the names of the elect are listed (Ps 69:28; Php 4:3; Rv 13:8, 17:8, 20:15). This metaphor is derived from the ancient practice of keeping books with the names of a town’s citizens written in them.

12:2. Following Israel’s deliverance, there will be a resurrection of **those who sleep in the dust, sleep** being used as a metaphor for death. This verse does not imply any kind of soul sleep before the resurrection since the faithful go to be with God instantly upon dying (2Co 5:8; Php 1:21-23) and the faithless go to a place of suffering also immediately upon dying (Lk 16:22-23). The word **sleep** is used as a metaphor to emphasize the temporary state of death before being physically awakened at the resurrection (cf. Jn 11:11-15). All the dead will be raised, some **to everlasting life** and **others to disgrace and everlasting contempt**. Although telescoped together here (as is common in prophecy), the resurrection of the faithful and the unfaithful will be separated by the 1,000-year messianic kingdom (see the comments on Rv 20:4-6). Daniel 12:2 contains the clearest statement of resurrection in the OT, but by no means is it the only one (cf. Jb 19:25-27; Is 26:19).

12:3. **Those who have insight** refers to those with the wisdom to turn in faith to the Messiah Jesus and as a result, they will **lead . . . many** others to faith and thereby to **righteousness**.

3. The Angel’s Final Instructions to Daniel Concerning His Prophecies (12:4-13)

This last section of Daniel’s final vision functions as a conclusion to the vision and the entire book. Here the interpreting angel gave Daniel final directions for his book.

a. The Sealing of the Book (12:4)

12:4. Although it is possible that Daniel was told to **conceal these words** of the vision, a better rendering of the Hebrew is to “close up the words” **and seal up the book**, a reference

to preservation of the text of Daniel **until the end of time** (or better, “the time of the end”). Preserving Daniel’s prophecy was necessary because in the end of days, **many will go back and forth**, not a reference to air travel but to seeking for answers that will be found in the book of Daniel. Moreover, in that day, **knowledge will increase**, not referring to the growth of general knowledge or science in the last days, but to understanding of Daniel’s prophecies, as the fulfillments of his predictions are recognized.

b. The Time of the End (12:5-13)

12:5-7. Daniel saw **two others**, meaning angels, who served as witnesses for the oath of the linen-dressed angel (10:5), two being the minimum number of witnesses necessary for an oath (Dt 19:15). One of the witnessing angels asked **how long will it be until the end** of the predicted time of distress. The angel **dressed in linen** answered that the time of the great tribulation (the second half of Daniel’s 70th week) **would be for a time, times, and half a time**, or three and one-half years (Dn 7:25; Rv 12:7). By the end of the great tribulation, **the power of the holy people** Israel would be shattered, causing them to turn in faith to their long-rejected Messiah, Jesus (Zch 12:10). At that time, He will return and deliver them (Zch 14:1-21) and **all these events will be completed**.

12:8-10. Daniel’s statement that he **heard but could not understand** was not that he did not comprehend that his prophecy was about the end of days but rather he did not understand how these events would precisely happen. Daniel was told to **go on his way** and not worry about these matters because **these words are concealed** (or better, “closed”) and **sealed up until the end time** (or better, “the time of the end”). This means that they would not be fully recognized until their fulfillment at the end of days. At that time, the wicked will fail to **understand** their situation, **but those have insight will**

understand the fulfillment of Daniel’s words and turn in faith to the God of Israel and His Messiah Jesus. They will receive this insight as a result of the Holy Spirit sovereignly drawing them.

12:11-12. Two periods of time were revealed to Daniel. First, from the middle of the tribulation when the antichrist stops **regular sacrifice** and commits **the abomination of desolation** until the end, **there will be 1,290 days**. The great tribulation is said to be three and one-half years (12:7) or 1,260 days (Rv 12:6; 13:5). Here it is 30 days longer, probably to include time for the judgment of the nations (Mt 25:31-46). Second, a blessing awaits **he who . . . attains to the 1,335 days**, a period that includes not only the 30 days for judging the nations but an additional 45 days, perhaps to establish the government of the messianic kingdom. Those who enter that kingdom are said to be **blessed** because they will be part of the most glorious world, governed by its greatest king, the Lord Jesus Himself (Archer, “Daniel,” 156–157).

12:13. The angel told Daniel that he was to **go his way**, a phrase used in 12:9, meaning to continue in unconcerned fashion, **to the end** of his life, at which point he would **rest**, a euphemism used for death. Yet, he was given the hope that he too would **rise** from the dead **at the end of the age** (12:2).

Thus, the book of Daniel ends with the hope that the times of the Gentiles will not be forever and Israel will not be eternally oppressed. Rather, its message is that God is in control of all time and will place His King on the eternal throne. All readers of this book, from Daniel’s day until the present, if they have trusted in God’s Messiah, Jesus, have ultimate and eternal hope. The content of that hope is that God is still the Sovereign of the universe and He will surely establish His righteous rule over the world through His divine messianic King, Jesus.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archer, Gleason L. “Daniel.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, edited by Frank E. Gabelein. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985.

Baldwin, Joyce G. *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, edited by D. J. Wiseman. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978.

Culver, Robert Duncan. *The Earthly Reign of Our Lord with His People*, 4th edition. Rushford, MN: Vinegar Hill Press, 1999.

Feinberg, Paul D. “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24-27.” In *Tradition and Testament*, edited by John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, 189–220. Chicago: Moody, 1981.

- Goldingay, John. *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Dallas, TX: Word, 1989.
- Goldwurm, Rabbi Hersh. *Daniel: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*, 2nd ed. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1980.
- Hoehner, Harold W. "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology." In *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977.
- Longman, III, Tremper. *The NIV Application Commentary: Daniel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999.
- Lucas, Ernest C. *Daniel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary, edited by David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.
- Miller, Stephen R. *Daniel*. New American Commentary, edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003.
- Shepherd, Michael B. *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Peter Lang, 2009.
- Steinmann, Andrew E. "Is the Antichrist in Daniel 11?" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 162:646 (April–June 2005), 195–209.
- Tanner, J. Paul. "The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 160:639 (July–Sept 2003), 269–82.
- _____. "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 1." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 166:662 (April–June 2009), 181–200.
- _____. "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 2." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 166:663 (July–Sept 2009), 319–35.
- Wallace, Ronald S. *The Message of Daniel: The Lord is King*. The Bible Speaks Today, edited by J. A. Motyer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979.
- Waltke, Bruce. "The Date of the Book of Daniel." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 133 (Oct–Dec 1976): 319–29.
- Walvoord, John F. *Daniel*. The John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries, edited by Charles H. Dyer and Philip E. Rawley. Chicago: Moody, 2012.
- Wood, Leon. *A Commentary on Daniel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973.
- Young, E. J. *The Prophecy of Daniel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949.





ROMANS

MICHAEL G. VANLANINGHAM

INTRODUCTION

Author. There are scholars who deny that the apostle Paul wrote all the letters ascribed to him, but virtually no one disputes that Romans was his letter. Pauline authorship of Romans has been affirmed by even the most critical scholars of the last 200 years.

Date. According to Rm 15, Paul's travel plans included three places: Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain (15:23-29). Paul explicitly mentioned his intent to go to Jerusalem to deposit the proceeds from the offering gathered by the Gentile churches in the Mediterranean world (Ac 19:21; 20:16; Rm 15:25-27), then to go to Rome (Ac 19:21; Rm 1:11-13; 15:24, 28), and then to Spain (Rm 15:24, 28). The Acts passages are found in the context of Paul's third missionary journey. He was probably in Greece when he wrote Romans (Ac 20:2-3), more than likely Corinth, which had been his base previously. Paul commends several who lived in or around Corinth, such as Phoebe who lived in Cenchrea, about seven miles southeast of Corinth (16:1), and Gaius (Rm 16:23; 1Co 1:14). These points suggest a Corinthian origination of the letter. It is intriguing to think of Paul walking through Corinth, observing the immorality there, then writing about the decadence of the world in Rm 1, or through the business quarter of Corinth where the famous Corinthian pottery was made, and writing about the potter and the clay in Rm 9:20-21. A good estimate for the date of the book is AD 57.

Recipients. Paul wrote the letter to the Christians in Rome. The population of the city in Paul's day is estimated at between one and four million. This imprecision is due in part to the large number of slaves in the city who were not included in the censuses. Possibly as much as 60 percent of the population was slaves, and when Paul begins with the words "Paul, a

bond-servant of Christ Jesus," he would have established rapport immediately with a good number in the church who were surely slaves. The Jewish community in Rome may have been as large as 40,000, influential in the economy, and perhaps the politics and arts of the great city.

Those to whom Paul wrote were believers already. Although in the early chapters Paul explores the plight of humankind apart from Christ, he was probably not emphasizing these points to evangelize his readers. Rather, he wrote to those who were "the called of Jesus Christ . . . who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints" (1:6-7), and his words were intended to influence true believers there.

There is debate over whether Paul wrote primarily to Gentile believers, Jewish believers, or to both. In some places he clearly addressed Gentiles in the church (1:5-6; 11:13; 15:7-9, 14-21); in others Jewish believers (2:17; 4:1; 6:14-15; 7:1, 4; and see the Jewish names in the list in 16:3, 7, 11). The most plausible view is that Paul wrote to both, and on occasion specifically addressed one group, then the other (1:7; 11:12-24; 14:1-15:13).

Purpose. Paul does not say explicitly why he wrote Romans, but there are hints. Serving as "bookends" for this epistle are almost identical verses, 1:5 and 16:26, where Paul says his apostolic commission (1:5) and the gospel (16:25-26) exist "to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles." This "bookending" suggests that Paul's purpose was to provide warrant for his mission to Spain and for the Roman Christians to support him. In addition, he desired to minister to them and with them (1:10-13), and to solicit support from them (15:24). But the closest we have to a purpose statement for the epistle is in 15:15-16, where Paul writes that

his intent was to remind them of some truths. This reminder came with the backing of his own apostolic commission (15:15), which, he notes, was a commission to evangelize primarily the Gentiles (15:16-20). The apostle then presented his itinerary, which included a visit to Rome to seek their financial assistance to execute the commission to Spain (15:24, 26-29). So Paul's purpose may have been to help the church clarify her doctrine and instill in her a new sense of urgency about the need for evangelizing the lost. This would motivate the church in Rome to provide support for Paul's outreach to Spain.

How do the diverse elements of the epistle fit with this overarching purpose? Chapters 1-3 present humanity's desperate need for the gospel (1:16-17). Each one has sinned and stands under the condemnation of God as a result of it—and no one can change his status through his own efforts. Thankfully there is hope. It is grounded in God's provision of His own righteousness, given freely to those who trust in the atoning death of His Son (3:21-31). The patriarch Abraham illustrates the nature and importance of faith, in that he was saved by faith and not by works (chap. 4). Chapters 5-8 present the extraordinary results of being right with God, results that the non-Christian world needs and that the Christian world should broadcast. Chapters 9-11 deal with the problem of Israel. One might argue that if God made promises to Israel in the OT and broke them by focusing His plans on the Church, then how could He be counted on to fulfill His promises in Christ? If God could not be counted on to keep those promises, why bother to evangelize? Paul argues that God was keeping His promises to Israel just as He always had, and that He could be trusted to keep them in Christ as well. In chaps. 12-16, the main theme is that of church unity. A church gutted by strife would be ill-suited to sustain a missionary venture for very long. Paul's goal for their unity is that they might glorify God (spread His name and enhance His reputation), and he prays to that end (15:5-6).

Excursus: The New Perspective on Paul.

As an important side note, since the late 1970s there has been a controversial approach to Paul's theology called "the New Perspective" on Paul. In a book entitled *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, E. P. Sanders explores the relationship of Paul's theology to first-century Judaism. He maintains that there was a considerable amount

of grace in Judaism because God chose Israel by His grace to be His covenant people—to be saved. They kept the law (*nomos* in Gk.) to "stay in" that relationship, but not to "get in." Sanders coined the phrase "covenantal nomism" (staying in the covenant by faithfully observing the *nomos*, the law) to describe this belief. He argues, somewhat surprisingly, that this is also Paul's view of salvation in Christ: Christians are saved on the basis of election, but they uphold that status by good works (a dubious understanding of Paul). So (says Sanders), why would Paul criticize Judaism for being legalistic when in fact it was not? Sanders says that Paul either misrepresented Judaism as being legalistic when it was not, in contrast to the traditional understanding of Paul, or that Paul faulted a form of Judaism that is no longer extant, which in any case the apostle believed was flawed because it excluded Christ. If Sanders is right, then a new interpretive grid is necessary to understand the apostle's criticism of Judaism. But Sanders does not propose what that new grid should be, and remains uncertain as to what exactly the apostle Paul was doing in his polemic against Judaism.

Into this vacuum stepped J. D. G. Dunn. Dunn was not satisfied with Sanders's assertion that Paul misrepresented Judaism or rejected it just because it omitted Christ. Dunn alleges that Paul viewed Judaism as being ethnically too narrow. The "works of the law" that Paul opposed (especially, but not only, circumcision, observance of holy days, and the dietary laws) were the identity markers for the Jewish people whereby they preserved their distinctiveness and privileged status as God's covenant people. Paul, according to Dunn, was actually opposing their covenantal nomism. When the apostle wrote, "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His [God's] sight" (3:20, 28; cf. Gl 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), he opposed these works of the law because with them the Jewish people perpetuated a sense of isolationism and elitism that excluded the Gentiles from the covenant people of God. With Christ came a shift in God's redemptive program. Salvation was no longer confined to those who practice the covenant identity markers (i.e., solely the Jewish people), but became open to all by faith. It is therefore wrong to require Gentiles to do these works to enter into the covenant community. For this reason, Paul opposed such elitism as well as the imposition of "works of the law" upon Gentile converts, a problem at the center of the theological storm in Galatians. But once again, Dunn,

like Sanders, does not see the “works of the law” as entrance requirements or as legalistic acts.

A third major player in the New Perspective is N. T. Wright, whose approach to Paul parallels much of what is found in Dunn but arguably with more nuancing. Wright, like Dunn, is heavily indebted to Sanders, and argues that Paul’s view of salvation is less about how to get in to the covenant faithfulness of God and more about the assurance of being in that covenant. In Wright’s thinking, “justification” is about God’s recognition of those who are in the covenant by His faithfulness and their assurance of this status, rather than about God’s declaration of a sinner’s righteousness in Christ and His effecting that status. “Righteousness” for Wright is about the acquittal of the sinner as a result of God’s decision, rather than about the holiness of God being imputed to the sinner. “Works of the law” are about actions that one who is in the covenant by grace shows in response to that grace, rather than about attempts to establish a right standing with God through one’s own efforts.

Sanders, Dunn, and Wright have been criticized on a number of grounds. First, Sanders is partly right but mainly wrong on his understanding of the extent of grace in first-century Judaism. A considerable amount of evidence has been gathered to indicate that Early Judaism was much more synergistic than Sanders recognizes, with some texts affirming God’s grace but many affirming the need for obedience to the law for “staying in” salvation. Even in Sanders’s view, works play a determinative role in the outcome of salvation.

Second, Dunn insists that Paul criticized the Jewish people for their “works of the law” that barred Gentiles from being part of the covenant

people of God. But Paul repeatedly criticized the Jewish people not for their exclusivism, which was shattered by the coming of Christ, but for their failure to keep the law by doing its works, which led to their condemnation (2:2-3, 22-23, 25-27; 4:1-12).

Third, Wright’s view inherits all the problems of Sanders’s and Dunn’s, and collapses under the weight of the passages in Romans that indicate that justification *does something to the sinner*. It cannot be seen simply as an expression of God’s *recognition* that one is in the covenant people. Romans 5:1, for example, indicates that justification *produces* peace with God. Righteousness is indeed *imputed* to individuals who have trusted Christ. In Rm 4:7-8, Paul links imputed righteousness with “lawless deeds that have been forgiven, sins that have been covered, and sins that have not been taken into account by the Lord.”

Finally, and more generally, salvation for the Jewish people and Gentiles alike was promised *not* through the Mosaic covenant (the law of Moses), but through the Abrahamic covenant. Covenantal nomism fails precisely because the Mosaic covenant could not be kept by the Jewish people nor by anyone else (see Dt 31:29), and because it was not designed to ensure salvation either in terms of getting in *or* staying in a right standing with God (cf. Rm 3:19-20; 4:15; 7:5; 8:3). The way both Jews and Gentiles find salvation is through receiving the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, and that happens only through faith (Gn 15:6; Rm 4:13-17; Gl 3:6-14)—after the cross, faith *in Christ*. Works performed in compliance with the Mosaic covenant are inadequate to make one right with God, and this is the fatal flaw in Judaism that Paul addresses in Romans and Galatians.

OUTLINE

- I. Sin: The Need for Being Right with God (1:1–3:20)
 - A. The Impact of the Gospel (1:1-17)
 - B. The Need for the Gospel (1:18–3:20)
- II. Justification by Faith: The Means for Being Right with God (3:21–4:25)
 - A. Righteousness Is Available from God (3:21-26)
 - B. Righteousness Is Appropriated by Faith Alone (3:27–4:25)
- III. Blessings: The Results of Being Right with God (5:1–8:39)
 - A. Christians Can Boast in God (5:1-11)
 - B. Christians Can Live a Life of Security (5:12-21)
 - C. Christians Can Live a Life Free from the Absolute Domination of Sin (6:1–7:25)
 - D. Christians Have Life in the Holy Spirit (8:1-39)

- IV. Vindication: The Jewish People and the Problems with Being Right with God (9:1–11:36)
 - A. God Has Not Broken His Word to Israel (9:1-29)
 - B. God Has Not Cheated Israel (9:30–10:21)
 - C. God Has Not Rejected Israel (11:1-10)
 - D. Israel Is Not Lost Forever (11:11-36)
- V. Application: The Implications of Being Right with God (12:1–15:33)
 - A. The Implications for the Christian’s Spiritual Commitment (12:1-2)
 - B. The Implications for the Christian’s Life in the Body of Christ (12:3-13)
 - C. The Implications for the Christian’s Life in Relation to the Secular World (12:14–13:14)
 - D. The Implications for the Christian’s Life in His Relationships with Weaker and Differing Christians (14:1–15:13)
 - E. The Implications for the Support of Paul’s Ministry (15:14-33)
- VI. Paul’s Concluding Mandates (16:1-27)
 - A. Appreciate Christian Workers (16:1-16)
 - B. Avoid Contentious People (16:17-20a)
 - C. Be Encouraged by Christian Leaders (16:20b-23)
 - D. Glorify God (16:25-27)

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS

I. Sin: The Need for Being Right with God (1:1–3:20)

A. The Impact of the Gospel (1:1-17)

1:1-3. Paul begins his letter with a brief summary of the gospel he proclaimed and the purpose of his apostolic ministry. **Called** refers to the effectual, divine calling as opposed to human self-appointment. An **apostle** was a special messenger whose task was to spread the **gospel** message that had continuity with the OT. As a **descendant of David**, Jesus Christ could lay claim to the throne of David. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised that a son of David would rule Israel forever and provide security for her (2 Sm 7:8-17; 1Ch 17:1-15). None of David’s descendants qualified, but Mt 1:1 identifies who it is: “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, *the son of David* . . .” (my emphasis).

1:4-5. Jesus was **declared the Son of God with power**. The resurrection signaled a change not in His essence but in His function and manifestation now as the “Son-of-God-with-Power” (Ps 2:7; Ac 13:33; Heb 5:5). Paul’s apostleship existed to **bring about the obedience of faith**, which has an almost identical expression in 16:26. See “Purpose” in the introduction for the significance of the repetition.

1:6-7. These verses indicate that the readers were predominantly Gentile. More important than their ethnic background was their spiritual

position, **the called of Jesus Christ, called as saints, and beloved of God.**

In this introduction, Paul presents his apostolic credentials and goals. He is the apostle appointed to take the gospel to the Gentile people so that they come to faith and begin to live like Christians to the glory of God. Our passion should parallel Paul’s!

1:8-15. Paul gives the reason for his planned visit to Rome: **so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established (v. 11), so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles (v. 13), and I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians . . . (v. 14).** The **spiritual gift** is not specified. Paul would need to determine what kind of help they needed before he could specify what gift(s) he would use for their benefit. Verse 14 provides the basis for his strong desire to minister with the Romans. He was **under obligation and eager** to do so, reflecting God’s sovereign plans for him (Ac 9:15; 22:21; 26:16-20; 1Co 9:16-23).

1:16-17. These verses are often seen as the theme verses for Romans, though they correspond better with chaps. 1–8 than 9–16. **For (1:16)** offers an explanation for Paul’s eagerness to evangelize (1:15): **I am not ashamed of the gospel. For (second occurrence in 1:16)** gives the reason Paul is not ashamed: **it is the power of**

God. Power means “mighty potency; an effective, transforming force and ability.” **Salvation** was a word used in Greco-Roman settings for an individual being rescued from some physical peril, perhaps from a burning house or from drowning. Here it is God’s deliverance of sinners from the eternal consequences of sin. **Believes** was used most often for trust or reliance upon a person and what he says. Paul uses it for one’s reliance upon Christ for salvation. **To the Jew first and also to the Greek** probably describes the good fit the gospel of Christ is for the Jewish people (see 1:2-3). While it is true that the gospel came first to and then through the Jewish people historically (see Jn 4:22), Paul’s point here in vv. 16-17 seems to be theological (note the words “power,” “salvation,” “everyone who believes”) rather than historical, and Rm 1:2-3 appears to show the special relevance of the gospel to the Jewish people because it has its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures.

For (1:17) explains *why* the gospel is the power of God (1:16): **in it the righteousness of God is revealed**. The phrase **righteousness of** [i.e., “that originates with”] **God** has become enormously controversial. Is this the covenant faithfulness of God? Is it God’s act of announcing or undertaking the vindication of His people on the judgment day? No doubt it includes these elements. But these signal what God’s righteousness *does* rather than *what it is*. A better view is that the **righteousness of God** is God’s moral virtue and excellence that prompts Him to do all that He does, including (among other things) bringing people into a proper relationship with Him, but also judging people for their sin. God’s moral virtue and excellence includes His justice that leads Him to judge sinners, but also His love that leads Him in Christ to redeem them. Paul’s emphasis in this verse is on the latter. Paul will make it clear in 3:21-26 that the key is not found in securing one’s own righteousness by keeping the law, but in God giving His own righteousness to those who have faith in His Son. This righteousness is **revealed** (“fully disclosed”) **from faith to faith**. The latter phrase is difficult, and it is best not to be dogmatic. A parallel construction is found with “from” and “to” in 2Co 2:16 (“from death to death” and “from life to life”). There the phrases suggest that Paul’s ministry resulted exclusively in death for the lost, and exclusively in life for believers. In Rm 1:17, the construction probably designates that faith in Christ is the only way one can receive God’s righteousness.

Paul cites Hab 2:4 for support. It should be translated “The one who is righteous by faith will live (be saved).” He uses the same verse in Gl 3:11 where he cites it to support how one receives eternal life (not through works of the law).

B. The Need for the Gospel (1:18–3:20)

1:18. For explains why salvation is available only by faith (1:16-17). People are not able to establish a right standing before God because sin sabotages the attempt. Therefore a right standing before God comes only through reliance upon Christ. **Revealed** is the same word used in 1:17 for the manifestation of God’s righteousness to those who believe. God’s wrath is “fully disclosed” against humanity because all **suppress the truth in unrighteousness**. Paul introduces one reason for God condemning humankind. People possess some truth about Him but reject it.

1:19-20. Because launches the substantiation for Paul’s claim that people suppress knowledge of God. This knowledge is **evident within them**. **For** (1:20) introduces the basis for that claim. Paul mentions a paradox when he says that God’s **invisible attributes are clearly seen**. Creation displays God’s power and deity, so that when people suppress knowledge about Him available through the created order **they are without excuse** when He judges them for it. *No one* ever responds correctly to the light of God in creation.

1:21-23. For continues the theme of people being without excuse, begun in 1:20. They choose not to **honor** and thank Him, and worship created things rather than the Creator. Three times Paul says people **exchanged** the truth of God for lies (1:23, 25, 26), and three times he says **God gave them over** (1:24, 26, 28) to practices that manifested His judgment against them in this life. As people reject God’s standards and afflict themselves by their disobedience, their sin becomes their punishment.

1:24-25. Therefore provides a logical conclusion from the action of people in rejecting knowledge of God. **God gave them over** first to degrading religious practices (1:25). In various ways false religions cause their adherents to live in fear or engage in practices that cheapen their lives (**their bodies are dishonored**) and bring God’s judgment.

1:26-27. People “exchanged the truth of God” for idols (1:25); **For this reason God gave them over**, this time to homosexual behavior. Some

claim that Paul is saying that it is wrong only for those whom God did not create as homosexuals to engage in homosexual behavior (the underlying thought being that God has created some as homosexuals, a contention that is unsubstantiated in science or Scripture). Others argue that God is forbidding the ritual homosexuality practiced in Greco-Roman religions. The text says neither. The statement indicates that the homosexual behavior is a form of judgment against those who reject the knowledge of Him. If it is a form of His judgment, then the people of God must neither practice nor condone it.

1:28-32. People “exchanged” the natural function of the sexes (1:26) and abandoned knowledge about Him in creation (1:28); therefore, **God gave them over**, this time to social problems (unrighteousness, wickedness, greed) as a form of His judgment.

2:1-2. Therefore (v. 1) connects with the idea of God’s judgment mentioned by Paul in 1:18-19, a judgment that encompasses all of humanity. **You have no excuse** (or “no defense”) picks up the idea from 1:20, where people have no defense before God on the day of judgment, for everyone suppresses and rejects the knowledge of God they have from creation. God’s judgment **rightly** (lit., “according to the truth”) comes upon people. That is, it comes upon them “according to the truth,” according to the facts of how they actually live.

2:3-5. Moral people are presumptuous in their thinking. They strive to live a principled life, do not (usually) act as those in Rm 1, and assume that God will overlook their occasional moral lapse because they really do strive to be good. They do not have as many practical manifestations of God’s **judgment** in their lives as those who do not strive to be good, as seen in chap. 1. They mistake this lack of present judgment for God’s approval, and as proof that they will escape His eschatological judgment. That God does not vent His wrath upon them to a great extent in this life is designed by Him to cause them to recognize His goodness and turn to Him (**repentance**). But if they do not repent, they will face **the righteous judgment of God** (v. 5).

2:6-11. Verse 6 continues the sentence Paul began in v. 5. God **WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS** is a key for the rest of chap. 2. God judges based on how well one lives his moral code. The key is what one *does* in his or her life, not the honorable rules for living

which one applauds. God will render **eternal life** (v. 7) or **wrath and indignation** (v. 8) based on how one acts.

This interpretation is shocking in light of Paul’s consistent point that salvation is always and only by grace through faith in Christ (cf. 1:16-17; 3:21-26). Scholars debate whether Paul is speaking of true believers whose good works demonstrate their regeneration, and Paul surely held this belief (cf. Gl 5:16-19, 24; 6:8). But here Paul explained what is necessary to be right with God *apart from faith in Jesus*. There is no clear indication that Paul referred to believers in vv. 5-11, and he made it clear that people **do not obey the truth** (v. 8; cf. 1:18, where unbelievers “suppress the truth”) and **obey unrighteousness** (cf. 1:29, where they are “filled with all unrighteousness”). All people sin and consequently deserve the wrath that awaits them. The phrases **to (or of) the Jew first and also to the Greek** (vv. 9, 10) indicate that there is essential equality between both people groups regarding both the prospects of judgment, or of salvation apart from faith in Christ. But there is a place of prominence for the Jewish people because of their special privilege in God’s program, both as it relates to righteousness and to judgment (cf. the comments on 1:16, and Am 3:2; Lk 12:48).

2:12-13. For (v. 12) introduces Paul’s explanation about God impartially judging all people on the basis of their deeds. Sinful actions make one liable to judgment, whether that one has the law or not (v. 13).

2:14-16. For (v. 14) signals that Paul gives the basis for maintaining that a Gentile without the law of Moses will perish in God’s judgment. Based upon the natural circumstances of their birth, Gentiles do not have the law, but sometimes **do instinctively the things of the Law**, probably a reference to its moral requirements (e.g., loving one’s neighbor; not bearing false witness) rather than the ceremonial aspects (sacrificing a red heifer). When those who do not have the law sometimes do some of the things prescribed by the law of Moses (**the work of the Law**, v. 15), they **are a law to themselves**, i.e., Gentiles indicate that they have their own moral code that overlaps with the law. God created humanity with a sense of right and wrong (cf. 1:32), and while Adam’s fall damaged that, it did not erase it altogether. One’s moral code may be as rudimentary as “treat everyone fairly” or “be nice to everyone.” That moral code is an imperfect reflection of the morality God instilled in humankind, seen

most clearly in the law. The problem is that *no one* lives up to whatever moral code he or his culture approves. As a result, **their conscience** bears **witness** to how well they have kept their own moral code, and will accuse or defend them on the day of judgment. Each one's conscience will say, "You kept your moral standards when you did this and this . . ." But the conscience will *also* say, "You broke it here and here and here!" God knows **the secrets of men**, i.e., what their conscience tells them, and He will use these accusatory thoughts as evidence for condemnation on the day of judgment.

Although Gentiles do not have the OT law, they are still sinners and will still face condemnation from God. There are some who claim that God would give eternal life to someone who never hears about Jesus, as long as that person responds correctly to the light of God in creation, is sincere in his own religion, and is kind to other people. But Paul indicates otherwise. Such a Gentile is still a sinner, even on the basis of his own moral norms, and as a sinner will experience God's judgment and wrath.

2:17-24. Paul begins to turn his attention to the sinfulness of those in covenant with God, the Jewish people. He noted the special privileges the Jewish people enjoyed (vv. 17-20), but also their failure to live up to their privileges. Paul's point is not that every single Jew has stolen or committed adultery, but rather that the Jewish people as a whole (and the whole consists in the individual parts) have acted with such sinfulness that they disqualified themselves from being used by God to enlighten the world. Worse yet, by their sinfulness, they served to **dishonor God** (v. 23). The same thing can be said about Gentiles who profess to be Christians, but live scandalous lives. They harm God's reputation now as much as unbelieving Jews did then.

2:25-29. Circumcision (v. 25) was viewed by later generations of the Jewish people as a virtual guarantee of eternal life (cf. the ancient rabbinic commentaries *Gen R.* 48 [30^a]; *Exod R.* 19 [81^c]; and *Tanhuma B, hayye Sarah* 60^b.8), and may have been in Paul's day as well. Sin in the life of a circumcised Jew canceled out the benefits of circumcision. Conversely, if a Gentile kept the law and did not sin, he would receive the benefits of the covenant people of God. Once again, Paul's point is that disobedience brings condemnation whether one is a Jew or not, and obedience without sin brings salvation (vv. 26-27). **For** (v. 28) begins an explanation as to why

being circumcised does not guarantee salvation. Here only in chap. 2 does Paul refer to believers, in this case exclusively Jewish believers, and his point is to argue that being right with God comes as He performs spiritual surgery upon the heart, not as one complies with the letter of the law, by undergoing circumcision in the flesh (v. 29). Note that Paul is speaking only of true, believing Jews in these verses. Gentile believers are not in view, and the idea that Gentile Christians are the new Israel is foreign to this section.

3:1-2. If both Jews and Gentiles are in equal danger because of their sin, as Paul said in chap. 2, then what benefit is there in being Jewish? Paul concedes that the Jewish people do have an historical advantage over Gentiles. **They were entrusted with the oracles** [the Hebrew Scriptures] of God is one advantage Paul mentions (see 9:4-5 for others).

3:3-4. Paul was apparently seeking to correct the idea held by many that God promised to save virtually every Jewish person. In response, Paul wrote that God's promises include not only promises to save, but also to judge (cf. Dt 30:15-20; Jr 16:10-15). He cited Ps 51:4, David's confession of sin with Bathsheba, where David recognized that God was just to punish him for that sin. Whenever a sinner, whether Jewish or Gentile, stands in the courtroom of the Judge and pleads his case, the Judge will *always* be found to be in the right and will win the case. When the verb **ARE JUDGED** is in the middle voice as it is here, it often means "to go to court" or "to engage in a legal dispute," and is the likely meaning here (so NIV; HCSB).

3:5-7. Paul put another argument on the lips of an imaginary opponent, a rhetorical device called "diatribe" (v. 5; for other examples of diatribe, see e.g., 2:3; 3:1; 6:1-2, 15; 9:19; 11:1, 11): "My **unrighteousness** (moral corruption) demonstrates just how morally excellent and virtuous God really is. Therefore, a person might object that since my sinfulness does God a favor by making Him look so good, He is not unjust or unfair (the likely meaning of **unrighteous** in this phrase), and therefore will not condemn me!" However, if a Jewish person could use this argument, so could a Gentile, for their lives were arguably more corrupt, and could make God look better still. Therefore, it would be unfair of God to judge Gentiles (**the world**, v. 6). But the Jewish people *relished* the prospect of God judging the Gentile world (e.g., *Sir* 36:1-10), and would not have conceded this point to Paul.

3:8. Some accused Paul of teaching that one should sin more to give God a chance to bring greater glory to Himself by providing more grace to counteract it. See the comments related to this in 5:20–6:2. But this is a misrepresentation of Paul's views, and any Jewish antagonists who assigned this belief to Paul deserved the **condemnation** they received.

3:9-18. The question, **Are we** [the Jewish people] **better than they** [Gentiles]? probably looks back to the advantage of having the **oracles of God** in 3:2. The Jewish people had advantages, but without a proper response to them, they were no better off salvifically than Gentiles. Paul wove together several OT verses, cited loosely, to support the theme of humanity's universal plight. Verses 10-12 describe humanity's rejection of God (from Ps 14:1-3). **THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD** (v. 11) should be understood with its full force, and does not allow room for *anyone* to respond positively to the light of God in creation. If it were not for God seeking people, no one, left to their own motivation, would seek Him. Verses 13-14 describe the harm that comes from words, vv. 15-17 the harm that comes from actions. Paul loosely cites several OT passages (v. 13 = Ps 5:9; 140:3b; v. 14 = Ps 10:7) that indicate the comprehensiveness of humankind's spiritual disease. In vv. 15-18 he cited Is 59:7-8, written by Isaiah about the sin of the Jewish people (Is 58:1, 14), so that Paul, once again, included them in the world's troubles.

3:19-20. **Whatever the Law says** (v. 19) includes Gentiles, since all people are under some kind of moral code that they fail to keep adequately (cf. 2:12-16). Therefore, everyone is **accountable** ("subject to being prosecuted and found guilty") to God. The referent of **works of the Law** (v. 20) has become astonishingly controversial. See the summary and critique of Dunn in the "Excursus" following the introduction to Romans. **Works of the Law** refers to deeds the law requires in order for one to remain in a proper covenant relationship with God. Paul mentioned **works of the Law** again in 3:28, but in 3:27 he used the solitary noun "works", also used alone in 4:2, and the cognate verb "work" in 4:4, 5. **Works** without the phrase **of the Law** refers to general (religious) deeds anyone might do to enter into or maintain a right relationship with God, but **works of the Law** refers to the religious deeds from a Jewish vantage point, since their religious deeds were defined by the Mosaic law. Doing the law does not save a person, for one intent of the law was to inform Israel

about what sin was (**through the Law comes the knowledge of sin**) so that she could avoid God's judgment and be used by Him to mediate His grace to the world. But the law of Moses was not designed *to save* per se. Salvation came through responding to God in faith in response to the promises He made in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gn 15:6), never through keeping the law of Moses (see the comments on Gl 3:6–4:7).

II. Justification by Faith: The Means for Being Right with God (3:21–4:25)

A. Righteousness Is Available from God (3:21-26)

3:21-26. **But now** (v. 21) introduces a significant transition in the argument of Romans. After delineating the sorry spiritual condition of humankind, Paul began a discussion of how one can become right with God. The key is not found in securing one's own righteousness by keeping the law, but in God giving His own righteousness (His own moral excellence and virtue; see the comments on "righteousness" in 1:17) to those who have faith in His Son.

But now carries a temporal sense, "But now, after the cross." For **the righteousness of God**, see 1:17. This **righteousness** has always been **apart from the Law** (cf. the example of Abraham in Rm 4, drawn from Gn 15). The Jewish people had misread the OT, wrongly prioritizing the law as the means for righteousness before God, and had neglected the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant for that. While this righteousness comes **apart from the Law**, it was **witnessed by the Law and the Prophets**; that is, the Hebrew Scriptures contain a predictive element pointing toward God's bestowal of His righteousness to those who have faith (see some of the verses Paul will refer to: Hab 2:4; Gn 15:6; Ps 32:1-2; and Jr 31:33-34; Ezk 36:25-27; Is 53:4-6). God's **righteousness** is **through faith in Jesus Christ** [lit., "faith/fullness of Jesus Christ"; Gk. *pisteos Iesou Christou*] (v. 22), which could mean either the believer's "faith in Jesus Christ" (objective genitive, the traditional view) or "the faithfulness of Jesus" in dying on the cross (subjective genitive). The second view is not objectionable, but it is not required by the syntax. The traditional view is preferable. Usually *pistis* (faith) refers to one's reliance upon another, and only when the context is explicit should the idea of "faithfulness" be ascribed to it. Also, several passages have a similar construction using the word "faith" followed by a member of the Godhead in the genitive case,

where one's faith is directed toward the divine one, but not indicating the "faith of" the one who is divine (cf. Mk 11:22; Ac 3:16; Php 1:27; Col 2:12; 2Th 2:13; Jms 2:1; Rv 2:13). This suggests that the phrase **faith of / in Christ** should be understood as having Jesus as the object of faith. In addition, the strong contextual evidence supports the view that this refers to the believer's faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 3:22c, 26, 27, 28, and throughout chap. 4; Gl 2:16). **For all those who believe** is not a redundancy if "faith in Christ" is an objective genitive, for this phrase gives the additional point that individuals from all people groups (Jews and Gentiles, **for there is no distinction**) can be saved by faith. The lack of **distinction** relates not only to salvation by faith in Christ, but to the consequences of sin as well (v. 23). **Fall short** means "lack" (1Co 1:7; 8:8). The **glory of God** is sometimes connected by Paul both to God's revealed perfections and to His immortality (Rm 1:23; 2:7-10; 5:1-5; 1Tm 1:17), so that lacking **the glory of God** here probably refers to God's immortal splendor forfeited by Adam and his descendants because of sin. But according to Early (intertestamental) Judaism, Adam possessed a special glory of his own as one made in the image of God, a special glory that he lost at the fall (*Apoc. Mos.* 20:2; 21:2, 6; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 56:5-6; *Gen. Rab.* 12.6.1), and which God will restore to the righteous in the future (CD 3:20; 1QS 4:6-8, 14-15, 22-23; 4 *Ezra* 2:39; 7:97-98; 8:51-52; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 51:3, 10; 1 *Enoch* 108:12-15; Rm 8:30). The emphasis, however, is upon *God's* glory.

Being justified (v. 24) probably connects with v. 22b, and reiterates the bright side of the "no distinction" theme, while v. 23 looks at the dark side of it. The verb **justified** (*dikaioo*) was a judicial term for a judge declaring a person innocent of whatever charges were levied against him. A sinner is rightly charged with breaking God's law. When a sinner trusts Christ for salvation, God declares him or her not only innocent of that charge (i.e., He "justifies" them, *dikaioo*), but as having kept the standard because of the relationship that is established with Him through Christ (Rm 8:4; 2Co 5:21). By God's declaration, the sinner is "put right" with God and possesses the status of "righteousness" (*dikaioisune*, a cognate of *dikaioo*, "to justify") on the basis of the favorable verdict rendered by the divine Judge. This is no legal fiction as is sometimes argued. When a judge declares innocent an individual charged with a crime, that declaration has a profound impact upon the one who was charged. **Grace**

denotes the character quality of benevolence that leads a benefactor to bestow a favor upon another. **Redemption** means "the act of setting one free by paying a ransom," used for paying a master the amount his slave was worth to purchase the slave's freedom. The blood of Jesus paid the ransom for believers (see the comments on Eph 1:7). **Propitiation** (v. 25) usually involved a sacrifice that averted the wrath of a divine being, but the word was also used in the LXX for the "mercy seat," the cover on the ark of the covenant onto which blood was sprinkled whereby sin was forgiven and wrath was turned away (cf. Lv 16:2, 13-15). Jesus' bloody cross, not the mercy seat, remains the place where God's wrath is appeased. **Faith** is "reliance upon a person, including what he says or does." One is justified by God when he or she relies upon Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus died **to demonstrate** (or "prove") God's **righteousness** (see the comments on 1:17), which in vv. 25-26 refers more narrowly to His justice or fairness as part of His wider moral excellence. And it needed to be proven. If a judge did not condemn a guilty criminal but let him go free, or if he had the criminal's pet collie go to prison in his place, the judge would be unjust, unfair, unrighteous. But in the OT, God both forgave sinners and determined to have animals sacrificed for sins (Lv 16; cf. the comments on Heb 9:15; 10:4). God would be unjust for doing this, except the death of Jesus safeguarded **His righteousness**. In the death of Jesus, God vented His wrath against sin, keeping **His righteousness** intact, and God applied the atoning work of His Son to OT saints. On that basis they were forgiven and **His righteousness** was upheld. All this is not only true for OT saints, but is relevant **at the present time** (v. 26). The death of Jesus allows God to remain **just** and yet forgive sinners who have faith in Jesus today (He remains **just** and is **the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**).

B. Righteousness Is Appropriated by Faith Alone (3:27-4:25)

3:27-31. In these verses, Paul presents the principles that flow logically from 3:21-26, and in chap. 4 he illustrates the principles with the concrete example of Abraham. The table at the top of the next page presents the connections.

It makes sense that if justification is a gift that springs from God's grace (3:22-26), then **boasting** in one's own ability to obtain it or maintain it **is excluded** (v. 27). The word **law** is puzzling, but here probably has a metaphorical meaning ("base, norm, standard, principle"), and probably

The Principles	The Concrete Illustration of the Principles
3:27 Boasting is excluded	4:1-3 Abraham could not boast
3:28 Justification is by faith, not works	4:4-8 Abraham was justified by faith not works
3:29-30 God justifies all by faith	4:9-12 Abraham indicates God justifies all by faith
3:31 Faith “establishes” the law	4:13-25 Abraham’s faith “established” the law

does not refer to the OT law. In vv. 29-30, Paul bolstered his argument about one way of salvation by referring to monotheism. If justification is available only through the Jewish law, then God is the God of the Jews only, and the Gentiles are excluded from a relationship with Him. Since salvation is by grace through faith, the question arises: “Does faith render the law purposeless?” (v. 31). What Paul means by **we establish the Law** is disputed, but it is possible that faith is the sole avenue whereby one is able to experience all of God’s promised blessings, blessings to which the law bore witness (3:21) but which could not be obtained on the basis of keeping the law (cf. 3:19-20; 4:13-15). While faith establishes **the Law**, v. 31 cannot be cited to support the idea that the law is still binding since it is not nullified by faith. Rather, faith does not nullify the teaching of the Pentateuch but actually establishes the law’s teaching, which includes justification by faith as evident in the law’s teaching concerning Abraham (cf. Gn 15:6; Rm 4:1-22).

4:1-3. Beginning in 4:1, Paul presents Abraham as the illustration of the principle in 3:27 that faith eliminates boasting. The phrase **according to the flesh** (v. 1) refers to Abraham being the physical **forefather** of the Jewish people, and does not refer to what he discovered “in the realm of the flesh” regarding salvation. Paul refers several times to Gn 15:6 (Rm 4:9, 22) as he employs Abraham to illustrate the principles of 3:27-31. **CREDITED TO HIM** (v. 3) translates a Hebrew phrase (the verb *hashab* followed by the preposition *le*) that means “to assign something to a person for his benefit *that he does not possess*” (cf. Lv 7:18; Nm 18:27, 30; 2Sm 19:19 [MT 19:20]; Ps 106:31 [MT 106:30]). God reckoned to Abraham the status of **RIGHTEOUSNESS** (“moral excellence and virtue”; see the comments on 1:17) that made him acceptable to God. Faith is not a work that makes one right with God. Faith is reliance upon *another’s work* (after the cross, the work of Christ), and is a gift from God (Ac 18:27; Eph 2:8; Php 1:29).

4:4-8. Here Paul explores the principle from 3:28 that justification is by faith. If salvation

were given on the basis of works (v. 4), then it would be a **wage** one had earned that God was obligated to pay. But Paul made it clear earlier (3:24) that **righteousness** is **credited** as a gift (v. 5). Both Ps 32 and Gn 15 use the same Hebrew verb, *hashab*, translated differently by the NASB in these verses (“reckoned” in Gn 15:6; “impute” in Ps 32:2a). Paul used a rabbinic interpretive method (called *Gezerah Shevah*) that links verses sharing common words (here “reckon to”) to demonstrate a general principle. If God credited Abraham with righteousness on the basis of his faith, then David must have had faith for God to “credit” or “reckon” him with righteousness as well. Paul cites Ps 32:1-2 to emphasize that the imputation of righteousness includes forgiveness of sins, a point not found explicitly in Gn 15:6.

4:9-12. Paul unpacks another principle presented in 3:29-30, that God justifies everyone (Jews and Gentiles) by faith (v. 9). Abraham was counted righteous while he was a “Gentile” (**uncircumcised**) (v. 10). **The sign of circumcision** (v. 11) is described further as a **seal** (proof or validation of something; 1Co 9:2) of Abraham’s righteous status by **faith**. Abraham’s faith preceded his circumcision (Gn 15:6 vs. Gn 17:9-14). Circumcision contributed nothing to his righteousness. Circumcision was a sign that God (apart from human effort) would fulfill His promise, that Abraham had faith in Him, and that God credited righteousness to Abraham on the basis of his faith. Because he was saved as a Gentile, Abraham is the spiritual father of believing Gentiles. But he is also the father of believing Jews (v. 12), for he was a circumcised believer.

4:13-17. In 3:31, Paul gave the principle that faith establishes the true teaching of the law (see the comments there), and illustrates it in 4:13-25. **Not through the Law** (v. 13c) is developed in vv. 14-17, and **the righteousness of faith** (v. 13d) is developed in vv. 18-25. **The promise to Abraham** (v. 13) (Gn 12:1-3) could never have been fulfilled if its fulfillment were **through** (by means of) doing **the Law** (v. 14). Everyone fails to obey the

law, exposing oneself to God's wrath (v. 15). If obtaining the promises depended upon one's ability to keep the law, then the whole plan would be doomed. **Where there is no Law, there also is no violation** continues Paul's explanation regarding the reason that obtaining the promise is not through the law. His point here is similar to the one in 3:20 ("through the Law comes the knowledge of sin"). The purpose of the law is to define what constitutes a **violation** ("an intentional act of disobedience to a law or custom"), not to facilitate the fulfillment of God's promises. Paul did not mean that when there is no law there is no sin and no judgment (cf. the comments on 2:12-16; 5:13-14). His purpose here is to explain the function of the law, and its function puts it at odds with obtaining God's promise. **For this reason** (v. 16), **the promise is realized by faith . . . in accordance with grace** (see 3:21-26). **So that** gives the purpose for God's design that salvation be by grace through faith, not by obeying the law, namely, that the promise may be fulfilled with certainty for **all the descendants**, Jews and Gentiles alike. Verse 17 indicates that Abraham is both the father of one nation, the Jewish people, and the father of **MANY NATIONS** (citing Gn 17:5). Although this is stating that there is but one spiritual people of God, ethnic distinctions are not extinguished. The **God** in whom Abraham believed is described as One who **gives life to the dead**, probably a reference to Abraham's and Sarah's inability to reproduce, but may include a glance at the resurrection of the dead, especially Jesus' resurrection (v. 24). God **calls into being that which does not exist**, a reference to the great nation of Israel and its impact on the entire world, which was not yet a reality when God spoke the promises to Abraham.

4:18-25. Paul has established that obtaining the promise of God was "not through the Law" (v. 13c; cf. vv. 14-17). Next, he developed the idea that the promise comes through the "righteousness of faith" (v. 13d) in vv. 18-25, with the emphasis on "faith" in vv. 17-21, and "righteousness" in v. 22. **In hope against hope** (v. 18) means "Abraham had hope contrary to all human expectations." Verse 19 explains v. 18. **His own body . . . as good as dead and the deadness of Sarah's womb** recalls what Paul said about God **who gives life to the dead** in v. 17. One might argue with Paul and say that Abraham did waver in unbelief (v. 20). He did not waver, however, after God explicitly told him that Sarah would bear him a son (Gn 17:19). **Grew strong** would

be translated better as "was strengthened." **And being fully assured** (v. 21) reflects Abraham's conviction that God was the kind of God who could bring about what He promised.

Beginning in v. 22, Paul explored Gn 15:6c on the theme of "righteousness." Cf. the comments on 4:3 for v. 22. In vv. 23-25 Paul showed how Abraham's experience was relevant to more than just him. Believers share in common with Abraham the reality of faith, the object of faith (God), and the futility of works of the law in order to be right with God. Christians **believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead** just as Abraham had faith in God "who gives life to the dead" by reviving the bodies of Abraham and Sarah. **Raised because of our justification** means that without the resurrection, no one would know that Jesus' death paid for believers' **transgressions**, and that they now have **justification**.

III. Blessings: The Results of Being Right with God (5:1-8:39)

A. Christians Can Boast in God (5:1-11)

Paul's theme from 5:1-8:39 relates to the benefits that accrue to the believer who has been justified. This section fits with his overall purpose of seeking to motivate the believers in Rome to support his mission to Spain. Unbelievers possess none of these privileges, and the Roman believers should assist Paul in proclaiming them.

5:1-2. Therefore (v. 1) introduces an inference from 3:21-4:25 that the believer has **peace with God**. There is a textual problem related to the verb **have** (whether it is an indicative "we have" or a hortatory [commanding] subjunctive "let us have"), but it is probably indicative. Paul begins giving commands in Romans only in chap. 6 (for hortatory subjunctives applicable to believers, see Rm 13:13; 14:13, 19; there are 22 imperative verbs from chap. 6 onward), but none before (except the hortatory subjunctive in 3:8, which is put on the lips of one in error, and the imperative in 3:4, which is purely rhetorical). Rather than encouraging the believer to strive for **peace with God**, Paul continues his statement of doctrinal facts so prominent in the first half of Romans. God Himself has established peace with those He **justified**. **For the glory of God** (v. 2), cf. the comments on 3:23.

5:3-5. It is possible that Paul presupposes the need to have faith for this chain (perseverance, character, hope) to be complete, but he does

not mention it here, and it should not be read into the text. His point seems to be that through **tribulations** God will produce in the Christian **perseverance, proven character** (v. 4) and **hope**, similar to Rm 8:29-30.

5:6-10. For (v. 6) introduces an explanation regarding how God poured out His love, through Christ's death. The difference between the **righteous man** and the **good man** (v. 7) is that the **good man** has done something tangibly beneficial for another. I might die for someone who has been good to me, but I probably would not die for one who I considered to be righteous, but who had done nothing for me. If God has done the "major" thing (sinners being **justified by His blood**, v. 9, parallel to **enemies** being **reconciled to God**, v. 10), the believer can count on Him to do the "minor" thing (save sinners **from His wrath**, v. 9, parallel to being **saved by His life**, v. 10).

5:11. Believers boast not only in the "hope of the glory of God" (v. 2) and in tribulations (v. 3), but **in God** Himself.

B. Christians Can Live a Life of Security (5:12-21)

The connection with what precedes is not clear, but Paul may be presenting the basis of the hope detailed in 5:1-11. The believer can have hope because Jesus has overturned the negative effects of Adam's fall.

5:12. Just as may find its conclusion in "even so" (*houtos kai*) in v. 18, but more likely it is found in **and so** (*kai houtos*) at the end of v. 12. "Original sin" is a term used to describe the idea that every person sinned in and with Adam, so that Adam's sin and guilt was our sin and guilt. But Paul is probably not teaching original sin in these verses, for several reasons. First, the phrase **because** [*eph' ho*] **all sinned** literally means "on the basis of which" and signals that everyone sins because the state of spiritual death, and physical death, entered the race through Adam's act. Second, the verb **sinned** *always* refers to an individual's conscious acts, never to sins committed without conscious choice or committed by proxy. Third, **sinned** is probably a "gnomic" aorist, describing a general truth about acts that typically take place, not acts that did take place in the past (see 2:12; 3:23, where **sinned** is also used, but has a gnomic sense).

5:13-14. In v. 13, Paul explains how one could commit a sin when there was no law of Moses yet in existence. Between Adam and Moses **sin was in the world** (v. 13), indicated by the fact

that people died in the flood because of their conscious acts of sin (Gn 6:5). With the phrase **sin is not imputed when there is no law** Paul means much the same thing as in 3:20 and 4:15 (see the comments on 4:15). People commit acts of sin even when there is no clear violation of an explicit command, and will experience God's wrath (see the comments on 2:12-16). **Imputed** is a commercial term, and would be better translated "tallied," "accounted," or even "charged to one's account" (cf. Phm 18). The law makes sin an **offense** (better, a "transgression," same word as 4:15) (v. 14)—it intensifies sin and its consequence—but *the law does not create sin*. Sin found its origination in Adam, not in the law. The phrase **those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam** indicates that Paul is not teaching "original sin" as it is typically conceived. Adam violated a clear command. Those between Adam and Moses did not. Therefore they did not sin in and with Adam. Theologically, a **type** is an OT person, object, or event that had a useful function in its own historical setting, but that also was designed by God to prefigure a greater, more spiritually potent situation or person. In this case, Adam was a "type" of Christ since he functions as the founder of the human race and his action had a profound influence upon it. Jesus, of course, is the superior "antitype" to Adam.

5:15-19. Here (vv. 15-17) Paul demonstrates the *differences* (**the free gift is not like the transgression**, v. 15) between Adam and Jesus. The differences lie in the effects of the acts of Adam vis-à-vis Jesus. In vv. 18-19, Paul demonstrates the *similarities* between Jesus and Adam, those similarities being found in the comprehensiveness of the consequences of the acts of the first and second Adam.

Paul teaches neither original sin nor the imputation of Christ's righteousness in these verses. He omits altogether *how* Adam's sin has corrupted humanity and *how* Christ's righteousness is applied to believers. His purpose is simply to state that Adam's sin *did* corrupt all those in him, and Christ's gift reverses that for those *in Him*, a point that serves as the ground of great boasting for believers.

5:20-21. When Paul refers to the law, he sees it as fulfilling a role of providing information regarding the identification of sin (cf. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13) that results in an intensification of sin, and this is probably the sense of **so that knowledge of transgression would increase** (cf. also

Gl 3:19). But in Rm 7:7-13, the presence of the law also brings about the quantitative increase of sin. Paul's point indicates that the law, given after the entrance of sin into humanity courtesy of Adam, did nothing to improve the situation. Only God's super-abounding **grace** proffers sufficient power to grant **eternal life** to those who believe.

C. Christians Can Live a Life Free from the Absolute Domination of Sin (6:1–7:25)

6:1-2. One might wrongly think that it is appropriate to continue to live in sin either so that God might be glorified as He causes grace to abound (5:20), or so that the believer might have a more profound experience of grace. Paul will demonstrate that while both are spiritually possible, both are morally irrational, for sin ruins a believer's life. **Died to sin** (v. 2) indicates that when Jesus died on the cross (cf. 6:10), the believer died with Him in a spiritual yet real sense (cf. the comments on Gl 2:19-20; Col 2:20; 3:1-3; 2Tm 2:11; 1Pt 2:24).

6:3-4. **Into** carries a referential sense, indicating that baptism is especially a baptism "with reference to" **Christ Jesus**, and even more narrowly is a reference to **His death**. Paul closely connects baptism with the salvation experience in v. 4, but it is not a cause of salvation. Baptism depicts that aspect of the Christian's conversion that unites him to Christ, especially to Christ in His death. It is the outward expression of saving faith and the solemn symbol of dying with Christ. This was brought about by God so that **we too might walk in newness of life** (v. 4; cf. 7:6, where the Spirit is said to bring about this "newness").

6:5-7. The **likeness of His death** indicates that the believer's experience of dying with Christ is not identical to His death. The believer did not die physically upon the cross, but the benefits of Christ's death are experienced when the believer trusts Christ. This union with Christ guarantees the believer **resurrection** with Him in the future. The **old self** (v. 6) is not a reference to the old sin nature, for Paul makes it clear in the passage that it is not a "nature" or part of the believer that is crucified, but the entire person. It is a reference to who the believer was in Adam, under the mastery of sin. That person **was crucified** with Jesus on His cross and no longer exists. The believer is now "in Christ," no longer "in Adam" under sin. **Body of sin** refers to the believer's body as owned, dominated, ruled by sin. **Done away with** means "rendered powerless." As a result, believers are no longer **slaves to sin**, for a dead slave is no longer a slave (v. 7).

6:8-10. The believer was united with Jesus in His death, a death undergone with reference to breaking the power of sin (**He died to sin**, v. 10). Jesus rose from the dead, and the believer is united with Him in that as well. If Jesus' condition is irreversible (Jesus **is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him**, v. 9), then the believer's condition is also irreversible. Sin is no longer the slave master over the believer.

6:11. Here, for the first time in Romans, Paul gives a true command, the first application of the entire book. **Consider** means "to count, compute, calculate, take into account, to make account of" something, and here means "a deliberate and sober judgment on the basis of the facts one has." The believer is not commanded to "put the old sin nature to death" as he is in Eph 4:22 and Col 3:9 (see the comments there), for this is done for him and her by God at the moment of conversion. Rather, believers are *commanded to understand these profound facts*, and failure to do so amounts to sin (cf. Jms 4:17).

6:12-14. Paul continues the application of these truths. **Sin** was personified previously as a slave master, but here as a king who **reigns** (v. 12). **Presenting** is used in the LXX for one serving a superior (1Kg 10:8; 2Kg 5:25; Pr 22:29). Christians are no longer in Adam, under the tyranny of sin as a slave master or a king, but instead are now in Christ, under the rule of God to whom allegiance is owed. Verse 14 is developed fully in chap. 7 (see the comments there).

6:15-20. Since the believer is **not under law**, one might think that he is free to live however he wishes. But to live for sin results **in death** (v. 16). Many believe that Paul refers here to eternal death, and that the one who professes to be a Christian but who lives in sin is no Christian at all. This is possible, but Paul seems to be less eschatologically oriented here than is sometimes thought. Paul goes back and forth between reviewing what a believer's experience was before conversion and how life is—or *should be*—after it. **Death** is the experience of the unsaved, but Paul's words contain an implicit warning for the believer as well. **Death** in this verse is something that can be experienced by a true believer, and produces not an eternity in hell for the believer but **impurity** (moral filth), and **lawlessness** (or anarchy) (v. 19) and shame (v. 21). While it is true that an unbeliever receives eternal condemnation for his sin, he also experiences these practical consequences in this life. But so does the believer, and that is precisely Paul's point here. It is morally

foolish for a Christian to live in sin like an unbeliever, and the believer who does will receive the same kind of “death” in this life that an unbeliever receives, namely impurity, anarchy, and shame.

6:21-23. Benefit (v. 21) is literally “fruit” (cf. 7:4). Christians are rightly **ashamed** of the kinds of things they did as unbelievers. Therefore, why do them as believers? In v. 21, the **benefit** or fruit of a sinful non-Christian life was shame and **death**. But the fruit of God freeing a believer from sin is **sanctification** (the process of becoming more holy in this life) and finally **eternal life** (v. 22). When a person, whether a believer or an unbeliever, sins he earns and deserves **death**—the moral corruption and hardships that come in this life as specified by Paul in 6:19-21. In contrast to what one deserves, God freely gives **eternal life** to believers.

7:1-4. In Rm 7, Paul develops the theme introduced in 6:14 (see the comments there). Law, whether Mosaic or any other, has **jurisdiction** only over the living (v. 1). But Paul wrote that the believer died with Christ in reference to sin (6:2, 6, 8, 11; see the comments there). That death was also a death with reference to the law (vv. 2-4). Sometimes these verses are cited in defense of the concept that Paul says only death dissolves the marital bond, and that all divorce, for whatever reason, is wrong. It is possible that Rm 7:1-4 could be understood this way, but it is unlikely since Paul himself appears to allow for divorce (see the comments on 1Co 7:12-16), as does Jesus (see the comments on Mt 19:1-9). In addition, Paul was simply using marriage, the death of one’s spouse, and divorce as an illustration of dying with Christ so that one is freed from sin. His intent was not to give binding instruction on divorce. To understand this text as representative of Paul’s view of divorce is ill-advised.

7:5-6. These two verses forecast the rest of chaps. 7 and 8, and are crucial for the proper understanding of chap. 7 in particular. **Flesh** (v. 5) refers to a conglomeration of human traits that contribute to one’s disposition to sin, also known as “the old sin nature.” **Flesh** has this sense in its ensuing occurrences (7:14, 18, 25; 8:3 [first occurrence], 4, 5 [twice], 6, 7, 8, 9, probably 12 and 13), and in each of its uses in these verses refers to the unsaved, non-Christian state as suggested by its use in 7:5. Because 7:5-6 forecast the rest of chap. 7 and all of chap. 8, and because “flesh” in 7:5 refers to the unsaved condition, it is likely that “flesh” in the

other occurrences of the word in chaps. 7 and 8 should be understood with a similar sense, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise (as noted below). **Sinful passions . . . aroused by the Law** is the topic developed in vv. 7-12. **Death** is the theme developed in vv. 14-25. **But now** (v. 6) refers to the present state of the believer who is no longer “in the flesh” (i.e., no longer in the unsaved condition) nor under the law because of dying with Christ. Christians now **serve** (better, “are enslaved to”; see 6:18, 22) righteousness **in the newness** (see 6:4) **of the Spirit**. The mention of life in the Spirit forecasts the theme of Rm 8.

7:7-13. Verses 5 and 6 do not indicate that the law is evil. The law informs about what sin is (v. 7), and this is valuable (cf. 3:20; 4:15; 5:20). Paul employs a rhetorical technique called “impersonation” (Gk. *prosopopeia*) with which he steps into a role to make a point (similarly, cf. 1Co 13:1-3, 11-12). But identifying who Paul impersonates is a challenge, and there are several interpretive options. First, it is possible that Paul uses “I” to describe the experience of Adam, or, second, of Israel before receiving the law. Third, Paul may be saying that sin is so strong in the believer that Christians should expect moral failure and accept it as an inevitability. In this case Paul is remarkably pessimistic about the Christian life, and in light of Rm 6 and 8, this is an unlikely view. Fourth, Paul’s “I” may refer to a believer who seeks to sanctify himself by keeping the law, an approach to the Christian life also doomed to fail. But sanctification is possible if the believer relies upon the power of the Spirit to defeat sin. Fifth, the preferable view adopted here and argued below is that Paul is describing the futile experience of an unbeliever who seeks to conquer the power of sin by keeping his moral standards in his own power. Paul’s “I” is autobiographical, but represents the experience of all unsaved individuals who seek unsuccessfully to keep their moral code. For the Jewish people, that moral code is the law of Moses. For Gentiles, it is some other philosophy of life they or their culture adopts (e.g., the “rule of fair play”; the Golden Rule; “all things in moderation”). Paul wrote in 2:12-16 (see the comments there) that Gentiles have their own moral code but fail to live up to it. This failure reveals them as sinners for whom condemnation is appropriate. But in chap. 7 Paul discusses primarily the experience of the Jewish unbeliever (7:1, **I am speaking to those**

who know the law), but what he says is equally relevant for Gentile unbelievers who fail to keep their own moral standards.

It is fashionable to maintain that Paul's "I" is not autobiographical since he kept the law competently enough that his conscience did not bother him (it was "robust"; cf. Php 3:2-6), contrary to the "I" in this chapter. However, Paul's law-keeping was sometimes motivated by impure intentions (Gl 1:10), and his pre-conversion conscience was not as robust as sometimes thought (Ti 3:3-6).

The law is good (v. 7), but it is weak, and does not help one who is "in the flesh," i.e., an unbeliever (see the comments on 7:5) break the power of sin *in this life* (not the eternal state, in keeping with 6:14) (v. 8). **Sin**, here viewed as an anti-God force that dominates the unbeliever, leads one to rebel against God. **Apart from the Law sin is dead** does not mean that sin is non-existent. Rather, sin is always active, but it is hyperactive when the unregenerate human heart encounters God's law (**sin became alive**, v. 9; **sin deceived me** and **killed me**, v. 11). That sin was energized **when the commandment came** likely refers to a "moral awakening" when one begins to grasp fully the implications of his moral code and the consequences of failing to fulfill it (**sin became alive** [or "sprang to life"] **and I died**). For the kind of death Paul has in mind (i.e., moral corruption and frustration), see vv. 13-24. The law is good (v. 12), but sin is so strong that it can use the good law as a weapon to kill an unbelieving person (vv. 10-11, 13), for sin influences people to violate the law and bring upon themselves the moral and spiritual sentence of death.

7:14-20. Verses 14-25 develop the theme of death introduced in 7:5d. **Death** is mentioned twice in v. 13 and again in v. 24, forming an *inclusio* (brackets) on the whole paragraph, clarifying what Paul means by "death." As in 6:15-23 (see the comments there), **death** refers to "moral frustration and corruption," not the cessation of biological life nor spiritual or eternal separation from God.

Verses 7-13 are dominated by aorist tense verbs, traditionally understood as reflecting Paul's past experience before he knew the Lord. In vv. 14-25, on the other hand, Paul used predominantly present tense verbs, and these have sometimes been interpreted as a description of Paul's present experience as a believer. But it is better to understand the present tense verbs as indicating Paul's *emphasis* in this chapter. His

main point is to explore the unbeliever's moral frustration and corruption due to sin and its consequences (called **death**, not "condemnation," in vv. 14-25), not how "the Law arouses sinful passions" (vv. 7-13). The present tense verbs in vv. 14-25 indicate this emphasis. This interpretation is supported by much of Rm 6, which explores freedom from sin and death (cf. the comments on 6:2-14), and Rm 8:1-13, which reiterates this theme.

When Paul says **I am of flesh** (v. 14; also **my flesh** in v. 18), it is extremely unlikely that he is referring to his *Christian* experience, for no Christian is "in the flesh" following conversion (cf. v. 5). **Sold in bondage to sin** is the experience of an unbeliever, for Christians are no longer enslaved to sin (cf. 6:7, 18, 22). This is an unbeliever enslaved to sin who, like Paul before his conversion, loved the law and strove to obey it, but was frustrated by his inability to do so (vv. 15-17). While Paul does have a category for "fleshly believers" (see the comments on 1Co 3:1-4), his use of "in the flesh" in Rm 7:5, and **flesh** in vv. 14, 18, indicates that he used **flesh** in a way that differs from 1Co 3. Here it delineates the unsaved condition ("while we were in the flesh" in 7:5 indicates that Paul believes Christians are no longer "in the flesh," indicated also by the "then-versus-now" contrast in 7:5, 6), but the use of "flesh" in 1Co 3:1-3 describes true believers who are acting like the unsaved.

The willing (v. 18) and **the good that I want** (v. 19; cf. v. 21) refer to the desire to keep the law (vv. 22-23). But Paul already argued that the believer has "died to the Law" (vv. 2-4), another point that supports a non-Christian referent for "I." It is sin in the unbeliever that keeps him from obedience and brings moral frustration (**death** in this passage). In v. 23, **law** does not refer to Mosaic law, but, as in 3:27, means "rule" or "principle." **Who will set me free** (or "rescue" me) cannot be the words of a believer who knows who his Deliverer is, nor is the future tense appropriate for one who is already freed in Christ. **This** (v. 24) probably modifies **body**, not **death**. Paul, playing the role of an unbeliever, mentioned his "members" (body parts) in v. 23, and there those members are dominated by sin and death. This **body** (the entire person, inside and out; cf. 6:6; 12:1) of **death** is a reference to the unbeliever aggravated by the tyranny of sin. Then, as if he could no longer stand to continue his role-playing, Paul erupts in praise to God who has provided Jesus to rescue people

from their wretched unsaved state. Here Paul speaks as a Christian. He abandons the first person singular “I” for the second person plural **our**, indicating a momentary shift out of his non-Christian impersonation. But then he steps back into that role immediately and recaps his discussion in 7:25b, c.

D. Christians Have Life in the Holy Spirit (8:1-39)

8:1-4. Paul continues with another benefit of salvation by grace through faith. Those who believe in Christ have the unparalleled privilege of living life in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned only in 1:4, 2:29, 5:5, and 7:6, but is mentioned 19 times in chap. 8. **Therefore** (v. 1) probably introduces a logical conclusion based on what Paul wrote in chap. 7, especially 7:24. **Condemnation** includes both the idea of rendering a verdict of guilt and the punishment that follows. In the context of 7:14-25 and the moral frustration and corruption the non-Christian “I” experiences, and based on the pronouncement of being free of the terrors of the non-Christian life in 8:1-11, **condemnation** here especially focuses upon the believer’s freedom from the crippling power of sin in this life. On the meaning of **law** in v. 2, cf. the comments on 3:27. Verse 3 provides a succinct summary of Rm 7 in which the main theme was the weakness of the law to help an unbeliever defeat sin’s power. For the meaning of **flesh** here and in 8:4, 5 (twice), 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, cf. the comments on 7:5. **Likeness of sinful flesh** masterfully links Jesus closely with humanity because of His incarnation, but maintains a distinction between His body and that of everyone else. He had real flesh, but it was not sinful flesh. **Condemned sin in the flesh** means that Jesus, through the medium of His sacrificed body, pronounced judgment on sin and broke its power. The law could only pronounce judgment but could not “execute” sin. **Might be fulfilled in us** (v. 4) indicates the purpose of Christ’s death. While one is not made right with God by performing the law, Jesus’ perfect keeping of the law is **fulfilled in us**, but the law is not “performed by us.” Christians no longer **walk according to the flesh**, are no longer under the absolute control of the flesh (cf. the comments on 7:5, 14, 18). Those who walk according to the flesh in this verse are unbelievers, not carnal Christians.

8:5-11. These verses contrast the values and experience of unbelievers (**those who are according to the flesh**, v. 5—and for an explanation

of the meaning of **flesh** as unbelievers, see the comments on 7:5; those who **set their minds on the things of the flesh**, vv. 5, 6; **those who are in the flesh**, v. 8) with Christians (those who are **according to the Spirit**, v. 5, with their **mind set on the Spirit**, v. 6). Christians experience **life and peace** (v. 6), the primary reference being to the experience of these blessings in this life, while those according to the flesh reap **death** (cf. the comments on 6:15). Verses 7-8 are key verses, along with Rm 3:9-20, for the doctrine of total depravity (man’s inability to obey God and his antipathy toward Him). Paul does not refer to the category of “carnal Christian” in 8:5-8 (for this, see 1Co 3:1-4). Paul places all believers into the category of those who are **not in the flesh but in the Spirit**, since every believer is indwelt by the Spirit (v. 9). The believer is freed from the absolute power and penalty of sin, but sin still exercises dominion over the believer’s body through death (v. 10). Here the word **dead** refers to the cessation of biological life, but does not carry the sense of “eternal spiritual death.” **The spirit is alive** would be better translated “the Spirit is life,” for **spirit** here is better understood as a reference to the Holy Spirit who is the hero of this passage, not the human spirit, and *He is life (is alive* is actually a noun, not an adjective or a verb). He is the living and life-giving Spirit, and though believers will die physically because they are physically fallen and sometimes sin, the Spirit nevertheless gives them eternal, resurrection life (v. 11). This is **because of righteousness**, meaning “because believers are righteous in Christ, they have the Spirit who is, and who gives, life.”

8:12-13. **Flesh** in these two verses refers to a conglomeration of human traits that contribute to one’s disposition to sin (cf. the comments on 7:5), the “old sin nature.” The believer still has the flesh, though he is no longer “in the flesh” (7:5), just as he has a body descended from Adam though he is no longer “in Adam” (6:1-10). If a believer lives like a non-Christian, **according to the flesh**, i.e., fulfills the desires of the flesh (Gl 5:16), then he **must die** (experience moral frustration and corruption as in 6:15-23; 7:13-24, but probably not eternal spiritual death). **If by the Spirit . . . you will live** probably refers to the believer’s experience of the abundant life by the believer *in this life*. Paul is describing the quality of a believer’s life. If a Christian lives in the power of the Spirit and puts **to death the deeds of the body**, he will experience the abundant

life now. But to the extent that a believer lives in sin (**according to the flesh**, i.e., “like an unbeliever”; on **flesh** see the comments on 7:5), he will experience lack of the abundant life, a “deadly life.” If **live** refers to *eternal* life (and it is often understood this way), then 8:13c teaches salvation by works (namely, by **putting to death the deeds of the body**), which is an unlikely understanding of Paul in this paragraph. While he teaches that true salvation will bring a change in life (e.g., Rm 8:29; 1Co 16:22; Gl 5:18-25; Eph 2:10; Php 2:13; Ti 2:14), Paul’s point in Rm 8 is more practical than eschatological. If a Christian lives like an unbeliever (**according to the flesh**), he will receive what an unbeliever receives *in this life*, namely moral corruption and frustration which Paul here calls “death.” **By the Spirit** indicates that sanctification in the believer’s life comes from dependence upon and cooperation with the Spirit, not through keeping the law.

8:14-17. Being led by the Spirit of God (v. 14), in connection with vv. 12-13, relates to the Spirit’s influence in avoiding sin and putting to death the deeds of the body, not to knowing His will when making mundane decisions (e.g., buying a Ford vs. a Chevrolet). The double occurrence of **spirit** (v. 15) is best understood as a reference to the Holy Spirit in light of His work whereby believers are made God’s sons and daughters in vv. 14, 23. The Spirit brings sonship, not dreaded bondage. **Abba** is often popularly glossed with “Daddy,” but it is a term that could be used by adult men for older men they respected so that “Daddy” may carry more of a sense of childish informality than is warranted. In much the same way that wealthier Roman families had a male slave who chaperoned the family’s boys (called a *paidagogos*), so also God gives His Spirit to lead (*ago*) His sons and to help them avoid trouble in the form of sin. The **Spirit testifies** to the believer’s spirit that he belongs to God. It would be odd to say that the Holy Spirit testifies *with* the believer’s spirit, as if the believer’s spirit added anything to His testimony. As the believer studies the Word and sees his life transformed (cf. 8:13), the Spirit impresses upon his mind that he belongs to God. If believers are God’s children, then they are His heirs (v. 17) and may inherit God Himself or what God has in store for them—or both. But the road to glory for Christians is the same one Jesus trod, and His road was marked by the suffering of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Perhaps Paul had in mind the sacrifices the church in Rome

might make in order for him to reach Spain with the gospel.

8:18-25. Paul continues both the theme of the futurity and the suffering associated with being God’s heir. At the second coming, believers will see God’s glory (v. 18) as they return with Jesus to earth, but also will have their own glory (v. 21), a glory that surely reflects the glory of Jesus, just as the moon’s glory is found in its reflection of the light of the sun. Verses 19-21 are Paul’s commentary on Gn 3. When Jesus returns to earth with His people, the curse will be lifted from the world. Inanimate creation is personified in this passage as looking forward to the restoration of creation. **Creation groans** (v. 22) probably refers to natural disasters in which human life and property are lost. **Suffers the pangs of childbirth** (v. 22) indicates that the natural disasters are not permanent, and will not continue past the second coming. When calamities happen in the world, they remind the believer that these conditions are temporary, just as a woman’s labor is temporary. Eventually the baby comes, and happiness ensues, and so it will be when the Lord returns.

Not only does creation groan (v. 22), but believers **groan within** themselves (v. 23) **having** (or “because they have”) **the first fruits of the Spirit**. **First fruits** may have OT offering connotations (cf. Lv 23). The first fruits offering was to show one’s trust in the Lord, that if He has provided early aspects of the harvest, He could be trusted for good provision later. God has given the Spirit to believers at the present time, establishing an unbreakable connection between the initial experience of salvation and its end in eternity. The Spirit is both the first installment of our salvation and the down payment of the pledge that guarantees the remaining stages of the work of God in our salvation. Because believers have the Spirit, they have a slender experience of what awaits them, and as a result, they groan. There is no good reason to think that believers’ groanings are not audible. Many of God’s children, when they encounter hardship, have uttered a groan and said, “How I wish Jesus would come back *right now!*” Unbelievers do not express such sentiments, and the fact that believers do should serve to remind them that their utopia is not found in this life. They groan while **waiting eagerly for their adoption as sons**. In v. 15 the adoption is seen as already accomplished, and it surely is, but the full consummation of it awaits the future (a classic text for the concept of “now and not yet”).

Redemption of our body refers to the resurrection, when all sin, evil, and suffering are set aside. If the Christian adoption as sons and daughters of God is accomplished (v. 15) but is not now fully accomplished (v. 23), then **perseverance in hope** (confident expectation) is needed (vv. 24-25).

8:26-27. In the same way that hope sustains believers when they suffer, so also **the Spirit helps their weakness** when they pray (v. 26), the **weakness** being found in ignorance concerning how one ought to pray. **Groanings too deep for words** is an oxymoron, but describes the Spirit's "wordless prayer groaning" on behalf of God's children. **Too deep for words** means "unspoken," "unspeakable," "unuttered," "unutterable," but in any case these groans are inaudible and therefore do not refer to speaking in tongues. In addition, **the Spirit Himself** performs this intercessory ministry, but speaking in tongues involves the participation of the believer (cf. 1Co 14:14), and while not every believer speaks in tongues (1Co 12:30), *every believer* can be confident of this prayer ministry of the Spirit. If God knows every thought of every person, then He is quite capable of understanding the Spirit's prayers for His children (v. 27). **He [the Spirit] intercedes . . . according to the will of God** provides the basis for what Paul will say in v. 28. If the Spirit prays for believers, then God's loving purposes will come to them. Not only does the Spirit intercede, but the Son does as well (v. 34), and the intercessory work of two members of the Godhead are what guarantees that "nothing will separate us from the love of God," and that believers will never lose their salvation.

8:28-30. Believers do not always know how to pray (v. 26), but **we do know that God causes all things to work together for good** (v. 28). It is not clear what the subject of v. 28 is, for the subject is embedded in the third singular verb (either "He/it works together") and "all things" could remotely be the subject (see KJV; NET). But God should be understood as the subject in light of His active role in calling and saving His people (vv. 29-30). Because God is both sovereign and loving, **all things** should be understood comprehensively. Even the tragic circumstances that believers undergo are part of His loving design for their lives, for from them He brings **good** ("that which is morally, tangibly beneficial"). **To those who love God** is defined further by **to those who are called**, so that **those who love God** are not some group of super-believers, but is a category in which *all* believers are

found. **His purpose** is explained in vv. 29-30. **Foreknew** (v. 29) means "to determine ahead of time to enter into a loving relationship with someone" (cf. Ac 2:23; Rm 11:2; 1Pt 1:2, 20). The functional opposite is found in Rm 11:2, where the verb "foreknow" is the opposite of "reject." If "reject" has an active sense in Rm 11:2, then its opposite (God's foreknowledge) is an active, determinative foreknowledge. In other words, His foreknowledge is not simply a prognostication (a bare, passive knowledge of what will happen next—for which see the human forecasting in Ac 26:5; 2Pt 3:17), but a *causative, determinative* foreknowing, where His foreknowledge *brings about* what is foreknown. **Predestined** means "to decide upon beforehand," "to predetermine." **Foreknew** emphasizes God's initial decision to embrace a specific believer, but **predestined** refers to the final eternal goal of His active foreknowledge, namely, believers being **conformed to the image of His Son** on their way to their eternal "destination" (as in "pre-destination"). Sanctification is missing from Paul's five-item list, but that is covered by the last half of v. 29. Being **conformed to the image of His Son** probably pertains not only to what will happen on the day of Christ's return but also what happens in the lengthy period before that return. **Firstborn** does not mean "first created" but rather "preeminent." The same term is used in the LXX for Israel being a preeminent nation, not the first nation God made (Ex 4:22), and for David, the preeminent king compared to all others, not the first king who ever lived (Ps 89:27). **Among many brethren** indicates that God's purpose (v. 28) includes a vast number finding redemption, the restoration of the human race through Jesus' work. There is, in this phrase, a brief reminder from Paul about the obligation the Romans have to promulgate the gospel, especially by helping him go to Spain (cf. "Purpose" in the introduction to Romans). **Called** (v. 30) refers to the effectual call of God. This call is the believer's experience of God's foreknown and predestined plan (cf. 1:1, 6, 7). For **justified**, cf. the note on 3:24. **Glorified** (to experience God's glory with Him forever) is in the aorist tense, as are the other four verbs, and the tense presents each action comprehensively, as a complete (not "completed"), undifferentiated whole, without regard to its internal workings or how it unfolds. In God's plan, He foreknew, predestined, called, justified, *and* glorified each believer. If God foreknows, predestines, calls, and justifies

a believer, then it seems extremely unlikely that the believer might fail to be glorified as well.

8:31-39. The contents of Rm 8 indicate that **God is for us** (v. 31). **Who is against us** does not prove that the Christian has no enemies. Paul's point is that those enemies cannot successfully turn God against him or her. If God sacrificed **His own Son** (v. 32) to bring about salvation, then He can be counted on to provide everything else delineated in chap. 8, including eternal life. **Charge** (v. 33) is a judicial term used for asserting that one was guilty of a crime and liable to prosecution and punishment. God, however, has chosen believers (**God's elect**) in Christ, and no one can successfully cause Him to condemn them. For **justifies**, see the note on 3:24. **Jesus . . . died** (v. 34) for sins and took care of the sin problem, something no one could do for himself. He **was raised** from the dead, and having conquered sin and death, He provides eternal life for all who have faith in Him. He **is at the right hand of God**, indicating that He shares God's authority, and that no higher authority exists who can turn Him against His people. And Jesus **intercedes for us** so that Christians always remain in the Father's love. Verses 35-36 indicate that visible threats, including the prospect of death by persecution (**sword**), cannot separate the believer from God's love. On the contrary, in spite of these, the believer **overwhelmingly conquers** ("we are hyper-victors"). In vv. 38-39, invisible threats cannot tear the believer from God's love. Paul concludes the list with the phrase **nor any other created thing**, which includes both the devil *and* the believer. It is inconceivable that a true believer, who at times might not be able to keep his own shoe tied or balance his checkbook, could undo the eternal purposes of God that include His foreknowledge and their glorification. The believer is not nearly that powerful, nor the Spirit and the Savior so incompetent.

IV. Vindication: The Jewish People and the Problems with Being Right with God (9:1-11:36)

A. God Has Not Broken His Word to Israel (9:1-29)

God will never stop loving believers, and He will keep all His promises to them on the basis of their connection with Christ (Rm 8). But this is harder to assert in light of what might appear to be God's ceasing to love Israel and His reneging on OT promises to the Jewish people. In chaps.

9-11, Paul vindicates God's character, proving that God always keeps His promises, even to Israel, and could thus be counted on to keep His promises to believers.

9:1-5. Paul felt great anguish about the spiritual condition of his kinsmen. **Accursed** (*anathema*, v. 3) means "to be cursed," here referring to eschatological judgment. Many scholars argue that Rm 9 is about God's sovereign choice to utilize entire nations to fulfill His purposes in history. But this is unlikely in light of Paul's wish to trade places with his fellow Jews and suffer eternal cursing. The preferable understanding is that God's choices involve the election of individuals for eternal life or its opposite.

Some of the privileges in vv. 4-5 have future components as well as past ones. For example, Israel's **adoption as sons** is grounded in God's selection of Israel as the recipient of His covenant blessings (cf. Ex 4:22; Jr 31:9). But Israel's sonship also has a glorious future component for Jewish believers (see Is 43:6; 45:11; 63:16-17; 64:8-12; Hs 1:10; Mal 3:17, all in eschatological contexts). This suggests, among other things, that God is not finished with the Jewish people yet, the primary point of Rm 9, 10, and 11. The future implications of these blessings gave Paul hope that God had not broken off relations with Israel and would yet keep His promises—all of them—to the people. Verse 5 indicates that **Christ** shares the divine nature, was incarnate, is absolutely sovereign, but is also worthy of eternal acclamation (**blessed forever**). Paul's anguish stems from his awareness that the Jewish people were not (yet!) experiencing everything God promised them, including their own exalted Messiah. Each of the privileges in 9:4-5 belongs to Israel presently (note the present tense **are** in 9:4a), suggesting that these privileges have not been rescinded. Their experience of these blessings, however, is contingent upon faith in Christ.

9:6-13. Paul argued that God would keep His promises for "true" Israel. **They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel** (v. 6) is explained by vv. 7-13. The true Jewish people are Jews who are not mere descendants of Abraham but are rather his ethnic descendants *who were chosen by God to be recipients of His covenant blessings* including salvation. In v. 6, Paul does not have Gentile believers in view. He is concerned to demonstrate that what God was doing with Israel in Paul's day was what God had always done with the descendants of Abraham, and Gentile Christians are not in view. Paul's point

is to indicate that “true Israel” consists of the ethnic descendants of Abraham who have embraced Christ, who are the “faithful remnant,” who are a narrower subset of broader ethnic Israel. **THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED** (v. 7) cites Gn 21:12; see the note there. **The children of the promise** (v. 8) comprise the true Israel, the true offspring of Abraham, and those, like Isaac but not Ishmael, are chosen by God to be blessed. For v. 9, see the note on Gn 18:10. But Isaac and Ishmael had different mothers. Perhaps God discriminated between the two on that basis. Jacob and Esau, however, had the same mother and were conceived at the same time (vv. 10-11). **God’s purpose according to His choice** (v. 11) is a prominent theme in chaps. 9 and 11 (see 9:15, 17, 18, 19-21, 22-24; 11:1-2, 4-6, 23, 28-29, 30-32), and indicates that salvation rests upon His sovereign purposes. Verse 12 cites Gn 25:23; see the note there. In the phrases **JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED** (Mal 1:2; see the comments), **HATED** sometimes means “loved less” (Lk 14:26), but that is not the case here. Malachi 1:2 indicates that it has a more active sense. God **hated** Esau by rejecting him, excluding him from the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is supported by Mal 1, where God deliberately cursed Esau and his descendants. God’s love for Jacob was manifested in actively choosing him to receive the promised blessings (including salvation). Both Gn 25:23 and Mal 1:2 begin with God’s choice of the individuals, not whole people groups descended from them, and indicate that Paul’s topic was God’s sovereign choice of individuals to include them in His covenant or to exclude them from it.

9:14-16. God’s electing love (v. 13) is developed in these verses. The question, **There is no injustice** [“unfairness”] **with God, is there?** (v. 14) means that Paul saw no unfairness in God freely choosing those who are saved. God would be perfectly just to condemn every person and save no one. That He chooses to save some indicates His grace, not His unfairness. Verse 15 cites Ex 33:19 where God reveals to Moses one of His fundamental attributes: that He remains free to show His **MERCY** and **COMPASSION** to whomever He freely chooses. Thus **it** (the bestowing of His mercy and compassion) depends on **God who has mercy** (v. 16). God determines who will be saved. That was true with the immediate offspring of the patriarchs, and it was true with the Jewish people in Paul’s day. God was doing with the Jewish people what He had always done,

namely, sovereignly and graciously selecting some of the physical descendants of Abraham to be recipients of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant including salvation (as indicated by Isaac and Jacob) and rejecting others from it (illustrated by Ishmael and Esau), and this indicates that He continued to fulfill His promises to Israel.

9:17-18. Here Paul develops the concept implied by “Esau I hated” (v. 13), using the example of Pharaoh as his illustration. Seventeen times Exodus mentions Pharaoh’s hard heart, the first two being ascribed to God’s decision to harden him (Ex 4:21; 7:3). Only four times does the text say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex 7:4; 8:15, 32; 9:34), and one of those verses (8:15) says that “he hardened his heart . . . as the LORD had said,” indicating that God was the impetus behind Pharaoh’s hardness. God hardened Pharaoh **TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH**, and because God smote the Egyptians with no less than ten plagues because of Pharaoh’s obduracy, even the inhabitants of Jericho, forty years later, heard and recollected the reports of His power (Jos 2:9-11). By implication, the hardening of Israel resulted in the spread of the gospel into Gentile lands.

9:19-21. Verse 19 could be paraphrased this way: “How can God judge people for their sinfulness (like Pharaoh’s or Israel’s hard-heartedness)? Are they not doing what *He* has sovereignly willed them to do?” Paul never gave an answer to the question, but instead reproves the vexed or dismissive attitude with which it is asked. **Answers back** (v. 20) means “to criticize in return” or “to answer antagonistically,” and is found in Lk 14:6, when the lawyers and Pharisees could not refute Jesus on the topic of healing on the Sabbath (“They could *make no reply* to this.”). The apostle gave no answer because, in the final analysis, the mechanics of God’s providence over sin is a mystery. The **lump of clay** (v. 21) refers metaphorically to all of humanity from which the **potter** (God) chooses to make a **vessel for honorable use** (in context, to receive His mercy and compassion) and another **for common use** (i.e., to be excluded from His mercy and compassion).

9:22-23. The syntax of these two verses is complex, but should probably be understood in this way: But if God endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath prepared for destruction

- because He was willing to demonstrate His wrath, and
- to make His power known, and
- to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

then what will you say to that? (Paul's sentence is incomplete; he never provided a "then" for the "if" that begins v. 22, so this last phrase is added to make the sentence grammatically complete.)

God is longsuffering (translated **patience** in v. 22) not to provide extra time for unbelievers to be saved, but, in keeping with Pharaoh's example, to afford God a greater opportunity to **demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known**, and thereby to bring glory to Himself as the holy one who will not tolerate sin. See v. 17 for use of the words **demonstrate** and **power** in connection with Pharaoh, who is the concrete illustration of the principles found in vv. 22-23. Ultimately the demonstration of His wrath and power upon vessels prepared for destruction is for the purpose of showing His profound grace toward those **He prepared beforehand for glory**. It is impossible to appreciate God's saving grace unless it is seen against the sobering backdrop of His judgment. **Prepared for destruction** could be translated "who prepare themselves for destruction," but it is preferable to see it as a true passive. While the agent of the preparation is not mentioned in v. 22, the context makes it clear that it is God (9:13, 15, 16, 18, 19-21). If Rm 9 emphasizes God's sovereign role in the condemnation of sinners, Rm 10 makes it clear that the individual is equally responsible for his own sins that result in condemnation.

The Bible teaches that the sovereignty of God extends even to sin, evil, and suffering in the world. God stood behind the hard-heartedness of Pharaoh and Israel's sin of unbelief, but in neither case was *He* to be held morally culpable for their sins. They bear the guilt of their rebellious actions. For a defensible, logical, non-contradictory discussion of the relationship of God's sovereignty and man's free will and moral responsibility, see John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 625-734. On a more popular level, cf. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 315-354.

9:24-26. God not only chooses Jewish people to be saved, but also **Gentiles** (v. 24). Paul cited Hs 2:23 in 9:25, and Hs 1:10 in 9:26 (see the

comments in Hosea). By analogy, Paul applied what is said of the restoration of apostate Jews to Gentiles. Paul used these verses to indicate that God was fashioning for Himself a single people, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, reconciled to Him by the work of Christ. But the citation of verses from Hosea does not indicate that "the Church fulfills the promises made to Israel" or that "the Church is the new Israel," for Jewish believers like Paul were fulfilling Hosea's prophecy, and later Israel will be reconciled as a whole (cf. 11:25-26).

9:27-29. Paul returned to Israel's situation. In vv. 27-28, Paul cited Is 10:22-23 in which Isaiah emphasized that only a small remnant would be saved, a situation that was being fulfilled in Paul's day (9:6-13). Isaiah also noted that God judges **THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY** (better "completely and finally") those who remain unrepentant. Paul cited Is 1:9, a verse indicating that God had preserved some who had not succumbed to apostasy and judgment. These OT verses support what Paul said in 9:6-23. God was keeping His promises to Israel, and was doing so in the same way that He had always done it—through the remnant of Israel, meaning God was selecting some, but not all, of the physical descendants of Abraham to be in a right covenantal standing with Him, including salvation.

B. God Has Not Cheated Israel (9:30–10:21)

Many believers are understandably troubled by Rm 9, but beginning in 9:30 and running throughout chap. 10, Paul developed a more familiar doctrine, that of man's responsibility. In chap. 9, Israel rejects Jesus because God hardened her. In chap. 10, Israel rejects Jesus because she has freely chosen to do so.

9:30–10:4. Gentiles . . . attained righteousness . . . which is by faith (v. 30) provides an illustration of 9:16. Israel, however, did not attain righteousness, for they were "pursuing the law *for* righteousness" (v. 31) (a better translation than **pursuing a law of righteousness**), and seeking righteousness by **works** and not by **faith** (vv. 31-32). Paul cited Is 28:16 in v. 33, and based on its use in 10:11, understood it messianically as a reference to Jesus. As in 9:3, Paul expressed his longing that his kinsmen find salvation in Christ (10:1), another indication that Paul was writing about God's choice of individuals to receive salvation, not His choice regarding what roles people groups would play in history. On 10:3, cf. the note on Php 3:2-12. **The end of the law** indicates that Jesus, by His death, brought

the era of living under the law to a close. Just as the finish line is both the goal and the end of a race, Jesus is the goal of the law inasmuch as it anticipated and pointed toward Him, and He is the end of the law since He brings its era of governing life to a close (see the comments on Mt 5:17-19; Rm 3:21-26; Gl 3:10-4:11).

10:5-13. In v. 5, Paul alluded to Lv 18:5 (see the note there), and with it censures unbelieving Israel (see the similar point of allusions to Lv 18:5 in Neh 9:29; Ezk 18:9; 20:11). He indicates that if one insists on establishing his righteousness with God by keeping the law, then he will live (have eternal life) *only* if he actually keeps the law. But Paul already demonstrated the futility of this in chaps. 1–3. In vv. 6-8, Paul cited Dt 9:4 and 30:11-14, where Moses commanded the people to obey the Lord. As in Moses' day when God graciously took the initiative to make the law readily available to the Jewish people so they could obey it, so also in Paul's day He made the gospel accessible as well. Verses 9-10 are sometimes cited to support the idea that one must publicly and verbally confess Christ in order to be saved. Confessing is a result of true saving faith and an evidence of it (cf. 1Tm 6:12; Ti 1:16), and lack of confession may indicate lack of salvation. Much of the apostolic preaching included an emphasis on Christ's resurrection (cf. Ac 2:14-40; 3:12-26; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:16-31), and it is faith *in a resurrected Christ* that saves one (**believe . . . that God raised Him**, v. 9). In vv. 11-13, Paul cited Is 28:16 again (cf. 9:33), and expanded on the implications of "whoever believes" in vv. 12-13. In v. 13, Paul cited Jl 2:32, emphasizing the universal availability of the gospel.

10:14-17. These verses ask questions that ultimately receive an affirmative answer in v. 18 (**Indeed they have**). Regarding the need to get the gospel to the Jewish people, messengers have been recruited (v. 14c), sent out (v. 15a), the word of faith has been preached (v. 14b), the message has been heard (v. 14b, 17, 18), and the message has been understood (vv. 19-20). So, what is the problem? The problem is, they did not believe it (vv. 16-17). Paul's point is that God cannot be blamed for not doing enough to get the gospel to the Jewish people. The problem, at least in chap. 10, resides with Israel's refusal to believe the gospel. Romans 10:14-15 are often used as motivational verses to bolster world evangelization, but the context makes it clear that Paul had in mind the Jewish people, and that, even in

his day, the gospel had made extensive inroads into Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world. But the mission to the Jewish people has not been completed.

10:18-21. In v. 18 Paul cited Ps 19:4 about how creation broadcasts God's majesty everywhere. Similarly, the gospel was disseminated widely enough among the Jewish people and the rest of the world that Paul could say it **HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH and TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD** (v. 18). He maintained that Israel has known its content (vv. 16-18), and should have known of God's plan to distribute it widely among the nations and have them embrace it (vv. 19b-20). Paul cited Dt 32:21b (v. 19) to indicate that God determined to bring salvation to the Gentiles and thereby cause Israel to be jealous when He did it. He also cited Is 65:1 in 10:20, where Isaiah prophesied that God would turn the Jewish people to Himself once again along with Gentiles (Is 66:18-21), the inclusion of Gentile salvation being Paul's main point here. God was doing this in Paul's day with a few believing Jews and a host of Gentiles. In v. 21 the apostle cited Is 65:2 in reference to the many unbelievers in Israel. Is 65:2 emphasizes both Israel's obstinate refusal to embrace her Messiah and God's refusal to withdraw His gracious offer of deliverance.

C. God Has Not Rejected Israel (11:1-10)

In Rm 9, Paul introduced the themes of election of some of the offspring of Abraham to be His children of promise and the hardening of others. In chap. 10, he emphasized the need for faith in Christ. In chap. 11, Paul weaves together all of these themes, and argues that there is still a future for ethnic Israel in God's program.

11:1-6. One might think that Paul believed that God rejected Israel because of her disobedience and obstinacy, but that is a misunderstanding of what Paul was saying. Once again, answering an unseen objector, Paul twice states categorically that **God has not rejected His people** (vv. 1-2). He cites himself as the textbook example that God had not altogether and permanently rejected the Jewish people (v. 1). **Rejected** (v. 2) is the functional opposite of **foreknew**, and indicates that God's foreknowledge is not simple prognostication, but is active and brings about what is foreknown. Paul referred to the record of Elijah (citing 1Kg 1:10, 14, 18), who had an over-inflated view of his own importance and wrongly saw himself as the sole Jew still faithful to God (v. 3). But God spiritually preserved

a faithful remnant of 7,000 (v. 4), just as He was doing with the faithful remnant of Jews in Paul's day and throughout the Church age. This preservation was accomplished on the basis of **God's gracious choice** (v. 5), not **on the basis of works** by the Jewish people (v. 6).

11:7-10. The majority of the Jewish people did not attain a right standing with God. Instead, they were hardened (v. 7; cf. also Rm 9:17-18). But the elect attained it on the basis of God's grace. As shocking as it sounds that God would harden some of His people, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures—all contain passages that speak of God's periodic hardening of His people in the past, so that what was happening in Paul's day was no anomaly. **GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR** (v. 8) is a citation of Is 29:10. **EYES TO SEE NOT . . . TO THIS VERY DAY** cites Dt 29:4. Verse 9 cites Ps 69:22-23. God was continuing to interact with the Jewish people in the same manner that He had always treated them, and by noting these precedents, Paul indicates that God had not broken His promises to Israel in Paul's day.

D. Israel Is Not Lost Forever (11:11-36)

11:11-16. Paul's readers might conclude from 11:1-10 that Israel has permanently fallen from God's ongoing program, but that is not what Paul meant. **Stumble** (v. 11) refers to Israel's temporary spiritual setback, but her condition was not a permanent **fall**. God's hardening of Israel, and Israel's refusal to believe in Jesus as their Messiah, was ordained by God to provide time for the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles (vv. 11, 12, 15). Just as God's fame spread as a result of Pharaoh's hardening (cf. the note on 9:17-18), so also His fame was spreading to the Gentiles in Paul's day because of Israel's rejection of the gospel. As Gentiles embrace the Jewish Messiah and receive the accompanying blessings, God's and Paul's aim thereby was **to make them** [the Jewish people] **jealous** (lit., "to provoke them to be envious" so that they will imitate the Gentiles). Paul was intensely burdened that the Jewish people come to Christ, for when they do, the world will erupt in spiritual vitality and life (vv. 12, 15; cf. Is 27:6). **Their rejection** and **their acceptance** (v. 15) may refer to God's temporary rejection and future acceptance of them, but in light of "their transgression" in vv. 11, 12 and Paul's assertion that God has not rejected them (11:1-2), the better understanding is that the phrases refer to Israel's rejection of God and what He had done through Christ. The phrase **life from the dead** (v. 15) may

indicate that Israel's restoration, and the concomitant blessings for the world take place at the time of the general resurrection immediately prior to the eternal state. But similar phrases are found in 4:17 (God "gives life to the dead") and 6:13 ("present yourselves as those alive from the dead"), and suggests instead that Paul was simply stating the fact that Israel will enjoy spiritual life at a time in the future, with that time left undefined. Verse 16 provides further support for Paul's assertion that Israel will be restored in God's favor. The identification of the **the first piece of dough** and **lump** is debated, as is the referent of **the root** and **the branches**. On the basis of 11:28-29, **the first piece of dough** and **the root** probably refer to the Jewish patriarchs who were upheld by the covenant promises of God. The promises God made to them guarantee an ethnic people who will stand in right relationship with Him (cf. Gn 12:1-3). This happy prospect, however, awaits a future fulfillment.

11:17-24. Paul continued to employ the metaphor of a tree to Israel's spiritual condition and awaited restoration. The **branches that were broken off** (v. 17) refer to Jewish unbelievers, and it should be noted that these were not individuals who once were saved and then lost their salvation. While Paul's analogy has them **broken off** from the tree, in reality they were never part of the tree to start with. The **wild olive** branches refer to Gentile believers. The grafting refers to their salvation. The **rich root** refers to the covenant blessings of God promised to the patriarchs. Those blessings sustained and supported Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and those covenant promises gave rise to **the olive tree**. The cultivated olive tree branches that were not broken off refer to the Jewish people chosen by God to be the recipients of His covenant blessings, including salvation through faith in Christ. Gentile believers have become partakers **with them** of the spiritual aspects of the Abrahamic and new covenants. Because Gentile believers benefit from the Abrahamic covenant, anti-Semitism is ludicrous (v. 18). Many of the Jewish people would not partake of the covenant blessings of God, and many Gentiles would. But that did not mean that Gentile believers were intrinsically superior to the Jews (v. 19). Therefore, Paul warns Gentile believers not to **be arrogant toward** (v. 18) the Jewish people. A Gentile believer must never think, "I have been grafted into God's blessings, but most Jewish people have not been. Therefore, that means that I am superior, that God prefers me to them." The key to

a right standing with God is not some modicum of ethnic or religious superiority, but **faith** (v. 20). **You stand by your faith** means “You stand *only* by your faith, nothing else!” But Paul makes it clear that if Gentiles do not come to God through faith in Christ, they will not be saved either (vv. 21-22), and if Jews begin to have faith in Christ, they will be saved (v. 23). Paul held out the joyful prospect that some day the Jewish people would come to Christ. God has engineered the peculiar process of Gentiles receiving Jewish spiritual blessings, called by Paul **grafted contrary to nature** (v. 24). That is, if an older cultivated olive tree was failing to produce decent olives, branches from a more productive tree could be grafted into the limbs or trunk of the older tree, and those branches would, in time, produce good olives. But *no one* would take the branches from a wild olive tree and graft them into a cultivated olive tree. Those wild branches would not produce the desired quality of olive. Yet this is what God has done with Gentile believers. Verses 17-24 do not mean that Gentile believers “become Jewish.” While they enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish people, they remain “wild olive branches.” They do not transform into “cultivated branches.”

11:25-27. A mystery (v. 25) could be a truth hinted at in the OT but fully revealed in the NT, or one altogether unknown in the OT and revealed in the NT. The latter is the sense here, for the OT speaks of an enormous number of Gentiles being included in the one people of God (cf. the notes on Is 2:2-4; 66:18-24), but the idea that those Gentiles are included prior to the wholesale restoration of Israel is not seen in the OT. **Partial hardening** means that a (majority) part of Israel were not saved based on God’s sovereign choice, but a minority (the faithful remnant) like Paul believed. **Fullness of the Gentiles** refers to the “full number of Gentiles” whom God has determined to be saved prior to Him lifting the hardening from Israel. **All Israel will be saved** (v. 26) is the climax of all of Rm 9, 10, and 11. **All Israel**, according to the use of the phrase in the LXX, never referred to every single Jew (cf. 1Ch 19:17 where it refers only to soldiers; 1Sm 25:1, where it refers only to those who buried Samuel), and more than likely Paul does not mean that in the future every Jew will be saved. **All Israel** should probably be understood to refer to the vast majority of the ethnic people of Israel, Jews from every tribe and from every locale all over the world. For the timing of Israel’s salvation, cf. the comments on Zch

12:10, Mt 23:37-39, and Ac 3:19, which indicate that Israel’s salvation happens during the tribulation period—before, not during, the second coming—and is a necessary precursor for His return. In addition, **all Israel** never referred to every Jew from all time. When the phrase is used in the LXX, it refers to a representation of Jewish people *at a given point in time* (e.g., Nm 16:34; 1Ch 11:10; 15:25; 2Ch 10:3), and Paul’s use of the phrase reflects the same understanding. At a specific point in time that was future to Paul (and to us), a colossal number of Jews from all wings of Judaism will turn to Christ. Paul is not referring to Jewish people who became believers throughout the church age and who are enfolded into the church, and in fact **Israel** does not refer to “the Church” comprised of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, though it is often understood that way. In 11:25, **Israel** clearly refers to the ethnic people of Israel, and there is no indication that Paul redefines the term in v. 26 to mean the Church. In addition, in v. 28, **they** has as its antecedent **all Israel** in v. 26, and in v. 28 the Church is not in view. Paul cited Is 59:20-21 in 11:26b, c, and 27a, and Is 27:9 in 11:27b to provide warrant for his confidence that in the future all Israel will be saved, and it is less likely that they present the time of this conversion. Some view these OT verses as an indication of the time of Israel’s salvation (when the Deliverer comes from Zion—i.e., at the second coming), but it was already argued above that the salvation of all Israel must precede the second coming, so that Is 59:20-21 and 27:9 give the assurance from the OT that all Israel will be saved, rather than establishing the time when that salvation takes place. Israel’s salvation is grounded in the death of Messiah Jesus at His *first* coming, not at His second.

11:28-32. In Paul’s day, many of the Jewish people were **enemies** of the gospel, but **for the sake of the fathers** (because of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; cf. Gn 12:1-3; 15:6; 17:7-8), they remain God’s chosen people and will someday be restored (v. 28). **The gifts and the calling of God** (v. 29) does not refer to the supposed permanency of miraculous spiritual gifts. In context, Paul was speaking of God’s covenant promises that remain **irrevocable** (v. 29). In v. 30, Paul addressed Gentile believers. Because of the hardening of most of the Jewish people, the Gentiles are given the time and opportunity to embrace the gospel. Verse 31 indicates, once again, that the disobedience of the

Jewish people is not permanent. In the future, when a precise number of Gentiles are saved at a time known only to God, God will lift the hardening of Israel and show them **mercy** (v. 31). It is God's intention to show His grace and mercy. In order to do that, He **shuts up all in disobedience** (synonymous with "hardening") so that He may show mercy to all, to "all people groups (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) without distinction," not "all individuals without exception."

11:33-36. The doxology that closes this section extols God for His **riches**, possibly the riches of His mercy (v. 32), His **wisdom** (His impressive skills), and **knowledge** (perhaps His foreknowledge so prominent in chaps. 9-11). His **judgments** do not refer to the eschatological condemnation of the lost, but His deliberative processes. Verse 34 cites Is 40:13-14, and emphasizes the futility of fully knowing how or what God has determined, as well as His utter independence of man in executing His plans. Verse 35 cites Jb 41:3, indicating even here that one experiences the "riches" of God's mercy (11:32-33) on the basis of His grace, not through reciprocity whereby He gives grace to those who have earned it. **From Him** (v. 36) indicates that He is the source of all things in the universe. **Through Him** indicates that He is the agent through whom all things exist and come about. And **to Him** means that He is the goal of all that exists and happens in creation, all of which serves to bring Him **glory** (praise) **forever**.

V. Application: The Implications of Being Right with God (12:1-15:33)

A. The Implications for the Christian's Spiritual Commitment (12:1-2)

12:1-2. In chap. 12, Paul transitioned to a discussion of the practical implications of being right with God, starting with the proper response to God. In light of the **mercies of God** (v. 1) expounded in chaps. 1-11, Paul urged the believers in Rome to function as **living sacrifices**. **Present** ("to stand before another in order to serve him," cf. Rm 6:13) is a virtual command, the aorist tense indicating not a one-time dedication, but the completeness and comprehensiveness of placing oneself at God's disposal. Unlike dead animal sacrifices, Christians must live to serve God constantly. **Spiritual** (*logikos*, from which the Eng. word "logical" is derived) means "rational," "reasonable," "that which is carefully thought through." **Conformed** (v. 2) means "to be shaped

by a pattern or mold," namely, the pattern or mold of **this world** (*aion*, "temporary era"). Rather than be shaped to look like the world, the Christian's **mind** is to be renewed in order to appreciate the importance and benefits of God's will as revealed in His Word.

B. The Implications for the Christian's Life in the Body of Christ (12:3-13)

12:3-8. Beginning in 12:3, Paul turned his attention to the social implications of being right with God. **Measure of faith** (v. 3) probably means "the *instrument* for measuring, namely saving faith." Every believer is saved by faith, and if each measures himself against that "yardstick" or "standard," conceit will vanish, and the diverse parts of the local body will work together more profitably for their mutual care (vv. 4-5). The body receives help especially as its members use their spiritual gifts (vv. 6-8). **Prophecy** (v. 6) was not "powerful preaching" or "convicting others of sin." A prophet was God's mouthpiece, His spokesperson who received direct revelation and spoke it with authority to His people (Ex 7:1-2; Dt 18:18, 20; Jr 23:16; for more on prophecy, cf. the comments on 1Co 12:10, and on 1Co 14 as a whole). The prophet is to prophesy "according to the standard of faith" (HCSB), or "in keeping with the Christian faith"—i.e., prophecies must not contradict previously revealed truth. **Service** (v. 7) refers to working in practical ways to assist believers. **Teaching** is the systematic impartation of knowledge or skill, in this case biblical truth. **Exhortation** (v. 8) carries the dual sense of "comforting" (cf. 2Co 1:3-7) and "urging one to live biblically" (Rm 12:1). **Giving** refers to the glad contribution of financial resources to the needs of Christians and the church without duplicitous motives (the meaning of **liberality**). The one **who leads** provides the oversight and direction for the church (cf. 1Tm 3:4-5, where the word is translated "manage"; and 1Tm 5:17, translated "rule"). **Diligence** means "eagerness, hard work, and speed." **Mercy** involves showing sympathy or kindness to those who suffer. For more on spiritual gifts, cf. the comments on 1Co 12-14.

12:9-13. While one should serve mainly in the area of his giftedness, sometimes he or she must help more broadly, and this passage explains how that must be done. An act of **love** (v. 9) can be hypocritical if it cloaks an attitude of reluctance or self-seeking. **Abhor** means "a strong feeling of revulsion or aversion." **Cling** means "to glue something together." **Devoted** (v. 10) means "to

be tender and affectionate” to another, as if to a cherished family member (**brotherly love**, Gk. *philadelphia*). **Give preference . . . in honor** means “being eager to value or promote the reputation of another” ahead of oneself. Not **lagging behind** (v. 11) means “not being slack in accomplishing what is worthwhile.” For **diligence**, see 12:8. **Fervent** means lit., “boiling, seething,” but here connotes having eagerness and enthusiasm (cf. Ac 18:25). **In spirit** may refer to one’s inner disposition, but probably refers to the genuine gusto that comes from the Holy Spirit. **Rejoicing in hope** (v. 12) indicates “rejoicing *because of* hope.” **Contributing** (v. 13) is from the verb *koinoneo*, and means “to share”; in this context, sharing one’s resources to help when others have serious needs.

C. The Implications for the Christian’s Life in Relation to the Secular World (12:14–13:14)

12:14-21. Paul moved from discussing life in the body of Christ to how a believer should respond to unbelievers who persecute them. Most of these exhortations are applicable to Christian relationships as well. **Bless** (v. 14; cf. Mt 5:44) means “to call upon God to bestow His kindness” on someone, and **curse** is its opposite. Verse 15 cannot be restricted to interaction only with believers. Nothing forbids the Christian from celebrating (appropriately) or mourning with a non-Christian friend. In v. 16, Paul may be speaking of relationships between Christians, but **be of the same mind toward one another** could equally be a directive “to have something in common” with one’s unbelieving friends. Paul had already forbade arrogance in Christian circles (cf. 12:3), and may be encouraging the Roman believers to avoid spiritual conceit toward their unbelieving acquaintances. **Respect what is right in the sight of all men** (v. 17b) indicates that believers should do and value the praiseworthy things unbelievers applaud (e.g., working hard; giving to the poor). Believers are actively to seek **peace with all men** (v. 18), though sometimes peace is not possible, for an unbeliever may not cooperate. Paul cited Dt 32:35 in v. 19, and ordered believers to let God take revenge on those who hurt them. Believers are to carry out the mandate of v. 20 (which cites Pr 25:21-22). The phrase **HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD** is puzzling, but Pr 25 was probably referring to an ancient Egyptian practice of demonstrating regret or repentance by carrying a pan filled with burning coals. Whatever the case, Paul’s words must be understood in a redemptive light in view of vv. 14, 17, 19, and 21.

13:1-7. Paul continued discussing how Christians should interact with the secular world, but his focus shifted here to relationships with the governing authorities. **Subjection** (v. 1; cf. Eph 5:22, 24; Ti 3:1-2) means “to align oneself under the authority” of another, but Paul’s order is not to be obeyed blindly. The Bible is full of examples of God’s people passively resisting religious or secular authorities when those leaders required people to violate clear biblical directives (e.g., Dn 3, 6). **For** introduces a reason for submitting to governing authorities: They are **established by God** (cf. Ac 17:24-26). Because God is sovereign, the governments that exist are there because He ordained their existence. But as in the case of His providence over sin, the governmental leaders are morally culpable for the sin, evil, and suffering they propagate, not God (cf. the comments on Rm 9:22-23). **Therefore** (v. 2), because God founds all nations with their governments, to actively **resist** a secular regime is to rebel against God and **receive condemnation**, possibly both God’s disapproval and formal condemnation from the authorities (cf. vv. 4–5). **For** (v. 3) explains why condemnation comes upon rebels. The government should not be opposed, for it guards the safety and security of its citizens (vv. 3-4). **Bear the sword** (v. 4) may mean “to practice capital punishment,” or it may mean nothing more than “to punish criminals.” But if a government determines that the death sentence is appropriate, it appears from this passage that it has the right to carry it out. **For conscience’ sake** (v. 5) means that if a Christian understands that God is behind the existence of one’s government, then disobeying that government will result in a violation of one’s conscience. **Render** (v. 7) is the same word used by Jesus in Mt 22:21.

13:8-14. Paul gave more general commands in this section, but his primary emphasis may still be how the Christian should act in the world. **Owe nothing to anyone** (v. 8) does not forbid taking or giving loans, for both the law and Jesus permitted it (Lv 25:35-36; Mt 5:42; Lk 6:35). Paul’s point is that the believer has the constant obligation to show **love** to all, and this obligation never stops. The verb **love** means “to demonstrate warmth and affection, usually to those with whom one is closely related or associated.” It also has the nuance of joyfully and enthusiastically meeting the needs of others (cf. the comments on 1Co 13:1-3), even one’s enemies (Mt 5:44). Love fulfills **the law**. In vv. 9-10,

Paul describes what happens when believers love others, but he is not prescribing that they must keep the law (cf. Rm 7:1-4; 10:4). Though Abraham did not possess and consciously obey the law of Moses, nevertheless by having faith in God his life fulfilled the law's requirements (Gn 26:5; see the comments there), though he was not saved by fulfilling them (Gn 15:6). Paul's command to love is presented with urgency in light of the rapture of the Church (v. 11). **Sleep** refers to the spiritual stupor that a believer must avoid. Jesus will hold each Christian accountable for his spiritual condition. **The night** (v. 12) refers to this present spiritually darkened era. **The day** probably refers to the inbreaking of Jesus and the kingdom, perhaps to the "day of the Lord." **Armor of light** would provide both spiritual protection and illumination so that one's enemies can be observed and avoided. One of the enemies is the believer's own **flesh** (v. 14; for "the flesh," cf. the comments on Rm 7:5-6; 8:12-13). **Carousing** (v. 13) means "a rowdy gathering typified by drunkenness and illicit sex." **Sensuality** refers to a lifestyle without any moral restraints, usually involving sexual sins. **Put on** (v. 14) was often used for putting on clothes (Mk 5:15; Ac 12:21), and in much the same way, the believer is to take Christ with him wherever he goes, just as he does his own clothing.

D. The Implications for the Christian's Life in His Relationships with Weaker and Differing Christians (14:1–15:13)

14:1-3. Paul addressed "strife and jealousy" in 13:13. Here he addressed a specific concern that could cause strife. Paul presented what he wanted the Romans to do in vv. 1-3, and gave the theological warrant for it in vv. 4-9. The **weak** were Jewish believers who felt that eating meat offered to a false god was an act of idolatry, so they ate **vegetables only** (v. 2). Food was offered in honor of the gods, and surplus fare was sold to the markets to provide income for the priests and maintain the temples. Gentile believers had the conviction (**faith**) that it was permissible to eat this meat. Paul directed the stronger Gentile believers to fellowship with Jewish believers, but not to coerce them to adopt the stronger brother's position (v. 1). They were not to **regard** their Jewish counterparts **with contempt** ("to despise," "to hold a disdainful, harsh attitude of disapproval"). Jewish believers were likewise not to **judge** (here "to nurse an unfavorable opinion of another," "to criticize, find fault") their Gentile brothers, for God **accepted** them.

14:4-9. Here Paul gave the theological basis for the exhortations of vv. 1-3. **Judge** (v. 4) specifically addressed the Jewish believers who were judging Gentile believers for eating meat offered to idols (cf. "judge" in v. 3). The Gentile Christians were **the servant of another**, i.e., of God, not of their fellow Jews. Jewish believers, therefore, could not dictate to the Gentile believers what they must do. Scripture was silent on the issue, so **each person** had to **be fully convinced in his own mind** (v. 5), i.e., had to follow his own convictions about what to do. **Day** indicates that Jewish believers continued to celebrate the Sabbath and holy days, though they were no longer under obligation to the law to do so (cf. Rm 6:14-15; 7:1-3; 10:4). Gentiles felt no compulsion to observe them. Both options were acceptable. Each group sought to please God in what they did (v. 6), but ironically disparaged each other when their opinions differed. Verses 7-9 reminded the Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome that only Jesus, on the basis of His resurrection authority, had the right to prescribe how believers should behave when Scripture was silent on an issue. But when Scripture clearly bans an action, the church is obliged "to judge" those whose lives are scandalously sinful (cf. the comments on 1Co 5:1-5, 9-13).

14:10-12. Paul reiterated the directives from vv. 3-4 (cf. "judge" and "regard with contempt"). **Judgment seat** (*bema*) was the raised platform where secular authorities rendered verdicts in criminal cases (e.g., Mt 27:19; Jn 19:13; Ac 18:12; 25:6). It never refers to the place where awards were given to the victors in athletic contests. Rewards are given *following* the *bema* judgment and are dependent upon God's evaluation of the believer there, but the judgment and the giving of rewards are distinct both in terms of what transpires and the time at which they take place. There is, in fact, no mention of the assigning of eternal rewards in 14:10-12, only an accounting of each believer to God. Some day, possibly following the rapture of the church, each believer will give an account of his life to God (cf. the comments on 2Co 5:10 and 1Co 3:10-17). The implication is that believers should not denounce one another when their opinions differ. God can be trusted to deal with them if they have done something wrong, and it should be left to Him. This judgment does not pertain to a believer's eternal destiny, but it certainly will affect his rewards (see the comments on 1Co 4:1-5). **GIVE PRAISE** (*exomologeō*, v. 11) would be better translated "admit doing wrong" (cf. LXX 2Ch 6:24; Mt

3:6; Jms 5:16). Paul cited Is 45:23, which affirms that God alone judges on the last day.

14:13-23. In vv. 1-12, Paul addressed both the weak and strong, but here the stronger Gentile believers are primarily in view. The **stumbling block** (v. 13) is sometimes understood as the anger that the weaker brother feels when a stronger brother legitimately exercises his liberty. This is possible, but a better understanding is that the **stumbling block** is the pressure a Gentile believer puts on a Jewish believer to violate his standards and sin against his conscience (cf. vv. 22-23). In v. 14, Paul sided with the strong, but made it clear that the actions of the strong could harm the weak (Jewish believers) (v. 15). **Hurt** means “to be distressed, saddened,” possibly even “outraged.” **Destroy** (*apollumi*) here does not mean “to send one to hell for eternal ruin,” for no believer could do this to another. It often means “to damage,” “ruin,” or “harm” (Mt 9:17; Lk 21:18; Jms 1:11), and when the stronger brother cajoles the weaker to violate his standards, the weaker brother is harmed.

Therefore (v. 16) introduces Paul’s conclusion to vv. 14-15. It was a **good thing** for a Gentile Christian to eat meat, but if he insisted that a Jewish believer should eat contrary to the dictates of his conscience, then that **good thing** took an evil turn. The **kingdom of God** (v. 17) is manifested in and through the Church, but the Church cannot be equated with the kingdom. **Righteousness** has a horizontal, social sense, “upright actions.” **Drinking** anticipates drinking wine in v. 21. Wine was used as libations in the temples, and Jewish believers refused to purchase and drink wine just as they did meat. **All things indeed are clean** (v. 20) indicates that Jewish and Gentile believers alike were allowed to eat meat, just as Paul did. In v. 22, Paul urged the stronger brothers not to bully the weak into doing something that would violate their conscience. **He who doubts is condemned** (v. 23; also v. 22) does not mean that God will send this Christian to hell. As in v. 22, the weaker brother’s conscience will experience guilt because he or she ate **not from faith**, i.e., because the weak did not have the conviction that it was permissible to eat. If one engages in some practice not clearly forbidden by Scripture, no sin has been committed. But if a believer violates his conscience, *that* constitutes sin. God wants His people to have sensitive consciences in order to avoid sin (1Tm 1:5, 19; Heb 5:14).

15:1-6. In 14:1-12, Paul wrote about the need to avoid condemning other believers. In 14:13-23, he urged the believers in Rome not to impose their practices upon others when Scripture did not require it. And in 15:1-13, Paul advocated the need to imitate Jesus, who served others. Verses 1-2 were addressed to the stronger Gentile believers, who were not to impose their practices upon the Jewish believers. They were to follow the example of Jesus (v. 3) who **did not please Himself**. There has always been the tendency of God’s people to insist on their rights to engage in activities—sometimes questionable activities—on the basis of Christian liberty. But the more virtuous approach proffered by Paul is the willingness to surrender those rights for the sake of unity. Paul cited Ps 69:9, where **YOU** refers to God and **ME** refers to Jesus. The rebellious acts (**REPROACHES**) of all humankind against God were laid upon Jesus at the cross in the supreme act of self-sacrifice as He died to atone for sins. The Roman believers were obligated to follow His example, and act in ways that were considerate of others. The Hebrew Scriptures exist in part **for our instruction** (v. 4), and as believers see examples of those in the past who did not live solely to please themselves, they receive motivation from Scripture to persevere in the present and gain confidence (**hope**) regarding the future. See the comments on 5:3-5. Paul then recorded a wish related to the unity he has urged in the preceding verses. Scripture provides perseverance and encouragement (v. 4), but ultimately these come from God (v. 5). The **perseverance and encouragement** relate especially to unity, which is indispensable if this church would be effective in glorifying (enhancing the reputation of) **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 6) in Rome and in the world. Church unity would enhance their evangelistic endeavors, and would give the church greater capacity and vitality in supporting Paul’s missionary work (see “Purpose” in the introduction to Romans).

15:7-13. Accept one another (v. 7) is the same command with which Paul began this section of Romans (cf. 14:1), but here he referred to Jesus as the prime example of accepting those with whom there are pronounced differences (cf. 5:6-10). By His death, Jesus served the Jewish people **to confirm the promises given to the fathers** (v. 8; cf. the comments on Gn 12:1-3). Jesus’ atoning death provides the only means for the Jewish people to experience the full blessings of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Rm 4:13-17; 11:27-29;

Gl 3:1-18). But His death also served Gentiles by providing them an avenue (**mercy**) through which they would **glorify God** for their share in salvation (v. 9). Paul cited Ps 18:49 in v. 9, Dt 32:43 in v. 10, Ps 117:1 in v. 11, and Is 11:10 in v. 12 (cf. the comments on the respective OT verses). These verses have in common the prospect, observed in the OT, that Gentiles would come to know the Lord along with the Jewish people. Paul expressed another wish for the church in Rome (v. 13). The selfless work of Jesus provided the confident expectation (**hope**) expressed in vv. 7-13 that the Jewish people would receive all the covenant blessings and Gentiles would receive God's mercy and be numbered among His people who believe (though without "becoming Jewish"). **Joy** relates to the happy anticipation of seeing one's spiritual hopes fulfilled, and **peace** results when, **in believing** (trusting Him), one has assurance that He will accomplish His promises. The achievement of all God's purposes for the spiritual welfare of His children, including the unity of the church, comes from the **power of the Holy Spirit**. What a fitting closing to the apostle's discussion of Christian living and Christian liberty.

E. The Implications for the Support of Paul's Ministry (15:14-33)

15:14-21. Not only was Paul confident that the Spirit would cultivate the unity he encouraged in 14:1-15:13, he was also confident that the Roman Christians would cooperate with the Spirit in that process (v. 14), as they could **admonish one another**. But not only would the Spirit do His work and they would cooperate with Him, Paul also wrote to promote unity so that they would more effectively "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:6). Verses 15-16 provide the closest thing Paul gives for a purpose statement for this epistle. He wrote to remind them of numerous doctrinal truths, truths that motivated him to discharge **the grace that was given to him from God** related to his apostolic office. His call was to evangelize primarily the Gentiles (vv. 16-20) (cf. "Purpose" in the introduction to Romans). Romans 15:16-21 contains the most complete statement of Paul's "philosophy of ministry" for himself as an apostle. His focus was on reaching the Gentiles in order to present them as an offering to God. Isaiah 66:18-20 indicates that in the end times the Gentiles will stream to Jerusalem and the Lord, and it is possible that Paul saw his work as contributing to a preliminary manifestation of that end-time event. The **obedience of the Gentiles** (v. 18)

parallels the statements of 1:5 and 16:26, and reflects both the purpose of Paul's work and the reason behind the letter to the Romans. Paul's effectiveness came through **what Christ** accomplished **through him**, and **in the power of the Spirit** as well, including **the power of signs and wonders** (cf. 2Co 12:12) that designated him as a true apostle. If part of the purpose of **signs and wonders** was to prove that one was an apostle, then it is unlikely that they would be commonplace among the people of God. While Jesus and the Spirit were at work in Paul and were the source of all his accomplishments, he nevertheless did his part by **fully preaching the gospel of Christ** (v. 19). There is a wonderful but mysterious connection between God's power that brings achievement and the willing work of His people, but Paul's words credit God for the fruit produced through his work. **Illyricum** occupied what is modern Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The book of Acts does not mention **Illyricum** explicitly, but Paul probably went there on his third missionary journey after leaving Ephesus (Ac 19) and before arriving in Greece (Ac 20:1-2). It formed the farthest northwest area Paul reached before going to Rome. In keeping with his call as apostle to the Gentiles, Paul sought to evangelize in previously unreached areas (v. 20), and justifies doing so with a citation from Is 52:15 regarding God's spread of the renown of the Suffering Servant among the nations.

15:22-29. Paul presented his travel and ministry intentions in this passage. He was prevented from coming to the Roman church probably because of the demands of his work (v. 22). Paul mentioned that he was prevented in 1:13 as well, a verse that connects directly with 15:22. It is remotely possible that 1:14-15:21 is a parenthetical aside. What an aside it is! More likely, Paul simply reiterated his plans to visit Rome. For his travel plans, cf. "Date" in the introduction to Romans. Paul's immediate plan was to deposit the collection he gathered from the predominantly Gentile churches founded on his missionary journeys, a task that had occupied him for almost 20 years (cf. Ac 11:27-30 with Gl 2:1-10, c. AD 37-38). It was right for these Gentile churches **to make** this material **contribution** (better, "to establish fellowship" with, v. 26) to the persecuted Jewish believers in Judea, for the Gentiles were **indebted to them** spiritually for having disseminated the gospel (v. 27). This debt remains true today and churches might apply Paul's point by remembering to give financial support to those who labor

at bringing the Good News to Jewish people. He planned then to travel to Rome and to receive financial assistance from them to continue to Spain (v. 24; **to be helped** means “to provide practical assistance for one who must make a journey”). Romans is, among other things, a letter from a missionary seeking to raise support.

15:30-33. Paul had three prayer requests for the believers in Rome (v. 30). He asked that they pray that God would protect him from Jewish opponents who would harm him in Jerusalem (v. 31a). God did protect him, but perhaps not in a way Paul would have anticipated nor preferred (cf. Ac 21:27). His second request was that the collection would be favorably received by the believers in Judea (v. 31b). The only indication that it was in fact found in the cryptic statement of Ac 21:17, “. . . the brethren received us gladly.” No wonder! Paul showed up with a crate full of relief funds for them. The third request was that he might get to visit the believers in Rome (v. 32; cf. Ac 28).

VI. Paul’s Concluding Mandates (16:1-27)

A. Appreciate Christian Workers (16:1-16)

16:1-16. Tucked away in what seem to be “an-cillary” verses concluding Romans are other exhortations that would strengthen the church so it could be more effective in its evangelism. The word **greet** (*aspazomai*) (v. 3) does not mean “to say hello.” It means “to pay one’s respects,” “to salute” (Mk 9:15; for the noun, cf. Mt 23:7), and as an imperative verb, Paul expected the Roman believers to *do* this. Paul named 25 people (17 men; 8 women; two unnamed women, vv. 13, 15, and two households, vv. 10, 11). A possible common denominator for at least some of them was that they distinguished themselves in their service to the Lord and the church (cf. vv. 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12 twice). Paul urged the church to recognize and appreciate them for the work they did. How would Paul have known so many people from a church he had not yet visited? Under emperor Claudius, all the Jews, both believers and non-believers, were expelled from Rome around AD 49 (cf. Ac 18:2). It was under these conditions that he met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, and probably the others mentioned in chap. 16. One of the people the church should salute was **Phoebe** (v. 1), a resident of **Cenchrea**, about seven miles southeast of Corinth, but who was apparently on her way to Rome, possibly bearing Paul’s letter. Paul called her a **servant** (*diakonos*, “deacon”?) and **helper** (v. 2), and some conclude from these labels that she was one of the pastors of the church. But this

is unlikely. Paul was not discussing those in formal church offices, and *diakonos* often has the non-technical sense of “servant” (cf. Mt 20:26). But even if she were a “deacon” in the technical sense, deacons were not entrusted with the primary leading or teaching ministry of the church. **Helper** sometimes meant “ruler,” “leader,” “chief,” but often meant “patron, one who supports another from his or her resources.” The latter sense is preferable here, for it is unlikely that Paul would call anyone other than Jesus his ruler.

A similar issue relates to the woman **Junias** (v. 7) who was **outstanding among the apostles**. It is possible that **Junias** was an apostle just as Paul was, and exercised considerable authority, but the grammatical construction is against it. The phrase is made up of the word “esteemed” or “outstanding” (*episemos*) + the preposition *en*, “in” or “among” + a word in the dative case that has a person or a group as its referent, in this case “apostles.” This construction was usually used in Greek for an individual or a group who was held in high regard by another group to which the esteemed person(s) did not belong. In other words, the best evidence suggests that the apostles thought very highly of both **Andronicus and Junias**, or that they were well known to the apostles, but neither were apostles.

B. Avoid Contentious People (16:17-20a)

16:17-20a. Paul addressed a final concern that could keep the church from being strong for supporting his venture to Spain. The Christians in Rome were to **turn away from** those who spread false teaching, from those who were enslaved to their own desires (vv. 17-18). Their teaching caused **dissensions** (“the division of a unified group into two or more discordant ones”) and **hindrances** (“that which causes indignation and antagonism”). Paul was confident of their ongoing **obedience** to the truth (v. 19). It was God who established peace in the church (16:20), not Satan, who probably placed the dissenting teachers in proximity to the body to disrupt it. On the role of believers in judging angels, including Satan, see 1Co 6:3.

C. Be Encouraged by Christian Leaders (16:20b-23)

16:20b-23. That some of Paul’s foremost assistants were thinking of the church in Rome might have been a great encouragement to the believers there. **Lucius** (v. 21) may have been the same Jewish believer as “Lucius the Cyrene” in Ac 13:1, but it is impossible to be certain. **Jason** may be the same individual who was converted under

Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, and who provided housing for Paul (Ac 17:5-9). **Sosipater** is possibly the same person called "Sopater" who accompanied Paul on his way to Jerusalem at the end of the third missionary journey (Ac 20:4). **Tertius** (v. 22) was Paul's amanuensis (secretary). He wrote down what Paul dictated to him. **Gaius** (v. 23) was possibly one of the first converts in Corinth (1Co 1:14) whom Paul baptized, and is probably a different person than the Gaius mentioned in Ac 19:29, who was from Ephesus, or 20:4, who was from Derbe. **Erastus** was apparently a high-ranking city official, and an inscription discovered in 1929 in Corinth refers to an Erastus who was the head of Corinth's city works. It is impossible to say that this is Paul's Erastus, but the name was relatively rare. **Quartus** is not mentioned elsewhere in the NT.

D. Glorify God (16:25-27)

16:25-27. Paul's doxology is long and meandering, but a good guess at its structure is suggested in the following paraphrase:

"(v. 25) Now to Him, (skip to v. 27) to the only wise God, be the glory forever through Jesus Christ. (Back to v. 25) He is the One who is able to establish you, and that establishing comes about through the gospel, namely, the gospel which coincides with my preaching about Jesus Christ. This gospel also coincides with the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages past. (v. 26) But this mystery has now been manifested. Furthermore, God not only establishes you according to my gospel (cf. v. 25), but (v. 27) also by the Scriptures of the prophets who gave their revelation as our eternal God commanded them.

Those Scriptures of the prophets have been made known to all the nations to promote in them the obedience which saving faith produces. (Reiterating v. 27) To Him be the glory forever through Jesus Christ. Amen!"

The doxology appears to emphasize three points: First, the gospel has continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures, but it was not fully understood until God manifested it in the epoch-shifting life and death of Christ and the evangelizing work of Paul and the other evangelists. Second, it was this gospel that both strengthened believers and produced active faith among all the nations. Third, God brings glory to Himself forever through the gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings about such profound change and unveils His unparalleled greatness. For these reasons, the Romans should spread the gospel themselves and support Paul as he sought to do so in Spain. For the details on the contents of this doxology, consult the commentaries by Moo and Schreiner listed in the bibliography.

Paul concluded his letter by referring once again to the **obedience of faith for all the nations** (cf. the comments on 1:4-5 and "Purpose" in the introduction to Romans). The letter to the Romans has as one of its major themes the need for the church in Rome to engage in spreading the gospel, especially by supporting Paul's plans for Spain. Any church or believer today that has lost a sense of urgency and fervor for reaching lost people would do well to study this letter. Understanding the gospel as the power of God should serve to energize a passion for souls and a desire to glorify God.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bruce, F. F. *Romans*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.
- Cranfield, C. E. B. *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981.
- MacArthur, John. *Romans 1-8 and Romans 9-16*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago: Moody, 1991, 1994.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Morris, Leon. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Pillar Commentaries. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Murray, John. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Romans*. InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998.
- Witherington III, Ben. *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.



Now you can study the Bible with the faculty of Moody Bible Institute!

Imagine having a team of 30 Moody Bible Institute professors helping you study the Bible. Now you can—with this in-depth, user-friendly one-volume commentary.

With more than 2,000 pages and over 1.5 million words, *The Moody Bible Commentary* is a one-of-a-kind, comprehensive Bible resource. Special features include:

- ❖ Helpful introductions to each book of the Bible, giving information about the authors, their audience, and historical background.
- ❖ Outlines that show organization and structure at a glance.
- ❖ Clear discussions that shed light on difficult and debated passages, show how the Bible speaks to current issues in our culture, and highlight how the Old Testament predicts the Messiah.
- ❖ Careful scholarship based in the original languages and offering a consistent method of interpretation.
- ❖ Plus: Charts that clearly explain biblical concepts, maps that provide an overview of Bible lands and cities, Scripture and subject indexes that make it easy to locate themes and topics.

Use *The Moody Bible Commentary* to help you know God's Word and apply it in your daily life.

“This will be a commentary that stays on my desk and is used often.”

ERWIN W. LUTZER, senior pastor, The Moody Church

“What a tremendous resource for everyone who loves studying the Bible and values teaching the ‘whole counsel of God.’ I highly recommend you add it to your reference library.”

JOEL C. ROSENBERG, *New York Times* bestselling author and Bible teacher

MICHAEL RYDELNIK is professor of Jewish studies at the Moody Bible Institute. He is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and holds a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary. He earned a DMiss from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, focusing his studies on the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible.

MICHAEL VANLANINGHAM is professor of Bible at the Moody Bible Institute. He received his MDiv in systematic theology from Talbot Theological Seminary and his PhD in New Testament and Pauline studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

