

The Book of Daniel, Ancillary Bible Studies, By James Moriello, 2024

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Ancillary Bible Study #1, Historical/Prophetic Overview

Welcome to the first of a series of ten themed studies in the Book of Daniel. This teaching provides all the historical and prophetic background information which is essential for having a full understanding of the book. It is the approach of this author to “front load” every Bible Study, meaning to spend a lot of time on preliminary matters for the purpose of providing a full context that the entire study can be framed into. The reasoning behind this method is that each Bible book contains great truths revealed by God, but each truth is given within the context of the Bible as a whole and of human history. Daniel is no exception.

The Man and Prophet Daniel and His Times

Daniel wrote the Bible book which bears his name about 530 BC. This great man of God was a statesman who faithfully served the true God while in Babylonian and Persian captivity. He was brought to Babylon in the first of the three stages of the Babylonian captivity of Judah, in 605 BC (the other stages of the captivity occurred in 597 BC and 586 BC). King Nebuchadnezzar had issued an order to bring “young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans” (Daniel 1:4). He got four spiritual giants—Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (Daniel Chapters 3 and 6). The Book of Daniel covers events from 605 BC (1:1) until 536 BC (10:1), meaning that his ministry spanned some 70 years in all. Because of the precision with which some of Daniel’s prophecies have already been fulfilled, liberal scholars have sought to attack the authorship and date of the book, because they have a bias against the Living God’s foreknowledge and supernatural work. Jesus Christ Himself says that Daniel wrote the book that bears his name, and that should settle it for any Christian with even

a mustard seed of faith (Matthew 24:15). The Hebrew Scriptures place Daniel amongst the Writings rather than the Prophets, because of his wisdom, as well as his status as a statesman. But in our Bibles today, Daniel is listed as the fourth Major Prophet, after Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Jeremiah ministered to the nation of Israel during some of these same years (627-580 BC). In Jeremiah 25:11-12, we read of the prophecy that Judah shall remain in Babylonian captivity for a period of seventy years. ““And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ‘Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation.” This span of time corresponds to the years of Daniel’s ministry and was fulfilled within them (Daniel 9:2). Ezekiel ministered to the Jewish exiles also during some of these same years (587-565 BC). In Scripture, Ezekiel refers to Daniel with very high regard. ““Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,” says the LORD God” (Ezekiel 14:14). Just as Noah was delivered from the flood and Job was delivered from Satan, Daniel was delivered from the mouth of the lions (Daniel 6:22). “Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you!” (Ezekiel 28:3). The prophet Ezekiel had no doubt heard of how God revealed secrets to his prophet Daniel, of whom it is testified, “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret” (Daniel 2:47).

The Four World Empires as Presented in Daniel

In relation to Israel, in the Bible, there are seven world empires. In the Book of Revelation, there is a reference to this. Those nations include Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Revived Roman Empire (Revelation 17:10). Daniel focuses on five of these, but the latter two are often combined, and the Revived Roman Empire is referred to as an extension of Rome (2:37-44). The last Kingdom which will arise as the final and victorious Kingdom is the Messianic (or Millennial) Kingdom. Notwithstanding the differentiation of the Roman Kingdom and the

interpretive challenges that exist as a result of this and the references to Antiochus Epiphanes and the Antichrist (of which we will have much to say as we move through this study of Daniel), at this point we will focus on four world empires.

The first of the four world empires in Babylon. The origin of this nation is ancient. From Ham came Cush, and from Cush came Nimrod. “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar” (Genesis 10:10). It was at Shinar, later called Babel, that the first recorded humanistic religion originated (albeit one with religious elements), and it was “from there the Lord scattered” the people of the earth and confused their languages (Genesis 11:1-9). The ancient city-state of Babylon was later established about 1830 BC, and gained prominence a few decades later under Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC), the Amorite king. History records the great ancient law code established by that ruler at that time. Other nations would gain preeminence, however, over the region, notably Assyria and Syria. Over a millennium later, the Neo-Babylonian Empire was established by Nabopolassar (626 BC to 605 BC). Nabopolassar defeated the Assyrians, and was used as God’s agent of judgment to conquer and destroy Nineveh, the Assyrian capital city, in 612 BC. Thus was fulfilled what was prophesied by Nahum (1:1, 3:5-7). The heir to the Babylonian throne was Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC to 562 BC), who is a central figure in the Book of Daniel (Chapters 1-4) as well as the historical narratives of Israel elsewhere in the Bible. It was Nebuchadnezzar who was the King of Babylon that conquered Judah and brought the children of Israel into captivity in three stages (2 Kings 24:1,14, 25:1). Other notable things that he did was check the power of Egypt in addition to keeping Assyria and Syria low, and like King Herod of much later days, engaged in massive building projects. As the king said to his own detriment, “Is this not great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). After Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Empire became increasingly decadent, and fell from its glory, in only 23 years. After Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach reigned two years (2 Kings 25:27), then Nergal-Sharezer who was formerly a prince reigned four years (Jeremiah 39:3). Following this, Nabonidus ascended to the throne in 556 BC, followed by Belshazzar, who reigned with him as co-

regent king over Babylon (Chapters 5,7, and 8). This arrangement prevailed until 539 BC. This provides the background for King Belshazzar's authority to confer to Daniel the honor of being "the third ruler in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:7). In 539 BC, the Babylonian Empire fell as it was prophesied, "Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:28).

The second of the four world empires is Persia, which began its dominance in 539 BC. Although the Kingdom of Persia and the Kingdom of the Medes were united as one, it was Persia that was preeminent. It went as the Lord had spoken about 150 years before, "who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid.'" "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut'" (Isaiah 44:28-45:1). Second Chronicles closes with and Ezra opens with reference to the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!" (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). This rebuilding began in earnest three years later, in 536 BC (Ezra 2:1). Cyrus is mentioned in Daniel twice (1:21, 10:1). More often mentioned in Daniel is Darius the Mede, who reigned concurrently under Cyrus as King of the Medes. This man also held the position of king, is identified with Gobryas or Gubaru in history, and is not to be confused by three monarchs who went by the name Darius in the subsequent days of the Persian Empire. We read, "And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old. It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one" (Daniel 5:30-6:2). Darius is also mentioned in Daniel 9:1 and 11:1. Subsequent kings of Persia under the dynastic names of Darius,

Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Ahasuerus are featured elsewhere in the post-exilic Bible Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

The third of the four world empires presented in Daniel is the Greek Empire, also known as the Hellenistic Empire. Beginning in 336 BC, Alexander the Great, a brilliant military mind and conqueror, destroyed the power of Persia, which had been in disarray due to infighting for some time. Alexander the Great representing the Greek power is depicted prophetically in Daniel as “a male goat...with furious power...moved with rage...and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand” (Daniel 8:5-7). In 323 BC, Alexander was not destroyed by an army but by the bottle. “Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink” (Isaiah 5:22). Following his death, a power struggle ensued between four rival factions, and for the purpose of our study of the Book of Daniel, the Ptolemy dynasty based in Egypt and the Seleucid Empire based in Syria and points north of Israel are most significant. Daniel Chapters 8 and 11 give us tremendous detail regarding this history, and the amazing accuracy of the details of history written hundreds of years in advance by Daniel through the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed...” (2 Peter 1:19-21). A significant figure among these, of whom we will have much to say in our detailed study of Daniel 11 (themed study 9 of 10 in this course), is Antiochus Epiphanes, whose attempt to destroy Jewish cultural unity, defilement of the temple, and ruthless slaughter of Jews who opposed his agenda has gone down in infamy. These evil actions precipitated the Maccabean revolt, of which the apocryphal books of 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees have much to say. The preservation of the Jews is certain, unless one harnesses the power of sun, moon, and stars. “If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever” (Jeremiah 31:36).

The fourth of the four world empires is the Roman Empire. This kingdom is not identified by name in Daniel. However, insofar as it is presented as that which succeeds the other three great kingdoms and is described according to its characteristics, it is the overwhelming conclusion of the Jews and Christians alike that it is indeed Rome. “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in

pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (Daniel 2:40). “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:7). Daniel goes on to connect this fourth beast (Rome) to the Antichrist and his kingdom. We will call this the Revived Roman Empire, as it is a fifth empire, but it is also an extension of the fourth empire. In the next section of this paper, and in our study of Daniel Chapters 7-12, we will bring out more specifics.

The fifth empire, the Messianic Kingdom, will be in the world, but it is not of the world, for its King and character are heavenly. Therefore it does not properly belong under this heading. It will be covered in the next section.

Daniel’s Prophecies and the Bible Prophecy Timeline

Daniel’s prophecies are both near and far, running the gamut from things which came to pass in his days all the way to the end times.

Certain of Daniel’s prophecies took place within the days of his life. That which was spoken in Daniel 2:31-39 concerning the fall of Babylon from its earthly splendor was not fulfilled in Nebuchadnezzar’s lifetime, but was fulfilled 65 years later, still within Daniel’s lifetime. In Daniel 5:17-31, the same prophecy was reiterated, near to the time it occurred. In Daniel Chapter 4, it is prophesied that King Nebuchadnezzar would live among the beasts, “eating humble pie.” This resulted in a profession by the king of the power of the Living God. Some debate whether or not King Nebuchadnezzar did in fact become a saved man after that experience. The Scriptures record his testimony. “At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of

whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (Daniel 4:36).

Certain of Daniel’s prophecies took place during the subsequent days after the closing of the Old Testament Canon of Scripture and before the coming of Jesus the Messiah. These include those things concerning the world empires of Persia and Greece, and the ascendancy of Rome, of which we have already said some and will say much more as we move along in our study of the Book of Daniel. Be prepared to be amazed by the precision of the fulfillment of these prophecies. The Bible critic rages against them, seeking to find ways to explain them away as something other than prophecy because of bias. But we read Bible prophecy through the lens of faith, even as we apply the same criteria to historically evaluating Daniel as we would any other ancient literary work.

Daniel prophesied regarding the time of the First Advent of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Daniel 9:25 reads in part, “Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.” The word translated “weeks” is literally “sevens”, and in the context of that prophetic passage Daniel is dealing with years. This 483 year time frame given is from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time when “Messiah shall be cut off”, or killed (9:26). Scholars debate which decree is view. In this author’s opinion, it is either that of 458 BC recorded in Ezra 7:11-26, 9:9, or that of 445/444 BC recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8, 3:1. The calculations are precise for either one, depending upon the approach one takes. We will deal with this in more detail later in the study when we get to Daniel Chapter 9. That some students of the Hebrew Scriptures had been diligent to make these calculations is evident in the New Testament record. The magi would likely have had this prophecy, being most likely from Persia, in addition to that of the “Star” (Matthew 2:1-11; Numbers 24:17). This alerted them that the timing was right for the revelation of the King of the Jews. We also find Simeon and Anna engaged in God’s service, in a heightened expectation of the revelation of Messiah, no doubt aware of the prophecy of Daniel and having put two and two together (Luke 2:25-38).

Daniel does not prophesy about the earthly ministry of Jesus the Messiah. But he does reference His death. “To make reconciliation for

iniquity...Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself” (Daniel 9:24,26). The Scripture here teaches that God’s Son spoken of in Psalm 2 is also the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Though innocent, and without sin, this One would die for the sins of others, even the world. “And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” of sins (Hebrews 9:22). “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Romans 5:10-11). And so we see that the gospel is presented in the Book of Daniel, and the readers of his prophecy needed to look no further than Isaiah for the full content of God’s salvation work. But we are blessed above measure in these days insofar as we have still more revelation, by which we can further ascertain that since “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom” (Daniel 2:44), the King who was murdered must now be alive to reign as King. Therefore the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah is taught, even as the doctrine of the resurrection is affirmed generally later in the Book of Daniel (12:2).

Daniel provides details of those events concerning the “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7). This is that time of which Jesus also speaks, calling it a time of “tribulation” and “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:9,21). John also has much to say of it in the Book of Revelation Chapters 6-18. “The prince who is to come...shall confirm a covenant with many for one week” (Daniel 9:26-27). This agreement between the leaders of the nation of Israel and the Antichrist will usher in this seven year period of unprecedented evil and judgment upon the earth. The Antichrist will begin by masquerading as a man of peace (Revelation 6:2), but soon enough the gloves will come off. He will speak “pompous words” against the God of heaven (Daniel 7:11). “Then the king shall do according to his own will; he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done” (Daniel 11:36). During these seven years, the cosmic battle between God and Satan for the souls of men will rage. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the altar in the days of the Maccabees, the Antichrist

will do a similar thing in the middle of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15).

At the end of the seven years, the holy angels led by the Archangel Michael shall win the battle in the heavens decisively, once for all (Daniel 12:1). But this victory will not be won by angelic power, but rather by divine power (Jude 9; Revelation 12). At this time the Lord Jesus Christ will return in His Second Advent (Revelation 19:11-16). The church age believers will already be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). But at this time Old Testament believers and Tribulation believers “shall awake...to everlasting life” (Daniel 12:2) to join the ranks behind Messiah the King.

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44) “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 19:15). But some housekeeping will be in order before the Messianic Kingdom is instituted. It will take thirty more days for the temple in Jerusalem to be cleansed, and then forty-five days more for the regathering of believing Israel to the land from the four corners of the earth (Daniel 12:11-12; Deuteronomy 30:1-3). Then the Lord will reign from His holy hill in Jerusalem, and there will be peace, even for a duration of one thousand years (Isaiah 2:2-4; Revelation 20:4-6).

Then comes the final judgment, of which the prophet Daniel also has something to say. “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...Some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). This is the resurrection of the unbelieving dead, for the purpose of judgment before God at the “great white throne” (Revelation 20:11). Antichrist will be the first to be “given to the burning flame” (Daniel 7:11; Revelation 20:10). The unbelievers and enemies of God of all ages will follow their leader and likewise be “cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).

Ancillary Bible Study #2, Testing (Daniel 1-2)

This is the second of a series of ten themed studies in the Book of Daniel. The first two chapters of Daniel have the recurring theme of testing. Daniel and his friends are tested. King Nebuchadnezzar is tested. Even the Lord God is tested. We can all identify with trials and testing, but we understand that God allows them, that we may grow spiritually thereby. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4). In this study, we shall identify ten areas and applications of testing, and how to meet them. This we shall do by going through the Scriptures. We have no other custom. Here is the list of the ten points, and following is the exposition of each one.

1. The Delicacies of the King (Daniel 1:5)
2. The Change of Outward Identities (Daniel 1:7)
3. Temperance (Daniel 1:8)
4. Surety of the Divine Work (Daniel 1:12)
5. Do not Quench the Spirit (Daniel 2:1)
6. Testing the True God (Daniel 2:18-19)
7. The Test of the True Prophet (Daniel 2:20-23)
8. Evil Diviners and Fraudsters (Daniel 2:27)
9. Response when Human Pride is Tested (Daniel 2:37-39)
10. The Test of Kingdoms (2:44)

1. The Delicacies of the King- “And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king” (Daniel 1:5). What was Daniel’s response? “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8). The children of God are served a daily dose “of the king’s delicacies” in the form of worldly provisions, distractions, amusements, and luxuries. Christians are tested on a daily basis. Will you indulge in the

delicacies of the king, or will you live in and for the blessings of the Lord our great King? For Daniel, the daily bread provided for him by the Lord was sufficient. “Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not” (Exodus 16:4). And what did the people do? They tried storing some up. And after a time of being fed by manna, they grew discontent and began to complain for something else (meat), and recalled (imaginatively) that the delicacies of Egypt were more fulfilling for them. We see many people (it used to be just men but now women fall into the same trap) who, often on the corporate dime, put their careers, ministries, travel perks, the prospect of having affairs without being caught, and the like, ahead of their families. Coveting the king’s delicacies leads them into sin. The king’s delicacies are like the wine red in the cup. “Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things” (Proverbs 23:31-33). Heed the words penned by Solomon concerning the delicacies of a ruler. Rolling with the powerful, high level business, or political class will lead you into situations rife with pitfalls. “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, Consider carefully what is before you; And put a knife to your throat If you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, For they are deceptive food” (Proverbs 23:1-3). Consider that every situation, whether family, social, business, or ministry, contains a test in some sense. Will you respond according to the delicacies of the Spirit (i.e. the fruit of the Spirit) or the delicacies of the king (i.e. appealing to the flesh)?

2. The Change of Outward Identities- “To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego” (Daniel 1:7). The Babylonians supposed that the change of outward identity of their captives would change their inward

identity also. Their new names given them by their new human masters referenced their false gods. These names replaced their original given Hebrew names, which referenced the true God of Israel. They were required to learn a new language and be educated according to the principles of Babylonian worldly wisdom. These four faithful saints kept their inward identity despite all this, without wavering. They passed the test. There are people in the world who, whether through direction or peer pressure, will insist that you outwardly act, look, or speak in certain ways. Don't ever lose sight of the fact that you are the disciple that Jesus loves (John 13:23). Maintain your identity in Christ and you will pass the test before the Lord, although the world will accept almost any other identity but 'Christian, child of the Most High God, redeemed, sinner saved by grace, and the like.'

3. Temperance- "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8). First of all, let us dispel the teaching that the Book of Daniel teaches universal abstinence from wine. It is true that Daniel and his friends were completely temperate vegetarians in Chapter One. However, it is clearly implied in Daniel Chapter Ten that Daniel did both eat meat and drink wine (according to the manner of the Hebrews) by the fact that he fasted from both. One does not fast from that which they always abstain—that is an illogical absurdity. "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled" (Daniel 10:2-3). Wine, and everything else that is permissible for men, should be received in moderation. If the wine is especially strong, strong drink is offered, or the alcohol is presented from an untrustworthy source, all do well to abstain. If an individual is an alcoholic, then that is "the sin which so easily ensnares" (Hebrews 12:1). Therefore, one drink reactivates the sin. If one has an addictive personality (e.g. an individual is a drug, gambling, or sex addict), he or she should

completely abstain, lest it become sin to that person, and replace the old addiction. Will you remain temperate while everyone around you indulges in the beverages of pictures and movies containing sexualized images, acceptance of homosexual behavior, sports gambling, and drinking in social settings? Please don't destroy your testimony. Pray that God will help you pass the test.

4. Surety of the Divine Work- "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink" (Daniel 1:12). The four faithful Hebrew young men were so sure that God's will would be done in them, like Paul and the Philippians, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Works done out of a pure heart for the glory of God will stand up to the test. We can be sure of that. "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.' " (Leviticus 10:3).

5. Do not Quench the Spirit- "Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him" (Daniel 2:1). How often do we dismiss an unsettled spirit, a rough night's sleep, or an ache or pain out of hand? In this instance, the Scripture records that the king was so disturbed by his dream that he was awakened (pun intended) to the fact that there was great significance in it. This the Spirit impressed upon his spirit, that God might be glorified through the prophetic revelation of his dream by the prophet Daniel. "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The test in this area for the Christian today can come in a variety of forms. It can be ignoring the still small voice of God that is leading you out of a situation, to avoid a situation, or to be wary of an individual and their motives or designs. The test can come by God placing someone before you and giving you a clear leading to share the gospel with that person. Will you do it, or make some excuse not to? The bottom line is that if your spirit is unsettled, it is time to pray at once for peace, discernment, truth, and understanding. Perhaps

it is God the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you, trying to tell you something (Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16).

6. Testing the True God- “that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven” (Daniel 2:18-19). The true God would show His power, and expose the impotence of false gods. No doubt Daniel and his friends recalled the work of God in the days of Elijah hundreds of years before. The parallels may well have been an aide to the faith of young Hebrews. “So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” So all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.” Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.” So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on

them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there" (1 Kings 18:20-40). The Lord will draw a distinction between Himself and His true prophets, and the heathens with their false gods. The latter in Daniel's day failed the test, and were unable to reveal secrets. But the God of Israel passed the test. It was said that nobody could reveal secrets. It is a dangerous thing to say this under heaven, for He who is in heaven might hear and make fools of men. The applications concerning testing God are much broader than this.

The Lord is not to be tested. “You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah” (Deuteronomy 6:16).

7. The Test of the True Prophet- “Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him. “I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, And have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king’s demand” (Daniel 2:20-23). Moses writes of the test of a true prophet of God, “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Daniel pointed to the true and living God, and showed himself a true prophet. “But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’— when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). Everything that Daniel has prophesied concerning his days up until this point in history has come to pass. We can be certain then that Daniel is a true prophet of God, and those prophecies which are still outstanding will likewise surely come to pass. You will know God’s spokesmen today by whether or not they preach and teach the counsel and doctrine of the Lord as revealed in the Bible, and by their life fruits (Cf. Acts 20:27; John

7:16-18; Matthew 7:15-20). If you know your Bible well, and are discerning, you will pass this test.

8. Evil Diviners and Fraudsters- “Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king” (Daniel 2:27). Evil diviners, under demonic control or influence, can do certain remarkable things, but they cannot do things only God can do, like create life out of dust alone. “So the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.’ ”And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.”” (Exodus 8:16-19). The magicians were able to duplicate the miracle of multiplying frogs, but only because the frogs already existed (Exodus 18:5-7). Nor can evil diviners know things only God can know, because the demonic realm cannot know the mind of God (Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14). “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4). Beware of fraudsters, who are wolves in sheep’s clothing. The test is real for you, and it can have temporal and eternal consequences.

9. Response when Human Pride is Tested- “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the

beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth” (Daniel 2:37-39). King Nebuchadnezzar thought he was all that. His pride was tested here, and he did pass the tense in one sense. One might have expected the king, who held sway over all the region, would think that his kingdom would last forever. But he did not react in fury to the pronouncement that his kingdom would be superseded by another earthly kingdom. How do we explain this, since in Daniel Chapter Four, King Nebuchadnezzar clearly was a man puffed up with pride? Probably he had the same attitude as King Hezekiah of Judah, who, when presented with a similar situation, responded as it is written. “Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the LORD. ‘And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’ ”So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!” For he said, “At least there will be peace and truth in my days.”” (Isaiah 35:5-8). Has your pride been tested? Has the Lord laid you low at one time, giving you a choice between humility or pride?

10. The Test of Kingdoms- “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (2:44). Every earthly kingdom will be judged in the balance and found wanting (Cf. Daniel 5:26-27). The only Kingdom that shall endure is the Messianic Kingdom of God, which shall exist on earth for one thousand years, and then shall be superseded by the Eternal State Kingdom, reigned over by the same Sovereign, King Jesus (Revelation 20:4-6, 21:1). The test for you is this—Which kingdom is your hope? Some folks, even Christians, are more concerned with

political solutions in a nation than they are with seeking spiritual solutions, forgetting the word which was spoken. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Like the Old Testament saints, we ought to have a heavenly hope. The test is whether or not we will put the only enduring kingdom first in our hearts. Are we preparing to meet the Lord, or are we too busy preparing for the next election? “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Further Scriptures Relating to Testing in the Bible

“And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.”” (Job 1:12). Sometimes, like Job, the believer is put on trial before heaven and earth, to see whether or not he or she will remain faithful. When the Christian remains faithful to the Lord through it all, God gets all the glory.

“You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress” (Psalm 17:3). Daniel prayed to God throughout each day. He was careful that he did not give his enemies, the enemies of God, a reason to find fault in him. He honored earthly authorities, and did not give them ammunition with which they could impugn the divine name and character of He who Daniel represented.

Ancillary Bible Study #3, Worship

Welcome to the third of the series of ten themed studies in the Book of Daniel. Daniel Chapter Three is the story of three faithful men who took a stand regarding worship. No matter the earthly cost, they would worship the true and living God, and they would not worship idols. In this instance, God vindicated their decision. But so many others have paid for their stand with their lives, but only to enter into the presence of the Lord with great reward. All of the third chapter of Daniel deals with worship, but verses twelve through eighteen give us the sense. “There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.” Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”” (Daniel 3:12-18).

Two Definitions and Three Categories of Worship

Etymologically, the word “worship” is connected to “worth-ship”, the act of ascribing worth to something or someone. Thompson defines it as an “act of honor, praise, and reverence of deity.” We could categorize worship in a number of different ways, but here we will set a framework of three broad categories. First, true worship, which is the worship of the

true God the Bible way. Second, the worship of the true God the wrong way. Third, false worship of any kind, which is pure idolatry. Under each heading, we will examine a volley of texts with a brief commentary on some of them.

True Worship, Worship of the True God the Bible Way

“Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is also to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and gladness are in His place. Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!” (1 Chronicles 16:23-29). Here we have a gem of a passage! True worship may be expressed in song, in rejoicing in one’s salvation, in soul winning, in exalting His Name, in willing and sacrificial giving, and in pursuit of personal holiness.

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23-24). Throughout the Gospel of John and elsewhere (John 14:6, 15:26; Acts 4:12), we are taught that Christians must come to God the Father through God the Son by the agency of God the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:19-25). True worship is on the basis of the finished work and the blood of Jesus

Christ. It is by faith and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Salvation in Christ is secure and not arbitrary (John 3:3-6, 10:28-30). And God has appointed His church to be a public assembly of believers who gather together for instruction in doctrine, fellowship with God and one another, breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42).

Worship of the True God the Wrong Way

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.’” So Aaron held his peace” (Leviticus 10:1-3). We are to follow God’s instructions regarding the manner of our worship precisely. Anything short of that profanes His Name and invites His judgment.

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God” (2 Samuel 6:6-7). This seems very harsh. However, the command was very specific that nobody was to touch the ark of God (Numbers 4:15). Even when we are well-meaning, if we are in conflict with Bible revelation, then we are sinning.

“Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the LORD. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. “When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting” (Isaiah 1:10-13). The people in Isaiah’s day were going through the motions of religion. But they were living in sin. They were hypocrites. God wants our hearts to be toward holiness, with actions of obedience that follow out of right heart motives and holy desires.

“A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’ ‘You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the LORD is contemptible.’ And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 1:6-8). Men ought to honor the Lord by giving Him their best. This passage can be applied beyond Old Testament sacrifices at the temple. We can apply it concerning our time, efforts, and alms. Is the Kingdom of God our first priority in all things? Or is He an afterthought? Some engage in Christian disciplines like Bible reading, praying, and church attendance only if there is nothing else to do, prioritizing those things second, or even last. Would God who gave His Son accept offerings made with that attitude with pleasure?

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:20-22). Some folks are religious, and they know part of the truth, but they are either biblically illiterate or have been led astray by false teachers or religious systems. The Samaritans accepted the Torah as truth, but they had set up a system of worship that was borne out of animosity toward the Jews, pagan influences, and flat-out bad theology concerning the Living God.

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). This can be applied to the hypocrite who professes Christ Jesus as Lord, God, and Savior, but is not in fact saved.

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26-27). But the main application is concerning believers. This verse is the New Testament counterpart to Leviticus 10:1-3, which is referenced earlier in this section. Partaking of the Lord’s table is not to be taken lightly. If anyone would come to the communion table with unconfessed sin and/or an unrepentant heart, this “worship” is rejected. More than this, it invites the judgment of God’s discipline. “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:3-11).

False Worship, Pure Idolatry

“You shall have no other gods before Me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them” (Exodus 20:3-5). This does not prohibit pictures or other God-honoring artistic things. Did not God Himself command Moses and Solomon to decorate His house of worship with beautiful artwork and imagery? This commandment, the second of the Ten Commandments, forbids the creation of any of these things for the purpose of worship in a way contrary to the divine revealed will.

“Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising” (Acts 17:29). Some worship the creation rather than the Creator.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Romans 1:18-23). The worship of the creation instead of the Creator leads to ignorance and depravity. There is no excuse for idolatry.

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!” (Revelation 19:10). These are the words of the angel to John the Apostle. The angel was holy and radiant from being in God’s presence, and John fell down to worship him. But the angel rebukes the apostle, since God alone is to be worshipped. Many people put their faith in angels more than the King over angels. This too is pure idolatry.

Sing Praises to God

Companion Paper to the Sermon Delivered November 11th, 2018, at Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket, RI, By James Moriello

“Sing praises to God, sing praises!” (Psalm 47:6, NKJV)

The gift of music was given by God to men from the very beginning. The first musician mentioned in the Bible is “Jubal...the father of all those who play the harp and flute” (Genesis 4:21). Music was used throughout the history of Israel as a means of praise and worship. Under King David and King Solomon, Israel had skilled musicians and singers

appointed for the purpose of leading God's chosen nation in the worship of the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:7-43, 25:1-31; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13). The Book of Psalms was the hymn book of Israel, and the divinely inspired verses were set to music. The people were enjoined to "worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2). The worshiper was urged on to "Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with understanding" (Psalm 47:6-7). There was to be a personal understanding of God, who He is, His majesty, and His work among men. The singing of Psalms also had a didactic (teaching) purpose to it, in addition to an expressive one. "Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving: Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms" (Psalm 95:1-2). Corporate worship had the following components: congregational singing first and foremost, attended to by musical instruments and (sometimes) dance. The last two Psalms, 149 and 150, illustrate this well.

It also became the custom of the early church to sing "hymns to God" from its earliest days (Acts 16:25). New Testament Scripture also was set to music early on. A couple examples of this are 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and 2 Timothy 2:11-13. Men and angels are heard together singing God's praises for the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in Revelation 5:9-10. There are two prescriptive verses in Paul's inspired writings that are of particular interest to us. The first is Ephesians 5:18: "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Why three classifications? Simply put, and I concede this may be oversimplification, "psalms" are the actual words of God, "hymns" are praises filled with reference to the doctrine and attributes of God, and "spiritual songs" are songs which lead the worshiper to spiritual regeneration and renewal. They are to be spoken to one another, which means that in the context of a church service, the congregational singing ought to both praise the Lord and encourage the worshipers (as they hear the voices of others). The second prescriptive New Testament verse is Colossians 3:16: "And let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The requirement is that we "worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs we sing

are to be those which teach and admonish the worshiper, even while he or she is engaged in pure worship of the living God. The mind and heart must both be engaged. Again, “one another” implies congregational participation in the singing at church.

Now we will turn to some common questions:

1. Are all instruments permissible in church services? Yes. The Bible does not forbid any specific instruments, and where God is silent, it is wise to be silent also.
2. Are church choirs biblical? Yes. Professional singers were employed in the monarchy of Israel under David and Solomon. See references in the first paragraph of this paper.
3. Are contemporary church bands with their “worship leaders” and “song leaders” biblical? Only if they do not violate biblical standards of worship. An excessive cacophony of music can actually detract from true worship. In pagan worship, such cacophony is used to direct worship to idols (Daniel 3:5-15). The lyrics and melody of the songs must be clearly understood and easy to follow (Psalm 47:7). The congregational singing must not be drowned out, lest Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16 be violated. The worship of the living God must be different than the experience the world offers through its music. The use of darkened rooms, strobe lights, and the like are a distraction to the worshiper, and set a tone opposite that of the spirit of light that Christ is supposed to bring (Cf. Ephesians 5:8-14). Bearing in mind that one of the Apostle John’s main themes was the contrast between light and darkness, I am fully convicted of the applicability of the preceding statement. Finally, the band or leader must attract no attention to itself. The congregation should “Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves” (Psalm 100:3).
4. Does the Bible allow for song leaders? Yes, absolutely, there is precedent for it, but one is not required.
5. You don’t need a complex music ministry. The absolute necessary elements of a Christian worship service is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the assembly together in fellowship, the Communion Table, and Prayer (Acts 2:42). Do

your best to align the music ministry with these four points, and within God's bounds.

6. How do I do that? Glad you asked. Make sure you have scripturally sound psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in your song book or song list. Incorporate a Call to Worship just prior to the singing time. Have someone announce the name of the song and hymn number (if applicable). The congregation does not need anyone to talk about what is being sung, just sing to the Lord! If the songs are spiritual, the Spirit will do His work. If you have musicians on hand, great! If you have a choir, great! But whatever you do, make sure that the congregational singing is the main thing. Let the entire church be your choir! The leaders of the church, and gifted vocalists in the church, should sing aloud and set the tone. God will be praised and the people will be blessed. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

TESTS by which our public worship should be tried (J.C. Ryle, 1896)

This is a point of vast importance, and one which every professing Christian should look fairly in the face. Too many are apt to cut the knot of all difficulties about the subject before us, by referring to their own feelings. They will tell us that they are not theologians, that they do not pretend to understand the difference between one school of divinity and another. But they do know that the worship in which they take part makes them feel so much better, that they cannot doubt it is all right.

I am not disposed to let such people turn away from the subject of this paper quite so easily. I cannot forget that *religious feelings are very deceitful things*. There is a sort of gentle animal excitement produced in some minds by hearing religious music and seeing religious spectacles, which is not true devotion at all. While it lasts, such excitement is very strong and very contagious — but it soon comes and soon goes, and leaves no permanent impression behind it. It is a mere sensuous animal influence, which even a Romanist may feel at seasons, and yet remain a Romanist both in doctrine and practice.

(a) True spiritual worship will affect a man's heart and conscience. It will make him feel more keenly the sinfulness of sin, and his own particular personal corruption. It will deepen his humility. It will render him more jealously careful over his inward life. False public worship, like liquor-drinking and opium-eating, will every year produce weaker impressions. True spiritual worship, like wholesome food, will strengthen him who uses it, and make him grow inwardly every year.

(b) True spiritual worship will draw a man into close communion with Jesus Christ Himself. It will lift him far above *Churches* and *ordinances* and *ministers*. It will make him hunger and thirst after a sight of the King. The more he sincerely hears, and reads, and prays, and praises – the more he will feel that nothing but Christ Himself will feed the life of his soul, and that heart communion with Him is "food indeed and drink indeed." The false worshiper in the time of need, will turn to external helps, to ministers, ordinances, and Sacraments. The true worshiper will turn instinctively to Christ by simple faith, just as the compass-needle turns to the north pole.

(c) True spiritual worship will continually extend a man's spiritual knowledge. It will annually give bone and sinew and muscle and firmness to his religion. A true worshiper will every year know more of self, and God, and Heaven, and duty, and doctrine, and practice, and experience. His religion is a living thing – and will grow. A false worshiper will never get beyond the old carnal principles and elements of his theology. He will annually go round and round like a horse in a mill, and though laboring much, he will never get forward. His religion is a dead thing, and cannot increase and multiply.

(d) True spiritual worship will continually increase the holiness of a man's life. It will make him every year more watchful over tongue, and temper, and time, and behavior in every relation of life. The true worshiper's conscience becomes annually more tender. The false worshiper's becomes annually more seared and more hard.

Give me the worship that will stand the test of our Lord's great principle, "By their fruits you shall know them." Give me the worship which . . . sanctifies the life, makes a man walk with God and delight in God's law, lifts him above the fear of the world and the love of the world,

enables him to exhibit something of God's image and God's likeness before his fellow-men,
makes him just, loving, pure, gentle, good tempered, patient, humble, unselfish, and temperate.

This is the worship that comes down from Heaven, and has the stamp and seal and superscription of God.

Whatever men may please to say, *the grand test of the value of any kind of worship is the effect it produces on the lives of the worshipers.* A man may tell us that what is called Ritualism now-a-days, is the best and most perfect mode of worshipping God. He may despise the simple and unadorned ceremonial of Evangelical congregations. He may exalt to the skies the excellence of ornament, decoration, and pageantry, in our service of God.

But I take permission to tell him that Christian men will try his favorite system by its *results*. So long as Ritualistic worshipers can turn from matins and early communions – to races and operas; and can oscillate between the confessional and the ball-room – then so long the advocates of Ritualism must not be surprised if we think little of the value of Ritualistic worship.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The best public worship is that which produces the best private Christianity. The best Church Services for the congregation are those which make its individual members most holy at home and alone. If we want to know whether our own public worship is doing us good, let us try it by these tests.

Does it quicken our conscience?

Does it send us to Christ?

Does it add to our knowledge?

Does it sanctify our life?

If it does, we may depend on it – it is worship of which we have no cause to be ashamed.

The day is coming when there shall be . . .
a congregation that shall never break up,
a Sabbath that shall never end,
a song of praise that shall never cease, and an assembly that shall never
be dispersed.

In that assembly shall be found all who have "worshiped God in spirit"
upon earth. If we are such, we shall be there.

Here we often worship God with a deep sense of weakness, corruption,
and infirmity. *There*, at last, we shall be able, with a renewed body, to
serve Him without weariness, and to worship Him without distraction.

Here, at our very best, we see through a glass darkly, and know the Lord
Jesus Christ most imperfectly. It is our grief that we do not know Him
better and love Him more. *There*, freed from all the dross and defilement
of indwelling sin, we shall see Jesus as we have been seen, and known as
we have been known. Surely, if *faith* has been sweet and peace-giving —
then *sight* will be far better.

Here we have often found it hard to worship God joyfully, by reason of
the sorrows and cares of this world. Tears over the graves of those we
loved have often made it hard to sing praise. Crushed hopes and family
sorrows have sometimes made us hang our harps on the
willows. *There* every tear shall be dried, every saint who has fallen
asleep in Christ shall meet us once more, and every hard thing in our life-
journey shall be made clear and plain as the sun at noon-day.

Here we have often felt that we stand comparatively alone, and that
even in God's house the real spiritual worshipers are comparatively
few. *There* we shall at length see a multitude of brethren and sisters that
no man can number, all of one heart and one mind, all free from spiritual
blemishes, weaknesses, and infirmities, all rejoicing in one Savior, and all
prepared to spend an eternity in His praise. We shall have worshiping
companions enough in Heaven!

Armed with such hopes as these let us lift up our hearts and look forward!
The time is very short. The night is far spent. The day is at hand. Let us
worship on, pray on, praise on, and read on. Let us contend earnestly for
the faith once delivered to the saints, and resist manfully every effort to

spoil Scriptural worship. Let us strive earnestly to hand down the light of Gospel worship to our children's children. Yet a little time, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry. Blessed in that day will be those, and those only, who are found true worshipers, "worshipers in spirit and truth."

Ancillary Bible Study #4, Humility

Welcome to the fourth of the series of ten themed studies in the Book of Daniel. Daniel Chapter Four contains the story of the pride and humiliation of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Daniel Chapter Five records the pride and humiliation of King Belshazzar. Thus was the proverb fulfilled in both of them—“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). And this ought to lead us away from pride and toward humility, that the proverb might be learned by us—“A man’s pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor” (Proverbs 29:23). We will work through the topics of pride and humility from the lesser (the sin) to the greater (the virtue).

Pride is the oldest sin in the world, and it is that sin which Lucifer engaged in, resulting in this angel falling from his honorable position in heaven. ““How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.”” (Isaiah 14:12-15). Then comes the serpent, and his pet sin (pride) is behind the original sin. “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” (Genesis 3:1-6). We have seen so far that pride is characterized by excessive focus on self. The devil repeatedly says “I will”, and when he tempts, he repeatedly says “you” in order to direct our attention and affections toward self. King Nebuchadnezzar followed after his playbook, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for

the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). Though Nebuchadnezzar did eat “humble pie” and admit that the Most High God is the everlasting King, his grandson Belshazzar refused to humble himself although he was not ignorant. Therefore, he was without excuse. “O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified” (Daniel 5:18-23). Notwithstanding all this, and the witness of all of human history, kings and leaders of all kinds think that their pride will never be put down. Now we can look at them, and judge them, but we do even better to also look in the mirror, and be further instructed by the Word of God, which has many things to say that are profitable for us.

Pride has her children, and five of them are well known enough that we know them by name. Worldly Ambition, Indulgence, Self-Exaltation, Hardness of Heart, and Sacrilege.

Worldly Ambition is sometimes relatively benign, but often ruthless. She is humanistic in outlook, and God is not in her thoughts, as she seeks to move ahead of everyone else (Cf. Psalm 10:4). For Worldly Ambition, the end justifies the means. Her heroes are Absalom and Adonijah. “Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, “What city are you from?” And he

would say, “Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel.” Then Absalom would say to him, “Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you.” Moreover Absalom would say, “Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.”” (2 Samuel 15:2-4). “Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king”; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him” (1 Kings 1:5). She does not know that it ended very badly for her heroes, for Worldly Ambition is blind to the fact that sin finds us out (Cf. Numbers 32:23).

She is very close kin to her sister, Indulgence, who caters to self and then revels in false security. She has reasoned as Solomon did in Ecclesiastes. “ I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure”; but surely, this also was vanity. I said of laughter—“Madness!”; and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?” I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3,24). But Indulgence will not think past the present pursuit of pleasures, and rejects the wisdom of Solomon which says, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them”” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). We know the teaching of Jesus, but Indulgence will die in her sin, for she has too much pride to consider and repent. We all know people who are of the mind of the brother hoping for an inheritance and the man who now enjoys the fruit of his labors, but has not God. “Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up

for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”” (Luke 12:13-21).

The third daughter of Pride is Self-Exaltation. She will not receive the words of Jesus, although one day she will. “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). She has no faith, for she only knows what she has learned from her mother. And without faith, there is no restraint. It is a shame that she would not hear the words of Paul. “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3). We see many fall who would become great, whether at school, at work, or even in the church. We recall Athaliah, the wicked woman who would usurp the royal throne of Judah. “When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs” (2 Kings 11:1). She thought she had ruthlessly destroyed all opposition, but God preserved Joash as the heir, and Athaliah’s self-exaltation became her downfall. In the days of Jesus, this daughter was active in the spirit of the Pharisees, who were hungry for power over men. “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:1-12).

Hardness of Heart is well known in every land. We recall back in the days when Israel was in bondage in Egypt. Time and time again, God gave

Pharaoh opportunity to repent and be a blessing. But every time the pressure subsided, Pharaoh acted after that manner of which it is written of him concerning God and His servants Moses and Aaron. “But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said” (Exodus 8:15). Hardness of Heart also dwelt among the children of Israel during their forty years of wilderness wanderings, God blessed again and again, “In spite of this they still sinned, And did not believe in His wondrous works. Therefore their days He consumed in futility, And their years in fear” (Psalm 78:32-33). The Psalmist gets to the heart of the matter. People become invested in and entrenched in their sin and their sinful thinking, and their hearts become hard to God’s truth. A good example of this is our Lord’s teaching on marriage and divorce. “Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”” (Matthew 19:1-9). Do not men today come up with excuses for violations of the marriage covenant? What is “irreconcilable differences” other than a denial of the power of God’s forgiveness, and an unwillingness on the part of men to put divine principle into practice? “Some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude” (Acts 19:9) when Apostles preached that Jesus is the Christ to them. So too do men reject the truth today because of hearts hardened in a state of unbelief.

Sacrilege is alive and well today, as she has always been since Pride bore her. We see sacrilege in the arts, and they are celebrated by the

“cultured class.” We see sacrilege in religion repeatedly written of in the Holy Writ. It is a result of the lack of a reverent fear of God. Human beings filled with the ways of Pride defile holy things and the principles behind them. “Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone” (Daniel 5:1-4). This was not taken lightly by the Living God who was being mocked and disrespected by the creature. “In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” Now all the king’s wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished” (Daniel 5:5-9). Rather than repent before God, Belshazzar called out to pagan sources for help. And it resulted in the loss of his kingdom. In Jesus’ day, sacrilege took the form of hypocrites profiting off the temple sacrificial system and prevention of the uninterrupted worship of God in the temple. “Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’ ”” (Matthew 21:12-13). Sacrilege is alive and well today, unfortunately. The Son of God is crucified afresh at every Roman Catholic Mass. Books and wares are sold in Christian houses of worship. Entertainers who call

themselves “worship leaders” perform for their audiences (the congregation) for their own vainglory. Contemporary preachers push the limits of propriety to gain a following. In the liberal churches, women occupy the pulpits, pastorates, and deaconates in direct opposition to 1 Timothy 2:11-3:13. Worse than this, some occupy such positions and are received, even exalted, as they openly participate in and advocate for homosexual behavior and acceptance. Is it any wonder that Pride has become a religious belief and system with its own month of festivals of debauchery? Sacrilege knows no restraint or bounds. “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20).

Now that we have spent better than six pages speaking of pride, that we might take heed not to fall into that sin, we shall now enjoin humility, that great characteristic that was demonstrated to us by our great Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us consider the ways in which this is so. Isaiah presents Messiah as the Suffering Servant of the Lord. “Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.

By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:1-12). What an amazing thing for God to condescend to endure such things at the hands of ungrateful and evil men! Yet He humbled Himself for our salvation. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Almighty God humbled Himself, but He shall be exalted above all things. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5-11).

Let us now consider humility as we find it in Daniel Chapters Four and Five. First, consider how much humility King Nebuchadnezzar learned through his experience of being abased and dwelling among the beasts. Daniel Chapter Four is the record of the king’s decree. Consider how he begins and ends his decree, by ascribing all glory and power to the God of heaven! This is an unusual thing. Generally, when men of high position (or low position, for that matter) are humbled, they only harden themselves through anger and resentment. “Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation... And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the

earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?” At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (Daniel 4:1-3,34-37). Through all of this, and also through all of his dealings with Belshazzar, Daniel never seeks to be exalted on earth, preferring to wait for God to do as He wills. Daniel, in Chapter Four, is happy to fade into the background as God gets the glory. And in Chapter Five, being named the third ruler in the kingdom means nothing to him (Cf. Daniel 5:16-17). His disposition is after the manner of the Psalmist, who proclaims to God, “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:10).

Is there any area in your life that you fall short of humbling yourself before Almighty God? Has Pride and her children gotten a foothold in your life in some way? Do you feel superior to certain people in any way? Have you forgotten where you came from? We all do well to repent of our pride and self-will before we get to the point where God (for the purpose of the betterment of our soul) must judge it in some way. How does your humility stack up against the manner of conduct of Jesus Christ?

Proverbs 11:2- “When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.”

James 4:10- “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

1 Peter 5:6- “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

Ancillary Bible Study #5, Faithfulness

Welcome to the fifth of the series of ten themed studies in the Book of Daniel. Daniel Chapter Six contains the familiar story of “Daniel in the Lion’s Den.” The overriding theme of this chapter is faithfulness. Daniel’s faithfulness in performing his work is noted. Daniel’s faithfulness to God is highlighted throughout. And greater still, God’s faithfulness in His deliverance of His children is demonstrated and proven.

“Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men” (Proverbs 22:29). So it came to pass for God’s servant Daniel. “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm” (Daniel 6:1-3). Daniel had so set himself apart from other men by his industry, integrity, and trustworthiness that King Darius the Mede thought to set Daniel over the other two governors and all the satraps. As we saw in Daniel Chapter Five, Daniel did not have great worldly ambition—he was not a self-promoter. And this also differentiated him from the others. “Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man? The righteous man walks in his integrity” (Proverbs 20:6-7). Let us learn that when our motives are none other than to please God in our work, we can rest assured that the Lord will honor that. Paul’s instructions to servants can well be applied to employees, regardless of industry, career, or position. “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free” (Ephesians 6:5-8). In the news, we read of politicians and such who get caught red-handed taking bribes from domestic or foreign sources. Sometimes they seem to get away with that, finding some ambiguity within the letter of the law. But let the Christian have no appearance of evil or impropriety. Nor may it be said that a child of God is indebted in some way to the world. Let us learn from the way in which Abram would

not be, or feel inclined to be, indebted to Sodom. This turned out to be wise to avoid a potential conflict of interest when that wicked city was destroyed without remedy by God Himself shortly thereafter. Here is the narrative. “And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains. Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram. Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all. Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’— except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”” (Genesis 14:8-24). We also can apply faithfulness on the level of being trustworthy in handling business funds. In the days of Jehoash, we read, “Moreover they did not require an account from the men into whose hand

they delivered the money to be paid to workmen, for they dealt faithfully” (2 Kings 12:15). And again, in the revival days of Josiah, we read the same, “Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, *that* the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying: “Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the LORD; let them give it to those who *are* in the house of the LORD doing the work, to repair the damages of the house— to carpenters and builders and masons—and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully.”” (2 Kings 22:3-7). Today, such a thing would be considered unwise, because of the temptation introduced for covetous men to embezzle funds that are given or paid in good faith. This is why we have Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), which amongst other things, require double checks, audits, and remedies for potential conflicts of interest in financial dealings. For the Christian living Bible principles, this is fine, for it is of no matter. The child of God will conduct all things honestly and transparently in good conscience. Therefore, that there be not even a perception of impropriety, the wise local church has bylaws that govern its financial matters, that no scandal will occur that might bring reproach to the name of Jesus Christ. Consider also the diligence of Daniel. Because he was always diligently working for his earthly master at all times, it did not matter whether the master was looking or not looking at any given moment. The Christian as an employee ought to be the same. We recall the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, which focus on the spiritual realm, but can also be applied to the lesser physical realm also. ““Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”” (Matthew 24:45-51). This leads us to

another point, which is the heart of faithfulness in stewardship. This also is taught by Jesus Himself, with primary application to spiritual things, but secondary applications concerning our conduct in this world. “Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ “And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’ “Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ “And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.’ ”” (Luke 19:11-27). Darius was an austere earthly master. Daniel, knowing this, acted accordingly because of a healthy fear and honor of his earthly master, and even more so a healthy fear and worship of his Heavenly Master. The children of the world complain about both earthly masters and the Divine Master, but to their own hurt. Let us not jump on that bandwagon, but rather follow the example of Daniel’s faithfulness to both, to each according to what is due them.

Daniel's faithfulness to God is highlighted throughout the entire book, and particularly so in Daniel Chapter Six. Evil, jealous, and covetous men had set Daniel up. But instead of closing his windows and drawing the curtains before praying to the True and Living God, which most people in that situation might find justifiable, Daniel did not change his mode of worship. If these wicked men were not going to get Daniel on that specific, they would have found another specific, or set up a situation to accomplish their designs. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days" (Daniel 6:10). Consider Daniel's faithfulness even from his youth. He got in a good Bible habit, and it became part of his life, a spiritually beneficial routine for life. Surely the prophet could identify with David's experience, and it is obvious that Daniel had the same level of confidence as David did in God's ability to save him and bring about a just result. "As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice. He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, For there were many against me. God will hear, and afflict them, Even He who abides from of old. Selah. Because they do not change, Therefore they do not fear God" (Psalm 55:16-19). We know the story. Daniel's faithfulness would be rewarded, and he would be delivered from the lion's den. One way or another. He would either live through the ordeal, or he would wake up in the presence of his God, which is far better. Daniel's attitude was the same as that of his three Hebrew friends who went through a similar experience about forty years before. "If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-17). This is, always has been, and always will be the disposition of those faithful men and women who are persecuted on account of their faith in the Living God. Peter writes concerning those who suffer for God's glory as experiencing something that should be expected in the Christian life. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad

with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:12-19). If you have undergone or are undergoing reproach on account of your Savior, you are not alone in the experience, nor are you alone through the trial. "For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."" (Hebrews 13:5). Finally on this point, consider the church at Smyrna, which was persecuted but faithful, and our Lord Jesus Christ had this to say to them. "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Greater than any human faithfulness, God's faithfulness in His deliverance of His children is demonstrated and proven. This was undeniable by Daniel, the king, and every other person present at that time. "So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed. Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found

innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.”” (Daniel 6:16-22). The human king had the good sense and humility to recognize the faithfulness of the divine Eternal King. “ I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions” (Daniel 6:26-27). Let the reader say with David, “Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast” (Psalm 36:5-6). Daniel was indeed delivered physically, but there is no guarantee of physical deliverance. The guarantee of God comes in a greater form, that of certain spiritual deliverance. Some are tested to the limit, even to death. If such a thing (physical death in His humanity) happened to the Lord Jesus Christ, should any mortal believe themselves to be exempt? “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Hebrews 11:35-40). These saints were justified by their faith, even as we are (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). And they experienced what we believe by faith. “So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). God’s faithfulness has no limit. He is faithful in all circumstances. “ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Even should we still fail on our part, we are happy to know that God’s faithfulness is perfect. “This is a faithful

saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

Let us close with a doxology, a composite volley of seven Bible texts. Well may we say with David, Ethan, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, “I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth From the great assembly. I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, “Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.” O LORD God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night. Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. Hear my prayer, O LORD, Give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, And in Your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no one living is righteous. O LORD, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, For You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!”” (Psalm 40:10, 89:1-2,8, 92:1-2, 119:89-90, 143:1-2; Isaiah 25:1; Lamentations 3:22-24).

Great is Thy Faithfulness, A Classic Hymn

Author: Thomas O. Chisholm (1923) (Public Domain)

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
as Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided:
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest;
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided:
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow:
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided:
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Ancillary Bible Study #6, Visions

Welcome to the sixth of the series of ten themed studies in the Book of Daniel. Daniel Chapters 7 and 8 are the record of Daniel's visions, and have been expounded in the detailed outline and audio commentary. Visions are one of the ways that God has revealed His truth through the prophets. In the Old Testament, the very beginning of the church age, and in Revelation, God would reveal certain things through visions and dreams, and sometimes miracles. But such things are not normative in the church age, excepting the notable miracle of the spiritual birth of church age believers (John 3:3-6). In the Old Testament, we read, "Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream." (Numbers 12:6). But after the church age has begun to mature, we read of such things as past tense. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" (Hebrews 2:3-4). In the Bible, we also find many other methods of divine revelation besides these. In the days of the Levitical priesthood, there was the Urim and Thummim. In all days, God gives us revelation through nature, through God the Holy Spirit, and through God's Word. Finally, He reveals Himself through the Incarnation. "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1-3). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In this chapter, we will set forth a comprehensive list of visions recorded in the Bible for the present, for the near future, and for the distant future. We will do so in the order that they come to us in the Bible, working from Genesis to Revelation. Let us note that visions are always aids to faith. "I have also spoken by the prophets, And have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the

prophets” (Hosea 12:10). Many are encouraging, emphasizing the promises of God. But some are visions of the righteous judgment of God.

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:1-6). Abram is promised a son, a near term prophecy which works with the Abrahamic Covenant made in Genesis 12:1-3.

“And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.” So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well” (Genesis 26:24-25). The promise comes to Isaac.

“So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” And he said, “Here I am.” So He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there” (Genesis 46:1-3). The promise comes to Jacob, who is called Israel.

“Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’ The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘You shall

persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’ Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.”” (1 Kings 22:19-23). Michaiah is vindicated as God’s true prophet.

“For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds, Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction. In order to turn man from his deed, And conceal pride from man, He keeps back his soul from the Pit, And his life from perishing by the sword” (Job 33:14-18). God’s personal warning is spoke by Elihu. May such things bring us to prayer, and be subserviated to the objective Word of God.

“Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one, And said: “I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found My servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him” (Psalm 89:19-20). David is validated as God’s choice.

“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah’s entire book contains visions. Many years are covered here.

“The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw” (Isaiah 13:1). Babylon’s coming judgment in the near future is seen.

“The burden against the Wilderness of the Sea. As whirlwinds in the South pass through, So it comes from the desert, from a terrible land. A distressing vision is declared to me; The treacherous dealer deals treacherously, And the plunderer plunders. Go up, O Elam! Besiege, O Media! All its sighing I have made to cease. ... And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen!” Then he answered and said, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground.” Oh, my threshing and the grain of my floor! That which I have heard from the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, I have declared to you” (Isaiah 21:1-2,9-10). Babylon’s final judgment is prophesied also by Isaiah.

“The burden against the Valley of Vision. What ails you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops ... He removed the protection of Judah. You looked in that day to the armor of the House of the Forest; You also saw the damage to the city of David, That it was great; And you gathered together the waters of the lower pool” (Isaiah 22:1,8-9). Jerusalem and Judah were to be judged because of their violations of God’s prescribed holiness.

“Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.” And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north.” Then the LORD said to me: “Out of the north calamity shall break forth On all the inhabitants of the land” (Jeremiah 1:11-14). Jeremiah prophesies by vision as Isaiah had many years earlier.

“Then the LORD said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad.” Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:3-7). Here is encouragement for the captive remnant of believers.

“Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God... And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a

rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD” (Ezekiel 1:1,26-28). Ezekiel sees the Glory of the Lord.

“And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there. Then I looked, and there was a likeness, like the appearance of fire—from the appearance of His waist and downward, fire; and from His waist and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like the color of amber. He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes to jealousy. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the plain” (Ezekiel 8:1-4). Ezekiel has a vision of the temple in his day, which was corrupt.

“The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” So I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.” ... I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,” says the LORD.’ ”” (Ezekiel 37:1-3,14). God can make alive. The restoration and the resurrection are alluded to here.

“In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there. In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city” (Ezekiel 40:1-2). Ezekiel had a vision that he wrote extensively about in Ezekiel 40-48. He saw the Millennial Temple, which was holy, a sharp contrast with the condition of the temple of his day.

“Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him. “I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, And have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king’s demand.”” (Daniel 2:19-23). God reveals secrets to His prophet.

“I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me... “I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, Bound with a band of iron and bronze, In the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, And let him graze with the beasts On the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over him. ‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.’” (Daniel 4:5,13-17). This vision reveals the abasement of the prideful King of Babylon.

“I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground ... “Now I

have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.” (Daniel 10:5-9,14). Daniel had another vision of future days, subsequent to the visions of Daniel Chapters 7 and 8, which are expounded in great detail in the course.

““And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls”(Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21). The point of similarity is the work of God the Holy Spirit. But these specific things occur in the Tribulation years, yet future. Therefore, the visions will be continued in that day, but not throughout the church age.

“The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.... Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, He formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop; indeed it was the late crop after the king’s mowings.... Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit.... I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and He said: “Strike the doorposts, that the thresholds may shake, And break them on the heads of them all. I will slay the last of them with the sword. He who flees from them shall not get away, And he who escapes from them shall not be delivered” (Amos 1:1, 7:1, 8:1, 9:1). Amos’ prophetic book was one of visions of judgment.

“The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the LORD, And a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, “Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle”):” (Obadiah 1:1). Obadiah’s prophetic vision was one of Edom’s judgment.

“The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem” (Micah 1:1). Micah’s prophecy included visions.

“The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite” (Nahum 1:1). Nahum’s vision was a burden, a judgment prophecy.

“The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw... Then the LORD answered me and said: “Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. “Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 1:1, 2:2-4). Here we have a great example of a vision as an aid to faith. It is explicitly stated. The God of all the earth shall do right.

“ I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were horses: red, sorrel, and white. Then I said, “My lord, what are these?” So the angel who talked with me said to me, “I will show you what they are.” And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, “These are the ones whom the LORD has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.” So they answered the Angel of the LORD, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, “We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.” Then the Angel of the LORD answered and said, “O LORD of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?” And the LORD answered the angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words. So the angel who spoke with me said to me, “Proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “I am zealous for Jerusalem And for Zion with great zeal. I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; For I was a little angry, And they helped—but with evil intent.” ‘Therefore thus says the LORD: “I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it,” says the LORD of hosts, “And a surveyor’s line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.” ’ “Again proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; The LORD will again comfort Zion, And will again choose Jerusalem.”’” Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns. And I said to the angel who talked with me,

“What are these?” So he answered me, “These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.” Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen” (Zechariah 1:8-20). These visions are encouraging. They point to the future restoration and glory of Jerusalem.

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel” (Zechariah 3:3). Here we have a picture of Satan prosecuting the saints, and we find them vindicated by God. We know this to be the work of God the Son (Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21).

“Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll. And he said to me, “What do you see?” So I answered, “I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.” Then he said to me, “This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: ‘Every thief shall be expelled,’ according to this side of the scroll; and, ‘Every perjurer shall be expelled,’ according to that side of it.’” (Zechariah 5:1-3). Wickedness will be judged, because God is holy and just.

“Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” And the angel answered and said to me, “These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth” (Zechariah 6:1-5). This vision encourages us by pointing out the fact that divine power is at work, and God’s armies are at work for Him, and for His people.

“Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him... But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless” (Luke 1:11-12,22). This vision involves the revelation of the Messianic program.

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”” (Acts 9:10-16). This vision is given as an aid to Ananias’ faith.

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!” And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?” So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:1-4). Here the vision involves salvation of the Gentiles.

“But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven” (Acts 11:4-10). Peter is taught by God in a vision that the Gentiles are not unclean. Rather, many will be coming into the Kingdom.

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to

Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:9-10). Paul is directed to preach at a specific place. The vision is divine guidance.

“When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (Acts 18:5-11). Paul was called in a vision to preach the gospel in Corinth.

““Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’ So I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’ ”” (Acts 22:17-21). Paul, like Peter, is given a ministry to the Gentiles.

““Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:19-20). Like Peter, Paul’s commission is to the Jew first, and also the Gentile.

“It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do

not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me” (2 Corinthians 12:1-6). Here we have the record of Paul’s vision of the third heaven, which he humbly recounts in the third person.

“Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last” (Revelation 1:12-17). The Apostle John is given a vision of the Glorified Christ.

“ After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six

wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.” And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals” (Revelation 4:1-5:1). John records some of the things concerning his vision of God’s throne room.

“ Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone” (Revelation 9:13-17). The sixth trumpet judgment is given to John in the form of a vision.

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1). John receives a vision of the Eternal Heavenly Abode. Dear Christian reader, I look forward to seeing you there!

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