

Daniel

Ep: 177: CFM: Daniel 1-6

Overview¹

This book of scripture is named after its major character, the prophet Daniel. The first six chapters were written about him and his associates in the third person, suggesting that the events may have been recorded by someone else. But chapters 7 through 12 are clearly first-person autobiographical records of his visions. Thus the book consists of some episodes from his life (whether written down by him or by someone else) collected with his own record of his visions. There is no way to know if the compilation was made during his own lifetime or later on.

But the book contains some difficulties that suggest that it may not have been transmitted carefully or accurately through the generations.² There are some apparent chronological problems, such as the statement that Darius conquered Babylon (Dan. 5:30-31), and the apparent placing of Darius earlier than Cyrus (Dan. 1:21; 6:28).³ Some scholars also see references and vocabulary in the text that they believe reflect a date of authorship centuries after Daniel's time.⁴ While some use these questions to date the book very late (second century B.C.), a wiser conclusion would be that the text of Daniel carries some scars from the process of translation and transmission before it reached its final form. But even so, the problems are minor; its message has been preserved with complete fidelity, and modern revelation confirms the accuracy of its major doctrinal sections (see D&C 65:1-6; 116:1; 138:44).

The book of Daniel easily divides into two sections, each of which deals with the same basic theme: God's dominion is over all nations. The first half of the book (chaps. 1-6) deals with the experience of Daniel and his associates and shows the supremacy of Jehovah over gods, kings, and nations. Tied to this is the idea that God will not abide the prideful arrogance of those who take credit for the things of God.

¹ This overview is provided by Richard Draper, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi*, Deseret Book, (ed. Kent Jackson), 2004.

² One issue is that Dan. 1:1-2:4a and 8:1-12:13 are preserved in Hebrew, whereas the rest is in Aramaic. **Scholars have proposed two explanations for this: Either two languages were used in the original work, a combination that was retained in the multilingual world of the land of Israel in the 2nd century BCE; or the whole work was originally composed in one language**, and one part was later translated into the other language. In this latter theory, Aramaic, the common international language of the ancient Near East at that time, is usually suggested as the original language of the whole. Neither explanation has met with complete scholarly agreement, but the most likely reconstruction is that chapters 2-6 and separately, chapter 7, were written in Aramaic, and chapters 8-12, at a date slightly later than chapter 7, in Hebrew. Chapter 1 may have been written in Hebrew, or translated from Aramaic into Hebrew as a more appropriate language for the introduction. Berlin, Brettler, and Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford University Press, p. 1641.

³ Darius I Hystaspes (see Ezra 4:5, 24; 6:14-15; Hag. 1) gained the throne of the Persian empire in 522 B.C., some years after Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. Scholars who date the book of Daniel late believe, based on some historical sources, that it was Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar, who went insane, as described in Dan. 4. See Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 2d ed. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1980, p. 352.

⁴ For surveys of the dating arguments, see *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1641-1642, 1664-1665.; and W. S. LaSor, D. A. Hubbard, and F. W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, 1982, pp. 662-68; and Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, Zondervan, 1991, p. 349-51

The second portion of the book (chaps. 7-12) deals with God's dominion over later nations and, finally, with the establishment of his kingdom in the latter days.

Daniel 1: Daniel in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar

Problems with Daniel 1

Daniel chapter 1 starts out making the following statement:

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. (Daniel 1:1-2)

There are a couple of problems with this statement. Jehoiakim reigned from 609 to 598 BCE. Jerusalem was besieged in 598 BCE, after Jehoiakim dies.⁵ ***So at the very beginning of this book we have this reference in Daniel that has the date wrong, as well as the wrong king on the throne at the time of the siege of Jerusalem.*** Also, if it was in "the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim," it would have been 606-605, so ***this statement is off by 7 years.***

When did Nebuchadnezzar lay siege to Jerusalem?

According to the Babylonian Chronicles,⁶ Jerusalem fell on 2 Adar (16 March) 597 BC. The Chronicles state:

The seventh year (of Nebuchadnezzar-598 BC.) in the month Chislev (Nov/Dec) the king of Babylon assembled his army, and after he had invaded the land of Hatti (Syria/Palestine) he laid siege to the city of Judah. On the second day of the month of Adar (16 March) he conquered the city and took the king (Jehoiachin) prisoner. He installed in his place a king (Zedekiah) of his own choice, and after he had received rich tribute, he sent (them) forth to Babylon.⁷

The King's Meat

The first task of Daniel was to teach Israel that great blessings follow faith in God and obedience to his commandments. Daniel knew personally of what he spoke, but he did not underplay the difficulty of being faithful. From the beginning, the book stresses that it is not easy to show fidelity to Jehovah while living in Babylon.⁸

Daniel was probably a youth when he was taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar's forces.⁹ Though he lived a long life, at least until the third year of the reign of Cyrus (536 B.C.; see Dan. 1.21; 10.1), he never

⁵ Aaron P. Schade, "[The Kingdom of Judah: Politics, Prophets, and Scribes in the Late Preexilic Period](#)," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely. Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2004.

⁶ Geoffrey Wigoder, [The Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible](#) by Sterling Publishing Company, 2005.

⁷ No 24 WA21946, The Babylonian Chronicles, The British Museum.

⁸ Draper, *Studies in Scripture*.

⁹ Dan. 1.1 states that Daniel was taken with exiles in Jehoiakim's third year, after Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. The date would be ca. 606 B.C. No known siege or deportation took place that year, but it is known that Nebuchadnezzar, who did not become king until a year later, conducted a campaign to the west at that time. Whether it took him as far to the south as Jerusalem is not known. If the date in Dan. 1.1 was a later, inaccurate

again saw his homeland. Instead, he served in the Babylonian and Persian courts. As the Bible points out, his rise to high position was nothing short of providential.

It was apparently Babylonian custom to train promising captive young men to serve in the royal court. Officials carefully screened the boys, looking for those who were "skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans" (Dan. 1:4). Daniel and some of his friends showed great promise. For this reason they came to the attention of a ranking officer. The record makes it clear this was not by chance, for "God had brought Daniel into favor" (Dan. 1.9). From the outset, Jehovah was with his servants, and the book never lets its readers forget that the omnipresent power of God was ever working with and for the faithful.

The book of Daniel assists its readers in understanding why the prophet found such favor with Jehovah. **Three times angels declared to him that he was beloved by God** (Dan. 9.23; 10.11, 19). The Hebrew word translated "greatly beloved" could be translated just as readily "very desirable," thus suggesting that Daniel possessed qualities that allowed him to find favor in God's eyes.¹⁰ As the angel Gabriel explained to him: "I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision" (Dan. 9.23). Note that it was because Daniel was beloved that he was given to understand the visions both he and others had. The qualities that caused him to find special favor with God were mentioned briefly by an angel: "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words" (Dan. 10.12). Determined obedience and humility were two qualities that marked Daniel throughout his ministry. It was this close association with the Spirit that allowed him to understand the deepest mysteries of God.¹¹

At issue in chapter 1 is the insistence by Daniel and his companions that they eat not the "king's meat." This is most likely because it violated the food laws in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Because they show the king that their diet is more beneficial to their countenances, they were given "pulse" to eat instead.¹² Because these young men eat this food, they are wise in all matters of understanding (Dan. 1.20).

Daniel 2: The stone cut out of the mountain

Chapter 2 contains the core of the first half of the book of Daniel.¹³ It testifies that God will bring about his work in a specified period of time, and nothing and no one can stop him. The way the revelation came forth both heightens its importance and confirms its truthfulness. The king had a dream that "troubled" his spirit (Dan. 2.1). It appears that he knew precisely the content of the dream but wished to have the interpretation verified through a proof: a clear description of the vision. The confession of the

addition to the text, then it is more likely that Daniel was taken with the first wave of exiles in 597 B.C., when Ezekiel, King Jehoiachin, and many others were deported. See LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, p. 662 and n. 7.

¹⁰ The Hebrew word here does not derive from *'hb* or *dwd*, the usual verbs expressing deep affection. It is *hamudot*, from חָמַד *hāmad*, meaning "highly desired."

¹¹ This is from Draper, *Studies in Scripture*.

¹² זָרְעֹן - *zēr'ōn* translated as "pulse," is related to the Hebrew word *zāra'* זָרַע which means to sow, scatter seed, produce seed. *The Jewish Study Bible* translates it as "legumes," while Robert Alter translates it as "grains."

¹³ Draper, *Studies in Scripture*.

court magicians is all-important: "There is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Dan. 2:11). Through this admission the writer set the stage to make two points. First, God, through Daniel, was able to do what the gods of the wise men could not. The inability of the wise men effectively showed that their claimed source of power was nonexistent. Second, Daniel's God did associate with those in the flesh and was very willing to manifest his will. One other point should not be overlooked. Daniel's ability to retell the dream did what the king designed it to do; it gave proof to the validity of Daniel's interpretation. Also important is the king's reaction to Daniel's prophetic ability. Falling before him the king proclaimed: "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret" (Dan. 2:47). The king's confession did not acknowledge that Jehovah was the supreme God, let alone the only God, but it did make the Lord a recognized member of the Babylonian pantheon. Having Jehovah become just one of the gods was not the objective, however. So the king had more to learn.

The content of the dream, in harmony with Daniel's message throughout the book, teaches us that for the present the government of the world is in the hands of the kingdoms of men. But a future day will come when God's kingdom will prevail. Daniel perceived that the "great image" which the king saw in his dream was a chronological time line that extended from his own time to the last days. The kingdoms of the world would come and go: one would replace another, only in turn to be replaced by another, and so forth (Dan. 2:31-43). It would be in the latter-day setting that God would create his own kingdom—"without hands," i.e., not of human construction—which would supplant the kingdoms of men, "that no place was found for them." Eventually, God's kingdom would fill "the whole earth" (Dan. 2:34-35), but unlike the other kingdoms, "it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was restored in 1830 after numerous revelations from the divine source," said President Spencer W. Kimball, "and this is the kingdom, set up by the God of heaven, that would never be destroyed nor superseded, and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that would become a great mountain and would fill the whole earth. . . . There was purpose for this unveiling of the history of the world so that the honest in heart might be looking forward to its establishment, and numerous good men and women, knowing of the revelations of God and the prospects for the future, have looked forward to this day."¹⁴

Daniel 2:31-45 give the interpretation of the king's dream. Portentous dreams of the fate of kingdoms were common in the ancient world; (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.108, 7.19). Here, however, the author uses an older prediction of four world kingdoms understood as Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Greece - and emphasizes their decreasing value. They are followed by a mixed kingdom of iron and clay, which signifies the divided Greek kingdom and the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings who ruled in the eastern Mediterranean. Although Daniel predicts the demise of the Babylonian kingdom and its ultimate replacement by the kingdom of the God of Heaven, Nebuchadnezzar nevertheless reveres Daniel for his insight.¹⁵

¹⁴ Spencer W. Kimball, in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1976, p. 10; D&C 65:2, 5-6. For additional interpretation of the dream, see Kent P. Jackson, "May the Kingdom of God Roll Forth," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, Randall Book, 1984, p. 251-57.

¹⁵*The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1646.

The Second Century Context of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Part	Material	2 nd Cenury BCE Context	LDS Interpretation ¹⁶
Head	Gold	Babylon (Dan. 2.38)	Babylon
Chest/arms	Silver	Medes (Dan. 2.39a) ¹⁷	Medo-Persia
Thighs	Bronze	Persia (Dan. 2.39b)	Macedonian Greece
Legs	Iron	Macedonian Greece (Dan. 2.40)	Rome
Feet	Clay/iron mix	The Diadochi ¹⁸	The European nations ¹⁹
Stone cut		God's Kingdom (Dan. 2.44-45)	God's Kingdom, restored in the last days, never again to leave the earth.

The Government of God

Daniel 2 portrays the inevitability of the governments of men to fade out. The author of the text takes the position that eventually all kingdoms of men fail. Only the government of God is sustainable over

¹⁶ A unique LDS interpretation is introduced, but not explained, in [D&C 65:2](#). President Spencer W. Kimball gave a lengthy LDS interpretation of Daniel 2 in his address, "[The Stone Cut without Hands](#)," General Conference, April 1976.

¹⁷ This interpretation of the statue's chest and arms as the kingdom of the Medes is flawed, in that the Median Empire did not succeed the Neo-Babylonian Empire; rather, it fell to and was absorbed by the Persian Empire in 550, eleven years *before* the Babylonians. This error is found repeatedly in the book of Daniel and was common among the Jews and other ancient peoples. See Daniel 5:31; 6:1–28; 9:1; 11:1, which mistakenly inform us that Darius of Media came to power after the overthrow of Babylon.

¹⁸ **The Diadochi** (singular: Diadochus); from Greek: Διάδοχοι Diadochoi, "successors") **were the rival generals, families, and friends of Alexander the Great who fought for control over his empire after his death in 323 BC.** The Wars of the Diadochi mark the beginning of the Hellenistic period from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River Valley. **The most notable Diadochi include Ptolemy, Antigonus, Cassander, and Seleucus** as the last remaining at the end of the Wars of the Successors, ruling in Egypt, Asia-Minor, Macedon and Persia respectively, all forging dynasties lasting several centuries.

¹⁹ Many Latter-day Saints saw this as the resultant kingdoms that remained after the dissolution of the Roman Empire. Orson Pratt said, "[The Roman] empire was divided and it was known as the eastern and western empire, represented by the two legs of iron, one having its seat at Rome, the other at Constantinople. But the feet and toes were governments more modern to grow out of the iron kingdom, after it should lose its strength. These are represented by the ten toes or ten kingdoms which should be partly strong and partly broken. They should not have the strength of the legs of iron, but they should be mixed with miry clay, indicating both strength and weakness." Orson Pratt, discourse delivered in the Eighteenth Ward meetinghouse, Salt Lake City, Utah, 25 February 1877. *Journal of Discourses*, volume 18, p. 337. In a meeting with Joseph Smith in 1835, Robert Matthews—who called himself "Joshua the Jewish Minister" or "Matthias"—compared the feet of iron and clay to the United States. Matthews' remarks were recorded in Joseph's journal; see *Journal, 1835–1836*, 9–11 November 1835, p. 26–27. See: [The Joseph Smith Papers, Journal, 1835-1836](#).

time and only God's governing power will have the ability to fill the whole earth. Joseph Smith expressed it this way:

It has been the design of Jehovah, from the commencement of the world, and is His purpose now, to regulate the affairs of the world in His own time, to stand as a head of the universe, and take the reins of government in His own hand. When that is done, judgment will be administered in righteousness; anarchy and confusion will be destroyed, and "nations will learn war no more." It is for want of this great governing principle, that all this confusion has existed; "for it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps;" this we have fully shown.

If there was anything great or good in the world, it came from God. The construction of the first vessel was given to Noah, by revelation. The design of the ark was given by God, "a pattern of heavenly things." The learning of the Egyptians, and their knowledge of astronomy was no doubt taught them by Abraham and Joseph, as their records testify, who received it from the Lord. The art of working in brass, silver, gold, and precious stones, was taught by revelation, in the wilderness. The architectural designs of the Temple at Jerusalem, together with its ornaments and beauty, were given of God. Wisdom to govern the house of Israel was given to Solomon, and the Judges of Israel; and if he had always been their king, and they subject to his mandate, and obedient to his laws, they would still have been a great and mighty people—the rulers of the universe, and the wonder of the world.²⁰

Daniel 3: The fiery furnace of affliction

Chapter 3 contains the next lesson that Nebuchadnezzar needed to learn. Again the details are listed in such a way as to highlight a point. The text is clear that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship the new Babylonian image, knowing full well that the consequence was death (Dan. 3.1-12). Explaining that they were worthy of death because they had disobeyed his decree, the king ended his sentencing with a question that was nothing less than a challenge: "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Dan. 3.15). The king's ill-disguised boast revealed his belief that his great idol was supreme; nothing could overmaster this god.

The prisoners responded, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. **But if not**, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3.17-18). The response cast no doubt on God's ability to save; the men responded that if God desired to save them he could. But whether or not he did, the idol was still nothing and they would not worship it. That God did save them proved their point—both Nebuchadnezzar and his image were powerless.

The details of the attempted execution magnify the power of God and the helplessness of the king. The text states that the furnace was heated seven times hotter than usual and that the guards who threw the Jews into the fire died before they could get away from the heat. No one could withstand that heat even for a few seconds. Thus, nothing short of divine intervention could save a mortal. But the writer pushed the idea further, noting that when the men were released they did not even smell of smoke (Dan. 3:19-27). Nebuchadnezzar was not slow to get the point when he saw the men walking unharmed

²⁰ Joseph Smith, [The Government of God, Times and Seasons, vol. 3, July 15, 1842](#).

amidst the flames in the company of one "like the Son of God" (Dan. 3.25).²¹ "There is no other God," he exclaimed, "that can deliver after this sort" (Dan. 3:29). Not only was the king's idol nothing but Jehovah emerged as the great savior God. Now Nebuchadnezzar was ready to acknowledge him as "the high God" (Dan. 4:2). The confession did not mean, however, that the king was ready to follow him as Lord and God. But God's hand was upon him, and the king would learn firsthand of Jehovah's power.

The vision recorded in chapter 4 emphasized God's controlling power over the great king (Dan. 4.1-18). There is a point here that should not be overlooked. ***The book of Daniel emphasizes the position of Jehovah not only as the God of the Jews but also as the God over the Babylonian king and, thus, over the whole nation as well. Indeed, Jehovah is the God of all nations.*** Daniel knew immediately upon hearing the dream recorded in Daniel 4:4-18 that the king had come under Jehovah's censure and that judgment would follow (Dan. 4:19-27). The curse had a purpose: it would remain, said Daniel, "till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25). That one verse summarizes the major thesis of the book. Both the visions of Nebuchadnezzar and those of Daniel all teach that lesson.²²

Daniel 4-5: The tree, the king's madness, and the writing on the wall

In chapter 4, the king has a dream of a great tree, whose height reached unto heaven (Dan. 4.11). The leaves of the tree were fair, and it was meat for all (Dan. 4.12).²³ A holy watcher, an angelic figure,²⁴ common in Jewish apocalyptic literature, comes down from heaven and chops down the tree and strips off the foliage and scatters its fruit (Dan. 4.14). Daniel explains that the tree is the king himself (Dan. 4.22). The king goes mad, eats grass, grows long nails, and suffers for seven years, and after this is restored to health (Dan. 4.28-37).

Chapter 5 emphasizes God's supremacy by showing that the same kind of arrogance seen earlier brought immediate punishment to the next generation. Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, served as a coregent with his father for a time. Revelry heightened by drunkenness lowered his inhibitions and allowed his arrogant impudence to express itself. His decision to drink from the captured wares of Jehovah's temple was, in effect, an attempt to show that he, not just his gods, was superior to Jehovah (Dan. 5.1-4). His vision (Dan. 5.5), like those of Nebuchadnezzar, showed clearly that God controls the destiny of nations. The message written by the divine hand in Aramaic on the wall of the palace constituted a kind of riddle. It was for this reason that the ruler and his court could not figure out its meaning (Dan. 5.7-16). MENE means "a numbering" which, according to Daniel, meant that the number of days determined by God for Babylon's duration was up (Dan. 5.26). TEKEL is a measure of weight. Belshazzar had been weighed on a scale and was found wanting (Dan. 5.27). UPHARSIN can be rendered "(and) separations," "divisions." Daniel linked the singular form, PERES ("a separation," "a division") by a

²¹ The translators of the KJV identified the one "like the Son of God" (Dan. 3.25) with Christ, as shown by the capital letter on "Son" (Hebrew and Aramaic have no capital letters). More likely, it was an angel, because the Aramaic term, *בַּר־אֱלֹהִין* *bar-'elahin*, was used commonly in ancient literature for subordinate gods, angelic beings, members of the heavenly council, etc. *The Jewish Study Bible* translates this bit as "the fourth looks like a divine being."

²² Draper, *Studies in Scripture*, emphasis added.

²³ The "world-tree" is often used in the ancient Near East as a symbol of a great empire; see: Ezek. 17.1-10; 31.3-14; Herodotus 1.108; 7.19. See: [The World Tree](#).

²⁴ Watchers executed God's justice (Jubilees 4.15), but were also sometimes fallen angels. See: 1 Enoch chapters 10-16.

play on words with the name of the nation which would conqueror Babylon—PARAS, the Persians: "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan. 5.28).²⁵

Babylonian rule was to cease. God's will would be done. Further, it would continue to be done. That is the point made in Daniel's harrowing experience of being thrown into the lion's den (Dan. 6.1-28). The author shows the continuity of God's hand over yet another generation, this time with a king of the succeeding empire, Persia. As in each of the other cases, circumstances arose by which Daniel was able to teach the faithful how the name of Jehovah was exalted among the nations. The enemy in this case was not the monarch but officials of the court jealous of Daniel's influence. Darius, the king, seems to have already understood that Daniel's God was the saving God.²⁶

Daniel 6: A den of lions

Daniel 6 may be one of the most famous stories from the Old Testament, and as a child I was fascinated by the telling of this story. The text states that Darius was the ruler at the time (Dan. 6.1), and corrupt leaders come to him and have him sign into law that whoever addressed a petition to any god or man other than the king should be put to death by being thrown into a den of lions. The king signs the decree, thus putting the ban in writing (Dan. 6.7-9). Historically, this ban has some serious issues, and so the story might be somewhat muddled as to the exact details.²⁷ Daniel is caught praying to God, and is thrown into the lion's den (Dan. 6.16-17) by the king who is deeply saddened, fasting – apparently in the hope that Daniel can survive the night in the presence of the lions (Dan. 6.18). Daniel is safe when found in the morning, the enemies who had him thrown into the den are then punished collectively,²⁸ and the king makes the pronouncement that Daniel's God is "the living god" (Dan. 6.26). This story has elements of a great drama: a heroic character, great danger, a reversal, and a happy ending for the hero.

Daniel 7-12: The apocalyptic visions of Daniel

Daniel 7-12 contain four visions of Daniel that are apocalyptic. What is apocalyptic literature? Apocalypse is a Greek word meaning revelation, and apocalyptic as an adjective describes the genre of literature that contains visionary or revelatory experiences. Although such writings have been known

²⁵ The words are interpreted on two levels. They are weights: MENE in Aramaic is a mina (a little more than half a kilogram, about 20 ounces); TEKEL is a shekel (11 grams or less than half an ounce); and UPHARSJN (a dual form of "peres") is two half-minas. They also sound like verbs: MENE sounds like the verb "to number," TEKEL "to weigh," and UPHARSIN "to divide." The last is also similar to the word "Persians." It is possible that the words originally referred only to the decreasing "weight" or importance of particular Babylonian monarchs, and the dynasty was thereby condemned. A more explicit level of prophetic condemnation was then added in terms of the verbal meanings. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1652.

²⁶ Draper, *Studies in Scripture*.

²⁷ The interdict is historically implausible. No king of this period who claimed divine status forbade the worship of other gods. Darius the Persian was supportive of local religions, including that of the Jews. The exclusive worship of one god was a Jewish view, and this exclusive notion is projected onto an Eastern divine monarch. The narrative thus reflects Jewish tensions about remaining monotheistic in a mixed Diaspora culture. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1654.

²⁸ It was common in the Hebrew Bible for the families of perpetrators of crimes against God to be corporately punished. So in this circumstance, not only the men who had Daniel cast into the den were punished, but their wives and their children. See also Esther 9.12, where the sons of Haman are hanged for Haman's crime. See also Joshua 7 and 2 Samuel 21. See: Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1995. Kaminsky emphasizes (p. 30) that "corporate ideas are common, central, and persistent in the Hebrew Bible."

from ancient times (texts like Daniel, and the Revelation of John), discoveries since the late nineteenth century of apocalyptic texts have increased scholarly interest in the subject. The apocalyptic tradition was one of those the early Christian church rejected in the third through the fifth centuries, only to be recovered in modern times through these discoveries. The importance of revelation in the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith makes the study of apocalyptic texts as worthwhile to Latter-day Saints as it is interesting to scholars.²⁹

Daniel 7

Daniel 7 is all about the rise of four mighty empires: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The vision shifts in verse 9, where Daniel sees “the thrones cast down, and the Ancient of Days...” come to take his place as the leader of the nations of the earth in this chapter. Most biblical commentators and scholars identify this person with God, but the prophet Joseph Smith identified the Ancient of Days as Adam, the primal parent of our race. The kingdom is eventually given to the those that are faithful to God. The moral of this apocalyptic vision is that trust and faith in God will eventually come to fruition, but for now, the kingdoms of this world are not friendly to followers of God.³⁰

The Son of Man in Daniel 7

Daniel speaks of the Son of Man when it says:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7.13-14).

Who is the Son of Man? The expression "the Son of man" appears 81 times in the Koine Greek of the four Gospels: 30 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark, 25 times in Luke and 12 times in John. This title is used Jesus when speaking of Himself but never used by anyone else in speaking of Him, though we see from Acts 7:56 that Christians did apply it to Him soon after His Ascension into heaven. In the Old Testament the expression “son of man” is frequently used to denote simply “a man” (Num. 23:19; Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; 80:17). The expression is found 90 times in the book of Ezekiel, where the Lord uses the term for the prophet Ezekiel.

The main ideas that probably underlie the title as applied to our Lord are (1) lowliness, humility, and suffering (Matt. 11:19; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:45; 14:21; Luke 7:34); (2) honor and dignity, as head and founder of the kingdom of God, and judge of all men (Matt. 13:41; 16:28; 19:28; 24:30–31; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 2:10, 28); (3) the thought of Him as the representative or ideal Man, pre-existent and chosen in the pre-earth Council of God as the Savior and leader over the whole human family.

Latter-day revelation confirms the special meaning and sacredness of this phrase when used as a name of the Savior Jesus Christ, as in D&C 45:39; 49:6, 22; 58:65; Moses 6:57.

The biblical scholar Sigmund Mowinckel, in his book entitled *He that Cometh*, gives examples from apocalyptic literature from the time period preceding Jesus that illustrate the expectations of the

²⁹ C. Wilfred Griggs, Apocalyptic Texts, [Encyclopedia of Mormonism](#).

³⁰ For details on this chapter see: Day, [Daniel 7](#).

coming of the Son of Man.³¹ The Son of Man is depicted in these visionary experiences as doing or embodying the ideal of the following things:

He will, at the turn of the age, appear and would receive from God delegated power and authority over all the kingdoms and peoples.³²

The Son of Man is a human, yet a heavenly deliverer. So while he has human characteristics, he “belongs to another sphere, that of heaven.”³³

The Son of Man will save the righteous and destroy the wicked who oppose God’s purposes.³⁴

The Son of Man is described in *2 Esdras* as the Jewish Messiah, the deliverer of the world.³⁵

1 Enoch tells its readers that the Son of Man came into existence before all time, before creation. He is the pre-existent one.³⁶

1 Enoch tells us that the Son of Man is not only a pre-existent heavenly being, but he is also a divine being. It also tells us that the Son of Man “will, in his own time, sit on a throne of glory like God’s own.”³⁷ The person who will put him on the throne is God himself.³⁸

These apocalyptic texts express the idea that the Son of Man, while being divine, is also subordinate to God. In ancient Jewish thought the Son of Man was not to usurp the place of God, and so the Son of Man stood in a position whereby he acted as God’s heavenly representative, and as the “Elect One” he “stands before the Lord of Spirits” possessing glory and might.³⁹

The Enoch literature expressed the idea that the Son of Man was full of glory, graciousness, wisdom, power, insight, and might. A man filled with the spirit of understanding, “more than an angel, exalted high above them.”⁴⁰

The Son of Man has the authority over the ordering of the cosmos, thus he is the Lord of all creation.⁴¹

³¹ Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, Abingdon Press, 1954. In his book Mowinckel cites the writings of *The Apocalypse Baruch* (2 Baruch), the *Ezra Apocalypse*, *The Sybilline Oracles*, and the Enoch writings. See pages 353-357 where he lays out the source material for the teachings regarding the Son of Man in the apocalyptic literature.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 352.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 370-371. John will use this idea in his teaching of the Logos, or Word. Before the world was, there was the Logos, which is Jesus Christ. He is the embodiment of God the Father, his desires and love for his children on the earth. Russel M. Nelson stated, “Under the direction of the Father, Jesus bore the responsibility of Creator. His title was the Word—spelled with a capital W. In the Greek language of the New Testament, that Word was *Logos*, or “Divine Expression.” It was another name for the Master. That terminology may seem strange, but it is so reasonable. ***We use words to convey our expression to others. So Jesus was the “Word” or “Expression” of his Father to the world.***” Russell M. Nelson, “[Jesus Christ- Our Master and More](#),” *BYU Devotional*, Feb. 2, 1992.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

Associated with creation was the idea taught in the *Ezra Apocalypse* that the Son of Man was the king of paradise, the “king from primordial times in the land of the gods, which is no longer here on earth.”⁴²

He is the “ideal man” and the possessor of the hidden secrets of wisdom, having been “initiated into all these secrets.”⁴³

He will come from the sea, the primordial symbol of chaos, in order to put chaos into its proper place and initiate a new creation. *The Apocalypse of Ezra* states that the Son of Man will come from “the heart of the sea” and bring order. Mowinckel asserts that this is not to be taken literally, but as a symbol. *The Apocalypse of Baruch* expresses similar ideas.⁴⁴

The Son of Man will come to earth with heavenly beings to judge the world and put things right.⁴⁵

In his setting things right, the Son of Man will put down Satan or Beliar. In so doing, the heathen nations will survive the destruction.⁴⁶

He opens the gate of paradise, initiates the resurrection and a time where “women shall no longer have pain when they bear,” and an overall state of Millennial peace.⁴⁷

Daniel 8

Daniel sees the rise of the Medo-Persian empire – verse 3 “a ram which had two horns”... (Daniel 8:3) He also sees the rise of the Greek Empire, brought about by the conquests of Alexander the Great. The Greek empire would come to dominate the Persians and the rest of the ancient world under Alexander’s leadership (reigning from 336-323 BCE) as the “he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth... moved with choler (or anger) ... and smote the ram (Media-Persia – Daniel 8.20).

“Four notable ones” rise up from the Greek conquest, the four rulers that divided Alexander’s kingdom following his death (verse 8), when “out of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceedingly great... and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away...” (Daniel 8.9-11). The rest of chapter 8 is about this “little horn” and what he does to the Jews, how he treats their temple, and ends with the prediction that he will “be broken without hand” (Daniel 8.25).

The villain in Daniel 8 is probably Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid emperor from 175-164 BCE.⁴⁸ The overall message is that Antiochus will be “broken without hand” (Dan. 8.125), suggesting that the God of heaven will bring down this enemy of the Jewish people in the second century B.C.

Daniel 9

Daniel 9 is the third apocalyptic vision of Daniel. This chapter contains Daniel’s confession that the reason for the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the captivity is due to the failure of the Jewish

⁴² Ibid., p. 382-383.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 383-387.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 390-391.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 393. John writes, “The Father hath life in himself, so he has given to the Son to have life in himself, and he has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5.27).

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 395-399. *The Apocalypse of Baruch* tells us that the heathen nations will survive. D&C 45.54 also gives this portrayal of these nations.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 401-409.

⁴⁸ Day, [Daniel 8](#). See also [2 Macc. 9.1-5, 9-10](#).

people to be faithful to the covenant (Daniel 9.1-19). It is during this prayer that “the man Gabriel” appears unto Daniel (Daniel 9.21). He informs Daniel that “seventy weeks are determined upon thy people” (verse 24). After this, Gabriel tells Daniel, “after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”⁴⁹

Daniel 10-12

These chapters contain the fourth and final recorded apocalyptic vision of Daniel. Daniel is shown the Lord in vision in this chapter. We read:

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. (Daniel 10:5-6) Daniel is told not to fear, and then promised that he will see what will happen in the future (Daniel 10:14).

Daniel 11 is a vision of a battle between Antiochus Epiphanes, “the king of the north” and the king of Egypt, “the king of the south.” This vision is significant because it emphasizes the importance of staying true to the covenant and not giving in to the evil that surrounds us. To the Jews at the time that this vision was disseminated, Antiochus was defiling the temple, and oppressing the Jewish people. This vision was meant to encourage these people to be faithful and true to their covenants with God. While the final prediction regarding Antiochus Epiphanes is an unfulfilled prophecy, (he isn’t killed in the land of Israel) the overall message was one of encouragement and faith.

Daniel 11:21 mentions that “a contemptible person” will arise. This is Antiochus Epiphanes. Verses 25-28 describe Epiphanes’ first invasion of Egypt, which took place in 170 BCE and was relatively successful. Verse 29 described the second invasion of Egypt in 169, which was a disaster. He was confronted by the Romans (the Chittim- Daniel 11:30) and ordered to withdraw. He obeyed. Daniel implies that he took his frustration on Jerusalem.

While the king was in Egypt, civil war had broken out in Jerusalem between the former high priest, Jason, and the current one, Menelaus (see 2 Maccabees 5:5-14). The king took it that Judea was in revolt and sent in the troops.

After this, for reasons that remain controversial, Antiochus attempted to suppress the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem and their sacrificial practices. Some Jews collaborated with Antiochus. Daniel says, “He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant” (11:32).

Some clues in this text

There are some clues embedded into this text which may help readers to better understand why and when this text was written. These chapters in the book of Daniel can be confusing for readers unless they have an idea as to the context of this vision.

⁴⁹ Day, [Daniel 9](#).

Biblical scholar John Collins writes:

The people who know their God, however, stand firm. The real heroes, from the standpoint of Daniel, are the “wise” (Hebrew *maskilim*) who instruct the common people, even though some of them do so at the cost of their lives.

It is reasonable to suppose that the authors of Daniel belonged to the circle of the “wise.” The instruction they gave to the masses presumably corresponded to the revelations of Daniel: that the human conflicts were only a reflection of conflicts on the supernatural level, and that the outcome was assured. Some scholars have argued that “the wise” should be identified with the party known as the Hasidim, how are mentioned three times in the books of Maccabees (1 Macc. 2:42; 7:12-13; 2 Macc. 14:6). We know very little about these people, except that they were militant supporters of the Maccabees. Daniel 11:34 says that the wise shall receive little help. This has often been interpreted as a slighting reference to the Maccabees. It is not clear, however, that Daniel would have regarded the Maccabees as any help at all. In his view, the battle would be won by the archangel Michael. The role of the Jews was to keep themselves pure and not do anything to obstruct their heavenly deliverer.

Daniel 11:40-45 describes the downfall of the king. Verse 45 claims that he would meet his death between the sea and the holy mountain, that is, in the land of Israel. This prophecy was not fulfilled. **Antiochus Epiphanes died in Persia from wounds received in an attempt to rob a temple late in 164 BCE. *The unfulfilled prophecy reveals the date of the composition of Daniel.*** All of the “predictions” are correct down to the persecution. This part of the prophecy was presumably written after the fact and served to inspire confidence in the real prediction of the end of the story, which was yet to come. ***The prophecy must have been written before the news of Antiochus’ death reached Jerusalem.***

The death of the king is not the climax of the prophecy. According to Daniel 12:1-3, “At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise.” Then all those written in the book of life would be delivered. Some would rise to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt. The wise would shine like the stars forever. We know from a passage in [1 Enoch 104](#) that “to shine like the stars” means “to become companions of the angels.”⁵⁰ The idea of astral immortality, that some souls ascend to the stars after death, was well known in the Greek world. Daniel does not say that everyone will be raised, only the righteous and the wicked. Neither does he say that the resurrection will involve a body of flesh and blood. Daniel 12:2, which is usually taken to refer to “the dust of the earth,” can better be translated as “the land of the dust,” or Sheol. The idea then is that the wise, at least, are lifted up from Sheol to heaven.

The **hope for resurrection** explains why the wise could let themselves be killed in the time of persecution. The traditional hope in ancient Israel was for a long life and to see one’s children’s children. This hope was changed radically by the idea of resurrection to a glorious afterlife. The goal of life would henceforth be to become like the angels, so that one could live with them forever. This new hope is

⁵⁰ “I swear unto you, that in heaven the angels remember you for good before the glory of the Great One: and your names are written before the glory of the Great One. Be hopeful; for aforesaid ye were put to shame through ill and affliction; but now ***ye shall shine as the lights of heaven, ye shall shine and ye shall be seen***, and the portals of heaven shall be opened to you. And in your cry, cry for judgement, and it shall appear to you; for all your tribulation shall be visited on the rulers, and on all who helped those who plundered you. Be hopeful, and cast not away your hopes for ye shall have great joy ***as the angels of heaven***” ([1 Enoch 104.1-4](#)).

central to the apocalyptic literature. ***It figures prominently in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it was essential to the rise of Christianity.***⁵¹

Daniel 12 is the conclusion of Daniel's fourth apocalyptic vision, comprising chapters 10-12. In this part of the vision, Daniel sees Michael rise up with the righteous and take control of the earth. Daniel sees the resurrection of both the wicked and the righteous (Daniel 12.2-3). When read in concert with other scriptures, this passage offers hope for a better world.

The end of the chapter can be enigmatic to say the least. Did the author of this text believe that after 1,290 days (Daniel 12:11) that the end times would come and the righteous would sweep away the wicked? Was it to be after 1,335 days? (Daniel 12:12) What do these verses mean?

One thing is certain: ***the author of this concluding vision believed that the kingdom of God would come and that the wicked would be swept away, with the mighty deliverance of the righteous followers of God.***

Just over a month before he was killed, Joseph Smith told an audience:

The Ancient Prophets declared in the last days the God of heaven shall set up a Kingdom which should never be destroyed nor left to other people; the very time that was calculated on; this people was struggling to bring it out — he that arms himself with Gun, sword, or Pistol except in the defense of truth, will be sorry for it — I never carry any weapon with me bigger than my Pen Knife — when I was dragged before the Cannon and muskets in Missouri, I was unarmed. God will always protect me until my mission is fulfilled. ***I calculate to be one of the Instruments of setting up the Kingdom of Daniel***, by the word of the Lord, and ***I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the world*** — I once offered my life to the Missouri Mob as a sacrifice for my people — and here I am — it will not be by Sword or Gun that this kingdom will roll on — the power of truth is such that all nations will be under the necessity of obeying the Gospel.⁵²

⁵¹ John Collins, [A short introduction to the Hebrew Bible](#), Fortress Press, 2007, p. 286-287, emphasis added.

⁵² Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, [The Words of Joseph Smith](#), Bookcraft, 1980, 367 (discourse of 12 May 1844). See also: David Whitaker, [The Book of Daniel in Early Mormon Thought](#), in *By Study and Also by Faith*, volume 1, emphasis added.