

DANIEL

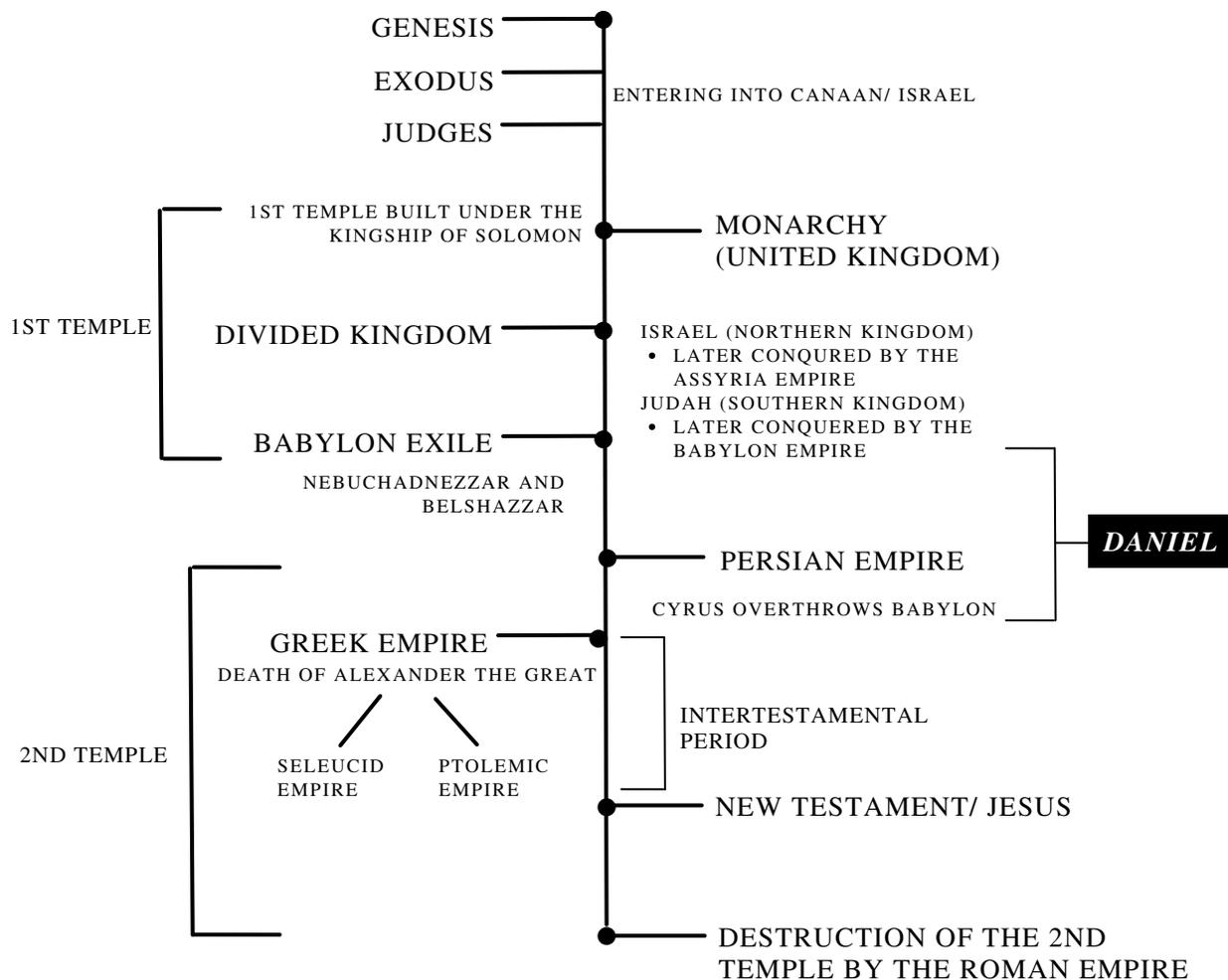
Background + Time

- The Book of Daniel was written after the Babylonian exile. At this point, the majority of the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon at the beginning of the story. The first temple constructed under Solomon's reign was destroyed, and the Davidic kingship had ceased.
- The general structure of the book can be summarized as **1) Court Narrative** from Chapters 1 to 6, and **2) Apocalyptic Literature** from Chapters 7 -12.

Theological Focus

- God is faithful to His people, and He is ultimately sovereign over the nations.
- Exhortation to imitate Daniel and his friends' faithfulness, wisdom, and piety under the pressure of foreign influence, even at great personal cost.
- The Israelites' God is the God who knows it all (superior in knowledge), controls it all (superior in power), and He has been and will rescue His people throughout history.
- God's kingship v.s. Human kingship. Many kingdoms will rise and fall, and His people will be persecuted and suffer. But in the end, His kingdom and His people will ultimately reign.

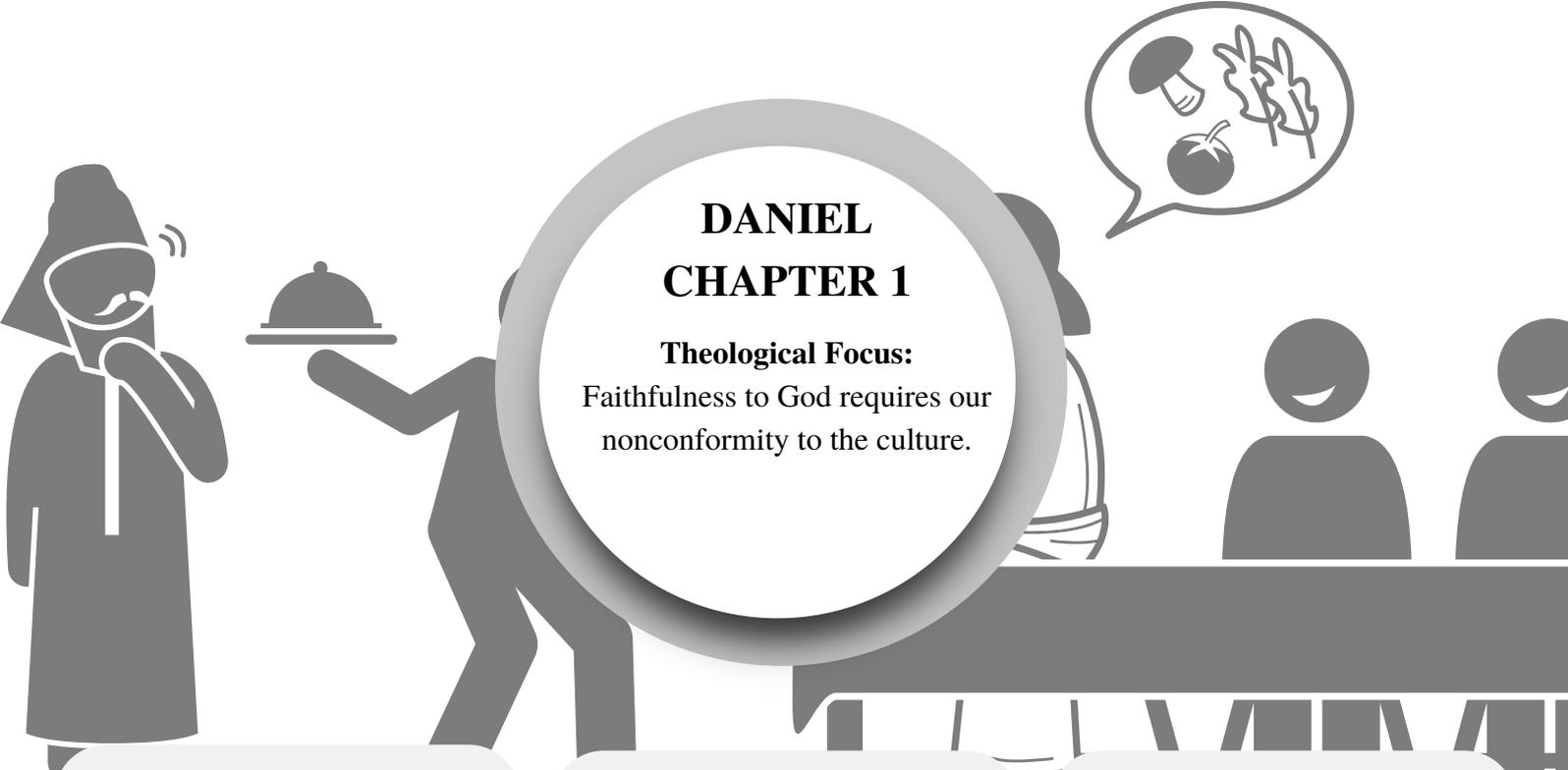
Timeline



The Four Kingdoms (Daniel 2; 7; 8) Interpretation

DANIEL 2 STATUE	DANIEL 7 FOUR BEASTS	GREEK VIEW #1	ROMAN VIEW	GREEK VIEW #2	DANIEL 8
Gold - Head	Lion • Eagles' wings	Babylon	Babylon	Babylon	Two horned ram (v.20)
Silver - Torso	Bear • Three ribs in mouth	Media	Media-Persia	Media	
Bronze - Midsection	Leopard • Four heads/ four wings	Persia	Greece • Four wings as Alexander the Great's four generals	Persia • Four Persian kings	
Iron legs	Unnamed beast • Ten horns	Greece • Ten horns are the ten Seleucid kings	Rome • The past prediction of the kingdoms are fulfilled • Extended/ Revived Kingdom. The influence of Rome still remains	Greece • Ten horns are the ten sovereign states • The little horn is Antiochus IV	
Feet/ toe iron - clay	A little horn	Little horn is Antiochus IV	Little horn is the Antichrist		

All views generally agree the Goat is Greece and the large horn is Alexander the Great, and little horn is Antiochus IV



DANIEL CHAPTER 1

Theological Focus:
Faithfulness to God requires our
nonconformity to the culture.

01 OBSERVATION

- How did Daniel end up in Babylon? What cultural setting was Daniel in? (*Take a quick look at the Biblical timeline and help the group to locate where Daniel was in the history of the Jewish people*)
- What conflict dilemma was Daniel engaged in?



02 INTERPRETATION

- Why do you think Daniel reacted so strongly to the king's provision of food?
- How was Daniel challenged into conforming to his surrounding (Babylonian) culture?
- How did God respond to Daniel's faithfulness?



03 APPLICATION

- How have you been challenged to conform in your culture? In your workplace, family, country?
- What do you need to believe about God's faithfulness when you are pressured to compromise?



04 NOTE

- **Timeline:** The United Kingdom of Israel was divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) after the death of King Solomon. Israel was later conquered by the Assyrian Empire, and Judah by the Babylonian Empire. The Book of Daniel was possibly written during the diaspora as the majority of the Jewish people were taken captive and exiled to Babylon.
- There is nothing about the Jewish dietary law that wine is prohibited. But, it is possible both the food and the wine were used for a festival and offering in the Babylonian temple; therefore, they would have been regarded as ritually unclean or associated with idol worship by the Jewish people. To Daniel and his companions, consuming the King's rations would constitute an act of disobedience against God's and His commands (Leviticus 11).
- Scholars also suggested the motivation for rejecting the rations could be a form of non-compliance to the Babylonian culture assimilation. The change of names in v.7 can be seen as such an example. By rejecting the royal food and choosing the more "peasant" option, Daniel and his companions made a theological point that it was God who sustained and nourished them, instead of the Babylonian king as the meals were probably offered three times a day).



DANIEL CHAPTER 2

Theological Focus:
God is above and more powerful
than earthly kingdoms.



01 OBSERVATION

- What challenges were Nebuchadnezzar, the king's advisors, and Daniel facing accordingly?
- How did they respond to their challenges differently?



02 INTERPRETATION

- Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar and his advisors were distressed?
- What was Daniel's belief about God and His attributes? (hints: look at Daniel's prayer in v.20-23)
- How was God's power displayed in this story?



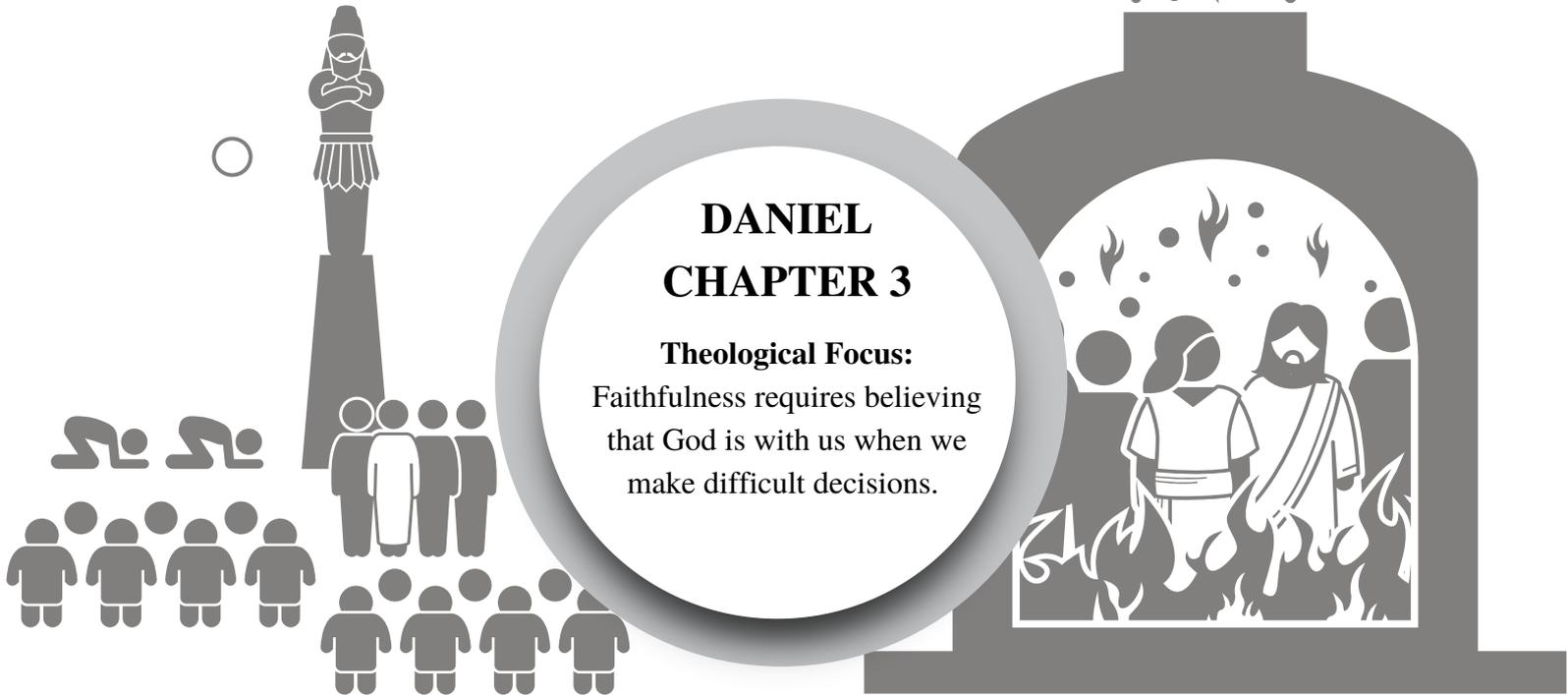
03 APPLICATION

- How has this story inspired you to believe about who God is? His attributes? His characters?
- In what area of your life do you need to believe God is more powerful than your circumstances?



04 NOTE

- In the Babylonian culture, the king's advisors served the court through communication with the spirit world, magical art, witchcraft, astrology, and other practices alike. One scholar described collectively these experts as "the political consultants, trend spotters, and religious gurus of the day".
- The general practice at the time was that the king would provide the content of the dream, and the experts would offer interpretations accordingly. Here Nebuchadnezzar broke the norm by requesting both the content and the interpretation of the dream. Hence, both the experts of the court and Daniel found the king's request unreasonable.
- The primary views of the metals' interpretations are 1) Gold: Babylon, Silver: Medo-Persia, Bronze: Greece, Iron/Clay: Rome, or 2) Gold: Babylon, Silver: Media, Bronze: Persia, Iron/Clay: Greece.
- Scholars suggested Nebuchadnezzar's response in v.46-47 was not necessarily a "conversion", as the Babylonians were polytheistic. But rather, an acknowledgment of the supreme knowledge of the Jewish God.
- In Daniel's description, God's kingdom is completely unrelated to the statue symbolizing earthly kingship. It will crush and obliterate all earthly kingdoms, and it will be universal and obvious to everyone (filling the whole earth, v.35).



DANIEL CHAPTER 3

Theological Focus:
Faithfulness requires believing
that God is with us when we
make difficult decisions.

01 OBSERVATION

- In what ways were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego pressured into worshiping the image?
- How did they respond to Nebuchadnezzar's command?
- How did Nebuchadnezzar react when he saw the fourth man in the furnace?



02 INTERPRETATION

- What made the decision of not worshiping the image difficult for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
- What did Nebuchadnezzar believe about the fourth person in the furnace to be?



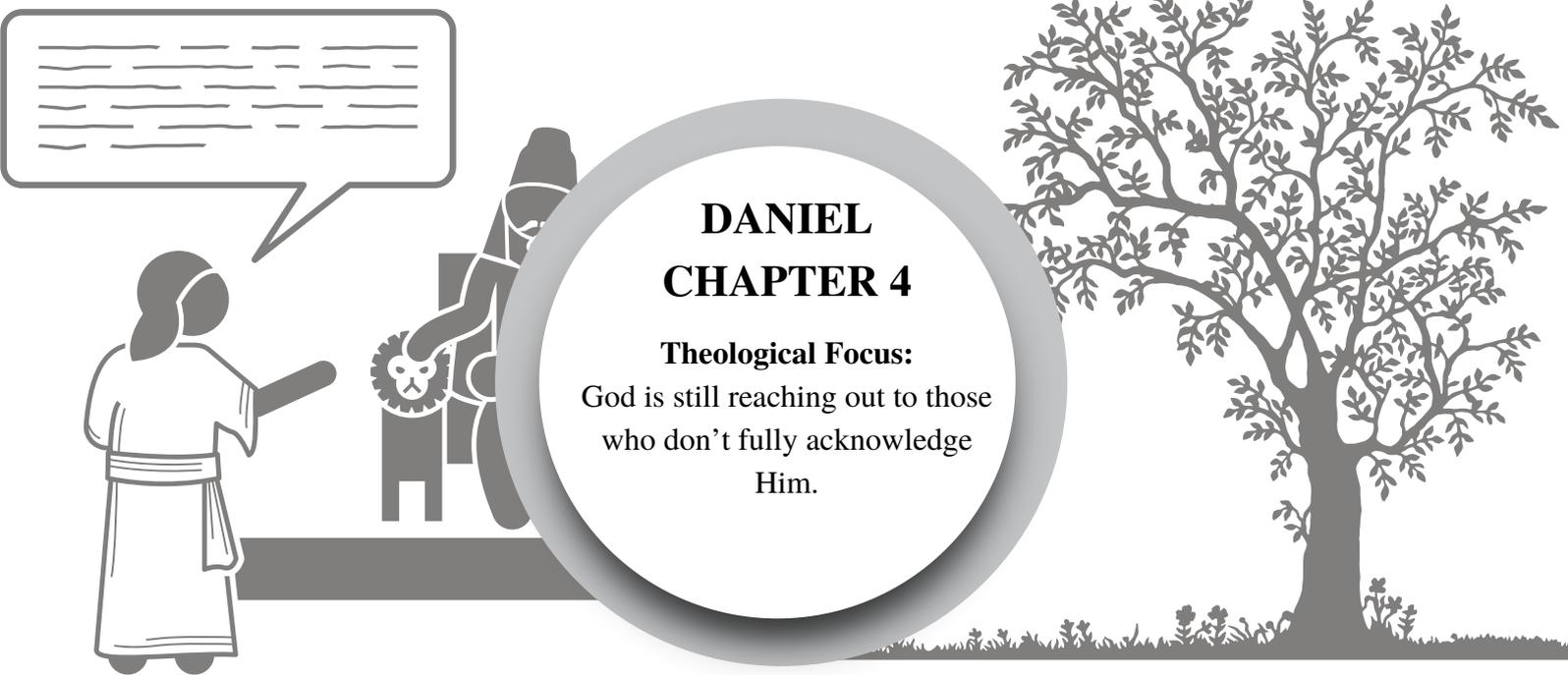
03 APPLICATION

- What would be the equivalent of being called together to worship the image in our world today?
- In what way do you need to believe God is with you when you stand against a popular decision or do something counter-cultural for your faith?



04 NOTE

- Scholars suggested the extended list of officials and instruments (v.3-5) was a literary device— Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were clearly the minority and “outnumbered” by the image worshipers. In the previous chapter, they were elevated to a high position in the Babylon empire. It is possible the astrologers were seeking to undermine their authority by reporting to the king.
- The identity of the statue was not specified by the author. Scholars have noted if Nebuchadnezzar considered himself divine, there would not have been such a need to build a physical representation when he himself was physically present.
- God’s people were repeatedly commanded to not worship other gods and idols. The most common example being the first two commandments in Exodus 20:3-6. The Jewish are to acknowledge God alone is the creator and distinct from creations (Psalm 95:3-7, Isaiah 40:25-26).
- Christian doctrine describes God as immanent (present in time and space) to His people. Some interpretations consider the fourth man in Daniel 3 as the pre-incarnate Christ who was later called by His followers, the Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23).



DANIEL CHAPTER 4

Theological Focus:
God is still reaching out to those
who don't fully acknowledge
Him.

01 OBSERVATION

- What was God's message to Nebuchadnezzar according to Daniel's interpretation?
- How did Nebuchadnezzar ignore God's warning?



02 INTERPRETATION

- Were there any recurring patterns in the way Nebuchadnezzar acts?
- In what ways did God give Nebuchadnezzar a second chance?
- How did Nebuchadnezzar change after this incident?



03 APPLICATION

- In what way have you ignored God in the past?
- How would you respond to God's calling in this current moment? It can be reconnecting with Him, reconciling with people in your life, or change of habits and life patterns, etc.



04 NOTE

- Scholars have pointed out that at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the city of Babylon was at its height in its scale and magnificence. The royal palace that Nebuchadnezzar walked on could be the famous Hanging Garden of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
- This chapter is the only passage in the Bible that was composed by a pagan author. It was written from Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint, and his third encounter with the Israelites' God in the Book of Daniel.
- Though there are debates on whether the Nebuchadnezzar had a genuine salvation experience (as he has acknowledged and praised God in previous chapters, and perhaps he saw the Israelites' God as only one of the powerful deities). The moral focus is highlighted by Nebuchadnezzar's final statement, "Those who walk in pride he is able to humble," (v.37) and God was gracious in offering a chance of repentance and restoration.

DANIEL

CHAPTER 5

Theological Focus:
God's signs and warnings are examples of people walking before us.

01 OBSERVATION

- How did Daniel interpret the writing on the wall?
- How was God's judgment to Belshazzar fulfilled?



02 INTERPRETATION

- What was the significance of Belshazzar bringing out the goblets which were from the temple?
- In what way did Belshazzar repeat his father's pattern of pride?
- To Daniel's original audience (the people of Israel), how had they been ignoring the warning signs?



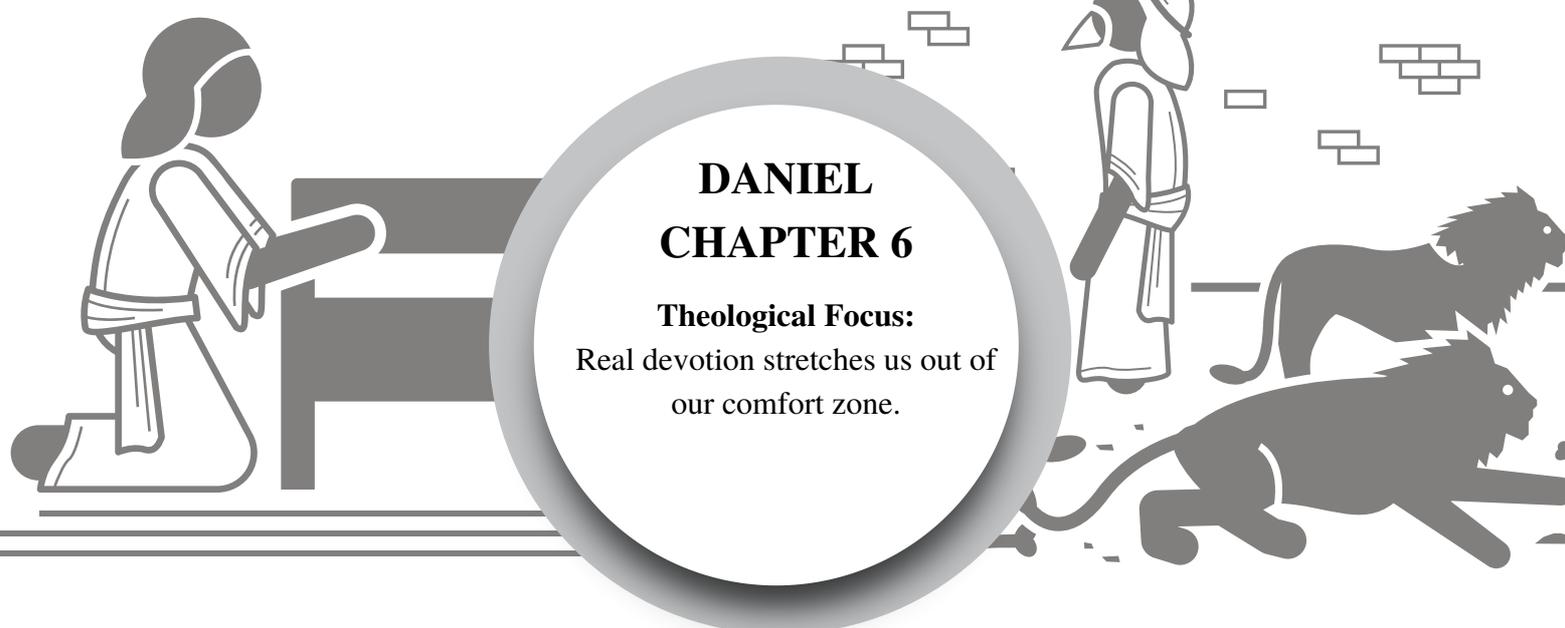
03 APPLICATION

- Do you have people who come to your mind that served as a warning sign on how you are living your life?
- How has Jesus inspired you to walk in humility instead of pride?



04 NOTE

- Like father like son. While Nebuchadnezzar elevated himself at the palace in the preceding chapter, the repetition of pride is displayed here again in his son. The contrast lies where Nebuchadnezzar was quickly humbled before God, but here, a second chance was not offered to Belshazzar.
- Another repeated pattern found in this chapter was the summoning of Daniel. Though, Belshazzar was not aware of Daniel's gifting in interpretation until the queen's reminder. Daniel's attitude was more austere compared with his previous interactions with Nebuchadnezzar. V. 22 indicates Belshazzar would have known his father's past interaction with the Israelites' God.
- The gold and silver goblets were plunder from the temple (Dan 1:2), and stored in the Babylonian treasure house. The offense committed by Belshazzar and his guests was not the banquet itself, but the blasphemous acts of using sacred vessels for common use, and worse, celebrating idols with them (v.4).



DANIEL CHAPTER 6

Theological Focus:
Real devotion stretches us out of
our comfort zone.

01 OBSERVATION

- What was the reason behind the administrators' and the satraps' accusations against Daniel?
- How did Daniel respond to Darius' decree? What risks were involved?



02 INTERPRETATION

- What do you think of Daniel's attitude toward Darius' decree?
- This is the last chapter of the narrative part of the book of Daniel. How has Daniel inspired you to be faithful to God despite the challenges to his faith?



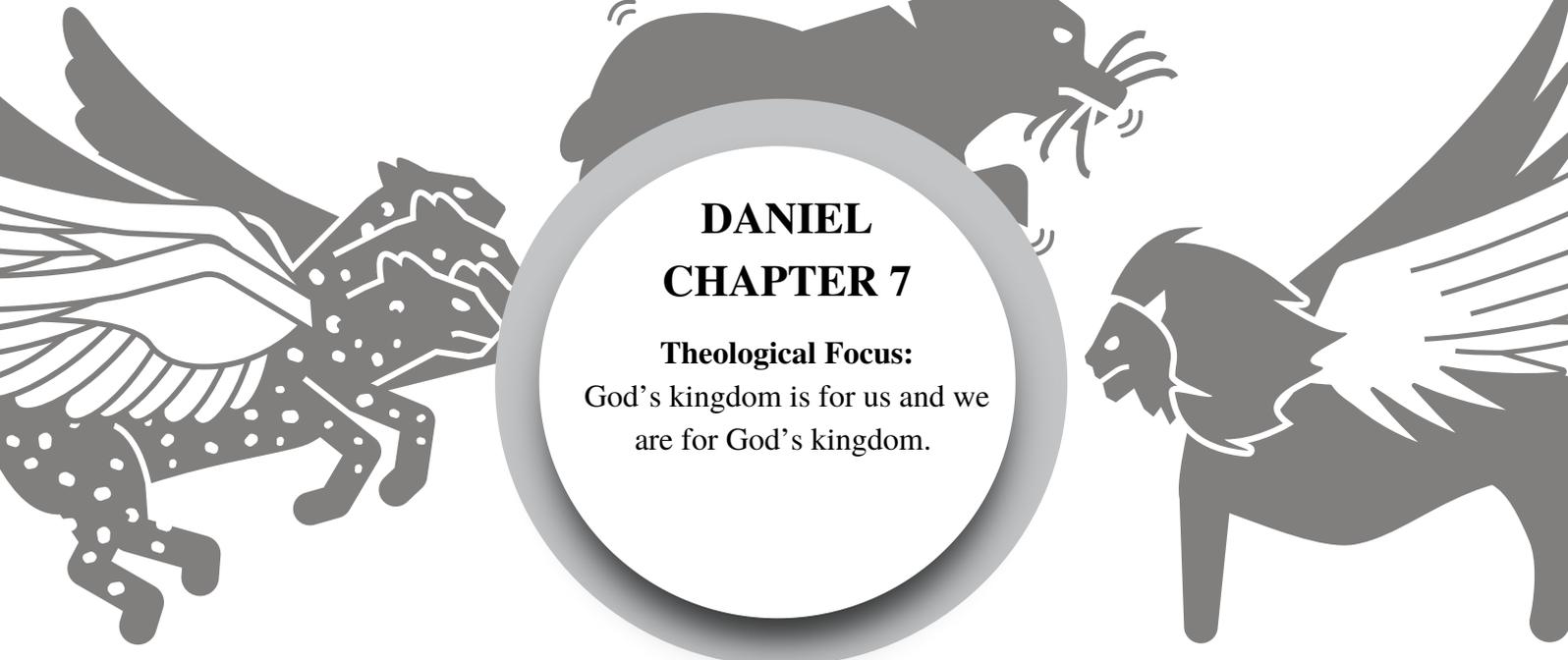
03 APPLICATION

- Was there a time your devotion to God put you in an uncomfortable situation?
- What would be the equivalent of praying three times a day in your room when it was off-limit in your environment or culture?



04 NOTE

- Even though Daniel's role remained the same, transitions were imposed upon him once again when Darius and the Persian kingdom took over Babylon. It is significant to remember that the Israelites were still in exile, and their temple was in ruin back in Jerusalem. Daniel and his people were still living in the tension of remaining faithful to God while under the authority and influence of a foreign kingdom.
- Although praying three times a day and praying to Jerusalem was not directly commanded in Scripture, Daniel's practice is possibly motivated by the practice started by Solomon and many Jewish after him (1 Kings 8:29). It was evidenced that he has not yet forgotten his ultimate authority is the God whom he served despite serving in foreign courts for years in exile.
- Scholars have suggested the notion of administrators' and satraps' petitions to Darius were political instead of spiritual. Darius was not deified in the thirty-day period but rather seen as a priestly mediator (a representation of the gods), and his subjects' and officials' loyalty was tested by their "prayer-allegiance".



DANIEL CHAPTER 7

Theological Focus:
God's kingdom is for us and we
are for God's kingdom.

01 OBSERVATION

- What were the descriptions of the four beasts and the horns in Daniel's vision?
- What happened to the holy people over the course of the vision?



02 INTERPRETATION

- Why do you think the kings are being described as beasts?
- How was the holy people vindicated?
- Imagine you're the exiled Jewish and subjected to a kingdom that does not acknowledge God. What hope does this vision offer to you?



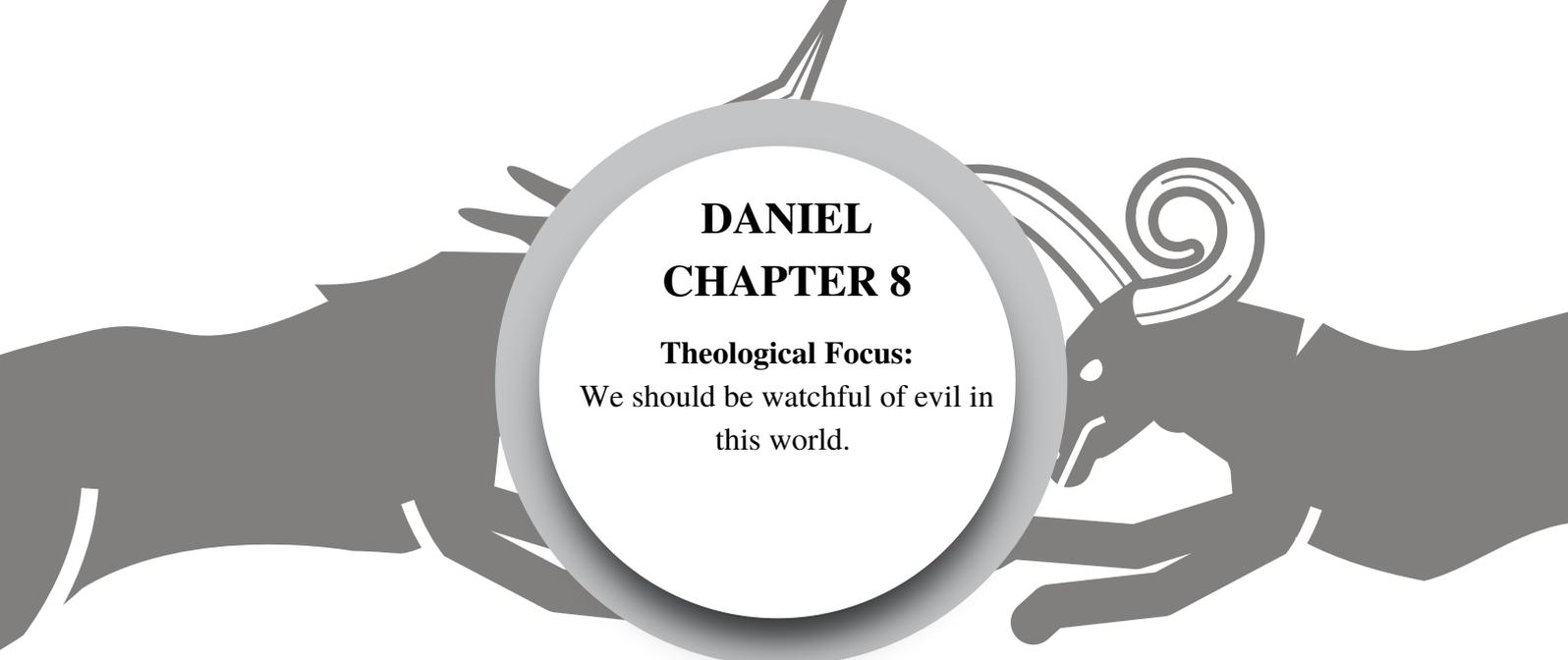
03 APPLICATION

- As Christians, we are living in the "already but not yet" reality as Jesus proclaimed His kingdom has come, and it will come fully at His return. How does this give you hope in your life?
- How does knowing God is for His people lead us to live for His kingdom and not for the kingdoms of this world?



04 NOTE

- Views vary on the interpretation of the kingdoms which the beasts and horns represent in Chapter 7. Some view the fourth beast as Greece or Rome, and the ten horns as kings according to their kingdoms. Some take on a futuristic view in which the king is still yet to come at the end of time.
- It is important to remember from this chapter onward, the genre of the text—Apocalyptic Literature, focuses less on an accurate prediction of the future, but rather, focuses on God's intervention in the world when persecution and evil are at their worst. Although Apocalyptic Literature often focuses on futuristic events, this type of literature is best understood in its historical context and the cultures which its original audience interacts with.
- While the Ancient of Days (this title highlights the figure's eternal attribute) was sitting in the throneroom, the son of man was simultaneously present as a cloud-riding figure. Scholars pointed out that in Daniel's vision, these are two distinct characters, yet both are Yahweh/ God. The son of man figure was given authority to rule and worship by nations.



DANIEL CHAPTER 8

Theological Focus:
We should be watchful of evil in
this world.

01 OBSERVATION

- What was the description and the interpretation of the little horn according to the vision?
- What evil did the little horn do to the sanctuary and God's people?



02 INTERPRETATION

- What was the significance of the disruption of the daily sacrifice and sanctuary (v.11)?
- Why do you think Daniel was overwhelmed by the vision?



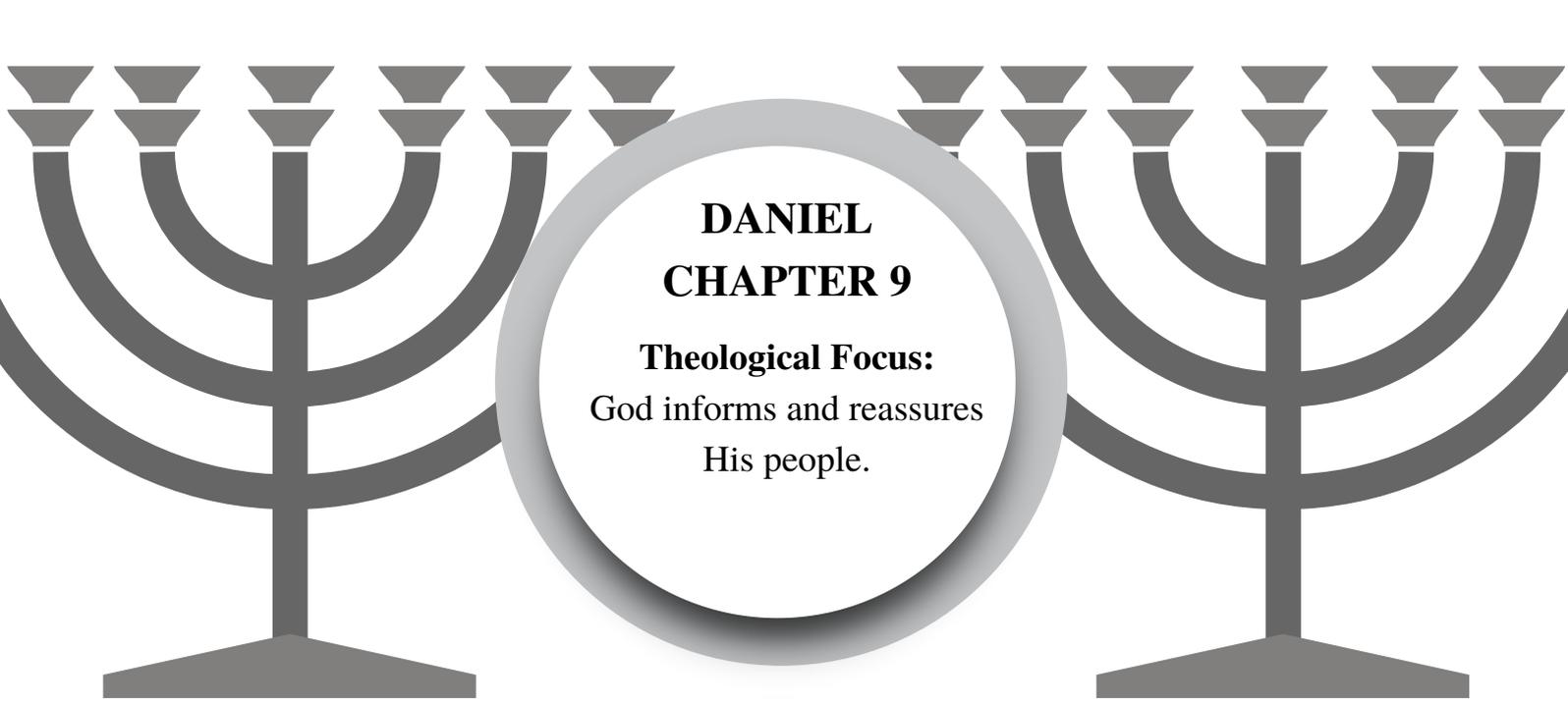
03 APPLICATION

- Even Daniel did not understand the vision and felt exhausted after the explanation of the vision— What are the evil in your environment that burdens you?
- How does knowing the spiritual dimension of human evil help us to overcome the evil of the present world?



04 NOTE

- Daniel received the vision while he was still serving at Belshazzar's court. This was a poignant message to Daniel which in the vision, the temple and daily sacrifice were restored, but they would soon be disrupted by the pagan ruler.
- The Beautiful Land which the little horn expands toward (v.9) refers to Jerusalem. Scholars noted the notion of the title has no relation to the natural scenery of the location, but rather it was beautiful because it was where God chose to dwell among His people.
- Most scholars believe the little horn represents Antiochus IV, one of the thirteen kings following the death of Alexander the Great. He was notoriously known for slaughtering Jewish who resisted his command to worship the Greek gods and desecrating the temple by erecting an altar of Zeus upon it. Later in his reign, he even surnamed himself Ehipanes, the Manifest One.



DANIEL CHAPTER 9

Theological Focus:
God informs and reassures
His people.

01 OBSERVATION

- What was Daniel repenting on behalf of his people? And what was his petition?
- According to Gabriel's message, what would the 490 years bring about in the end?



02 INTERPRETATION

- What was the significance of the timing of Daniel's prayer (v.1-2)?
- What hope did Gabriel's message offer to Daniel and his people?



03 APPLICATION

- How do you wrestle with the Bible passages on suffering and tribulation yet not lose hope?
- How can understanding of "the end" in this passage and in the Bible strengthen our hope of God's reassurance?



04 NOTE

- The passage begins with Daniel's reading of Jeremiah 25 or 29, thus bringing in the realization of the approaching ending of the captivity. What might come as a surprise from Gabriel's message was despite the promise of the restoration of Jerusalem (in times of trouble)—the city and the temple would once again be destroyed and desecrated by a certain ruler.
- In v.24, seven could mean the numeric "7" or a week. While scholars dispute the interpretation of seventy sevens (some consider it as 490 years while some consider it as entirely symbolic), the prolonged period is to usher into the atonement of sins and rededication of the Jerusalem temple.
- Commentators also differ on the fulfillment of the desolator-ruler downfall (v.27). The historical view suggests this verse refers to the death of Antiochus IV, the Seleucid king who eventually desecrated the temple by erecting an altar of Zeus upon it. The futuristic view considers "the end" as the return of Christ and the final judgment on the Anti-Christ.

DANIEL

CHAPTER 10

Theological Focus:

Our prayers and acts of faith matter in situations where we feel powerless and discouraged.

01 OBSERVATION

- What situation was Daniel in when the vision occurred to him?
- The messenger touched Daniel three times. How was Daniel being strengthened progressively according to each touching?



02 INTERPRETATION

- What do you think Daniel was mourning for?
- What was the purpose of the messenger's visit?
- What did the messenger say about Daniel's prayer?



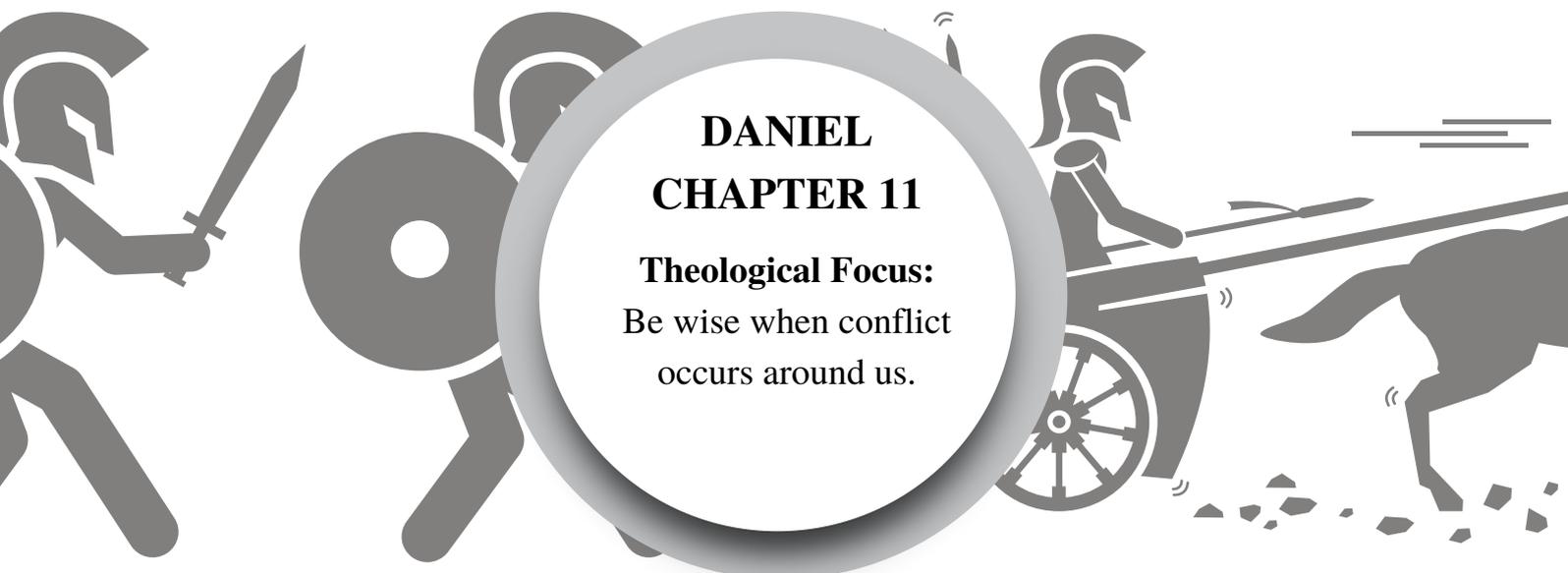
03 APPLICATION

- Why do our normal acts of faith/ prayer matter in situation where we feel powerless and discouraged?
- Where do we need God in our life to say "be strong" to us?



04 NOTE

- This chapter unfolds the one united vision leading to the end of the book of Daniel. These chapters still fall under the style of Apocalyptic Literature, a genre particularly designed to encourage God's peoples who were experiencing oppression and great difficulties.
- According to the Jewish calendar, Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread took place in the first month, Nisan (March - April). These are festivals to commemorate God's deliverance of His people from Egypt. This thus makes Daniel's mourning more significant that he and his people were still in exile under the Persian Empire.
- The messenger mentioned Daniel's prayer was heard and an immediate response was sent to him. The "unseen reality" presented by the messenger was the prince of the Persian kingdom—possibly a spiritual being, who disrupted the answer to Daniel's prayer.



DANIEL

CHAPTER 11

Theological Focus:
Be wise when conflict occurs around us.

01 OBSERVATION

- What adjectives were used to describe the Northern and Southern kings?
- What was the association between the holy covenant and God’s people? What was the last king of the North’s action toward the holy covenant?



02 INTERPRETATION

- Knowing the geological location of Jerusalem, what was the significance of the struggle of Daniel’s and his people?
- Why do you think the people were referred to as “the wise” in v.33?



03 APPLICATION

- We might not have experienced military conflicts, but how can we be wise when our daily conflict still occurs around us?
- How do you wrestle with the idea that in this passage, God’s intervention was not explicitly mentioned when His people were under the oppression of the powerful and evil kings?



04 NOTE

- Scholars generally agree the mighty king (v.3) was Alexander the Great. Following his death, his kingdom was divided into four parts (v.4). Scholars also reach a consensus that the contemptible and deceitful king from the northern kingdom (v.21, 23) was Antiochus IV, who eventually desecrated the temple (v.31).
- Among the divided kingdoms, the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires are the focus of this passage. The significance is that the home of God’s people (the Beautiful Land, v.16, 41) was located in between these kingdoms as they were often engaged in military conflicts, historically known as the Syrian Wars.
- The Jewish considered the reign of Antiochus IV as one of the darkest periods in their history. After a shameful defeat in Egypt, he ordered a massacre in Jerusalem on a Sabbath and rewarded those who supported his policy (v.29-30). Some Jewish refused to compromise and chose to remain faithful to their God, despite some among them were martyred in the process—they were regarded as the wise (v.33-35).



DANIEL CHAPTER 12

Theological Focus:
Blessed are those who
persevere until the ultimate
end.



01 OBSERVATION

- How was the time of distress (v.1) described in this chapter?
- How were the outcomes of the wise (v.3) and those whose names were written in the book (v.1) different from the wicked?



02 INTERPRETATION

- What instructions were given to Daniel by the messenger, and what did they signify?
- What promises ascribed to Daniel do you think are also for those who are faithful to God?



03 APPLICATION

- How does your view of the end times change how you live?
- Using the entire book of Daniel as a case study, how does living faithfully in the small things prepare you for distressing times in the future?



04 NOTE

- The specific command to Daniel in v.4 was not to keep the content hidden or secret, but rather for preserving the message as it will be needed at the appointed time—a time of distress (v.1).
- The Old Testament notion of sealing signifies the legitimacy of the document as the identifying mark would authenticate all the official parties involved in the writing of the document.
- Two figures of speech were used in v.2. Sleep meaning death and awake (or rise in v.13) meaning resurrection. Scholars denote the “consolation of hope” at the end of this chapter was not only for Daniel but also for those who belong to the Lord and lived faithfully—they too will rest from the labor, be resurrected, and receive their allotted inheritance (v.13).