

## Under The Fig Tree



### WEEK 37

#### Day 1

Mark Chapter 9. For the last few weeks, we have been studying the Major Prophets. Now we have turned aside to review the briefest of the Gospel accounts. There is a lot of detail packed into just 16 chapters. The Gospel account is familiar to us because we have already studied Matthew and John. Later we will return to the Gospels and study Luke. The Gospel writers overlap, each emphasizing specific incidents in the life of Yeshua. Some commentators consider that Mark emphasized how Yeshua came to earth to serve, instantly responsive to the will of the Father. Mark 10:45 is a summary of this ministry: *even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* A central theme of the Prophets is that the promised Messiah will be a servant to His people. This was most poignantly portrayed in Isaiah 53. He ministered to the needs of others even to the point of death, teaching His disciples to do the same. Perhaps this is what Mark had in mind. Let us leave it to the Holy Spirit to show each of us what He wants us to see in this and all the Gospels.

All the needs of human beings, revealed through 4000 years of history, most clearly centred on the experiences of Israel, were fulfilled in Yeshua. All the promises of the Prophets, and that which was shown mysteriously through types and shadows of the Tanach, were fulfilled in Him. He walked this earth to show the love of the Father and take to Himself all the authority of Prophet, Priest and King. He began by ministering to the needs of individuals through His teaching and through His miracles. Crowds followed Him. He taught about the Kingdom of Heaven. While the Prophets had spoken in general terms to the nation as a whole, Yeshua ministered directly to individuals. Ezekiel taught that each individual is responsible for his own sins (Ezekiel 18), but only Yeshua could offer salvation to individuals who repented.

If Ezekiel, or any other Prophet, had stood in Yeshua's presence as He taught the people, he would have declared that this was the one who was foreseen through the Prophecies. They would have realized that this was the One of whom they Prophesied. Of all the Prophets, Elijah most fully typified John the Baptist, when he prepared the way for Yeshua. Moses was given the Torah. Every element of the Torah finds its fullest meaning in the teaching and life of Yeshua. That is why Elijah and Moses were the two witnesses from the past and from Heaven, on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13). Peter, James and John were also three living

witnesses of the Transfiguration, ensuring that, after the resurrection, Yeshua was not seen merely as a “good man” or as a prophet, but that He is the Son of God. Beyond the earthly ministry was the unseen ministry from Heaven to which Yeshua’s ministry on earth pointed. The deliverance of the boy with the spirit (Matthew 17:14-21) was as sign of Yeshua’s spiritual authority, seen by a number of people. Only three of the disciples were shown the Transfiguration and the witness of the Torah and Prophets. Yeshua made Himself known more fully to these disciples but left it to others to interpret the signs.

Throughout the Gospel account are incidents and references that remind us of what we studied in the Tanach. The Gospel is mysteriously woven in to the fabric of the Tanach, revealed now fully through Yeshua. For example, Yeshua’s reference to a cup of cold water (Verse 41) reminds us of the welcome Abraham gave to the three Angels (Genesis 18). Yeshua frequently quoted from the Torah and Prophets, showing that He came to fulfill and not to replace. Three times in this Chapter He quoted Isaiah 66:24, the last verse of Isaiah. Isaiah’s Prophecy was first understood at the exile of Judah; it also pointed more fully to the end time judgments on the earth, which Yeshua confirmed with great authority.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 10. Yeshua came to restore relationship with the Father, which is likened to a marriage. That is why the Bible teaches us about the sanctity of human marriage. This is where we learn the principles of intimate and trusting relationship which God wants between us and Him. Also, He showed the great responsibility we have to nurture children in the ways of God. These are principles that Moses brought through the Torah. Yeshua showed that the principles have not changed. He showed that His disciples must not allow themselves to compromise with the world in any way. He used the encounter with the rich young ruler to demonstrate this. He also underpinned the teaching with the truth that *all things are possible with God*: we will obtain help through our struggles to serve Him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 11. In this compact Gospel, we come to the time when Yeshua entered Jerusalem at Passover, to become our Sacrifice. Read this account again, noting the details carefully. Treasure the fact that we have an accurate account of what Yeshua said and did, how He warned, how He taught, how He fulfilled all the details that are recorded in the Tanach, and how He suffered for our sins.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 12. In the early Chapters of the Gospel, Yeshua drew crowds of ordinary people, ministered to their needs and began to teach them the way to eternal life, as had been promised by the Prophets. Now, in Jerusalem, the teaching rose to a higher pitch. In the presence of the religious leaders, He left no doubt of whom He is, replacing even the Temple as the centre of worship of God. He confronted them in a way that challenged their shallow interpretation of Scripture. They came to test Him but found themselves tested. The Pharisees asked Him about responsibilities on earth, and Yeshua answered them. The Sadducees challenged Him about

eternal life and Yeshua answered them. He proclaimed Himself to be the one whom David foreshadowed. He revealed the hypocrisy of some religious leaders while showing that God looks into the heart. He exalted a poor widow in their presence, demonstrating this. She gave such a large amount to the Temple, which to the natural eye looked to be so small. The widow gave a small coin, yet God knew she had given all she had. Yeshua was fulfilling the words of the Prophets, showing how God was seeking the remnant from the Children of Israel who sought Him whole-heartedly through repentance and faith.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 2

Chapter 13. Judah knew the Prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The people were constantly reminded of the way they came to pass at the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC, followed by the exile. Now, in Yeshua's day, they looked for a deliverer from the Romans. Many hoped that Yeshua was this deliverer. He *is* the Deliverer, but not according to the expectations of the people at the time. Yeshua came to deliver His people not from the Romans but from the penalty of their sins. Therefore, a new exile was soon to begin once more, following the fall of the Temple. In just a few words of Prophecy, compared with such as Ezekiel, Yeshua said in plain language that the Temple would soon be destroyed completely. He then went on to speak of what would happen on earth leading up to His return. These words are in accord with what was already revealed through the Prophets who went before Him. Restating them at this time confirmed that God's Words through His Prophets pointed more to the end times than to deliverance from physical enemies.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 14. Yeshua challenged the religious authorities and disappointed those who looked for an immediate alleviation of their sufferings under Rome. With His earthly ministry coming to an end, He was soon to stand alone as the Suffering Servant and the Sacrificial Lamb of God. The time came for His betrayal, His trial, His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His Crucifixion. In the midst of this He transformed the meaning of the Passover Meal to the context of the New Covenant. Read the details prayerfully. Here was the moment in time that the Prophets foresaw.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 15. Here is the climax of biblical history and the main focus of the Prophets. Yeshua went to the Cross to suffer for our sins and to bring in the New Covenant in His Blood. Every need of mankind, every suffering of His people, focused on this moment. Every lesson that was learned from the Fall, through the Flood, through the troubled years of the Judges and Kings, and through the exile, was to teach us about what Yeshua alone could do for us. He fully understood why He suffered on the Cross and descended to hell on our behalf. We all need time to consider the balanced message of Scripture and understand what He did. For Him, it was a bleak and lonely day, when He stood alone, not just from His people, but also separated, for us, from the Father. He was our representative and our substitute; those who witnessed the moment of His death did not understand.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 16. *He is risen!* These words echo over all history. The power of His resurrection brings life to the dry bones that Ezekiel saw in vision. The Sacrifice was accepted! The exile is over! All who have faith in Yeshua will be saved. Go and tell the world, so that all have the opportunity of eternal life! The mysterious visions of the Prophets and the purpose of the exile are now understood through His resurrection, His ascension to the Father and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We now await His return to fulfill the remaining prophecies, so let us return to our studies of the Prophets to see if we learn something more about this.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 3

We return to the third year of King Jehoiakim, approximately 605 BC. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was taken captive along with some of the Jews. Among them were Ezekiel, Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. These were young men whom Nebuchadnezzar thought might be useful in his service. Through this incident God ensured that He had a witness in the palace. Archaeologists and historians have uncovered remains of ancient Babylon in the modern-day country of Iraq. Nebuchadnezzar had a magnificent Palace and a Temple dedicated to the gods of Babylon. For the entire exile, Daniel and his friends lived in the service of the King, right through to the end of time when Cyrus, the Persian, made the decree that allowed the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The Book of Daniel is packed with information that was relevant to the exile and also pointed to the end times. His Prophecies confirm much that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and other Prophets foresaw, but the Book has its own unique features.

Daniel could not have been closer to the most powerful ruler of the day, the one chosen to be God's agent of judgment on Judah. The timing was important. God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar, through Daniel, prior to the fall of Jerusalem, giving him the opportunity to turn to the God of Israel rather than seeing himself as an all-conquering king and adopting a ruthless strategy against the Children of Israel. This was a foreshadowing of all major world empires including the last empire that the world will see in the end-times. All leaders of nations are intended to review what God showed Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's Book is a relevant study for the times we are in.

\*\*\*\*\*

Daniel Chapter 1. Daniel and his friends were among the *good figs* that Jeremiah foresaw in vision (Jeremiah 24). They accepted the captivity, settled in Babylon, maintained the principles of Torah and fulfilled God's purposes for their lives. Chapter 1 recounts how they were chosen to serve in the palace and how God was with them.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar was only in his second year. It would be more than 10 years before Judah would be besieged. This gave time for Nebuchadnezzar to consider his position before the God of Israel. Just as God spoke to others, including Pharaoh in Egypt at the time of Joseph, so He spoke to Nebuchadnezzar. Vivid dreams from God have powerful effect and so it was with Nebuchadnezzar. God used this as an opportunity to bring Daniel into prominence both with the King and with all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel was the means of revealing the meaning of the dream and of saving the lives of the wise men (Verse 24). Nebuchadnezzar saw an image in his dream that was both relevant to his time and for centuries to come. We must continue to study this vision of which the details are clearly recorded. God showed Nebuchadnezzar how important his position was in the Gentile world, also showing that other powerful empires would follow after Babylon diminished in power. In hindsight, we know that the four empires in Nebuchadnezzar's vision were Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Each of these empires was depicted in different metals, beginning with gold and each one becoming less than the other. The end of the Roman Empire was shown as a compromise, two feet of iron and clay, which do not mix. The feet would be struck by a rock, which would destroy the entire world system

represented by the statue. The rock symbolized the judgment of God on the world's empires, through Yeshua. Finally the Kingdom of Heaven would fill the entire earth. The Roman Empire fell a few hundred years after the coming of Yeshua. The statue in the vision also represents the last world empire of the antichrist which will also fall. The image Nebuchadnezzar saw was simple in form but profound in its implications. We must study the detail alongside the history of the world and alongside other prophecies, especially concerning the end times. We must be careful, as Nebuchadnezzar should have been, not to misinterpret what he saw.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 3. If we put ourselves in the place of Nebuchadnezzar, what would we do next? We are all prone to take what we like from a prophecy and then run away with ideas before we have considered the matter sufficiently. Nebuchadnezzar had been shown his importance by the God of Israel. He was appointed head over the Gentile nations in a way that no other world leader would be. He humbled himself a little before God, but then ran away with his own ideas, influenced by the mind-set of his day. He was the head of gold, so why not make an image like the one he had seen, but all of gold, so that he might command due honour? This young king made a serious error, but God had placed in his court young men whom He could honour before him. These young men typify those who God seeks from among His people and so the promise was fulfilled from Isaiah 43:2: *when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 4. The timing of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream is not given. This Chapter takes us to the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, so it seems that we have gone forward in time. Nebuchadnezzar's reign ended in approximately 562 BC. He was followed by Nabonidus who made his son Belshazzar regent for ten years in 550, ending in 539 when Cyrus the Persian King conquered Babylon. Much of the details of these empires must be studied from history books. The Bible records the key events that we need to know regarding covenant history. Other Prophets contain details that are not recorded in Daniel, so we must study all the Prophets carefully to obtain a balanced perspective on history. The Babylonian exile was in 586 BC and now, in Daniel, we are approximately seven years before the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (Verse 23). Nebuchadnezzar was a human being as well as the head of the most powerful empire. God caught his attention again through a vision. He was shown the fall of Babylon and how he would humble himself before God. He was brought low by God and given the opportunity to trust in the God of Israel, Creator of Heaven and earth. The experience of Nebuchadnezzar seems to have brought him close to God. We might ask if there is a picture of the end times in this experience. Babylon is the name given to the last world empire in the Book of Revelation and there is a special seven year period prophesied for this time. The antichrist system is inevitable. It will be destroyed just as the ancient empire was destroyed, but this time it will be by God and not by the Persians. All rulers of nations at this time would do well to study the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar so that they, as individuals, might turn to God in humility during the seven year period that God affords them in the last days.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 4

Chapter 5. The account of Daniel in Babylon moves forward to the end of Belshazzar's reign. It was the time for Babylon to fall to the Medes and Persians. God had spoken to Nebuchadnezzar in a way that touched his personal life, but the Babylonian Empire as a whole continued as it had before. The judgment of God was pronounced at the time when Belshazzar had the audacity to use at his feast the gold and silver vessels of Jerusalem's Temple. His fall was immediate. Cyrus led the Medes and Persians to capture Babylon, and Darius the Mede was proclaimed king.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 6. By this time Daniel was no longer a young man. He had become prominent in Babylon in a similar way to which Joseph had become prominent in Egypt. It is remarkable how God ensures that He has His own people in places of authority when it serves His purposes. The world sees it as a chance happening but we know from the Bible that this was God at work, offering His Hand of grace at strategic moments. Daniel was honoured before God and man, but this brought jealousy, so an evil plot was hatched against him. We, therefore, have the incident of the lion's den. Just as God had helped his three friends when they were put into the furnace, so He helped Daniel in the lion's den. Daniel was honoured by Darius and so was God, as a result! Imagine living in this ruthless ancient Empire. Daniel honoured God in all he did, not fearing any situation, trusting only in God. This was the testimony that God wanted from all His people during the exile in Babylon. It is also the testimony that He wants from all His people in the end times when the antichrist establishes his evil empire.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 7. We now return to the time of Belshazzar, when Daniel had further revelation of the empires of the world leading up to the end times. The revelation made him grieved and troubled (Verse 15). Since this was Daniel's reaction to what God showed him we, to whom the vision is passed on and to whom it retains its relevance, must take it very seriously. Once more Daniel was shown images that related to the empires of the world that had already been seen by Nebuchadnezzar. This time they were characterized by animals rather than metals of a statue. The Great Sea is the Mediterranean Sea which is on the borders of the Land of Israel. The symbolism of a beast rising from the sea is relevant to the Book of Revelation, where we find confirmation of Daniel's vision and further imagery of the end times. The sea is a symbol of the place where Satan's powers and principalities reside and we are shown that these powers arise at different times in the history of the world. Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome are human empires, but behind them are spiritual powers, symbolized through Daniel's vision. Perhaps world leaders do not realize that they can be moved by these powers in the governance of the nations. Perhaps they sometimes let the powers rule them willingly. Such powers are behind the false gods of the world, and the lesser demons impact the lives of ordinary people, as we are shown in the Gospel accounts. Israel and Judah had been protected nations – Torah brings protection. Had they been obedient they would not have needed to know about the evil spiritual powers behind the gods of the nations. Now they were living in these nations where the unseen spiritual powers were at work, and Daniel was given insight into this. He was shown that the entire world would come



under such powers one day through multitudes of people willingly submitting to the power of satan who would rule through the antichrist.

The balance of Paul's teaching for the latter days was that we should not dwell on matters of evil (Philippians 4:4-9), whilst recognizing that there are spiritual powers and principalities at work which we withstand through faith (Ephesians 6:10-20). Daniel's vision helps us to understand the powerful empires of the world and be prepared for the last days. The lion of this vision symbolized Babylon, the bear the Medes and Persians, the leopard Greece, and the last beast was Rome, first in the form of the Empire that ruled at the time of Yeshua, and second as the last world empire, terrible in all its details. The Roman Empire will be reborn also having characteristics of the other empires. It will rise in a blasphemous form, worse than anything before. The context is the end of time when God will set up His Eternal Kingdom. Daniel also saw a vision of the risen Lord, the judge of the whole earth.

Verses 23 to 27 describe the empire that will arise in the end times, originating from the foundation set by the early Roman Empire. There are various interpretations of the ten kings (Verse 24). They could be prominent evil Roman Emperors who declared themselves to be a god. It could refer to Seleucid Kings, leading up to Antiochus IV, a type of antichrist. Antiochus was prominent when the Greeks ruled and oppressed Israel before the time of the Romans (approximately 170 BC). This was the time of the Macabees, whose deeds gave rise to the Books of Macabees, which is a useful historical source of the time and tells of the origin of the Festival of Hannukah. There may be several types and shadows of the coming antichrist empire, which is visualized as arising out of the remains of these earlier unholy empires. Daniel was told that there would be a special time of three and a half years when this end-time empire would flourish. The Book of Revelation expands our understanding of this. It is to be a time of trouble across the entire earth, a time when pressure will mount on God's people. Biblical festivals and law will be under attack so that all identity of a Torah based nation might be destroyed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 8. Daniel was shown yet another vision of the coming empires. Even before the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians, he foresaw the fall of this empire under Greece. He also foresaw the way this empire would impose itself on the Land of Israel. The Angel Gabriel came to explain the vision to Daniel. History points to this aspect of the vision being fulfilled by Antiochus IV, who titled himself Epiphanes, meaning *god-manifest*. This evil man sought to destroy the faith of the Jews and to turn them to the ways of Greece. He desecrated the Temple by putting a pig on the altar and many other wicked deeds.

All of Daniel's revelation took place in the midst of Judah's exile ahead of these other events. The Prophets revealed God's purposes for the exile to discipline and correct His people. Now He looked forward to the end-times when He would bring to the ultimate climax His purposes in the entire earth. The exile was a shadow of things to come for Judah, things that we find hard to understand. In the end times, when God prepares the last generation of His people for eternal life, He will also allow the world to rise under the power of satan. It will be time for choices to be made among all people, whether to accept the antichrist rule, or turn to God through faith in Yeshua. The world ruler at the time will be the antichrist (one who puts himself in the place of

Christ). Antiochus IV was to be a shadow of this person. He was announced ahead of time, so that Daniel's Prophecy could be consulted as the day draws near, just as we are studying now.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 5

Chapter 9. Daniel was in possession of a copy of the promises revealed to Jeremiah, especially the fact that the exile would last 70 years. Prophecy and prayer are linked ministries. As the time was drawing near for the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, Daniel turned to God in intercessory prayer. Notice that this is not a prayer of repentance. We can only repent of our own deeds. Daniel could not repent for his people. Instead, it is a prayer of confession. This prayer has been an inspiration for others in times of difficulty. We, like Daniel, must remain pure of heart, so that our heartfelt prayers for our people will be rightly motivated through times of trial. Take careful note of how Daniel prayed.

God heard the prayer. He not only heard it but added to Daniel's understanding of the events that would take place after the end of the exile, right up to the return of Yeshua in the last days. How wonderful to hear the words directly from God, *you are greatly beloved...*(Verse 23). There followed another brief summary of the main events of the world for the years ahead, centred on Daniel's people, Israel. This is the 70 week Prophecy which has been much studied by Bible scholars and of great importance. Judah was soon to go back to their Land at the end of the exile. They would discover that sin was no more dealt with fully than when Noah stepped off the Ark with his family. The weeks refer to periods of seven years. God showed that 70 sevens of years were allocated for the completion of God's work to deal with sin. This is the same as the number of Sabbath years for the Land for which Judah went to exile. Perhaps there is a link, based on the sin that God will now deal with over the same period of time.

The first 7 periods of 7 years was the time that would be taken for rebuilding the Temple. The next period of 62 times 7 years has been shown to be an accurate measure of years preceding the time when Yeshua went to the Cross. After Yeshua's resurrection, a new era began for the world. The prince who is to come (Verse 26) indicated the antichrist figure who would arise from the renewed Roman Empire of the last days (the antichrist). A shadow of the antichrist was the Roman Emperor who caused the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jews' return to exile. Israel remained desolate until it was resettled again after the UN resolution following the Second World War. There is a final period of 7 years reserved for the end-times, of which other Prophecies have a bearing as well as this simple time-line from Daniel.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 10. This was a momentous time for Daniel, with one powerful revelation following another. It is all recorded accurately because we need to study the details for ourselves and use this and other Prophecies to understand various events on this earth as they come about in our own day. Daniel saw a vision that no-one else could see. Instead they felt the spiritual pressure all around. It was in the midst of a spiritual battle, which we can barely understand, that the Angel visited Daniel to give him further understanding of the latter days, and what would happen to the Jews.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 11. There is great detail concerning the struggles between earthly kingdoms. This is all related to the four major empires that Daniel had been shown. It looked ahead to the dividing into four parts the Empire of Greece after the time of Alexander the Great (Verses 3 and 4). The Kings of the North and of the South were the Seleucids , who ruled in Syria, and the Ptolomies who ruled in Egypt. All of the details in this Chapter can be associated with rulers leading up to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. There seems to be a point in this Prophecy where it both speaks about the time of Antiochus and looks forward to the end-times. Both interpretations are there simultaneously. This occurs around verses 31 to 32. By the time we reach Chapter 12, the focus is fully on the end times. Thus Daniel 11 speaks both of a type of antichrist preceding the coming of Yeshua for the first time, and the final antichrist, more fully described in Revelation, who precedes Yeshua's return.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 12. Daniel was shown a time of trouble such that the world has never seen. At that time there will be a great deliverance for Israel. This foretells the time that, prior to the Lord's return, many will cry out to God for salvation through the Messiah. At this time there will be many who having been long dead come to life. This was prefigured at Yeshua's Crucifixion (Matthew 27:50-53), as a sign pointing to the end-times. This will be the time when, at the climax of all the world's suffering, eternal life will be granted to all who maintain their walk of faith through the trials on earth. These trials will have reached a peak in the last few years before the Lord's return. Finally Daniel was given insight into the abomination of desolation and the period that this would be allowed to prevail (Verses 11-12). Yeshua spoke of this same abomination of desolation. The shadow of the antichrist, Antiochus IV, had brought an abomination to the Temple some 170 years before the birth of Yeshua. The Romans also desecrated the Temple with a statue of Zeus, shortly before the Temple was destroyed in 70AD. Yeshua showed that there would be another manifestation of this antichrist figure in the end times (Matthew 24:15), prior to His return. Verses 15 to 28 require careful reading so that we are prepared for those days. This is also known as the times of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). Again, the period of three and a half years is mentioned (Verse 7).

Daniel did not understand all that he was shown. This is the nature of Prophecy. It is received, recorded and waits its fulfillment. We would do well to treat the Prophecy with the same reverence as Daniel did. It refers to the times that are soon to come upon the world.

Daniel was told to go to his rest and wait for his inheritance in the end of time. What will this be? It is plausible that this will be, as well as his eternal salvation, his portion of responsibility in the Millennial Kingdom. We must wait until all the Prophecies are fulfilled in order to see if our interpretation is correct, but Revelation does point to a 1000 year reign of Yeshua on this earth before the Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:4). Those reigning with Yeshua seem to be those who faithfully endured like the ones listed in Hebrews 11 and Revelation 12:11. Paul may have been speaking about this when he wondered, *if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.* (Phillipians 3:11) He knew of his salvation, so perhaps he was speaking about the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5).

Daniel went down to Babylon as a young man and died there an old man, having served God faithfully. He, like all the exiles, must have yearned for his homeland, to return to his family's property and rebuild what had been left abandoned for decades. In one sense, this was his inheritance. God promised him a greater inheritance, of which the Land of Judah, even after the return from exile, was a foretaste. He did not understand all that God showed him. He recorded the Prophecies for future generations to consider and, like many heroes of the faith before him (see Hebrews 11) died in faith. Paul, likewise, died in faith for the eternal future that is planned for all God's people who minister in obedience through their lives. Such people then go to their temporary rest, prior to resurrection day when Yeshua will gather the "exiles", who were pilgrims and strangers on this earth. They will be gathered for Eternal Salvation, their inheritance in Messiah.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 6

There is a lot to consider in the Prophets, especially Daniel, who speaks of the end-times in a unique way. Spend some more time considering this today. Also put what you have studied into the context of the New Testament.

Today, read 1 and 2 Thessalonians. These were among Paul's earliest letters. They are thought to have been written at Corinth around 50 AD, whilst he was on his second missionary journey. This was before the fall of the Temple and within 20 years of Yeshua's death. He was writing to a newly formed community of believers and commended their faith as being spoken of throughout the world (1 Thessalonians 1:7). There is much in the letters that a pastor would write to his flock. We can take the message as written to us. Also Paul makes reference to expectations for the end times. Paul had studied the Tanach under Rabbi Gamaliel and was able to put the Prophecies in perspective. In 1 Thessalonians 5 he raised the issue of the Lord's return, using the term *Day of the Lord* (Verse 2). This term refers to times of judgment on the earth of which the Prophets speak (for example, Jeremiah 46:10). Paul explained the attitude the Thessalonians should have in regard to this. No-one knows the time of the Lord's coming so we must always be awake and ready. Also (Chapter 4, Verse 17) Paul encouraged the Thessalonians not to be concerned that some of their number were dying before the Lord's return. This was possibly the chief reason for bringing the subject up. Paul had built expectancy of the imminent return of Yeshua, but time was passing. Not even Paul knew the time of the Lord's return, so he lived in daily expectation whilst planning for a longer wait. He assured the Thessalonians of the resurrection of the dead on the Lord's return. In Revelation we are given the fuller picture of the faithful saints returning with the Lord (Revelation 19). The teaching about the end-times is continued in 2 Thessalonians. In Chapter 2, Paul warned about deception and false teaching. Paul lived in the days of the Romans, a powerful and ruthless nation. There were other ruthless nations in history. Paul did not interpret the end-time prophecies as fulfilled by Rome, but he looked ahead to an even worse empire than the current world power, and to a massive falling away. In Chapter 2, Verse 8, we read that the Lord will consume this nation with the *breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming*. Paul's warning to the Thessalonians is still valid today. Many people will mislead others concerning the nature of the Lord's coming. We must ensure a balanced searching out what the Scriptures say.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 7

### A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

Daniel is tough meat, so we need to digest it over time. Paul does not compromise Daniel or any other Scripture, but brings a pastoral response which is helpful to us as well as to the Thessalonians.

Spend time reviewing this today. Also read some Psalms to refresh your spirit!

Read Psalms 136, 146, 147, 148, 149 and 150.

\*\*\*\*\*