

24.06 Daniel's Prayer; Cyrus's Decree (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1–19; Daniel 9:1–27; 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1–11; 5:14–16; 6:3–5)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Likenesses of characters might change with the variety of pictures. Hopefully, this isn’t too confusing to young minds.
- ashes
- sackcloth or burlap
- platter, basin, or other items that would have been used in Temple sacrifices

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *Medes and Persians*: the people of countries, united, that conquered Babylon. Darius was the king of the Medes and ruled in Babylon; Cyrus was king of the Persians.
- *to fast*: to stop eating because you are so concerned about a situation that you are constantly praying about it
- *to humble oneself*: the opposite of being proud; to confess before God that you are unworthy of any of His favors
- *ashes*: the soot and dirt left after something is burned. In the Bible, people who humbled themselves would sometimes put ashes on their heads or sit with ashes around them.
- *righteousness*: doing right. Only God is totally righteous: He always does right—in judgment and in mercy.
- *desolate*: totally destroyed or useless

Scripture: (NKJV)

Isaiah 44:28: who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”

45:1 Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,. . . 3 “I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. 4 For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. 5 I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, 6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. 7 I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things. . . .

Daniel 9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 5 we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and

rules. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. 8 To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. 9 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him 10 and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. 12 He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16 “O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. 17 Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

20 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, 21 while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. 23 At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

24 “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. 25 Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. 26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. 27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

Ezra 1:1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”

5 Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem. 6 And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered. 7 Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. 8 Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. 9 And this was the number of them: 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censers, 10 30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels; 11 all the vessels of gold and of silver were 5,400. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

5:3 In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits, 4 with three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. 5 And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God."

5:14 And the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; 15 and he said to him, Take these vessels, go and put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site. 16 Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it has been in building, and it is not yet finished.

Introduction/Review:

About 170 years before 2010, electricity was soon to be put into the White House and the first adhesive postage stamp was made. Although steamships and trains were in use, there were no cars.

About 170 years before today's story,¹ God had caused Isaiah to prophesy some wonderful things about our Most High God. As I read, listen for two things God said over and over about Himself in Isaiah 44 and 45 [Teacher, write these two things on a board, and have students write tally marks under them as they are mentioned.] The two things are (1) God is the *Creator* of the universe, and (2) God is the *only true God*.

Now I'm going to read verses from the book of Isaiah and we will tally how many times God says He is the Creator and how many times He says He is the only God. Here we go.

"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: 'I am the LORD, *who makes all things*, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself [Creator, 1]. . . . I am the LORD, and *there is no other* [only God, 1]; *There is no God besides Me* [only God, 2]. That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That *there is none besides Me*. I am the LORD, and *there is no other* [only God, 3]; I form the light and create darkness . . . I, the LORD, do all these *things*. . . . *I, the LORD, have created it* [Creator, 2]. . . . Thus says the LORD, The Holy One of Israel . . . *I have made the earth, And created man on it. I—My hands—stretched out the heavens.*' [Creator, 3] . . . For thus says *the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited:* [Creator, 4] 'I am the LORD, and *there is no other* [only God, 4]'" (Isaiah 44:24; 45:6–8, 11, 12, 18).

How many times in these 7 verses did you hear that God is the Creator? [Four times.] How many times did you hear that there is no God besides the one true God? [Four times.], The only true God created the universe, and He sets up and puts down the rulers of this world, including our mayor, congress people, and President.

In our last story we learned that Babylon was conquered by a new ruler from a different country. That meant Nebuchadnezzar's sons and grandsons would no longer be kings there; the Medes and Persians conquered, ruled, and eventually would destroy Babylon.

Meanwhile, the Jews in Babylon longed to go back home. They were so homesick that they didn't even want to sing their old songs from home (Psalm 137).

Story:

Cyrus named

One of those kings who ruled Babylon is named specifically in Isaiah 44 and 45, the passage I read a minute ago. In fact, when God says He is the only God and the Creator, He also mentions this king, saying things like, "He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure. . . . That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. . . . I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me" (Isaiah 44:28; 45:3, 4).

What is the name of this king that Isaiah prophesied about 170 years earlier? [Teacher, you might want to have a mini-sword drill here and have the students find the name in Isaiah 44:28]. God "says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure.'" What was the king's name? [Reread until the students answer correctly: Cyrus.]

Now, what was so special about this Cyrus that God prophesied about Him and even gave his very name 170 years before he reigned? Listen again and see if you can tell me. "He shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' And to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

What command will Cyrus give? [Repeat the verse until students answer correctly: that Jerusalem shall be built and the Temple foundation laid.]

If Cyrus was about to command that Jerusalem be rebuilt and the Temple foundation laid, what does that mean about God's people being able to go back to the land of Judah? [God was going to send His people back home.] Jeremiah had said the land would be desolate seventy years. So about how much time had gone by since Jerusalem's fall? [About seventy years.]

Daniel had been brought to Babylon before Jerusalem was destroyed; so he was an old man now. In the first year that the new king, Darius, ruled Babylon Daniel was studying Jeremiah's writings and the fact that the Temple and Jerusalem would be rebuilt after seventy years.

Daniel prays

Even though Daniel understood that God was about to send the Jews back to their homeland because the seventy years were fulfilled, Daniel didn't just say, "That's that. Yippee! God is soon going to send His people home!" No. Daniel did something else. He prayed. But he didn't just pray; he fasted. He also humbled himself by dressing in sackcloth and sitting among ashes, for he had very serious business to bring before the Lord God.

I wish we all had enough attention span to listen to Daniel's entire prayer because it is a great example of how we all should pray. Maybe you can read it when you get home. It is found in Daniel 9:4-19. I will teach us today how Daniel prayed. When we pray later, I want you to remember to do it Daniel's way.

Honor God

First, Daniel honors God. He speaks of God's fearful greatness and His faithfulness, saying, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments."

Confess sins

Next, Daniel confesses the sins of his people, the Jews, who rebelled against God and didn't listen to His prophets. Because of their sin, they are ashamed that they don't even live in their own land but live among several nations. Moses had said this exile would come because of their disobedience; yet the people did not pray and repent. They deserved "open shame" and all the trouble they now had through no fault of God.

Beg

Finally, Daniel in Babylon appealed to God’s righteousness as he begged Him, “O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger . . . be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, . . . Our God, hear the prayer of Your servant . . . and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your Temple, which is desolate. O my God, listen; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

When you pray, remember to honor God, to confess, and to beg.

Gabriel comes

At this point, the angel Gabriel came to Daniel and encouraged him, not about the Temple and Jerusalem but with prophecies telling when Christ the Messiah would come, that He would come for the salvation of His people, that He would die, that the Temple and Jerusalem would again be destroyed after Messiah’s death, and other prophecies future from today.

Cyrus commands

Soon after Daniel's prayer, Cyrus, the king of the Persian Empire that included Babylon, gave a decree—a commandment. Can you guess what it was? Yes, it was to send the people back to Judah and to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple just as Isaiah had said. Listen to Cyrus’s words: “All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem.”

There it is, kids. Cyrus was doing what God had instructed him to do—send the people back to their homeland in order to build Jerusalem and the Temple. But that’s not all Cyrus would do; he would encourage the people to give offerings to support those who went back to rebuild.

Cyrus gives

Do you think anyone would want to go all that long way back to Judah? Oh, yes! Many of the people had been longing with all their hearts to be back home in Jerusalem, especially the heads of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites. But as they prepared to go, King Cyrus gave them something very valuable.

He got the articles that had been in God’s Temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and had put in the temple of his own gods. Cyrus took them out of Nebuchadnezzar’s temple and counted them to Zerubbabel, a royal prince whom Cyrus now made governor of Judah. When they finished counting, Cyrus had given Zerubbabel five thousand four hundred articles of gold and silver—platters, knives, basins (bowls). Zerubbabel prepared to take all these with him back to Jerusalem.

Cyrus had one more surprise. He instructed Zerubbabel to lay strong foundations for the Temple and told him how to build it. Who would pay for the materials—the rock, wood, gold, etc.—for the Temple? That’s the surprise, for Cyrus himself said, “Let the expenses be given out of the king’s bank.” Who would pay to rebuild the Temple? [Cyrus.]

Isaiah’s prophecies and Jeremiah’s prophecies came to pass exactly as God had said they would. God was turning away His great anger and showing mercy and forgiveness to His people. The man Isaiah had named 170 years before was the king who commanded it. The captives prepared to travel from Babylon back to Jerusalem. No longer were they sad. They rejoiced with great joy (Psalm 126:1–3). They were going home!

¹Isaiah prophesied about Cyrus around the year 712 B. C.; Daniel’s prayer was in the year 539 B. C. This is 173 years. (Dates found in *The Reese Chronological Bible*, Bethany House Publishers: Minneapolis, 1975.)

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Daniel 9:24–26 is “the clearest, brightest, prophecy of the Messiah, in all the Old Testament,” telling us of “the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ . . . what should be the nature of it and when it should be accomplished” ([Daniel 9 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\) \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).

Jesus is “the Anointed One,” which is the word *Messiah*. The amount of time to pass before Messiah would come is tied to the decree by Cyrus to go and rebuild the Temple.

- We should learn to pray as Daniel did. [See Activities below.] We should pray even about things we know will happen.
- God said it and did it.
- Give God credit for what He does, and don't be proud of your own accomplishments: What a contrast between Nebuchadnezzar, who said, “Look at what I've done,” and Cyrus, who said, “All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me.”
- Think about God's attributes/characteristics: He is great, dreadful, merciful, forgiving, righteous, and He keeps His covenant promises.
- Be generous toward those who are doing God's will by serving Him fulltime—pastors, missionaries, etc.

Activities:

- Play dough: platters, knives, basins
- Snack: Sugar cookies with frosting happy faces. Also make some with slight frowns to show Daniel's seriousness in praying.
- Practice praying as Daniel did: confess God's greatness and goodness; confess your sins and the sins of others; basing your petition on His character, pray that He do all His holy will. Some attributes of God to pray are His being great, dreadful, merciful, forgiving, righteous, and His keeping covenant.
- Watch a 6.75-minute, well-done cartoon video, “Daniel Treasured by God,” at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](#). (Click on “Stories” and scroll past halfway down the page.)
- With parental permission perhaps, have students put ashes, not in hair, but on face or arms. Use disposable wipes to clean.
- Pass around a piece of burlap to show its scratchy, uncomfortable feeling.
- Review questions: (Game: Print and cut out the seven sets of ten tally marks (to equal 70 years) found below. If printed on paper, back with flocked paper or paper towel and have students place one set on a flannel board for each correct answer. If printed on cardstock, students will place a set in a pocket chart for each correct answer.)
 1. What prophet named the king who would command the Jews to go back to their homeland? [Isaiah.]
 2. What was the king's name that Isaiah prophesied? [Cyrus.]
 3. How many years before today's story had Isaiah prophesied the name of Cyrus? [About 170 years.]
 4. What prophet was Daniel reading when he realized the captivity in Babylon was almost over? [Jeremiah.]
 5. How many years had Jeremiah said would pass before the people returned to Jerusalem? [70 years.]
 6. Tell one of the three things Daniel included in his prayer. [Honored God; confessed sin; begged God.]
 7. Cyrus commanded that the people could return to Jerusalem. He did at least two things to help them. Tell one of those things. [Gave God's temple vessels back to them; paid for the materials of building the Temple.]

Memory Verse[s]: (NKJV)

- Daniel 9:18c–19b: “We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God.”

Handwork:

- Color picture and/or do the maze found below.

Medes and Persians

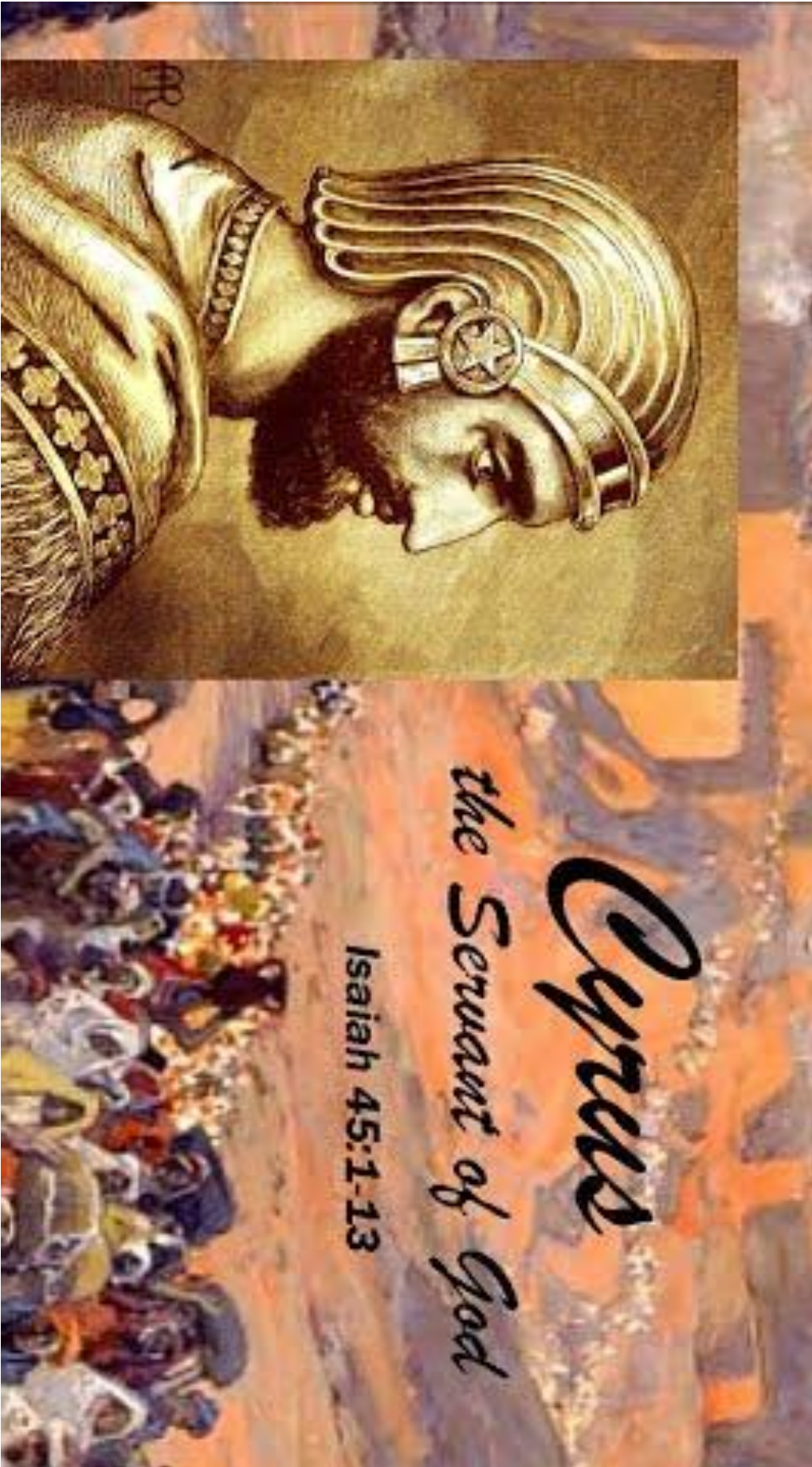
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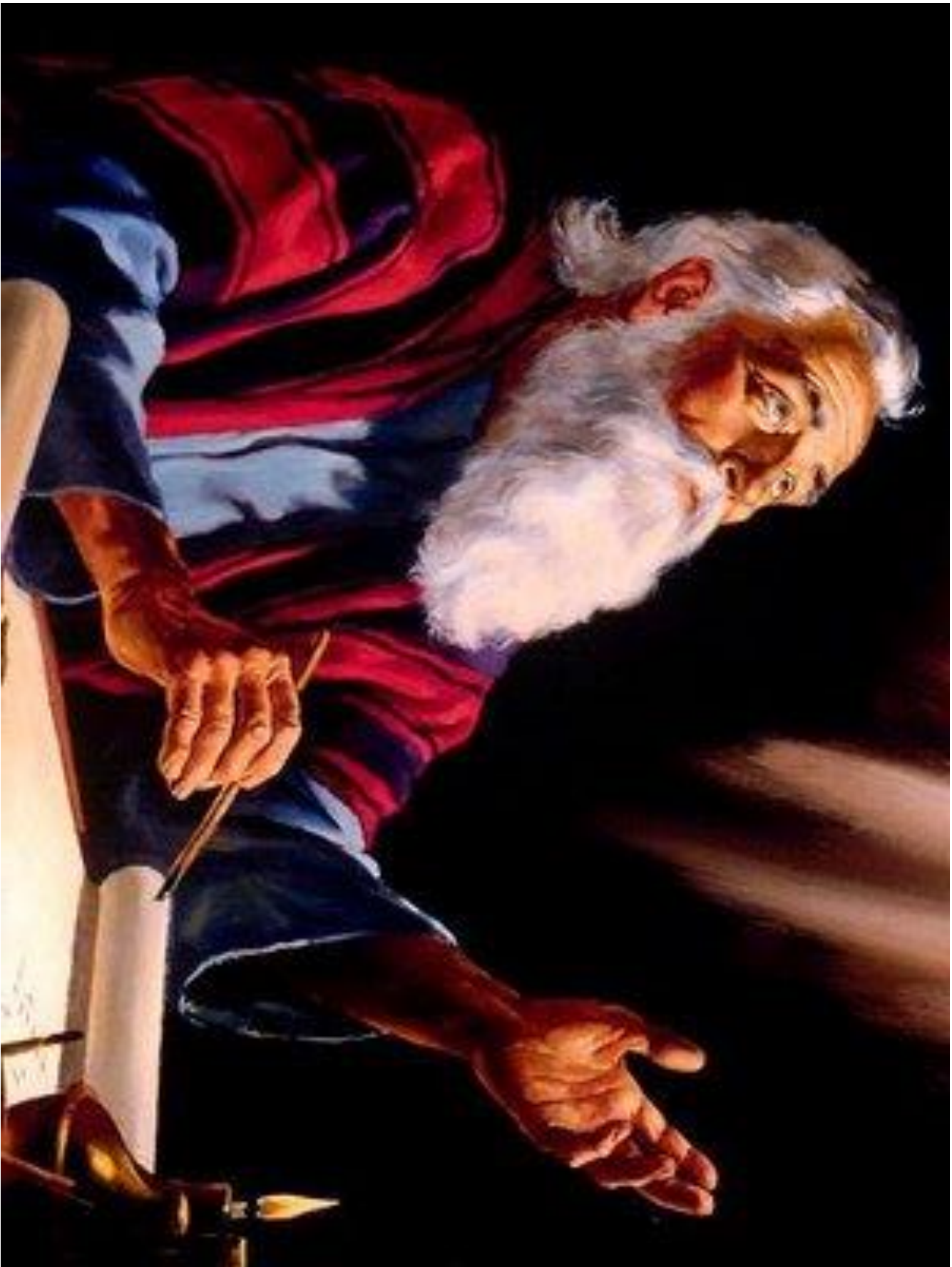
to humble oneself

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righteousness

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[The Prayer in Daniel 9 • FaithEquip](#)

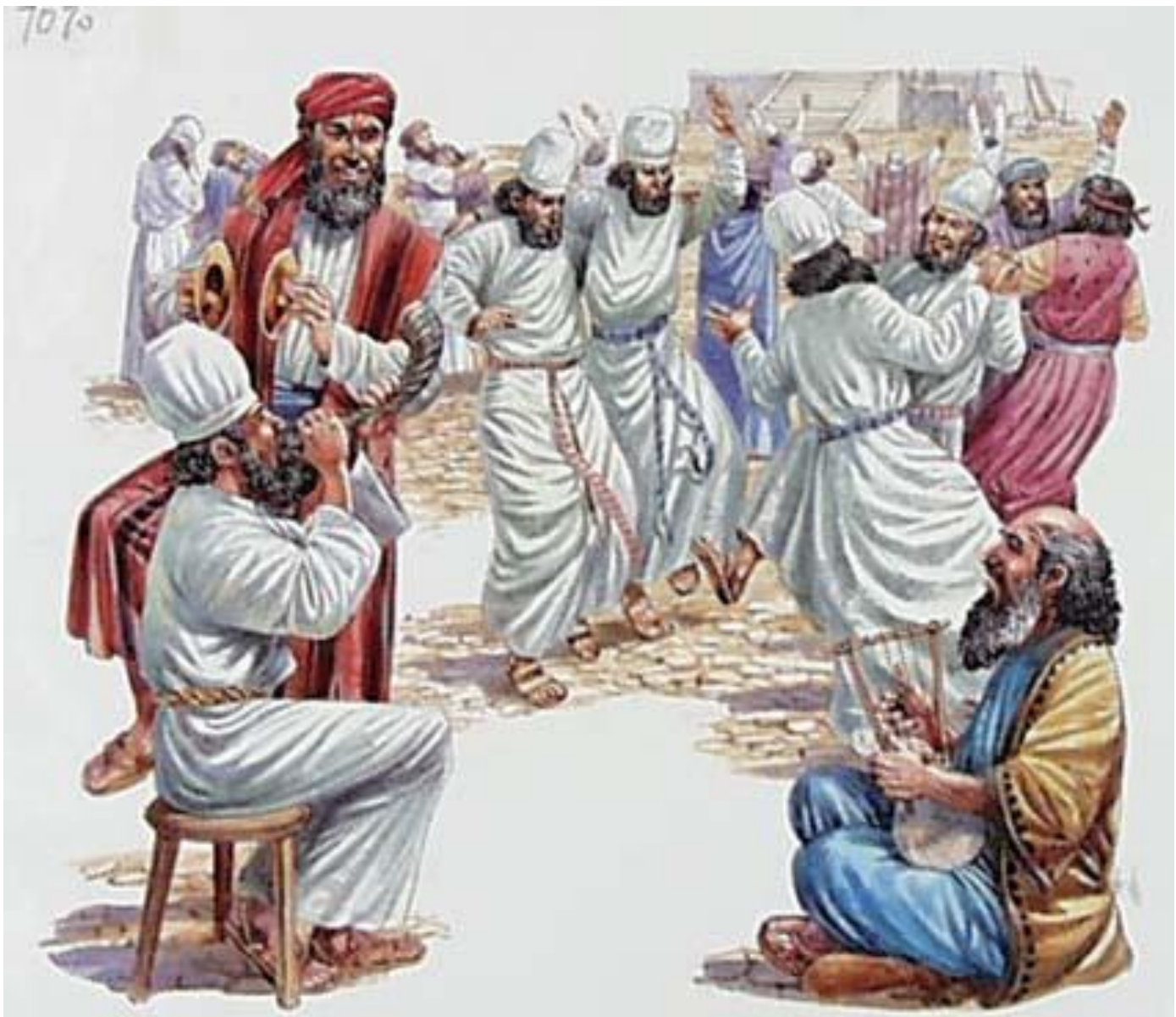


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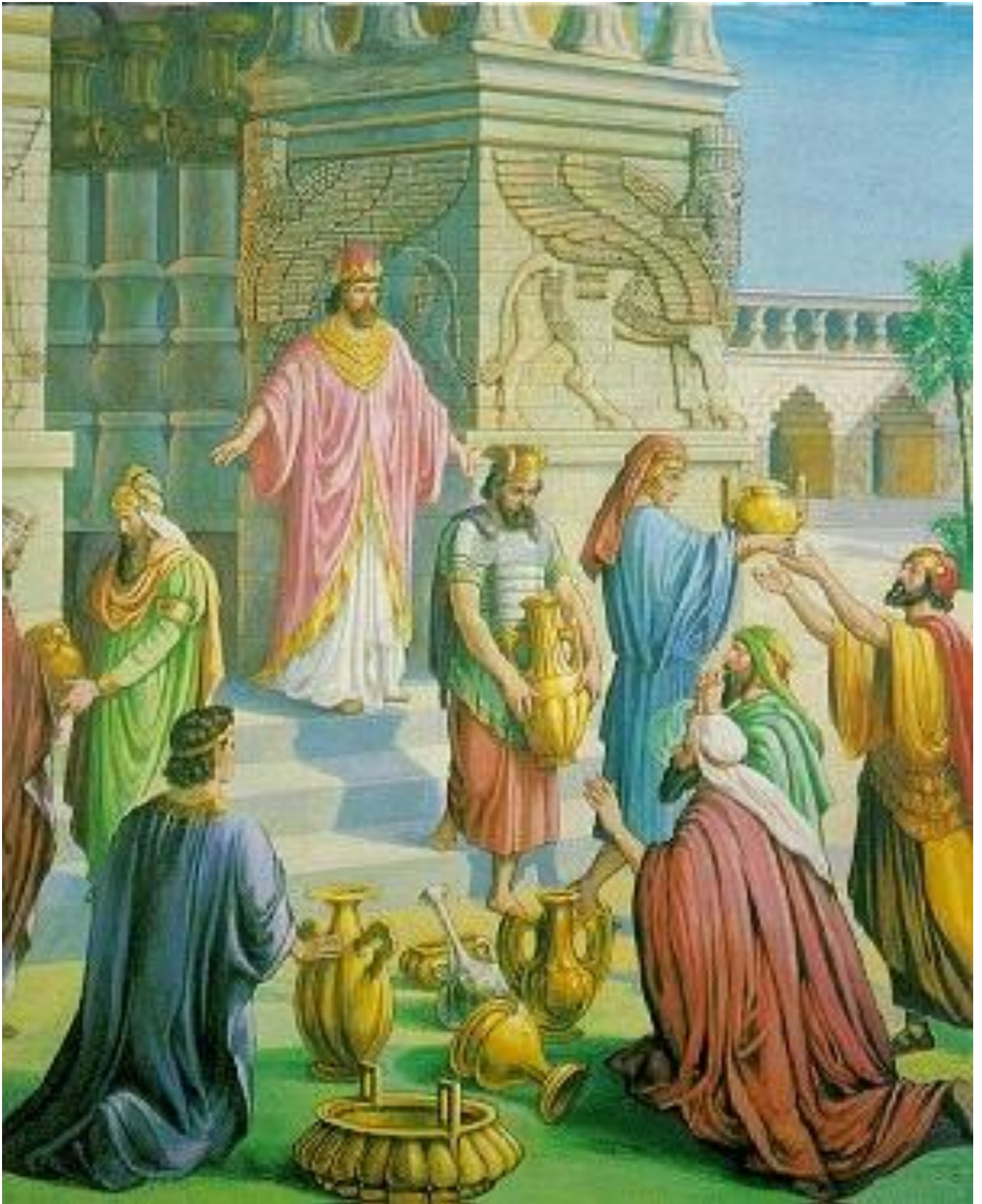


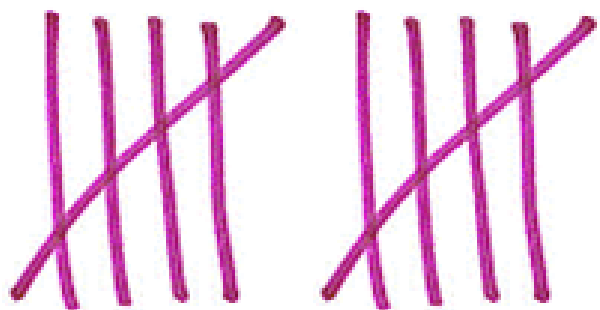
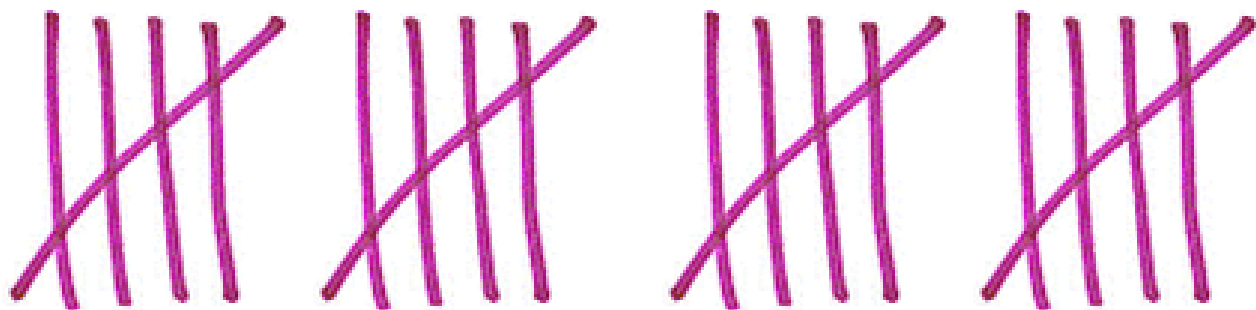
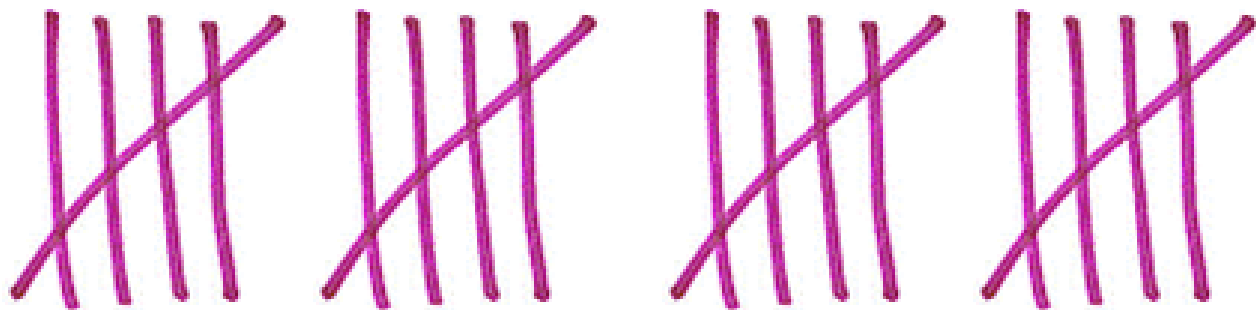
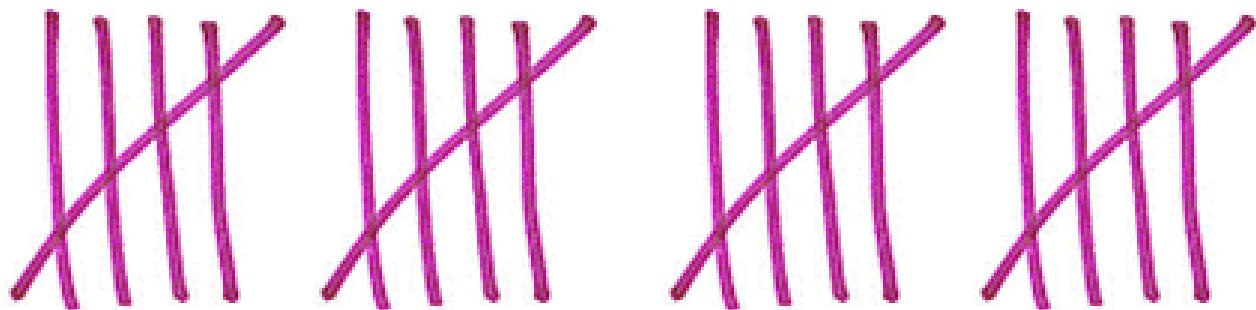
[What is the 70 week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27? \(bibleinfo.com\)](http://bibleinfo.com)

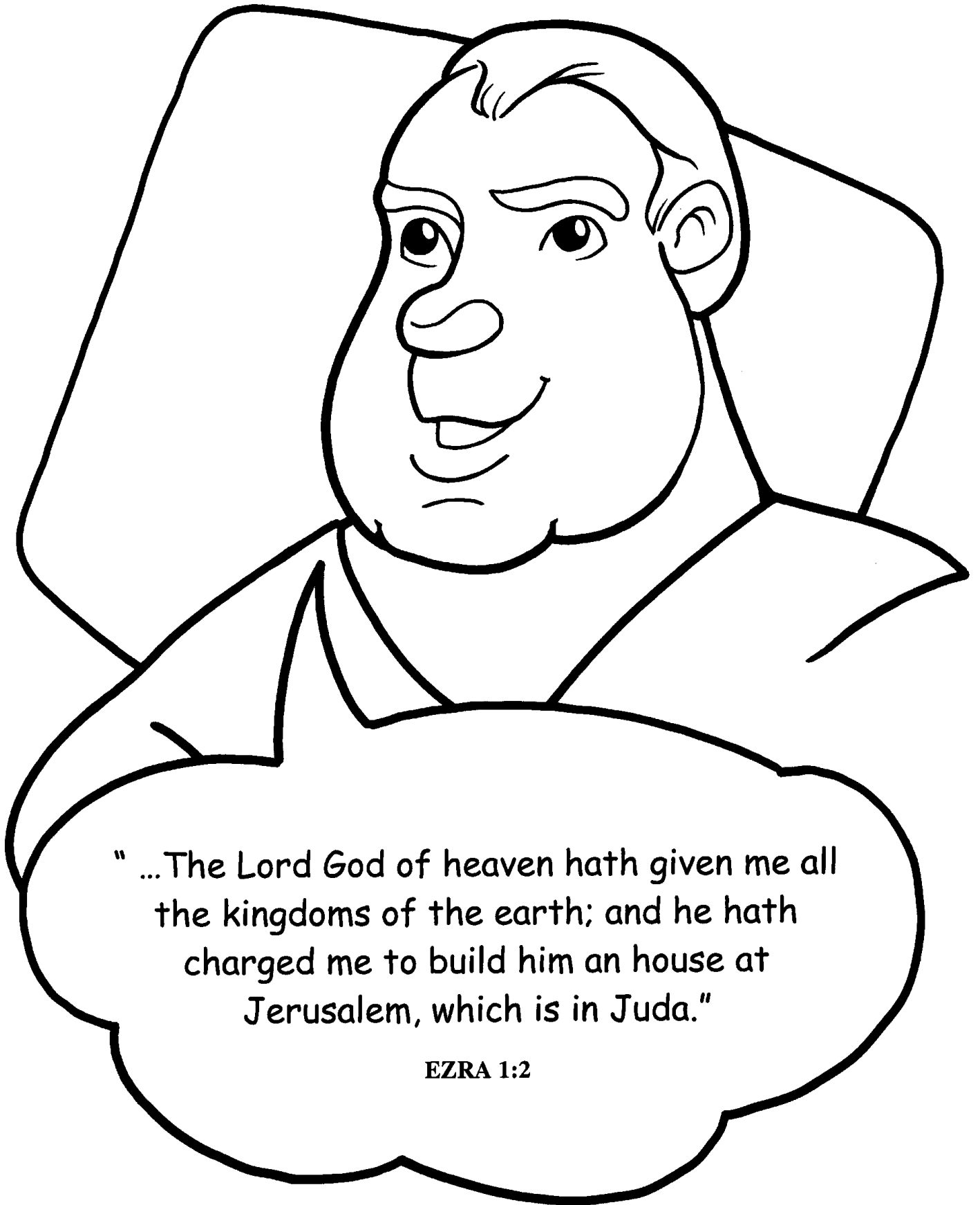
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DKImages Psalm 126







" ...The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Juda."

EZRA 1:2

Daniel 9:18c-19b: "We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.
19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God."

BABYLON

