

I M M E R S E

The Reading Bible™

CHRONICLES

The background of the cover is a watercolor-style illustration. The top half is a plain, textured white surface. The bottom half is dominated by a large, organic shape that resembles a splash or a piece of torn paper. This shape is filled with various shades of green, from a vibrant, almost neon green to a deep, forest green, and is accented with streaks of yellow and brown. The edges of this shape are irregular and feathered, blending into the white background above.

Welcome to IMMERSE The Bible Reading Experience

The Bible is a great gift to us from God. Through its words, God reveals himself to us and invites us into a relationship with him. And as we begin to better understand who God is, we also begin to better understand who we are—people who are loved by God, created in his image, and called into a new kind of life as members of his renewed creation.

The appropriate way to receive the Bible is to come to know it deeply, to lose ourselves in it precisely so that we can find ourselves in it. But the Bibles that most of us read are filled with artificial divisions and additions that, though originally meant to make the Bible easier to navigate, have had some unintended consequences. We now rarely read the Bible the way it was originally meant to be read. We most often break it into small, digestible chunks and pieces. We seldom read it at length and without distraction. Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience has been developed to reopen our eyes to the beauty of God's word in its amazing unity so that we can more easily discover its call to live into God's grand Story.

Immerse: The Reading Bible presents each book of the Bible without chapter and verse numbers, subject headers, or footnotes—all later historical additions. The entire text of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, is presented in a single-column format with easy-to-read type. To provide meaningful perspective, book introductions give historical and literary context, and the books are often reordered chronologically or grouped with books that share similar ancient audiences. This unique Bible enhances the opportunity for readers to approach God's word in simple clarity.

Immerse is more than just a series of books; it's a community growing experience rooted in God's word. This sampler provides information on the layout, features, and text found in *Immerse: The Reading Bible*, but it also provides an opportunity to experience what Immerse is all about. The opening chapters of Daniel are included, with stories of the exiled prophet and his friends, so you can experience firsthand the look and feel of *Immerse: Chronicles*. Take a deep breath, and drink deeply. Immerse yourself in God's beautiful, life-giving words.



The entire Bible divided into 6 volumes provides the framework for the Immerse experience.

Each volume has been developed so it can be read according to an 8-week reading plan. The goal is for churches and other groups to read Immerse and then to come together each week to discuss what they've read. Meetings should feel more like a book club, where people gather to discuss the reading, freely sharing thoughts and opinions, all centered on God's word. Ultimately, the goal is to encourage God's people to read through the entire Bible in a regular 3-year rhythm, leading to a lifetime of deep Scripture engagement.



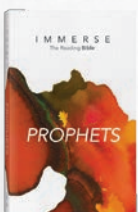
Immerse: Beginnings includes the first five books of the Bible, known as the *Torah* (meaning “instruction”). These books describe the origins of God’s creation, human

rebellion, and the family of Israel—the people God chose to be a light to all people. We follow the covenant community from its earliest ancestors to the time it is about to enter the Promised Land.



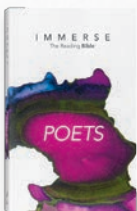
Immerse: Kingdoms tells the story of Israel from the time of its conquest of Canaan (Joshua) through its struggle to settle the land (Judges, Ruth) and the establishment of

Israel’s kingdom, which ends in a forced exile (Samuel–Kings). The nation of Israel, commissioned to be God’s light to the nations, falls to division and then foreign conquest for rejecting God’s rule.



Immerse: Prophets presents the First Testament prophets in groupings that generally represent four historical periods: before the fall of Israel’s northern kingdom (Amos,

Hosea, Micah, Isaiah), before the fall of the southern kingdom (Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk), around the time of Jerusalem’s destruction (Jeremiah, Obadiah, Ezekiel), and after the return from exile (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel, Jonah).



Immerse: Poets presents the poetical books of the First Testament in two sections, dividing them between song books (Psalms, Lamentations, Song of Songs) and

wisdom writings (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job). These poetic writings all reflect the down-to-earth faith of God’s ancient people as they sought to live out their covenant relationship through their worship and wise living. These books now call us to do the same.



Immerse: Chronicles contains the remaining First Testament books: Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel. These works were all written after the

Jewish people fell under the control of foreign empires and were scattered among the nations. They remind God’s chastened people of their identity and calling to faithfully represent God to the nations and that there is still hope for the struggling dynasty of David.



Immerse: Messiah provides a unique guided journey through the entire New Testament. Each major section is anchored by one of the Gospels, highlighting the

richness of Scripture’s fourfold witness to Jesus the Messiah, who fulfills all the longings and promises set in motion in the First Testament.

To facilitate your reading experience, each volume comes with a Quick Start Guide.

IMMERSE
The Bible Reading Experience™

QUICK START GUIDE

3 ways to get the most out of your experience

- 1** Use *Immerse: Chronicles* instead of your regular chapter-and-verse Bible. This special reader’s edition restores the Bible to its natural simplicity and beauty by removing chapter and verse numbers and other historical additions. Letters look like letters, songs look like songs, and the original literary structures are visible in each book.
- 2** Commit to making this a community experience. Immerse is designed for groups to encounter large portions of the Bible together for 8 weeks—more like a book club, less like a Bible study. By meeting every week in small groups and discussing what you read in open, honest conversations, you and your community can come together to be transformed through an authentic experience with the Scriptures.
- 3** Aim to understand the big story. Read through “The Stories and the Story” (p. 183) to see how the books of the Bible work together to tell God’s story of his creation’s restoration. As you read through *Immerse: Chronicles*, rather than ask, “How do I fit God into my busy life?” begin asking, “How can I join in God’s great plan by living out my part in his story?”

IMMERSE Resources:

- Custom Immerse audio Bible
- Weekly preview videos
- Digital eBook version
- Datan’s Guide
- Group Leader’s Guide
- Family Guide

Available at www.ImmerseBible.com

TYNDALE
INSTITUTE FOR BIBLE READING

CHRONICLES

8-WEEK READING PLAN

| | |
|--|--|
| WEEK 1 Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah | WEEK 5 Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah |
| Day 1 pp. A9-2 | Day 21 pp. 90-95 |
| Day 2 pp. 3-7 | Day 22 pp. 95-101 |
| Day 3 pp. 7-12 | Day 23 pp. 101-107 |
| Day 4 pp. 12-15 | Day 24 pp. 107-111 |
| Day 5 pp. 15-20 | Day 25 pp. 111-115 |
| WEEK 2 Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah | WEEK 6 Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah |
| Day 6 pp. 20-25 | Day 26 pp. 115-120 |
| Day 7 pp. 25-29 | Day 27 pp. 120-125 |
| Day 8 pp. 29-33 | Day 28 pp. 125-130 |
| Day 9 pp. 33-39 | Day 29 pp. 130-136 |
| Day 10 pp. 39-43 | Day 30 pp. 136-141 |
| WEEK 3 Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah | WEEK 7 Esther, Daniel |
| Day 11 pp. 43-49 | Day 31 pp. 143-148 |
| Day 12 pp. 49-55 | Day 32 pp. 148-151 |
| Day 13 pp. 55-60 | Day 33 pp. 151-155 |
| Day 14 pp. 60-62 | Day 34 pp. 157-158 |
| Day 15 pp. 63-67 | Day 35 pp. 159-163 |
| WEEK 4 Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah | WEEK 8 Daniel |
| Day 16 pp. 67-70 | Day 36 pp. 163-164 |
| Day 17 pp. 70-76 | Day 37 pp. 165-167 |
| Day 18 pp. 76-80 | Day 38 pp. 168-171 |
| Day 19 pp. 80-85 | Day 39 pp. 171-177 |
| Day 20 pp. 85-90 | Day 40 pp. 177-181 |

4 Questions to get your conversations started:

1. What stood out to you this week?
2. Was there anything confusing or troubling?
3. Did anything make you think differently about God?
4. How might this change the way we live?

The guides provide

- + Useful background information for the reader
- + Ideas for getting the most out of the Immerse experience
- + An 8-week reading plan to guide the reading
- + Four questions to inspire conversation:

- 1 What stood out to you this week?
- 2 Was there anything confusing or troubling?
- 3 Did anything make you think differently about God?
- 4 How might this change the way we live?

Natural Structure

The natural literary structures of each book are displayed by appropriate layout, simple line spacing, and graphic markers.

Maximized Readability

Line length, line height, font size, and spacing have all been thoughtfully crafted for an optimal reading experience.

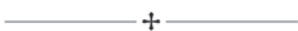
Chapter and Verse Ranges

Displayed for quick orientation to the Bible text that falls on each page

Refreshing Reading Experience

Designed to be enjoyed like the bestseller it is.

1 CORINTHIANS



This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Sosthenes.

I am writing to God's church in Corinth, to you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did for all people everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

+ + + Alerts you to the book's significant structural transitions



I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

+ Alerts you to important thematic turning points



I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ."

Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not! I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else.) For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. As the Scriptures say,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise
and discard the intelligence of the intelligent."

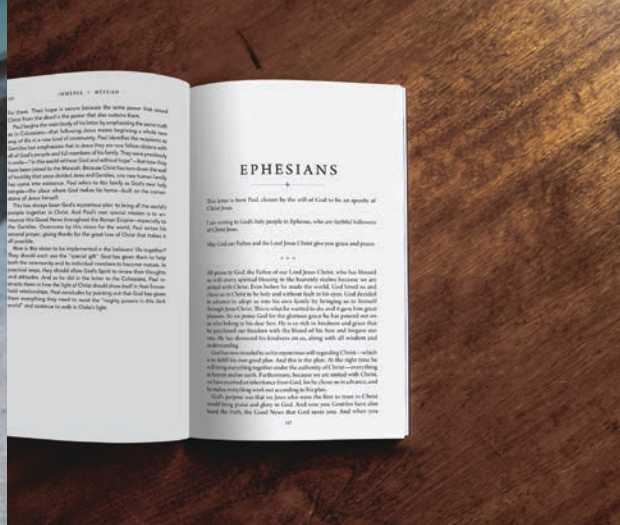
So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. Therefore, as the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD."

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than



IMMERSE: The Reading Bible...

Presents the entire *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation—a translation of the Scriptures designed to bring readers immediate clarity and a heart-language connection to God’s word.

Sets different kinds of literature—poems, songs, stories, letters, genealogies, lists—in ways that help readers recognize them, facilitating more immediate understanding.



Lays out the entire Bible in a friendly single-column format with easy-to-read type.

Offers excellent book and section introductions that provide the historical and literary information necessary to accurately understand each inspired work on its own terms.

Presents each book of the Bible without the distractions of chapter and verse numbers, subject headers, or footnotes—all later historical additions to the text.

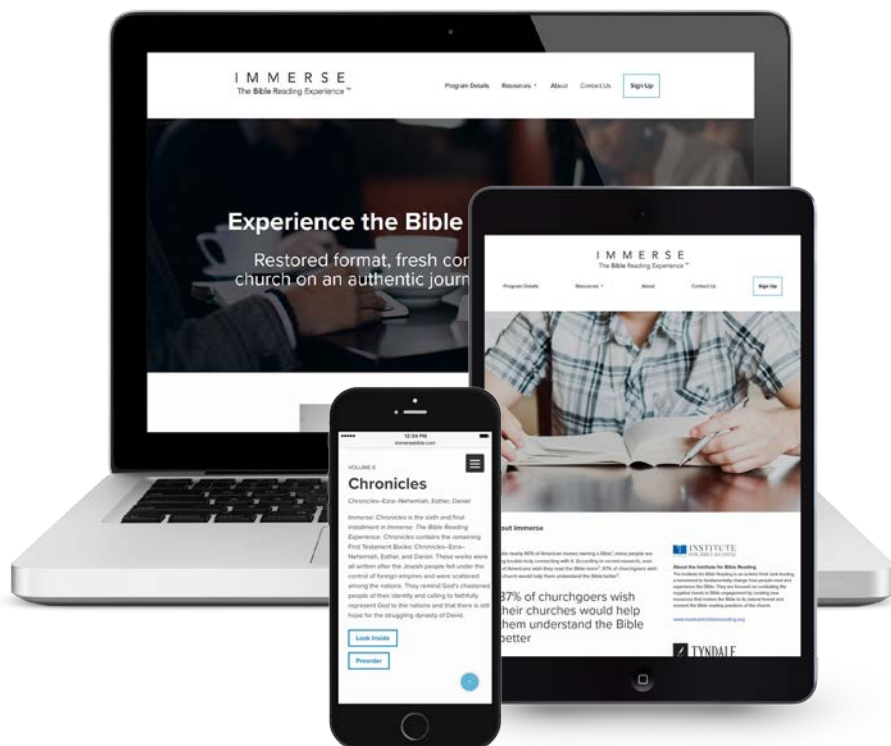
Arranges the Bible books in ways that offer readers additional context, grouping books together that share similar ancient origins, contexts, and audiences.



Provides subtle literary markers to pull forward the original structures of the books, helping readers to experience and progressively discover each book’s flow as originally intended.

Support Tools to Enhance Your Immerse Experience

The Immerse experience involves far more than just reading a series of books. Various support components have been purposely developed to enhance your community reading experience. These resources are included at no additional charge. And as resources are updated or added, your church will be given immediate access to them, allowing you to provide the most up-to-date tools and information to your community.




Current resources available online at immersebible.com:

- 1 Custom Audio Bible**
Full audio recording that follows the natural literary breaks found in *Immerse: The Reading Bible*
- 2 Weekly videos**
A 2-3 minute “trailer” highlighting what to expect and look for in the following week’s reading
- 3 Pastor’s Guide**
Guide to help pastors implement Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience in their church
- 4 Group Leader’s Guide**
Guide for facilitating discussion during weekly group meetings
- 5 Family Guide**
A resource that parents can use to engage their children in the *Immerse* experience
- 6 Quick Start Guide**
Guide for participants, delivered as a bookmark within each book (also downloadable). One side gives the reading plan and helpful discussion starters; the opposite side provides other excellent tips for getting the most out of your reading experience.
- 7 Graphics Kit**
For use in church programs, PowerPoint slides, etc.

eBook Version

Available for purchase, for use on Nook, Kindle, iPad, etc.



Experience *Immerse* yourself
by reading how the prophet Daniel and his
friends remain true to God, even as exiles
in the pagan society of Babylon.

Learn with the ancient readers what it
means to live faithfully in a world that doesn't
yet recognize God's universal rule.

Discover with them your calling to faithfully
represent God to the nations.

IMMERSED IN DANIEL

IN THE FEW CENTURIES BEFORE the birth of Jesus the Messiah, the nation of Israel faced increasing pressure as they lived under the rule of hostile empires. This meant dealing with not only the possibility of religious contamination but also the threat of extinction. The book of Esther records the courage of faithful Jews when threatened under Persian rule. The book of Daniel shows their steadfastness under the rule of several powerful empires—first under the Babylonians and Persians, and then in association with the Greek Seleucids.

The book of Daniel is divided into two main parts: a collection of stories and a collection of apocalyptic visions. The six stories in the first part are of two different types: interpretation stories and deliverance stories. In the interpretation stories, a mystery arises that the king's own wise men can't interpret or resolve, but the Most High God of Israel reveals the meaning to Daniel. In the deliverance stories, the king demands that the Jews compromise their worship of God (by worshiping an idol or by abandoning regular times of prayer to God) and attempts to execute them when they refuse. But God powerfully intervenes to rescue his people from danger. Both story types emphasize that Israel's God is the one true Creator and King over all things.

These stories center on four young Judeans—Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who were taken into exile by the Babylonians. Their stories are among the most memorable and inspiring in the Bible. These humble captives are lifted up after they refuse to compromise their faith, while a proud king is brought low until he acknowledges that “the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.”

After these stories, the book presents four visions filled with vivid and intricate symbolism. These visions closely follow the conventions of a particular type of writing known as *apocalypse*, which often features heavenly visitors, symbols representing historical periods, and a command to seal up the book, among other elements. Apocalyptic literature developed as a genre late in the First Testament period. In the face of suffering and uncertainty, the Jewish people needed stories

that would reveal the cosmic realities behind their experience and give them hope in the battle against the rulers of this world.

As the visions themselves depict, the Babylonian Empire fell to the Persians, who were conquered in turn by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. The Greek Empire was divided up after Alexander's death, and the Seleucids, who ruled one part, eventually carved out an empire of their own that was nearly as large as Alexander's and included Judea. After Antiochus IV Epiphanes became emperor, he desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem and tried to force all the Jews to worship Greek gods. But under the leadership of the Maccabees, the Jews fought back. After great suffering and sacrifice and with God's help, they temporarily won their freedom.

The stories and visions in the book of Daniel work together to strengthen God's people as they struggle to maintain their distinctive identity as a people loyal to God alone. They reveal that God is truly working, even when it looks like evil is triumphing. The pride of even the greatest human rulers is shown to be empty and weak when the Most High God acts to save his people.

The book of Daniel became one of Israel's most popular books in the first century AD, the time of Jesus. God's people were still suffering greatly under the oppression of foreign Roman rulers, and they were longing for the arrival of God's promised redeemer. Daniel gave them hope that God would bring a change in the future: "Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will last forever, and all rulers will serve and obey him."

DANIEL



During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon." The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.
 Hananiah was called Shadrach.
 Mishael was called Meshach.
 Azariah was called Abednego.

But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. But he responded, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded."

Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. "Please test us

for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,” Daniel said. “At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king’s food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.” The attendant agreed to Daniel’s suggestion and tested them for ten days.

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.

When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

Daniel remained in the royal service until the first year of the reign of King Cyrus.

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One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn’t sleep. He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, he said, “I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means.”

Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, “Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means.”

But the king said to the astrologers, “I am serious about this. If you don’t tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble! But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!”

They said again, “Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means.”

The king replied, “I know what you are doing! You’re stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, ‘If you don’t tell me the dream, you are doomed.’ So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I’ll know that you can tell me what it means.”

The astrologers replied to the king, “No one on earth can tell the king

his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! The king’s demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people.”

The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed. And because of the king’s decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

When Arioch, the commander of the king’s guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. He asked Arioch, “Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?” So Arioch told him all that had happened. Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant.

Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon. That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven. He said,

“Praise the name of God forever and ever,
for he has all wisdom and power.
He controls the course of world events;
he removes kings and sets up other kings.
He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to the scholars.
He reveals deep and mysterious things
and knows what lies hidden in darkness,
though he is surrounded by light.
I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors,
for you have given me wisdom and strength.
You have told me what we asked of you
and revealed to us what the king demanded.”

Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, whom the king had ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him, “Don’t kill the wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him the meaning of his dream.”

Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king and said, “I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell the king the meaning of his dream!”

The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar), “Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?”

Daniel replied, “There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king’s secret. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what

will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

“While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.

“In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay. As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain, but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

“That was the dream. Now we will tell the king what it means. Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.

“But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third kingdom, represented by bronze, will rise to rule the world. Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth one, as strong as iron. That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes. The feet and toes you saw were a combination of iron and baked clay, showing that this kingdom will be divided. Like iron mixed with clay, it will have some of the strength of iron. But while some parts of it will be as strong as iron, other parts will be as weak as clay. This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage. But they will not hold together, just as iron and clay do not mix.

“During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”

Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn

sweet incense before him. The king said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret.”

Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. At Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king’s court.

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King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up. So all these officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then a herald shouted out, “People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king’s command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “Long live the king! You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”

Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.

But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, “Didn’t we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?”

“Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did,” they replied.

“Look!” Nebuchadnezzar shouted. “I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!”

Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke!

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king’s command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!”

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world:

“Peace and prosperity to you!

“I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me.

How great are his signs,
how powerful his wonders!
His kingdom will last forever,
his rule through all generations.

“I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity. But one night I had a dream that frightened me; I saw visions that terrified me as I lay in my bed. So I issued an order calling in all the wise men of Babylon, so they could tell me what my dream meant. When all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers came in, I told them the dream, but they could not tell me what it meant. At last Daniel came in before me, and I told him the dream. (He was named Belteshazzar after my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

“I said to him, ‘Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too great for you to solve. Now tell me what my dream means.

“While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth. The tree grew very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree.

“Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. The messenger shouted,

“Cut down the tree and lop off its branches!

Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit!

Chase the wild animals from its shade

and the birds from its branches.

But leave the stump and the roots in the ground,

bound with a band of iron and bronze

and surrounded by tender grass.

Now let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,

and let him live with the wild animals among the plants

of the field.

For seven periods of time,
 let him have the mind of a wild animal
 instead of the mind of a human.
 For this has been decreed by the messengers;
 it is commanded by the holy ones,
 so that everyone may know
 that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world.
 He gives them to anyone he chooses—
 even to the lowliest of people.”

“Beltshazzar, that was the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now tell me what it means, for none of the wise men of my kingdom can do so. But you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.’

“Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Beltshazzar) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, ‘Beltshazzar, don’t be alarmed by the dream and what it means.’

“Beltshazzar replied, ‘I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you! The tree you saw was growing very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves and was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. That tree, Your Majesty, is you. For you have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth.

“Then you saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live with the animals of the field for seven periods of time.’

“This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king. You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses. But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.

“King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.’

“But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.’

“While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’

“That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.

“After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever.

His rule is everlasting,
 and his kingdom is eternal.
 All the people of the earth
 are nothing compared to him.
 He does as he pleases
 among the angels of heaven
 and among the people of the earth.
 No one can stop him or say to him,
 ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’

“When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before.

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.”

Many years later King Belshazzar gave a great feast for 1,000 of his nobles, and he drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking the wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver cups that his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to drink from them with his nobles, his wives, and his concubines. So they brought these gold cups taken from the Temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. While they drank from them they praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote, and his face turned pale with fright. His knees knocked together in fear and his legs gave way beneath him.

The king shouted for the enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers to be brought before him. He said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me what it means will be dressed in purple robes of royal honor and will have a gold chain placed around his neck. He will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom!"

But when all the king's wise men had come in, none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant. So the king grew even more alarmed, and his face turned pale. His nobles, too, were shaken.

But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said to Belshazzar, "Long live the king! Don't be so pale and frightened. There is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods. Your predecessor, the king—your predecessor King Nebuchadnezzar—made him chief over all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon. This man Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means."

So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king asked him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles brought from Judah by my predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar? I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods within you and that you are filled with insight, understanding, and wisdom. My wise men and enchanters have tried to read the words on the wall and tell me their meaning, but they cannot do it. I am told that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. If you can read these words and tell me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

Daniel answered the king, "Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.

"You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! So God has sent this hand to write this message.

"This is the message that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. This is what these words mean:

Mene means 'numbered'—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.
Tekel means 'weighed'—you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up.
Parsin means 'divided'—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed.

And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.

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Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a high officer to rule over each province. The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the high officers and protect the king's interests. Daniel soon proved himself more capable than

all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.

Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy. So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion."

So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius! We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions. And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked." So King Darius signed the law.

But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God. Then the officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help. So they went straight to the king and reminded him about his law. "Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions?"

"Yes," the king replied, "that decision stands; it is an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked."

Then they told the king, "That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is ignoring you and your law. He still prays to his God three times a day."

Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.

In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty, you know that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed."

So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you."

A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel. Then the king returned to his palace and

spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn't sleep at all that night.

Very early the next morning, the king got up and hurried out to the lions' den. When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?"

Daniel answered, "Long live the king! My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."

The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.

Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.

Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world:

"Peace and prosperity to you!

"I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel.

For he is the living God,

and he will endure forever.

His kingdom will never be destroyed,

and his rule will never end.

He rescues and saves his people;

he performs miraculous signs and wonders

in the heavens and on earth.

He has rescued Daniel

from the power of the lions."

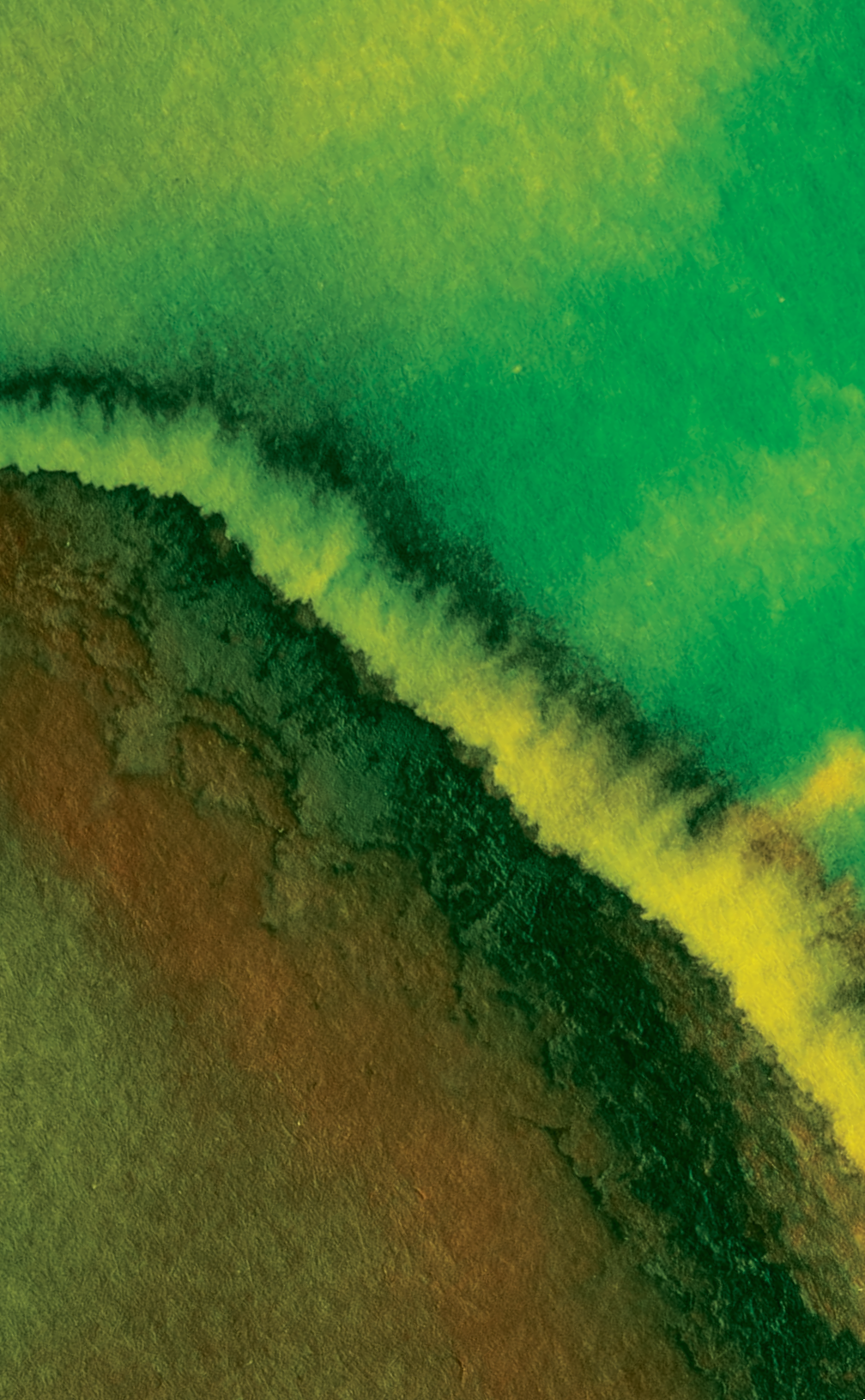
So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

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Earlier, during the first year of King Belshazzar's reign in Babylon, Daniel had a dream and saw visions as he lay in his bed. He wrote down the dream, and this is what he saw.

In my vision that night, I, Daniel, saw a great storm churning the surface of a great sea, with strong winds blowing from every direction. Then four huge beasts came up out of the water, each different from the others.

The first beast was like a lion with eagles' wings. As I watched, its wings



The Partnership

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The Art

A Word from Rachel Van Dyke, Illustrator:

When I was approached by Tyndale House Publishers to consider creating art work for the covers of their new Reading Bible series, I had already been in prayer for a few months about how God might use my artistic gifts for His Kingdom. There was a deep need in me to see a direct connection between my artistic expression and bringing people to the saving knowledge of Christ.

The title, Immerse, is so visually expressive for me. I was thrilled to create a series of works that would embody this feeling of immersion in Christ's love and God's word.

I was given the book titles for the Immerse series, each one inspiring in me a color and gesture. Throughout the series, the cover art represents a set of harmonious colors to express the title to that particular Reading Bible volume. It feels alive and in motion, much like the Spirit of God in our lives.

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