



Daniel Masterclass

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| The Visions of Daniel

The second half of the book of Daniel contains the visions that the prophet himself received. The visions contain a lot of symbolism and numbers that many find hard to understand. There are countless theories on how to best interpret these visions. Generally they fall into three main camps.

1. **Preterists** – Believe the fulfilment of the prophetic revelations is entirely in events that have already taken place.
2. **Futurists** – Believe the fulfilment of the revelations is yet to take place at the end times.
3. **Historicists** – Believe the fulfilment spans the whole of human history and look for fulfilments around the world in the news today.

There are major problems with the second two approaches. Daniel was clearly a prophet to the nations, and as we have already seen in the first six chapters, he spoke of the rise and fall of the empires in the time between the exile and the advent of Christ. To force all these events into the future or into the current time overlooks the most obvious meaning and opens the door for all kinds of bizarre interpretations that are generally picked to suit the personal views of the interpreter.

This does not mean however, that there is nothing in Daniel’s visions that relates to the end times. It is very common in scripture for there to be “prophetic echoes” of significant figures and events. We have already seen how both Daniel and Joseph foreshadow the life of Christ, and how the Tower of Babel, and Daniel 4 foreshadow the final judgement on the rebellious nations symbolised by *Babylon*.

We will see another of these “prophetic echoes” in these coming chapters. There is much here that prophesies the ultimate fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. This event in many ways was the “end times” and the “final judgement” for the Jewish people. But like the flood this “day of judgement” is used in scripture as a foreshadow of the ultimate day of judgement. Jesus when he spoke about the destruction of the temple and his second coming spoke of these two events telescoped together as if they were occurring at the same time.

In the same way when we study these prophecies we find that although the majority can be understood best from a “Preterist” stance, when it comes to the visions concerning the fall of Jerusalem, we find not only historic fulfilments but also prophetic insight into the last day itself.

2.1 Daniel 7

2.1.1 Beasts from the Sea

Biblical Classification of Creatures

Before we look at the beasts from the sea in this chapter it is worthwhile to review the classification of creatures in the scriptures. We often read the Word of God with our 21st century glasses on, and impose our modern way of thinking upon this ancient text. As a result we can miss details that would have been immediately apparent to the readers of the time.

Modern biology sees the animal kingdom divided up into many different categories such as mammals, marsupials, amphibians, reptiles, insects, arachnids, crustaceans and the like. Modern biology would also include man along with the animals, just another kind of mammal.

In the scriptures the classification is very different. We have *birds of the air*, *beasts of the field*, *fish of the sea*, and *man in the image of God*. It is a very simple system: if it flies in the air – it’s a bird; if it crawls on the land – it’s a beast; and if it swims in the sea – it’s a fish.¹ This system reflects the creative order of God, who not only created all the animals according to their kinds, but also assigned them the place where they should live.

So when we read of “*Beasts from the sea*,” immediately before we read anything else about them, we know that this represents something that is contrary to the will and order of God.

The Raging Sea

The fact that they come out of the raging sea is also very significant. In the scriptures the raging sea represents the opposition of wicked nations to the plan and purpose of God.

Oh, the raging of many nations-- they rage like the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples-- they roar like the roaring of great waters!

Isaiah 17:12

¹ Thus the argument that Jonah could not have been swallowed by a whale because scripture records it as a “fish” is not valid. To the writers of scripture a whale was a fish.

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.

Isaiah 57:20

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.

Luke 21:25

This fits, as verse 17 explains that the four beasts are four kingdoms. The connection with the sea yields more revelation about these nations when we see how God deals with the sea in the scriptures.

Constrained and Controlled

Should you not fear me?" declares the LORD. "Should you not tremble in my presence? I made the sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting barrier it cannot cross. The waves may roll, but they cannot prevail; they may roar, but they cannot cross it.

Jeremiah 5:22

These nations may rage and plot against the purpose of God, but they cannot prevail. God has set a limit for the raging sea. He has given it a boundary. He has declared "Thus far and no further." Thus their raging is futile, as they can never overcome that which they vent their fury against; they can only do what God permits them to do.

It is significant in the dream that it is the winds *of heaven* that stir up the sea. Thus it is not just that these nations are constrained, they are also controlled. It is not just that they can only do what God permits, but ultimately they can only achieve what God purposes. Ironically their raging only serves to advance the purpose they wish to destroy. God is sovereign even over the most wicked of nations. Like Pharaoh, they are raised up in rebellion so that God can display his power in the earth.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

Romans 9:17

Rebuked

It is interesting that whenever God deals with the sea, he almost always does so by rebuking it.

The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils.

2 Samuel 22:16

The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.

Psalms 18:15

He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert.

Psalms 106:9

When I came, why was there no-one? When I called, why was there no-one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert; their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst.

Isaiah 50:2

He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade.

Nahum 1:4

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Matthew 8:26

This shows that he will not let the wickedness of the nations persist forever. He will rebuke them and bring them to an end.

Transformed

If we wonder how a holy and righteous God can use a wicked and rebellious nation to accomplish his will, we are not the first! The prophet Habakkuk addressed this very question to God himself. The Lord's answer reveals something quite remarkable.

Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labour is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 2:13–14

In another great irony, God uses the very symbol of the sea that represented the wicked strivings of the nations against him and his purpose to now represent the ultimate victory of his Kingdom. Once again this shows that the kingdoms of this world are destined to give way to the Kingdom of God

The Four Nations

Even if we missed the significance of the beasts or the raging sea, we would not have to scratch our heads for long to work out what these beasts represent; the scriptures interpret themselves. We are told that these beasts represent four kingdoms that are to arise on the face of the earth. Since we have already come across a vision of four nations in Daniel chapter 2, it would not be unreasonable to assume that these are the same four nations: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires.

This is confirmed further if we examine the historic details of these kingdoms and compare them to the descriptions in this chapter.

The Lion

The wings represent the swift conquest over the other nations by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. The transformation from beast to man, most probably represents the events of Daniel chapter 4, where Nebuchadnezzar is restored from his beast like state when he humbles himself and acknowledges that God is sovereign over the nations.

The Bear

The bear raised up on one side represents the unequal alliance of the Medes and the Persians, the Persians being the stronger of the two.



The Leopard

The four wings of the leopard, represents the exceptionally swift conquests of the Greek empire under Alexander the great. He conquered the entire known world of the time in just 12 years. The four heads represent the fragmentation of his empire into four parts that would occur after his premature death.

Of this beast we are told, “It was given authority to rule.” Thus all authority, even of the ungodly and violent nations is given by God.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Romans 13:1

10 horned beast

This terrifying beast represents the Roman Empire. The worst persecutions and ultimate destruction of the Jewish nation would come during this time. The iron teeth links in with the legs of iron, in Daniel 2. It is a possible reference to the iron swords that the Roman armies were feared for using.

The 10 Horns

Opinion seems to be divided as to whether the ten horns represent the first ten rulers of the Roman empire, or whether they refer to the ten kingdoms that the empire encompassed at the height of its power. However the scripture itself gives the answer. Verse 24 tells us that the ten horns are ten kings.² This would fit with the use of horns in the rest of scripture where they represent power and strength.

If we allow scripture to interpret itself and fill in the details from history this would mean that the ten horns are the following emperors (Caesars).

1. Julius³
2. Augustus
3. Tiberius
4. Gaius (Caligula)

² The reason that the 10 kingdom theory is proposed seems to be because it is necessary to support some historicist interpretations of the book. In particular one spread by some protestant groups that claim that Daniel reveals the Papacy is the antichrist!

³ Being pedantic Julius Caesar was not technically an emperor, but the last ruler of the Roman Republic.

5. Claudius
6. Nero
7. Galba
8. Otho
9. Vitellius
10. Vespasian

Some points of note are that Christ was born during the reign of Augustus, and was crucified and raised during the reign of Tiberius. Nero's number of 6 is also significant. The most appalling persecution of Christians in Rome occurred during his reign; the apostles Paul and Peter were both martyred in his time. It is also probable that the book of Revelation was written during this time.⁴ Nero is certainly a foreshadow and type of the beast who persecutes the saints in the book of Revelation. Nero's number is the number of the beast, both because he is the 6th emperor, but also because the letters of his name in Hebrew add up to 666.⁵ Finally it is significant that the fall of Jerusalem occurred during the reign of the last of these emperors – Vespasian.

The Small Horn

There is even more debate as to the identity of this individual. If indeed it represents an individual. However the interpretation in scripture once again comes to our rescue. Verse 24 tells us that he is another King who will arise after the other 10. The 11th emperor was Titus. This is very significant as it was Titus, son of Vespasian, who led the final assault on Jerusalem and brought about its final destruction.

The fact that he was not emperor at the time, but heir apparent, might explain why he is described as a small horn. If the normal horns represent kings, then it would make sense that a small horn would represent a prince. One who had not yet risen to the height of his power and strength.

However when we look at the descriptions in this chapter relating to the small horn we have a problem, as they seem very hard to pin them all to Titus, or indeed to any one of the 10 preceding emperors.

It is said that he will *subdue 3 kings*. This was not achieved by Titus, but by his father Vespasian. When Nero died in 68 AD without leaving an heir, it left a power vacuum in the Roman Empire that many fought to fill. A series of 3 emperors each lasting less than a year tried to establish a new dynasty. Order was finally

⁴ All the internal evidence points to it being written in the time of Nero. However there is one piece of external evidence quoted by the church historian Eusebius that would place the book of Revelation during the reign of Domitian (the 12th Caesar).

⁵ The Hebrew alphabet has no separate characters for numbers, instead every letter also carries a numeric value.

restored when Vespasian, the great military commander, marched on Rome and took control.

He will also *speak boastfully*. This also is hard to pin on Titus or Vespasian, both of whom were level headed military men. It fits much better with the 4th emperor Caligula. Who proclaimed himself a God, and demanded that every temple in the whole empire have a statue of him erected for all to worship. He even planned to have the temple in Jerusalem desecrated in this way, but he was stopped at the last minute by his old friend King Agrippa.

We are told he will *make war on the saints*. This does not fit with Titus either, but nor does it fit with Vespasian or even Caligula. For although Christians suffered during Caligula's short reign, so did everyone else. This fits much better with either the emperor Nero, or the emperor Domitian (Titus' brother and successor.) Both these men led a direct campaign of persecution against Christians. Nero's was by far the most severe, but it was limited to the city of Rome. Domitian's persecutions were less barbaric, but extended throughout the whole empire.

Finally we are told he will *change set times and laws*. It is hard to know what this is referring to in the reign of Titus or any of the other emperors mentioned thus far. However there was an emperor who changed how time was measured forever. Julius Caesar himself introduced and enforced the Julian Calendar throughout the empire. It is the basis of the calendar we use today.

So we see that the characteristics of the small horn encompass the attributes of all of the Kings. This highlights the problem of trying to pin the antichrist to one man. Although Titus was just one man, the spirit of rebellion he represents is greater than just himself as an individual, it encompasses the Roman empire as a whole. This is why it is the image of the 10 horns that reoccurs in the book of Revelation to symbolise all that is opposed to God - both the dragon, and the beast.

Time, Times and Half a Time

This again is a hotly debated matter of interpretation. However, if Titus represents the small horn, the most obvious interpretation is the 3½ year siege of Jerusalem from 66 AD until Titus finally sacked it in 70 AD.

However the only problem with this is that it says *the saints will be handed over to him*. Heeding a prophetic warning all the Christians left Jerusalem prior to the siege and so escaped the horrific sufferings of those trapped inside. It also says that his power will be completely destroyed, and that all the kingdoms of the earth will be handed over to the saints. As none of these events were fulfilled during the siege of Jerusalem, it is most probable that these are prophecies concerning the end times that have been telescoped into the events of AD 70.

Verses 26 and 27 certainly make most sense if they are talking about the final day of judgement and the final and ultimate victory of the Kingdom of God.

This shows yet again that the kingdoms of this world are destined to become the Kingdom of our God, and that the things that the saints are handed over to, are the very things that will be handed over to them when the fullness of the Kingdom comes. This is the main point of the vision: although these wicked kingdoms will arise, they will not last forever, and although the saints may have to endure in these times, they are receiving an eternal kingdom that is destined to overcome them all.

Revelation builds on revelation

We have seen how scripture interprets itself, and how we have used other parts of scripture to better understand the book of Daniel. This is because in the scriptures, revelation builds upon revelation. This is a process that works both ways; we can also use the understanding we have gained from the book of Daniel and apply it to other parts of the word that we would not have otherwise been able to understand.

This is especially true of the book of Revelation, which builds upon the imagery in the book of Daniel. Take for example chapter 13 where we also see a “beast from the sea.”

And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling-place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. He who has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

Romans 13:1-10

The description of this beast, which we may have found puzzling in the past, should now be instantly familiar. It is described with ten horns, and resembling a leopard, a bear and a lion. This beast is a composite beast of Daniel's four beasts. This beast therefore does not represent a person, or some demonic monster, but nations in opposition to the will of God.

The message again is that there are persecutions ahead for the people of God from the wicked nations who are being manipulated by Satan, and that they will need patience and endurance to overcome. But this message is not meant to frighten, but encourage, because the ultimate defeat of this beast is also prophesied.

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Revelation 20:10

Message

As with all of scripture, the purpose of this passage and the images of the beasts is not to scare or intimidate, but to correct and encourage.

The Jews of the exile had a misconception that the exile was the final judgement on their people, and once they returned everything would be rosy. They would never again suffer persecutions, and never again have to go through any difficult trials. Some Christians have the same misconception about their new life in Christ. They think that once they are born again God will shield them from all the trials and troubles of this world.

Whilst it might seem like a very positive and faith filled outlook, it is not correct. The problem arises when we do go through a time of trial. If we maintain that as God's people we should never experience these things it can knock us off balance and leave us wondering what we have done wrong, or why God has forsaken us.

The nature of trials is one of the key messages of the book of Daniel. God does not want us to be ignorant of these things, so they will not take us off guard or weaken our faith. Time and again we see in the book of Daniel that God does not spare his servants from times of trial, but he is with them in them, and brings them out safely to a position of greater strength and blessing.

God reveals these things before they happen so that we might know that he is with us, and that they do not mean we have done wrong or that he has forsaken us. He wants us to endure and stay faithful to the end, and he encourages us to do this by revealing that the trials will not last forever, and that the things that now rule over us, we are destined to rule.

Like many of the truths of scripture, once we have recognised them we see them everywhere. For this is not just the message of Daniel, but the testimony of scripture as a whole.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

2 Corinthians 4:17

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow-worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no-one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them.

1 Thessalonians 3:2-3

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved

genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

This last passage is revealing as it shows that we can be shielded by God's power and yet still go through trials of many kinds. The shielding of God does not mean will not be tested, but it does mean we will never be tested beyond our ability to endure. Equally the scriptures show that far from being a sign that God has forsaken us, trials are actually a sign that God is working with us, and that we are inheriting the Kingdom.

1 Peter 1:3-7

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

Hebrews 12:7

strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Acts 14:22



2.1.2 Visions of God

The visions of this chapter are not confined to visions of nations in rebellion. There are two wonderful images in the passage that reveal God himself. These visions are very significant, for they do not just reveal God the father, but they also reveal the divine Son of God in human form.

The Father

God the Father is revealed as the “Ancient of Days.” Many of the attributes of God are revealed in this short passage.

The King

God is the *King of Kings*. This is revealed because thrones (plural) are set in place and God takes his place.

Holiness

The glory of his holiness is revealed by the whiteness of his clothes. This is taken up in the book of Revelation where white garments stand for righteousness, and also in the transfiguration of Christ.

Eternal

His eternal nature is displayed in the whiteness of his hair, and in the title he is given – *The Ancient of Days*. God is from everlasting to everlasting.

All powerful

His power is evident from his flaming throne. It is an awesome picture. He is not one to be trifled with.

Omni-present

There is no escape from God. He is omni-present, in every place at every time. This is revealed by the wheels on his throne. He is not just the God of heaven, but the Lord of all the earth. His presence is throughout the world, by his Spirit, who has been hovering over the earth since the beginning. Ezekiel in his opening chapter, reveals that the wheels under the living creatures represent the spirit of each living creature. (There is a strong similarity between the visions of God in



Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1.) So it is probable these flaming wheels represent the Spirit of God sent with power into all the earth.

Lord of Hosts

God is the Lord of hosts. He is surrounded by countless thousands of angelic beings. They are both servants and worshipers (just as we are) for they both attend him and stand before his presence. The book of Hebrews explains that when we come to worship, we are joining in with the eternal worship of the angels that forever surround him (Heb 12:22).

The Judge

God is the judge of all the earth. We are witnessing a courtroom scene. God is condemning the beast and bringing about his final destruction. The beast is thrown into the river of fire that comes from under the throne of God. This is the place where all God's enemies belong – under his feet.

The book of Revelation has an almost identical image of this courtroom scene in chapter 20. Here we discover that the books are a record of everything that everyone has ever done. God judges each person according to his actions. Fortunately for us Revelation reveals that there is another book – the book of life. Which our names have been written in⁶. If anyone did not have their name written in the book of life, they were cast into the lake of fire. This shows that salvation is in Christ alone, no one can be saved according to their actions as recorded in God's books. It is only if we have accepted Christ and are written in his book, that we can be saved.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

⁶ Luke 10:20, Hebrews 12:23

Vision of Christ

Daniel's vision of the divinity of Christ is truly remarkable. He saw the glory of the Son of God, with such clarity. It is especially amazing when you consider that Daniel as a devout Jew and strict monotheist would most probably have considered the vision of a man being worshipped as God as blasphemous. Indeed although this passage was part of the Jews holy writings, they were deeply disturbed by it, and the fact that they stoned Stephen for just quoting it⁷ shows that they did consider it blasphemous. Daniel saw probably better than any other Old Testament prophet into the mystery of God's triune nature. The greatest testimony of the insight of Daniel's vision of the Son, is that of all the messianic titles Jesus could have chosen to refer to himself, he chose this one "The Son of Man". His message was clear - *I am the one whom Daniel saw.*

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Matthew 17:9

So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Mark 2:28

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Luke 19:10

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man.

John 3:13

Son of Man

Daniel clearly sees Christ's divinity, but the title "Son of Man" also reveals his humanity. He is God made man. God in the flesh.

⁷ Acts 7:56-58

Coming with the clouds of heaven

Daniel sees his glory, as indicated by the *clouds of heaven*. Although in this picture he is coming *into* God's presence in the clouds of glory. And so is of his ascension and not his second coming, Jesus used this phrase to reveal that when he comes again he is coming in glory – all the glory of heaven.

"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Mark 14:62

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Matthew 26:64

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:9–10

In the presence of the ancient of Days

Daniel saw Jesus being exalted to the highest place, to the right hand of God in heaven. He is above all rulers powers and authorities.

Given all authority

Daniel saw that he was given *all authority, glory and sovereign power*. Jesus has a name above every name, there is nothing that is not under his authority. He is Lord of all.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name

Philippians 2:9

All men worship him

Daniel also saw the ultimate fulfilment of the Kingdom of God where every peoples, nations and languages worship Jesus.

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Philippians 2:10

His is the eternal Kingdom

And once again he sees the Kingdom. The same Kingdom he witnessed as the rock in chapter 2. It is the eternal Kingdom of God in Christ.

You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end."

Luke 1:31-33

But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom.

Hebrews 1:8

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Revelation 11:15

Summary of the Chapter

A great summary for this chapter is found in Psalm 2.

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they



say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Psalm 2

The nations rage against God, but he is sovereign over them; the kingdom of the Son is destined to subdue and destroy them.

2.2 Daniel 8

In Daniel we see two more beasts, which we should already know by now represent the kingdoms of the world. If we were still in any doubt the interpretation is given, not only that they are kingdoms, but which kingdoms: Medo-Persia and Greece. This is very helpful, because up to now we have used our historic knowledge to fill in the details that the kingdom following the Medo-Persian empire was the Greek empire, but here the scriptures explicitly confirm it for us.

Even though Daniel was appalled at this vision, and considered it “beyond understanding,” because we know without any doubt or ambiguity which nations these beasts represent, we can once again fill out the details from history. This then becomes a fairly straight forward chapter.

Ram

The Ram we are told represents the Medo-Persian empire. This is still a future Kingdom for Daniel who is still prophesying at the time of Belshazzar, the last King of Babylon. It is significant though that the language of Daniel has changed again, from the beginning of chapter 8 to the end of the book he reverts back to his native Hebrew. In both prophecy and language he has left the exile behind.

It is also significant that Daniel is transported in this vision to Susa which would become the capital of this new empire.

If we did not know that this beast represented Medo-Persia, we could probably have guessed by the two uneven horns. We have already seen how the horns represent the rulers of the nations, in this case it is the uneven rule of the Medes and the stronger Persians.

Goat

The Goat we are told, represents the Greek Empire. Thus Daniel is seeing not just the empire that would end the captivity of his people, but the one that would come after that too. In relation to his vision in chapter 7, these are the middle two beasts, the bear and the leopard. They are also the chest of silver, and the belly of bronze in the statue of chapter 2.

Large Horn

There is no doubt as to whom the Goat's great horn represents. It is the greatest military leader of the Greek empire (and possibly of any empire) – Alexander the Great. Alexander had remarkable success as a conqueror. He became King at the age of 20, and just 12 years later he had conquered almost the entire known world of the time.

Broken off at the height of his power

Alexander did not get to enjoy the vast kingdom he had forged. He had just made his way back to Babylon to set it up as the centre of his empire, when he was struck down by a mysterious illness and died suddenly. He died in Babylon in 323 BC, aged 32 years old.

4 Horns

As Alexander left no heir, his kingdom was divided between his four generals. Cassander in Greece, Lysimachus in Thrace, Seleucus in Mesopotamia and Ptolemy in Egypt. These four would later become consolidated into two rival empires – the Selucid and the Ptolemaic. This is significant as they are the Kingdoms of the North and South referred to in Daniel chapter 11.

The horn that grew up

Unlike the small horn of Daniel 7, there is little doubt as to who the small horn in this chapter represents. He is a very nasty piece of work, known as *Antiochus Epiphanies*. It is significant that Daniel should see these two individuals in these two chapters – Titus, and Antiochus. For in all the time the temple in Jerusalem stood, it suffered the ultimate desecration, of having an idol to a foreign God set up in the most holy place twice⁸! The last was by the soldiers of Titus, shortly before they burned it to the ground – they set up the Golden Roman Eagle in the most holy place and worshiped Titus as a god. But the first was by Antiochus Epiphanes.

In 169 BC Antiochus, a usurper to the Selucid throne, captured Jerusalem and entered the temple carrying off its treasures. In 167 BC he returned in great anger to quash a rebellion of the Jews, and it was at this time that he had an image of himself as the god Zeus erected in the most holy place in the temple. The account of these events is recorded in the Apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees⁹.

⁸ It was nearly desecrated again during the reign of the Roman Emperor Caligula. He intended to have an image of himself as the god Jupiter erected in every temple. The temple in Jerusalem was spared by the intervention of King Agrippa.

⁹ See Appendix 2, where the first chapter of this book which records Antiochus' desecration of Jerusalem is reproduced.

The temple was eventually rededicated exactly three years later in 164 BC by the leader of the Jewish resistance *Judas Maccabeus*, from whom the book of these events gets its name.

Threw down some of the starry host

The starry host in scriptures is used most frequently to refer to the descendants of Israel.

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Genesis 15:5

I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,

Genesis 26:4

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Genesis 37:9

Throwing down the starry host and trampling them underfoot, would thus indicate a slaughtering of the Jews. This is confirmed both by the historic account of Antiochus' actions, but also in the angel's interpretation, that he will "Destroy the Holy People."

Casting down the starry host is also a representation of Satan

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.

Revelation 12:3-4

So we see that the symbols associated with both “small horns” are used in Revelation to indicate satanic origin. We have the 10 horns of Titus, and the casting down of the stars of Antiochus.

Took away the Daily Sacrifice

The morning and evening sacrifices that the Jews were commanded to offer daily in the temple were made impossible after Antiochus had desecrated the temple. What is more, Antiochus forbade all forms of observation of the Jewish law on the pain of death, even going as far as having circumcised babies and their mothers publicly executed.

Very strong but not by his own power

He was not the rightful heir, but a usurper to the throne.

Destroyed but not by human power

Antiochus died suddenly whilst he was on his way to Jerusalem with plans to annihilate the whole nation.

2,300 Evenings and Mornings

The 2,300 mentioned here is one of the difficult numbers in Daniel that it is hard to understand. As a result some have taken it to mean whatever they want it to mean! There have been some ridiculous theories proposed all revolving around interpreting the 2,300 evenings and mornings as 2,300 years. This again springs from the historicist interpreters wanting to find fulfilments in recent times. The Mormons say it predicts the coming of Joseph Smith, and others proposed that it predicted the return of Jesus in 1844!

Leaving these bizarre and misguided interpretations to one side there are a couple of sensible ways this number can be understood.

If the 2,300 are understood as 2,300 days then it could refer to the entire seven year period during which Antiochus persecuted the Jews.

However the words are actually 2,300 “evening and mornings”. Since the passage is referring to the cessation of the daily sacrifices, this could be referring to the morning and evening sacrifices. Thus 2,300 evenings and mornings would correspond to 1,150 days. Just over 3 years. We know from the book of Maccabees that the period of time between the desecration of the temple and its reconsecration was exactly 3 years. This seems the most likely explanation. The



only puzzling thing is that if the time between the desecration and rededications was an exact number of years, why is the time prophesied out by 55 days? Some have argued that it means that Antiochus must have stopped the daily sacrifices 55 days before he desecrated the temple. This is certainly a possibility, but there is no historical evidence to back it up.

Another explanation is simply that the number was never meant to be exact. Time periods in prophetic visions rarely are. It is only because some of the other numbers in Daniel are so precise that we fall into the trap of expecting them all to be so. For example Jeremiah prophesied that the exile would last 70 years, when in fact it lasted 68. No one in their right mind would claim this was a false prophecy because he was out by two years. Also one has to consider that the numbers themselves are often more significant in prophecies than the exact time period they represent. For example it is very significant that the exile was a multiple of 7 years, as God said the land would get its rest for all the Sabbath years the Israelites failed to observe. In the same way it is possible that the number 2,300 is significant because it is reminiscent of the 23,000 male Levites who came out of Egypt (Nu 26:62) Which would indicate God's judgement not just on the temple but on the whole Jewish religious system.

Angelic visitation

The book of Daniel is also remarkable for the angelic visitations that occur. Here the angel is none other than Gabriel himself. Other than Mary and Zechariah who he appeared to declare the coming of the Lord, he is only recorded as appearing to one other man – Daniel. The fact that Daniel saw Gabriel the one who announces the Lord's coming once again shows the depth of insight that Daniel had into the eternal purpose of God and of his coming Christ.

2.3 Daniel 9

Daniel's Prayer

This chapter records for us one of the prayers of this mighty prophet. Daniel is a great role model for us in many ways, and the area of prayer is no exception.

Provoked by the word

His prayers were provoked by the word of God. He read the word and let the truths he read there shape his prayers.

The promises

Daniel understood from the word that the exile should have been drawing to a close, yet it showed no sign of ending. Yet when faced with this discrepancy between the word and his experience he chose to believe the word. But he did not believe it in a fatalistic way. He went to God in prayer and asked him to bring about the promises he read of.

This again is a great example to us. How do we react when our experience does not measure up to the word of God? Do we lower our understanding of the word to meet our experience, or seek to raise our experience to the level of the word? How do we react when we read of promises in the word for our lives that we have not seen the fulfilment of? Do we think that they cannot be applicable to us? Do we choose to believe them, but fatalistically, thinking if God wants to do it, he will do it? Or do we, like Daniel or Habakkuk, earnestly seek the Lord in prayer and ask him to fulfil the word in our day.

The warnings

Daniel was not a “Cherry picker” of the word of God. He did not only read the bits in the Bible he liked – all the promises and all the blessings. He knew the warnings too, and believed in them every bit as much as the blessings.

I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings.

Leviticus 26:31

The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you.

Deuteronomy 28:36–37

We cannot pick and choose the scriptures. We need all of God's word, the warnings as much as the promises. They are all there for our benefit. Part of the reason some Christians fail to grasp the fear of the Lord is because their unbalanced diet in the word has led them to think of God as some kind of heavenly blessing bank. We ignore God's warnings at our own peril

A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Proverbs 22:3

Provoked by Sin

Daniel's prayer was also provoked by sin. It was a prayer of confession and repentance. Daniel was a righteous man, yet here we see him taking upon himself the sins of his people. This is yet another way in which Daniel reflects Christ – he who had no sin and yet became sin for us.

Confession is part of the pattern that Jesus gave his disciples to teach them how to pray. It releases forgiveness to us. It is part of the godly sorrow over sin that does us good. It humbles us before God, and when we become less, he can become more; and it is a key to releasing God's power in the nations.

Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' "

Luke 11:4

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

2 Colossians 7:10-11

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Confession and repentance do us good. They are a necessary part of our walk with God. Some may consider that if a Christian is living right before God he should not need to repent, and so look down upon it. However Daniel's example shows this understanding to be incorrect. If righteous Daniel did it, and if Jesus instructed it, who are we to ignore it. Repentance is not just a one off event that ushers us into the Kingdom, it is a way of life where we daily chose to live his way and not our own. I consider that it is no coincidence that many of the great revivals recorded in recent history were preceded by a wave of genuine repentance through the church.

Provoked by the honour of God's name

Daniel's prayer was also provoked by the honour of God's name. Ultimately Daniel's concern was not self-pity or self-interest. He was concerned for the name of the Lord. This is the greatest type of prayer. Prayers when we are not asking for things we want, or asking God to meet a need, but we have caught God's heart for what he wants to do, and are praying in line with his will. When we become consumed like Daniel for the honour of God's name, and make that our focus in prayer, rather than our request list, then our prayers will truly have power. This was the way Jesus instructed his disciples to focus whenever they began to pray – *Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed by your name.*

His prayer moved heaven

Daniel's prayers moved heaven. As soon as he began to pray an angelic messenger was dispatched to him. Once again this is none other than Gabriel, the announcer of Christ. Is it any wonder then that the revelation Daniel received went further than just the answer he was seeking.



70 Sevens

Gabriel reveals to Daniel not just the end of the seventy years of exile, but lets him in on God's ultimate plan – the coming of Christ. He shows him that God's plan is not about the temple in Jerusalem, which will be destroyed, but about the coming of the Anointed One.

This time period is another of those that can be difficult to understand, and has many different interpretations, including a fair share of off the wall futurist and historicist theories. However there is one that is very satisfying, and quite remarkable.

Sevens

The first thing to establish is what the “sevens” mean. The most obvious interpretation would be weeks, but 70 weeks would not take Daniel to the end of the exile let alone the coming of Christ. However we have already mentioned in relation to Jeremiah's prophecy that years were also measured in sevens. Each seventh year was supposed to be a Sabbath year where the land rested (something the Jews never observed) and after seven sevens, the fiftieth year was a year of Jubilee. Thus these “Sevens” are best understood as periods of seven years. Seventy Sevens, thus refers to 490 years. As Daniel was prophesying in the 6th Century BC, we can already begin to see the significance of this period of time. It should take us to around the time of Christ himself.

The decrees

Part of the problem with identifying when this time period ends, is identifying when it begins. We are told that it is from *the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*. The problem is that we have not one, but four decrees to choose from. The first was given by Cyrus, which ended the exile in 539 BC¹⁰, the second by Darius in 520 BC¹¹, and the third and fourth by Artaxerxes in 457 BC¹² and 445BC¹³.

7 Sevens + 62 Sevens

The time given from the decree until the Christ (the Anointed One) comes is given as seven sevens and sixty-two sevens – a period of 483 years. If we take the third of the decrees listed above (for no other reason than it is the only one that works!) then we get the date of 27 AD - smack, bang in the time of Christ.

¹⁰ Ezra 1:1-4

¹¹ Ezra 6:8-12

¹² Ezra 7:11-28

¹³ Nehemiah 1

If this were not remarkable enough (and remember that prophetic time periods do not necessarily have to be precise) it is even more so when we take into account when Jesus was actually born.

Contrary to tradition, Jesus was not born on 25 December 0 AD. This date was chosen in the 6th Century and was based on a miscalculation. In fact most recent calculations put the birth of Christ at 3, 5 or 6 BC. The actual day he was born is unknown. Using the evidence of the gospels we can narrow this down further, as the account of Matthew states Jesus was born during the reign of Herod. Since we know very accurately that Herod died in 4 BC¹⁴, we can rule out 3 BC as a possibility. Also since Herod commanded all the infants aged 2 and below to be slaughtered in accordance with the time he was told for Jesus' birth. This would certainly imply that Herod was still alive for two years after Jesus was born; this all points towards a 6 BC birth.

If Jesus was born in 6 BC, this would mean that 27AD was actually his 33rd year. The year he was crucified!¹⁵ This is a startlingly accurate fulfilment to the prophecy: *After sixty-two sevens the Anointed One [Christ] will be cut-off and will have nothing.*

The Last Seven

So what of the last seven? One popular theory holds that the 62 sevens actually predict the start of Jesus' ministry, and that it is the middle of the next seven that he is crucified. The problem with this is that the crucifixion fits much better with the Anointed One being cut off, than putting an end to sacrifice and setting up an abomination. Also what do the remaining 3 and a bit years refer to? Some say this takes us up to the stoning of Steven the first Martyr, but as significant as Steven's death was this hardly seems satisfactory.

A much better explanation can be had if one allows for the last seven years to not have to follow immediately after the preceding 483. For this passage also prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem and the desecration and destruction of the temple. We know these events happened in 70 AD, when Titus conquered Jerusalem. What is very interesting if you read any history of this period is that you find that these events took place in what is known as the *Jewish Rebellion*, which was a war between the Jews and the Romans that lasted 7 years. It began in 67 AD and ended in 73 AD. We can see straight away that these seven would fit, as the destruction of Jerusalem happens in the middle of the "seven" just as predicted.

¹⁴ Both from Historical records and because Josephus records a lunar eclipse occurred shortly before his death.

¹⁵ Jesus began his ministry at the age of thirty and ministered for three years before his crucifixion. 33 AD was always the traditional date for the crucifixion, but was based on his birth in 0 AD.



So what of the time in between? From the end of the 69th seven to the beginning of the last seven we have a period of 40 years. This was the time Israel was given in the wilderness so that the whole generation might die out. Interestingly if this interpretation is correct then it is also the same length of time that Jesus gives saying that the generation would certainly not pass away until these things were fulfilled.¹⁶

Summary

So we see that Daniel was told much more than he actually asked about! He thought he had caught God's heart by praying for the restoration of the people who bore God's name, but God revealed to him just what his heart really was. As we have seen so many times before, even in this Old Testament book - *It's all about Jesus!*

¹⁶ Matthew 24:34