

Until now, Daniel has been interpreting the dreams of others; but now God gives him extraordinary visions of his own. These two chapters take place before Ch. 5, of course, since Babylon has not yet fallen to the Medes and Persians. Remember that Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, was actually king of Babylon (the empire) and Belshazzar was his co-regent in the city of Babylon. Nabonidus became king in 556 BC, so we may date chapter 7 in 556 and chapter 8 in 554. Other historians prefer to date chapter 7 in 550 when Nabonidus left for Arabia and put Belshazzar officially in charge; and this would put chapter 8 in the year 548. In these visions, Daniel sees the course of Gentile history and helps us understand what will happen to the Jews in the end days.

I. THE VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS - ch. 7

The restless sea in the Bible is a picture of the Gentile nations (Rev. 17:15, Isa. 17:12). Here it is the Great Sea, or the Mediterranean Sea; and all of the empires mentioned in this vision bordered in one way or another on this sea. Daniel saw four beasts, and the angel explained what they meant. Each beast represented a kingdom (vs. 17).

1. The lion with wings (4). Here we have Babylon, corresponding to the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image (2:36-38). The winged lion was a favorite image in Babylon; you may see these figures in any museum that has a Babylonian display. The animal made to stand like a man certainly reminds us of Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience in 4:27-37! Babylon was still ruling the world at this time, but in just a few years (as ch. 5 explains) the empire would fall. So, that takes us to the next beast.

2. The bear with the ribs (5). Here we meet the Medo-Persian empire, known not for its swiftness or skill, but for its brute force, just like a bear. The three ribs depict the three empires already defeated (Egypt, Babylonia, Libya); and the fact that the bear stood "raised up on one side" indicates that the one half of the empire (the Persian half) was stronger and more honorable than the other half (the Medes). Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC, but their empire lasted only some 200 years.

3. The winged four-headed leopard (6). This is certainly Greece, led by Alexander the Great who swiftly conquered the world, defeating the Persians about 331 BC. But the great general died in 323, and his vast kingdom was divided into four parts (and thus the four heads). Four of his leading generals each took parts of the kingdom and ruled them as monarchs.

4. The terrible beast (7-8, 17-27). This beast startled Daniel, because nothing like it had appeared in any of the previous revelations. It seems clear that we have here the Roman Empire, corresponding to the iron in Nebuchadnezzar's image. But the picture seems to go beyond history into "the latter days"; because we see ten horns on the beast, and these parallel the ten toes of the image in ch. 2, the Revived Roman Empire of the last days. Vss. 8 and 20 both tell us that a "little horn" (ruler) will appear and defeat three of the ten kingdoms represented by the ten horns and ten toes. This little horn will then become a world ruler, The Anti-Christ! His mouth will speak great things and he will persecute the saints (believing Jews and Gentiles during the tribulation period) for three and a half years (vs. 25 - time, times, and half a time). This is the last half of the tribulation period, the "seventieth week" that Daniel will tell us about in ch. 9. According to vss. 11-12, the three previous kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Rome) will be "swallowed up" and included in this last great world empire; but the Anti-Christ himself will finally be judged and slain. Read Rev. 13:1-2 where John describes the Beast (Anti-Christ) and uses the very same beasts we find in Dan. 7 - but notice that their order is reversed. This is because Daniel was looking ahead while John was looking back.

5. The judgment (9-14, 26-28). It must have shocked Daniel to see a man in heaven! He saw Jesus Christ, the glorious Son of Man! Of course, God could not

permit the Beast to control the world! He will send His Son to judge the Beast and destroy his kingdom, and then to set up His own glorious kingdom, with the saints of God reigning with Him.

So, this vision complements and supplements the one in ch. 2. There we have man's view of the nations (precious metals); but here we have God's view - ferocious beasts! Ps. 49:12!

II. THE VISION OF THE RAM AND HE-GOAT - ch. 8

This vision is actually an amplification of 7:6, explaining how Greece will conquer Medo-Persia. We are back to the Hebrew language in ch. 8 (to the end of the book; since 2:4, it has been in Chaldean). Ch. 8 takes place 2 years after ch. 7 and describes the kingdoms that will follow Babylon after it falls. Daniel was in Jerusalem, but God carried him in a vision to the capital of Persia, the palace in Shushan (see Neh. 1:1). Why Shushan? Because Persia would be the next empire!

The ram (3-4) represents Medo-Persia in its conquests (vs. 20). The emblem of Persia was a ram! Just about the time the ram was through "pushing," the he-goat appeared from the west (5) and leaped swiftly to where the ram was standing. This ram had two horns, one higher than the other, symbolizing the Medes and the Persians, with the Persians the stronger. The he-goat had one great horn - Alexander the Great. Now, the he-goat attacked the ram, broke the two horns, and became very great (7-8). This represents Greece's victory over Medo-Persia. But then we see the great horn broken (Alexander's death) and four horns taking its place (the four generals who divided his kingdom and ruled over it).

But here comes a "little horn" again! We met a "little horn" back in 7:8, and now we have another one! The "little horn" in 7:8 represented the Anti-Christ, the last world ruler of the final world empire before the return of Christ to earth. But this "little horn" in 8:9 comes out from one of the four horns; that is, he is a leader who comes out of one of the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom. So, this "little horn" is not the Anti-Christ of the "latter days," although he has a definite connection with him. This "little horn" conquers nations to the south and east (Egypt, Persia), and then invades Palestine ("the pleasant land"). He not only attacks the Jews politically, but also religiously; for he tries to destroy their heavenly faith (vs. 10) by stopping the sacrifices in the temple (11-12). Vs. 13 tells us that he will set up "the transgression of desolation" in the temple and defile the temple for 2300 days!

Who was this man? History names him: Antiochus Epiphanes (e-piff-a-nees), a wicked leader who came out of Syria, one of the four divisions of Alexander's empire. He invaded Palestine and set up a statue to Jupiter in the temple! He even went so far as to sacrifice a pig on the altar and sprinkle its blood around the courts! Imagine how the orthodox Jews felt about this! History tells us that the temple lay desolate until Dec. 25, 165 BC when the Jewish patriot, Judas Maccabeus, rededicated the temple and cleansed it; and the total number of days between desecration and dedication was 2300!

But this does not exhaust the visions' meaning. In vss. 17-26, the interpreting angel makes it clear that the vision reaches to the time of the end, the closing years of Jewish history. Antiochus Epiphanes is but an illustration, a foretaste, of the Man of Sin, the Anti-Christ, the "little horn" of 7:8. Vs. 23 calls him "a king of fierce countenance." This man will make an agreement to protect the Jews for seven years (9:27), but in the middle of this period he will break his promise, invade Palestine, and set himself up as world dictator. See vs. 24-25, II Thess. 2:1-12, Rev. 13. He will take away the daily sacrifices in the temple, set up his own image (this is "the abomination of desolation" of Mt. 24:15) and force the world to worship and obey him. Vs. 25 tells us he will use craft and lies to accomplish his purposes. He will even stand up against Christ, the Prince of Princes; but this will be a losing battle. He shall be broken "without hand" (see 2:34), defeated at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19). No wonder Daniel was overwhelmed! And so ought we to be as we consider the amazing prophecies of the Word of God.

TOPIC: "The Seventy Weeks" - Daniel 9-12

These closing chapters contain some of the most detailed prophecies in the Bible, and most of them have already been fulfilled. We want to focus our attention in ch. 9, because an understanding of "Daniel's 70 Weeks" is basic to Bible prophecy. This chapter deals with two different periods of time as related to the Jews.

I. SEVENTY YEARS OF CAPTIVITY - 9:1-19

1. The prophecy (1-2). Daniel was a great student of the OT Scriptures, particularly those prophecies that related to the destiny of his people. He was now nearly 90 years old. He was reading Jeremiah 25:1-14 and the Lord caused him to see that his people would be in Babylon for 70 years. Note that God does not give people "visions and dreams" when He can teach them through His Word. Today His Spirit teaches us through the Word; beware of "new revelations" that are supposed to come from dreams and visions. But this meant that the 70 years of captivity were about to close! Babylon invaded Palestine and began its seige in 606 BC, and Daniel understood the prophecies in the year 539-38 BC; so there were but two years left in the 70 years promised by Jeremiah! What an exciting time Daniel had in his Bible study that day!

2. The prayer (3-19). The Word of God and prayer always go together (Acts 6:4). Daniel did not go out and boast about his insight into the Word; in fact, he did not even preach a sermon. He went to his knees in prayer! This is the true attitude of the humble Bible student. It is sad to see "prophetic truth" making boasters out of men instead of prayer warriors. How strange it was for the people to see the Prime Minister wearing sackcloth. Daniel's prayer is one of the greatest examples of intercession in the Bible. He confesses his own sins and the sins of his people. He reviews Bible history and confesses that the nation has been wicked but God has been righteous to judge them. He knew the warnings Moses had given (ys. 13, see Lev. 26), and he knew that he and his people deserved far more than God had sent to them. It is wonderful to see Daniel identifying himself with his sinning nation, though he himself had not been guilty of these sins. After confessing his sins and the sins of the people, Daniel begins to pray for Jerusalem (vss. 16-19). No doubt he had often prayed for the Holy City; in fact, this is one reason why God blessed him and made him to prosper (Ps. 122:6-9). But why pray for the prosperity of a desolate city? Because God had promised, not only to end the captivity, but also to take the Jews back to their land that they might rebuild their temple! See Jer. 29:10-14 and 30:10-24. In Isa. 44:28, God promised that Cyrus would rebuild the city for Jerusalem! So, Daniel was laying hold of these great promises and turning them into believing prayers. What an example for us today! Now we will see how God answers his prayers.

II. SEVENTY WEEKS OF PROPHECY - 9:20-27

There was no evening sacrifice being offered in Jerusalem, but Daniel was offering himself in his prayers at the time of the evening offering (see Ps. 141:1-2), and the angel Gabriel came to give him his answer. Daniel was concerned about Jerusalem and the holy mountain (vs. 20). Would the city be restored? Would the temple be rebuilt? Would the nation ever be redeemed from sin and would righteousness ever dwell on the earth? Well, Gabriel had all the answers for Daniel, and we find them in the famous prophecy of the "70 weeks."

The number seven has been stamped on Israel from the beginning. They had a Sabbath of days (Ex. 23:12), setting apart the seventh day for honoring God. They also had a sabbath of years (Lev. 25:107); they were to let the land lie fallow on the seventh year and give it rest. Because they broke this law, they went into captivity, one year for each sabbatical year they failed to obey God (II Chr. 36:12; Lev. 26:33-34). They also had a "sabbath of sabbaths," with every 50th year set apart as the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-17). But now Daniel was to be introduced to a new series of Sabbath's - seventy "weeks" (seven-year periods) making a total of 490 years of prophetic time for the Jews. (The word "weeks" in vs. 24 is actually "sevens" - seventy sevens are determined, making 490 years.) Please note that this

490-year period of time has to do with Jerusalem and the Jews: "thy people...thy holy city..." (vs. 24). And God has specific purposes to fulfill in this period: the removing of sin and the bringing in of righteousness. The result will be the anointing of the most holy place in the temple, that is, the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to reign in glory from His temple in Jerusalem.

Now for the outline of the 490 years. Vs. 25 tells us that the event that will trigger the 490 years is a decree permitting the Jews to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. (It is interesting that the event that will trigger the last 7 years of this period will be the covenant of the Anti-Christ to protect the Jews. We find a decree at the beginning and the end of the 490 years.) History tells us there were four different decrees relating to Jerusalem: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes all made decrees concerning the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1, 6 and 7; and Artaxerxes decreed that Nehemiah could return to rebuild the city (Neh. 2). This was in 445 BC and it is the decree Dan. 9:25 is talking about; it took place nearly 100 years after Daniel received the message from God. Gabriel said that there would be "seven weeks and threescore and two weeks" ($69 \times 7 = 483$ years) between the giving of the decree and the arrival of Messiah, The Prince, in Jerusalem. Keep in mind that "prophetic years" in the Bible are not 365 days, but 360 days long. It has been calculated by scholars that there were exactly 483 prophetic years between the decree in 445 BC and the very day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday! (See The Coming Prince by Sir Robert Anderson.)

But Gabriel divided these 483 years into two parts - seven weeks ($7 \times 7 = 49$ years), and threescore and two weeks ($62 \times 7 = 434$ years). Why? Well, it took 49 years from the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem; and this was done (as Gabriel said) "in troublous times." Read Nehemiah and see how difficult a task it was to restore the city. Then, 434 years later we come to Messiah, the Prince, who is "cut off" (His death on the cross) for the sins of the world. It was His death on the cross that accomplished the purposes given in vs. 24. What followed His death? Did Israel accept Him and His message? No! They lied about Him, persecuted His messengers, stoned Stephen, and refused to acknowledge His Lordship. What happened? Rome came and destroyed the city and wrecked the temple. The nation "cut off" Jesus Christ, so He cut them off from being a nation! Until May 14, 1948, Israel was not a free nation.

Rome is called "the people of the prince that shall come." Who is this prince? Not "Messiah the Prince" because that refers to Christ. "The prince that shall come" is Anti-Christ! He will be the leader of the restored Roman Empire. So, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was but an illustration of a future invasion and destruction to be led by Anti-Christ. This prince will make an agreement with the Jews to protect them from the other nations, and this agreement will be set for seven years. This final seven years is the completion of Daniel's 490-year period. BUT NOTE: Between the death of Christ and the signing of this covenant you have the entire Age of the Church, a "great parenthesis" in God's program. The 490 years are in operation only when Israel is in God's will as God's people. When Israel crucified Christ, she was set aside and the "prophetic clock" stopped ticking. But when the church has been caught away to heaven and the Anti-Christ signs his pact with Israel, then the last seven years of Daniel's "70 weeks" will start being fulfilled. This seven-year period is known as the tribulation or the time of Jacob's trouble. It is described in Rev. 6-19.

After $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, Russia and her allies will invade Palestine (see Ezek. 38-39) and God will judge them. Anti-Christ will invade the land, break his covenant, and set himself up as world dictator. He will stop all worship at the Jewish temple (see II Thess. 2) and force the world to worship him and his image. This is the abomination of desolation (see Mt. 24:15, Jn. 5:43, Rev. 13). How will this period end? Jesus Christ will return to earth, meet the rebel armies at Armageddon, and defeat them (Rev. 19:11-21). Even so come quickly, Lord Jesus!