

The Book of Daniel

- I. Introduction to the Book
- II. Comment and Commentary on the Book.

Part One: The Life Ministry of Daniel (and friends) in Babylon (1:1-6:28)
Part Two: The Visions and Prophecies of Daniel in Exile (7:1-12:13)

Part Two Introduction

1. Chapters 1-6 were preparatory for what is found in 7-12. The previous chapters established the integrity of the exile, Daniel, in his walk with God and his elevation to political prestige personally in the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires. Most importantly, it established his authority to speak to issues of the future for the Jewish people, his people. If God revealed the secret dream of Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 2), the meaning of handwriting on a wall in Belshazzar's place (chap. 4) and delivered him from a den of lions (all through the power of Daniel's God), he possessed the ability to know future events if revealed by his God for His people.
2. In 1-6 the narrative is in the third person (he, they), but after 7:2 (except for 10:1), the text is delivered in the first person (I). This indicates that what is presented is that of the writer himself who received the visions.
3. Also, the cryptic visions of the first and second advent of the Promised One are presented. Further, greater details are added concerning the four successive kingdoms (chap. 2), particularly the fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire) that extends in gradually more corrupt forms until Messiah comes to end human history.
4. While the order of the two kingdoms in 1-6 were not presented in chronological fashion (Babylon, Medo-Persia), the order is in 7-12.
 - Chapter 7: Belshazzar's first year of reign
 - Chapter 8: Belshazzar's third year of reign
 - Chapter 9: Darius' first year of the reign over Medo-Persian
 - Chapter 10-12: Cyrus' third year of reign
5. While this section is apocalyptic (symbolic in form), the reader can expect a literal fulfillment since the predicted symbols in chapters 1-6 met with literal fulfillment (Medo-Persia conquering the Babylonian Empire, Nebuchadnezzar's mental disorder and recovery, Belshazzar's demise).

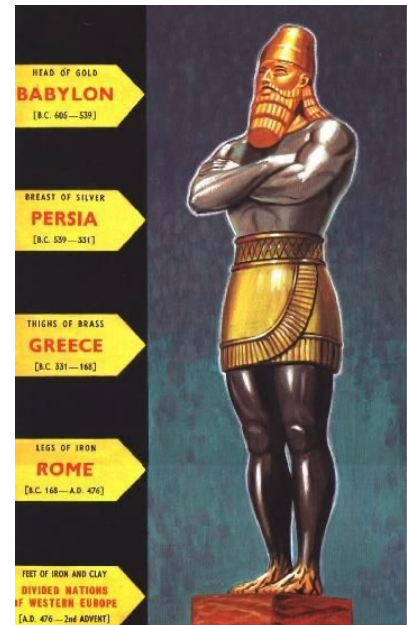
A. Daniel's Vision of four Successive Kingdoms, 7:1-28

1. The night dream/vision of Daniel, vv. 1-7
 - a. The context, vv. 1-3
 - In the year of Belshazzar's ascension as co-regent under his father (553), Nabonidas,

Daniel had a dream. Four beasts emerged from the sea, perhaps the Mediterranean, distinct from one another, and in succession. In v. 17 the beasts are said to come from the earth, so the reference to “sea” may be symbolic. The winds stirring the “sea” seem to suggest turbulence and chaos.

b. The vision of four animals, vv. 4-8

The four beasts should remind the reader of the vision in chapter 2 of a statue composed of four metals representing four successive empires, the later end of the fourth with feet of clay.



The four beasts are four kingdoms (v. 17).

- 1) A winged lion (Babylon), v. 4
- 2) A bear on its side with three ribs in its mouth (Medo-Persia), v. 5
- 3) A four-winged leopard with four heads (Greece), v. 6
- 4) A beast, horrible beyond description (Roman), v. 7-8

Of this last animal, Daniel was given further details.

The mighty, odious breast would have ten horns (the statue had ten toes [2:41]), ten often symbolic of the whole without a specific number (all of the nations at the time). Another horn, “a little horn,” which had eyes and a boastful spirit, destroys three of the beasts’ horns (three kingdoms will be conquered). “Horns” are often in apocalyptic literature symbolic of kings or nations.



2. The destruction of the final beast with coming of the kingdom of God, vv. 9-14

a. The vision of God as judge upon the throne, vv. 9-12

The vision of Daniel, God upon His throne, and a court room judgment scene seems to parallel John’s vision in Revelation 4. The scene is the end of time and the final judgment. The “Times of the Gentiles” will end with the coming of an eternal kingdom. God who grants power to the nations will also judge them at the end of time (Rev. 20:12).

- 1) The court room scene, vv. 9-10
 Depicted is the convening of a trial; the nations are about to be judged. Seated to commence His official duties is the "Ancient of Days." The description of Him is that of a robe of righteousness ("white as snow"); He will bring a just verdict ("fire" emanating from His throne). The reference to "wheels...all aflame" would remind the reader of Ezekiel 1. The court scene is in heaven and the judgment righteousness. The "books" suggest the evidence to be presented (Rev. 20:12) and the myriads of witnesses suggests God's redeemed, having once suffered, people.
 - 2) The destruction of the "Little Horn," v. 11
 This "horn" is the final manifestation of the Roman Empire. It will arise to supremacy lead by the anti-Christ (vv. 8, 20: the boastful horn)
 - 3) The continued influence of the three beasts, v. 12
 It is not that these empires continued to exist, but their cultural or social influence did and will. For example, Rome conquered Greece militarily in the second century, but Greek culture continued and dominated Roman culture. As in chapter 2, previous empires continued to exist as part of the statue until all four kingdoms came (or, will come) to an end.
- b. The vision of the Son of Man granted the right to reign forever, vv. 13-14
 Again, Daniel's insight seems to have been taken up by John in Revelation 5, the Father giving the Son of Man the promised kingdom.
- 1) The granting of the "true" kingdom to the Son, v. 13
 The kingdoms of man will succumb to the kingdom of God's Son. Coming in the "clouds" adds to the majestic appearance of our Lord.
 - 2) The reign of the Son over an eternal kingdom, v. 14
 The Son of Man is none other than the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, "I am [the Christ], and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62)."
3. The longing of Daniel to understand the vision, vv. 15-17
- a. The first inquiry, vv. 15-16a
 Daniel did not grasp the meaning of the vision so he, in his dream, made inquiry of an angel (perhaps Gabriel since he appears in 8:16, 9:21).
 - b. The disclosure, vv. 16b-18
 - 1) The beasts are four kings that will arise in time, vv. 16b-17
 Once again, the four beasts coincide with the four metals in the statue of chapter 2.
 - 2) The kingdom of the "Highest One" will never end for the saints, v. 18
 After the nations have run their course perished from the earth, a kingdom will arise that will be without end as the dwelling place of God's people (heaven).
4. Daniel's inquiry concerning the fourth beast, vv. 19-27
- a. The second inquiry, vv. 19-22
 The fourth beast, or empire, is described in much more detail (2:40-43, 7:7-8) than the other three. This beast troubled, puzzled Daniel particularly.
 - 1) The fourth beast, war with the saints, vv. 19-21
 This beast with iron claws seems more vicious and destructive than the others. The "horns," symbolic of strength, of the beast perplexed Daniel, particularly the one "Horn" that conquered three of the ten horns and persecute the saints of God (Rev. 13:7, John identified the personage as the anti-Christ).

- 2) The defeat of the fourth beast and the eternal kingdom, v. 22
The Ancient of Days will crush the "Little Horn" and the saints will inherit the kingdom, a kingdom without end.
- b. The disclosure, vv. 23-27
 - 1) The fourth beast, v. 23
The fourth beast to come out of the sea is the fourth kingdom of mankind. All opposition to his kingdom will be persecuted.
 - 2) The ten horns, v. 24a
The ten horns are ten kingdoms that will arise from the fourth beast and extends into the present and until his kingdom is brought to an end; the last kingdom will comprise a new phase and final expression of the Roman Empire.
 - 3) A final conquering "Little Horn," vv. 24b-26
In the Bible, this person is identified as "the man of lawlessness (II Thess. 2:3), the Anti-Christ (I John 2:18), and the Beast (Rev. 13:1). He will demand worship (as Nebuchadnezzar, chap. 2; Darius, chap. 6) and oppress the people of God. He will lead the nations (7 by submission, 3 by conquest). His viciousness will last for three and ½ years (the second half of the Great Tribulation).
 - 4) The arrival of the eternal kingdom, v. 27
The fourth period will end with the advent of the kingdom of God, brought in at the Second Coming of Christ, a kingdom without end.
 - 5) The aftermath, v. 28
Daniel awoke from his dream in a state of shock and horror, but kept the matter to himself.

Thoughts

1. God raises up nations, usually to exact His judgment on others. In the story of them from the prospective of the centuries, there an underlying drama of God's grace in gathering a people who will inhabit the kingdom consummated in the coming of the Son of Man. The world, as we know it, will end with the judgment of the nations and the "New Heavens and New Earth." We are people of hope with a bright future.
2. The story of mankind apart from the intervention of God through Christ, is not one of the improvements of humanity, but its continued degeneration (advances in technology has only revealed the depth of human depravity.) Jesus was not wrong when He said, "In this world you will have tribulation...." This is clearly not a world of peace, harmony, and righteousness. Yet, when the king comes with His kingdom, it will be! How does this insight shape the way you propose to live?
3. While there will be no kingdom of righteousness on the earth until the King brings it, you and I are called upon to be citizens that work and live for the good our nation. Though we live in an increasingly broken and decaying nation, we should long for righteousness to come in it. Our job in the jaded world is to bear witness that there is ground for hope, that social peace may be uncertain at best, there is a peace that "passes all understanding." Is there any justifiable reason that we should live a life of despondence and despair?
4. The story line of history is the faithfulness of God who works "all things according to the counsel of His pleasure." The world will not end in tragedy. After darkness will come light. The darkness, which seems so long to all of us, will end and the light will illuminate us forever, the light of the presence of God. Is that not thrilling?