

- 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)

- A. Daniel's Vision of Four successive kingdoms, 7:1-28
- B. Daniel's Vision of the Second and Third Kingdoms, 8:1-27
  - 1. The vision of second and third kingdoms, 8:1-14

The vision of chapter 2 spanned the entire period from the gathering of God's people to the regathering into God's eternal kingdom. The vision of chapter 7 focused up the fourth beast or empire, its divisions, weakness, and crushing. Chapter 8 narrows the focus to two beasts, the second and third.

- a. The context, vv. 1-2

This vision came to Daniel in the third year of Belshazzar's reign (550/549). The importance of the dream is seen in the details: Daniel was in Susa, a royal city in Elam, a province two hundred miles east of Babylon, which was on the Ulai Canal (River), a tributary to the Tigris River, likely on official duties (v. 27).

The reference to the vision "previously" is found in chapter 7, the only other vision experienced by Daniel recorded thus far in the book.

- b. The vision of the ram, vv. 3-4

The ram and goat visions depict two mighty nations, one pushing westward (v. 4) and the other eastward (v. 5). The ram had two horns with one stronger than the other. The two horns are the coalition of two peoples, the Medes and the Persians (depicted as silver in Nebuchadnezzar's statue in chap. 2; a bear in chap. 7). The stronger of the two horns finds its fulfillment in Cyrus, the Persian, who gained power over the Medes in 539.

- c. The conquest by the goat, vv. 5-7

Charging from the west the goat destroyed the Medes/Persian Empire. The goat is Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire (bronze in Nebuchadnezzar's vision and a leopard in chap. 7)). The Medo-Persian Empire was invaded and destroyed in a three-year campaign (336-334), a turning-point in world history. Alexander died in 323 in Babylon from either malaria or typhoid fever at the age of sixty-seven. His empire spread from Egypt to India.

- d. The demise of the goat, v. 8

At the apex of his power (323), Alexander died, and his empire divided to his four generals ("four conspicuous horns").



e) The division of the goat's empire, the four horns, vv. 9-14

(1) The rise of a "small horn," vv. 9-10

In terms of intertestamental history, two generals are crucial, each establishing dynasties: the Ptolemaic of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria and Persia. These two powers trampled over the Jews of the return and the Temple they built, as they were in constant conflict between them.



The Seleucids under Antiochus Epiphanies IV (175-164, "a small horn which grew exceedingly great...") attempted several times to add Egypt to his domain.

(2) The desecration of Israel's Temple, vv. 11-14

(1) The fact, vv. 11-12

In the Sixth Syro-Egyptian War (170), Antiochus Epiphanies IV nearly conquered Egypt taking Memphis, but the balance of power shifted once again in the East with the advance of the Romans from the west. Fearing this potent new powerful alliance, Antiochus decided to fortify the former Jewish state ("the beautiful land," the land of God's presence) as a buffer state and imposed a heavy Greek culture upon the Jews. He desecrated the Temple ("the abomination of desolation") precipitating the Maccabean Revolt (168) that led to the autonomy of Israel for some hundred years. This is the background of this part of Daniel's vision.



Antiochus, in his arrogance and pride, led to the desecration of the daily sacrifices in the Temple, replacing the worship of Israel's with Zeus.

(2) The length of times, vv. 13-14

Suddenly two angelic beings appeared, one asking of another the duration of the pollution of the Temple. The duration between the desecration of the Temple to its cleaning would be 2300 "evenings and mornings." Does it refer to literal days or the days of the pollution of sacrifices, called "the abomination that causes desolation (11:31).

The phrase, "evenings and mornings, may be a clue" since a Jewish day began with the evening sacrifice and ended with the morning sacrifice (Gen. 1:5, 8). This seems to fit the context and what we know from the Book of Maccabees that chronicles the era. This seems to fit the fact in that the Temple was desecrated by Antiochus who looted the Temple, murdered priests in 170, and set up an altar to Zeus 167. The altar



was cleansed, and Temple worship restored by Judas Maccabeus 14 December 164 (BC); the nation was reborn until the Roman shadow came over the land one hundred years later and it was destroyed a second time in 70 AD. The birth of the nation aligns with the restoration of worship, the true presence of God among His people. This happened once on 14 December 164 and will yet a second time when God's presence, the true temple, is among His people forever.

From this event came the Feast of Hanukkah, the feast of Dedication, or the Feast of Lights, lighting of the menorah with one day's supply that lasted eight days after the cleansing of the Temple by the Maccabees.

2. The interpretation of the vision, vv. 15-27
  - a. The inquiry of Daniel, v. 15-16

While perplexed and confused by what he saw an angel appeared to him described as having the appearance of a man. The "man" had discourse with Gabriel commanding him to explain the vision to Daniel. This would suggest that the "man" was a preincarnate appearance of the Son of Man since He has authority over an angel.
  - b. The appearance of Gabriel, vv. 17-19

Gabriel addresses Daniel as the "Son of man" and the evidence emerged in that he had to be awakened. The phrases "end of times" and the "final period of indignation" applies and interprets the detail of the final kingdom of the fourth Beast, the duration of the "times of the Gentile," pagan persecution of God's people, the period from the destruction of the first temple, the symbolic presence of God by the Babylonians (586) to its final and eternal appearance in the eternal triumph of God, the true Temple, which is yet future.
  - c. The meaning of the ram vision, v. 20

The symbol is simply stated without elaboration; it is Medo-Persian Empire (see vv. 3-4).
  - d. The meaning of the goat vision, vv. 21-26
    - 1) Stated, v. 21

The shaggy goat is the period of Greek dominance beginning with Alexander the Great (see vv. 5-7).
    - 2) The broken-into-four horns, v. 22

The broken horn into four indicates the division of Alexander's Empire to his four generals (see, v. 8).
    - 3) The rise of a "small horn" from one of the four horns, vv. 23-26

The focus of the vision is revealed by the angel. This "little horn" is the fourth beast in Daniel's statue (2:42-43). The ten toes of iron mixed with clay are a ten-nation confederation to come under the auspices of a single world despot, only to be destroyed when the Son of Man comes, the true Adam, Jesus Christ, in power. Here the "little horn" from the four horns would correspond with the "ten toes," nations at the end of time (The four-metaled statue parallels the four beasts here).

      - a) His destructive power, vv. 23-24

"...in the latter period" the feet and toes of Daniel's statue, the feet and toes, the last manifestation of the fourth beast (7:7), a "small horn" will arise (7:8) to gather the nations of the world to himself as a single potentate, the anti-Christ.
      - b) His ascendancy and demise, v. 25

Though enormously destructive, he will oppose, the "Prince of peace," only to be destroyed, "broken without human agency." It's place will be an eternal kingdom; the "stone cut without hands" "...will crush and put to an end all these kingdoms (2:44-45)."

- c) The instruction of Gabriel, v. 26  
Daniel is told that the vision of future days is true (see also 2:45) where the vision of the statue ends with similar words (“...this is true and the interpretation is trustworthy...”). Further, he is told not to reveal the events of the last of the last days. This seems validated by the reference to “evenings and mornings” meaning a series of days when sacrilege through the mandated worship of the beast, the anti-Christ (depicted as a beast, a dragon) and his false prophet [Rev. 13] during the Great Tribulation at the ending of time.
- d. Daniel’s exhaustion and confusion, v. 27  
It is little wonder that Daniel is weary, shocked, and unable to work for some time; yet he just could not understand the vision (see 7:28, 12:9-11).

#### Thoughts:

1. As I read through Daniel, I am struck by the majesty and greatness of God. He controls the nations setting the time of their risings and the moment of their decline. History will not end with a giant despotic mastermind, infused with evil intent; it will culminate in a world of peace, joy, and love we can only contemplate in our fantasizes because there is nothing to compare it to since, at best, all we experience is momentary, passing shadows of a sense of it.
2. This chapter tells us much. In the beginning of the Bible, you have a lush, green garden and a couple; the Bible ends much same with a new paradise with God reigning and His people worshipping Him forever (a new habitant). Between, you have empires emerging, conflict, and each successive kingdom expressing hostility to the people of God. We today are that people; we are living in the time of the statues’ toes. Yet, there is not a global power. You and I should be aware that adversity, sorrow, and loss has been and will be until the Satan-inspired geopolitical tyrant comes with awful destruction for us and is destroyed. Does this provide for each of us insight into how we are to live today, what our priorities should be?
3. The comfort in our passage to me is this: though troubles arise, you and I have a brilliant future. Until we arrive and dwell in the final kingdom, you and I have the assurance that we will arrive there, because of the one who is there, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are only frightened by the evening “news” if we take our eyes off Jesus. This is a wonderful world, not like the one that will be, but we have a divine calling to be here to show forth the beauty and glory of God through our choices. We will be safe in the interim until our task is accomplished through His grace and power.
4. The purpose of God in revealing the future should not allow us to squabble and fracture over the meaning and chronology of details; it is to give us courage to press forward in the proclamation of His character and accomplishments. We should not look upon eschatology as a tool to give us hope that we will avoid the pain and loss that many who have gone before us have experienced (I call that using our faith as an escapist tool from the harsh realities of life). He gave us these things to fill us with hope in His person and promises of a great day to come. “Shall I be carried through the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas,” states an old hymn.