

Chapter Three

The Seventieth Week

The next order of business in this study is to establish a basic timeline, or series of events, that must occur before God creates the “new heavens and the new earth” (Isa. 65:17, 2 Pet. 3:13). I do not intend to “set dates.” The Bible does not give us clear dates for specific events, nor secret codes and formulas to decipher such dates. On the other hand, the Bible is quite precise about the order of events that will occur surrounding the instantaneous transformation and the Resurrection. That is what we are seeking to establish.

Both the Old and New Testaments include futuristic prophecy. Many of the events that unfold in the New Testament are identified as fulfillments of specific Old Testament promises. But, there are some passages of the Old Testament that encompass the time span of the New Testament and continue out into our own future. The prophetic book of Daniel is just such an instance.

Daniel’s uncanny knack for accurately foretelling his people’s history in advance has led many of the “higher critics” who refuse the possibility of miraculous intervention to claim that the book is a late-dated forgery. That would explain how Daniel could appear to be intimately acquainted with the details and movement of people long before they occurred. The defenders and critics of Daniel fall into two basic camps:

- 1) The defenders are those who believe that Daniel is the genuine article, written during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and Cyrus, the king of the Medes and Persians, around 600 BC.
- 2) The opponents or critics are those who believe that the name Daniel is a pseudonym for the actual author who wrote it during the onslaught against Jerusalem during the time of the Maccabees and Antiochus Epiphanes, around 167 BC.

Representative of the latter position, called the Liberal or Critical View, is the introduction to the book of Daniel in The New American Bible, translated by the members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, sponsored by the Bishops’ Committee, including “helps for Bible reading” from the Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation, “How to Read the Bible.”

This Book takes its name, not from the author, who is actually unknown, but from its hero, a young Jew taken early to Babylon,

where he lived at least until 538 BC. Strictly speaking, the book does not belong to the prophetic writings but rather to a distinctive type of literature known as “apocalyptic,” of which it is an early specimen. Apocalyptic writing enjoyed its greatest popularity from 200 BC to 100 AD, a time of distress and persecution for Jews, and later, for Christians. Though subsequent in time to the prophetic, apocalyptic literature has its roots in the teaching of the prophets, who often pointed ahead to the day of the Lord, the consummation of history. For both prophet and apocalyptists Yahweh was the Lord of history, and he would ultimately vindicate his people.

This work was composed during the bitter persecution carried on by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (167-164 BC) and was written to strengthen and comfort the Jewish people in their ordeal.

The Book contains stories originating in and transmitted by popular traditions, which tell of the trials and triumphs of the wise Daniel and his three companions. The moral is that men of faith can resist temptation and conquer adversity. The characters are not purely legendary but rest on older historical tradition. What is more important than the question of historicity, and closer to the intention of the author, is the fact that a persecuted Jew of the second Century BC would quickly see the application of these stories to his own plight.¹

So, the official position of the Catholic Church, where Daniel is concerned, is that the book was not written in order to foretell future events, culminating in Christ's Kingdom, but rather to encourage persecuted Jews 160 years before the birth of Christ. It does seem a bit presumptuous of the Catholic commentators to announce the “intention of the author” when they admit that they do not know whom the author was. And, of course, they sidestep the question of genuine historicity in favor of a simple explanation.

On the other side of the debate we find conservative scholars such as Sir Robert Anderson, whose book *Daniel in the Critics Den* was a watershed work in the late 19th Century. In his book, Sir Robert answers the objections of the critics point by point and makes a compelling argument for the historicity and validity of Daniel as an ancient text.

More recently, in the 1950's, archeology began to produce objects that confirmed Daniel's historic accuracy. For years it was believed that Daniel's use of names of particular monarchs was suspect. History, for instance, had little record of “Belshazzar, King of Babylon.” But, the recent discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder and the Chronicle of Nabonidus confirmed Daniel's historic veracity. On the Cylinder, Balshazzar is identified by Nabonidus as “Belshazzar, my firstborn son, my own child.”

The Chronicle of Nabonidus recounts the rise of Cyrus, the Persian ruler and the erratic behavior of the Babylonian king, Nabonidus. He had left Babylon to spend several years in the oasis Temâ in Arabia. His son, Bêlsharusur, (Daniels' Belshazzar), acted as regent but was unable to ward off the approaching Persian danger. So, archeological evidence continues to support Daniel against his critics.

As well, from 1947 to 1956, the Dead Sea Scrolls were unearthed from caves near the ancient ruins of Qumran. Included among the scrolls were copies of every Old Testament book except the Book of Esther. In fact, the Isaiah Scroll, found relatively intact, is 1000 years older than any previously known copy of Isaiah. The scrolls constitute the oldest group of Old Testament manuscripts ever found. And, they contain an extensive collection of manuscripts of the biblical book of Daniel, along discussions and references to his work in other works. Eight separate copies of Daniel were found, more than any other single manuscript.

It is believed that the Dead Sea scrolls were hidden around the time of the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70) as the Roman army advanced against the rebel Jews. Given their proximity to the ruins of Qumran, the scrolls were most likely written by the Essenes, who the Jewish historian Josephus dates to a period from about 200 BC to 68 AD, encompassing the time of the Maccabees and the time of Christ.

Now, if the book of Daniel had indeed been a forgery, written by one of their contemporaries, the Essenes, a fundamentalist religious sect, would not have held the book in such high esteem and put it alongside the ancient books of Isaiah and Ezekiel. But, even more telling is the attitude of Essenes in their writing concerning Daniel. Daniel 12:10 is quoted in the Florilegium (4Q174). A florilegium is an encyclopedic collection of quotes and selections from particular works. In it, we read that the Daniel pericope is in "the book of Daniel, the Prophet." They would not have considered a contemporary forgery as the product of "the prophet."

Meanwhile, the Gospel of Luke quotes almost verbatim from the apocalypse of Daniel, found in Cave 4, which refers to an eschatological king, the royal Messiah, with titles like "Son of God" and "Son of the Most High." And, it is exactly that fact, Jesus' own use of the book of Daniel, which gives it so much genuine credibility. For instance, the primary passage behind Jesus' application of the term "Son of Man" to Himself is Daniel 7:13-14 --

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of
Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every*

language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

By the way, this passage from Daniel (7:13-14) concerns the future return of Christ to set up an everlasting kingdom that will not pass away as each of the former kingdoms have. It is interesting to note that Christ is here described as coming with the clouds of Heaven, consistent with Paul's descriptions.

Giving additional and substantial weight to the veracity of the book of Daniel is the fact that every chapter of Daniel is either quoted or alluded to in the book of Revelation. In fact, only two chapters of Revelation are without some background in Daniel. As well, the word "Messiah," one of the most powerful nomenclatures in Hebrew history, designating the great Deliverer of Israel, is only found twice in the Old Testament. Both occurrences are in the book of Daniel (Dan. 9:25-26). If it were in fact a second century forgery, it would not have influenced the mindset of Jewish thought to the degree that it has.

Jesus Himself referenced the book of Daniel, calling him a prophet, giving these prophecies great validity and reducing to infinitesimal the possibility of forgery.

"Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains." (Mat. 24:15-16)

As, John F. Walvoord argues:

Except for the attack of the pagan Porphyry (third century AD), no question was raised concerning the traditional sixth century BC date, the authorship of Daniel the prophet, or the genuineness of the book until the rise of higher criticism in the seventeenth century, more than two thousand years after the book was written. Important confirmation of the historicity of Daniel himself is found in three passages in Ezekiel (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3), written after Daniel had assumed an important post in the king's court at Babylon. Convincing also to conservative scholars is the reference to "Daniel the prophet" by Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Mat. 24:15, Mk. 13:14)²

Despite the debate, the book of Daniel has historic, internal, archeological and Scriptural evidence of its historic origins and validity as genuine prophecy. And, we will treat it as exactly that.

The 70 Weeks

As a child, Daniel was included in the first deportation of Israelites to Babylon in 606 BC. He was trained to serve in the Babylonian court and, on account of his gift of dream interpretation, came into favor with King Nebuchadnezzar. During the exile, Daniel apparently had access to some sacred Hebrew Scriptures and as an old man he read the prophecies of Jeremiah. Jeremiah prophesied that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years, which Daniel reckoned to be nearly over.

“This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,” declares the LORD, “for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.” (Jer. 25:11-12)

For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.” (Jer. 29:10-11)

Daniel began to pray and fast, wearing sackcloth and ashes, admitting Israel's sin in turning from God. He pled with God to keep His word and, for His own sake, return His favor to Jerusalem. While Daniel was speaking, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and announced that he had been sent to give Daniel “skill and understanding.” Daniel was told --

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*. So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing ...” (Dan. 9:24-26a)

Let's view the highlights of this passage before we wrestle with the details. The whole of it strictly concerns the Jews and Jerusalem - “your people and your holy city.” And, inasmuch as the prophecy of Jeremiah, which Daniel was contemplating in his prayer, was about 70 years, most all writers and scholars agree that Daniel's reference to “weeks” concerns “weeks of years.”

The English word “weeks” is actually misleading, inasmuch as the Hebrew word *shabua'* is the plural form of the word “seven” without designating days, weeks, months or years. Gabriel's prophecy concerned seventy “sevens” that would directly affect Daniel's people and city. However, 490 days would hardly be

sufficient to accomplish the several things mentioned in the prophecy and there is no historic record of a period of 490 weeks or months that satisfy the requirements of these events. Consequently, it is most commonly assumed – rightly, I think – that Gabriel spoke of 490 years, each group of seven representing seven years, or seven times seventy, in parallel with Jeremiah’s prophecy of seventy years.

Taking the language of this passage at face value we can conclude that sixty-nine of these “sevens” elapsed between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the ministry of Messiah the Prince, which is obviously a reference to Christ. The specific point of termination is when Messiah will be “cut off, but not for Himself” (KJV) or “cut off and have nothing” (NASB). The most natural understanding of this phrase refers to the vicarious crucifixion of our Lord who, though He was personally innocent of any sin, died to pay the redemption price for the sins of His Church.

In the late 1800’s, Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) wrote two books - *Daniel In The Critics Den*³ and *The Coming Prince*⁴ - in which he expounded a fairly complex arithmetic formula that accounts for the first 69 weeks of years by converting them into 360-day years, supported by Revelation’s numbering of 1,260 days in Rev. 12:6; “a time, times and half a time” reckoned to be 3 ½ years in 12:14; and 42 months in 13:5. According to Anderson, the starting point is the decree of Artaxerxes given to Nehemiah on March 14, 445 BC, as recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8. By his calculations, the 69 weeks end exactly on the day of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem April 6, 32 AD, just prior to His passion. Sir Robert explains his calculations thusly:

The 1st Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (the edict to rebuild Jerusalem) was 14th March, BC 445. The 10th Nisan in Passion Week (Christ’s entry into Jerusalem) was 6th April AD 32. The intervening period was 476 years and 24 days (the days being reckoned inclusively, as required by the language of the prophecy, and in accordance with the Jewish practice).

But, $476 \times 365 = 173,740$ days

Add (14th March to 6th April, both inclusive) 24 days

Add for leap years 116 days

The total is: 173,880 days

And 69 weeks of prophetic years of 360 days (or $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$).

It may be well to offer here two explanatory remarks. First: in reckoning years from BC to AD, one year must always be omitted; for it is obvious that from BC 1 to AD 1 was not two years, but one year. BC 1 ought to be described as BC 0, and it is so reckoned by astronomers, who would describe the historical date BC 445, as 444. And, secondly, the Julian year is 11m. 10'46s, or about the 129th part of a day, longer than the mean solar year. The Julian calendar, therefore, contains three leap years too many in four centuries, an error which had amounted to eleven days in AD 1752, when our English Calendar was corrected by declaring the 3rd September to be the 14th September, and by introducing the Gregorian reform which reckons three secular years out of four as common years; 1700, 1800, 1900 are common years, and 2000 is a leap year.”⁵

This explanation is very attractive and has been most recently promoted by John F. Walvoord, past chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary in his book *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*.⁶

However, there are alternate interpretations. For instance, Fred Zaspel, in his booklet *Daniel's 70 Weeks*⁷ argues that the initial “issuing of a word” to rebuild Jerusalem occurred in 587 BC when God promised Jeremiah that Israel would be re-inhabited. 49 years later (using a 365 day calendar), Cyrus decreed an end to Jewish captivity in 538 BC.

Cyrus, then, would be the “anointed one, a prince” (rendered “messiah, the prince” in KJV) in Daniel 9:25. After that would be a gap of time, denoted by Daniel’s separation of the 69 weeks of years into 7 and then “three score and two”, or 62. The last 62 weeks would begin at 440 BC when Nehemiah began building the streets and moat of Jerusalem in times of distress and would end 434 years later at 6 BC, just prior to Christ’s birth.

A version of this interpretation was also published extensively by one of the “higher critics” of Daniel, Professor S.R. Driver, Regius Professor of Hebrew in Cambridge, against whom Sir Robert Anderson was writing.⁸

But, to simplify my point, regardless of the specific events one uses as the historic landmarks to fulfill the details, all but one “week of years” is accounted for at the time of Christ’s death. Most every scholarly interpreter who finds a Christological reference in these verses agrees with this conclusion (although some Amillennial and Preterist writers claim that the 70th week encompasses Calvary and the Passion week). Nonetheless, Jesus declared that the conclusion of Daniel’s prophecy was yet future to His own ministry (Mat. 24:15).

Now, let’s look at the details of Daniel’s vision. Gabriel listed six things that must be accomplished during these 70 x 7 years:

- 1) To finish the transgression
- 2) To make an end of sin
- 3) To make reconciliation or atonement for iniquity
- 4) To bring in everlasting righteousness
- 5) To seal up the vision and prophecy
- 6) To anoint the Most Holy (place)

While a variety of interpretations have been applied to each of these phrases, our primary concern with them is how they affect our understanding of the chronological sequence of the 490 years. The 70 weeks cannot be over until all six of these things have actually been accomplished.

For a fuller exposition of this section I am going to defer to Fred Zaspel's research and lift verbatim from his book *Daniel's Seventy Weeks*.

1) *lekale'*, translated "bring to an end" (*piel* from *Kalah*) speaks of "ending", "finishing" or "firmly restraining." Precisely what is "firmly restrained" is *Happesha'* (transgression), probably to be understood as rebellion, waywardness, that principle of evil within man.

2) The precise reading of the second infinitive is questionable. The *Kethib* reading signifies "to seal up sin" (*ulechatem chatta'ot*). The *Qere* points instead to the verb root *tammam*, "to complete, make an end" (hence, KJV, NASB). The "sins" (*chatta'ot*) spoken of here refer to men's personal, daily sins - their activities of sin. In either case, as Young says, "The thought is that an end will be made of sin as such."

3) "To make atonement for guilt," (*Ulekapher 'awon*) promises the expiation of sinfulness.

All of the first three objectives are, in effect, negative -- they speak of the removal of sin and guilt, that which was the cause of Israel's captivity. Together they promise not only atonement, but the actual cessation of sin itself. Sin itself (as an inward principle and as a practice) will be ended, and those sins previously committed will be pardoned. The seventy weeks will see the complete removal of the sin of Daniel's people forever. By contrast, the last three purposes are more positive, speaking of blessings given.

4) "To bring in everlasting righteousness" (*ulehabi' tsedek 'olamim*) signifies the opposite of what has gone before. Just as God will remove Israel's sin, so also He will "cause to come in" (*hiphil*) a righteousness that will endure forever.

5) “To seal the vision and the prophet” (*ulechatem chazon wenabi*) signifies the final fulfillment of prophetic revelation. The time specified will see the perfect completion of all the visions and words of the prophets.

6) “To anoint a holy of holies” (*welimeschoach qodesh qadashim*) clearly speaks of a ritual consecration of the Jewish temple.

Summary: In summary, the seventy weeks will see the complete removal of Israel’s sins forever, the establishment of everlasting righteousness, the final fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy and the consecration of the temple. All this helps to establish the time frame of the prophecy as well. Clearly it involves the earthly life and ministry of Jesus; His sacrificial work is the atonement being spoken of (#3). But He has not yet “put an end” to the sins of Israel (#1,2). He has in principle, to be sure, but not in actuality; the sins continue today. Nor have the many prophecies of the Old Testament been fulfilled (#5). Nor has the holy of holies been “anointed” (#6). These words seem to suggest a yet future fulfillment.”⁹

I so appreciate Fred’s scholarship in approaching these phrases and I seek to glean only one concept from this passage of his book: The 70 weeks cannot yet be completed. Zaspel’s conclusion is, “These words seem to suggest a yet future fulfillment.” Daniel’s 70th week remains a future event. The necessary details and consequences of fulfillment simply have not yet occurred.

Now let’s look at Daniel’s description of the events contained in the last, the 70th week, of years -

... and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." (Dan. 9:26b-27)

This is the point where controversy rages. It is popular to misread this short passage and fall for the attractive notion that it is Jesus who “shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” Certainly, in His death and the institution of the New Covenant in His blood, the requirements of the Law of Moses were superseded, nailed to His cross and taken out of the way (Col. 2:14). But, this fact has led to the idea that the whole Hebrew religion lost all credibility and was essentially stopped in its tracks when Christ died. That is historically inaccurate. Temple worship continued for many more years, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

So, to whom is this referring? The “he” that causes the sacrifice and oblation to cease refers back to “the prince who is to come.” Chronologically, it is obvious that this prince appears after the death of Christ. This “prince who is to come” is not a reference to Christ (Messiah the Prince). The actions and activities of the people who follow this prince should be adequate proof that they are not Christians, but followers of an enemy of God. They shall destroy the city (Jerusalem) and the temple. The final end of this prince’s reign will be swift. Further, God foreordained desolation upon Israel and the followers of this prince.

Notice particularly that this prince will “confirm the covenant with many for one week” (KJV) or “make a firm covenant with the many for one week” (NASB). There is our remaining 70th week! The most natural understanding of the phrase “he will make (or confirm) a firm covenant” is that he will re-establish the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple – the benchmark that began the 70 weeks. But, in the middle of the week, 3½ years into it, he will renege on his deal, causing the Jewish temple worship to cease. Then he will make the temple, and even Jerusalem, desolate places until his own decreed destruction.

Simply put, there is not event in history that adequately fulfills the details of Daniel’s prophecy. And, inasmuch as the six things that must occur during the 70 weeks have yet to reach their culmination, we cannot help but conclude that what Daniel predicted is yet future to us. But, we do not have to rest on this short passage to draw our conclusions. Daniel supplied us with a tremendous amount of detail concerning this final week and the “prince who is to come.”

Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

In Daniel Chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar dreamt a horrible dream. He was unable to sleep he was so troubled by it. And, to make matters worse, the king forgot what the dream was. So, he gathered all his magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and sorcerers and demanded that they tell him the dream and the interpretation under threat of being cut into pieces and their houses made into dunghills. Of course, they tried to convince the king that if he would just divulge the content of the dream they would be more than willing to offer an interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar knew they were just buying time and concluded that the only way he would know for sure that their interpretation was true would be for them to first supply him with the actual dream. Naturally, the Chaldeans begged the king to reconsider.

The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has *ever* asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with *mortal* flesh." (Dan. 2:10-11)

Rather than see the logic of their plea, the king became furious and commanded the destruction of all the “wise men” of Babylon. Fortunately, when Daniel became aware of the decree - he himself being subject to it - he sent word to the king via Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard. He asked the king not to be so hasty, give him a bit of time, and he would supply the king with the interpretation. Daniel went to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (known more commonly by their Chaldean names - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) and they prayed together that God would reveal the secret and save their lives. God responded and Daniel got the whole dream in a vision, which he promptly took to Nebuchadnezzar.

In verse 29 Daniel - called by his Chaldean name, Belteshazzar - told the king that the thoughts in his mind were revelations of what would come to pass hereafter, future to the kingdom of Babylon.

"You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. “ (Dan. 2:31-35)

Fortunately, we - along with the king - were given the interpretation as well.

"This *was* the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, *or* the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given *them* into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.” (Dan. 2:26-28)

In the king’s vision of an enormous man-like image or statue, the golden head signified Nebuchadnezzar himself. That laid the groundwork for what was to come. The parts of the image each signified an earthly kingdom or empire. And, they were going to run chronologically after Babylon.

“After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.” (Dan. 2:39)

Daniel later identified the first of these successors, the silver breast and arms, as the Medo-Persian Empire (Dan. 5:28). This is a perfect depiction. The Persians and Medes were united around their two primary rulers, Cyrus and Darius, respectively. Hence, the two arms united around the chest. The word translated "inferior" is the Hebrew "Ara" which occurs 21 times in the OT and all but two are in the book of Daniel. It literally means, "earth, world, or ground." The inference here is that the succeeding kingdoms would not have the heavenly connection that Nebuchadnezzar enjoyed, but would be rooted in the earth and successively more Godless.

The third kingdom, the belly and thighs of bronze, which overcame the Medo-Persian Empire, was the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great. Again, Daniel tells us as much in 8:21 and 10:20. Daniel's interpretation continued --

"Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces." (Dan. 2:40)

This vision is astounding in its accuracy. History recounts that Alexander the Great died in his early thirties in the moats outside of Babylon. His kingdom was divided up to four of his generals. Two of their territories (Egypt and Syria) engaged in constant warfare and in that state of inner conflict the remnants of the Grecian Empire were crushed (along with nearly every other kingdom) by the Roman Empire. The history of Rome revels in its power to not only defeat, but also crush and reduce to rubble every one of its enemies. The Roman legions were infamous for their ability to demolish resistance with an iron heel. It was during the Roman occupation of Israel that Jesus appeared on the scene of history. But, Daniel's kingdoms did not end at Rome. He envisioned yet another.

"In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. *As* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of pottery, *so* some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery." (Dan. 2:41-43)

The Roman Empire was divided, the Western Empire having its capital at Rome and the Eastern Empire setting up its capital at Constantinople. The Western Empire lasted only a few hundred years, but the Eastern Empire continued until AD 1453. With the historic end of Rome we come to the end of the kingdom of iron and the eventual inception of a kingdom of iron and clay. Interpreters are in far less agreement concerning this kingdom, primarily because they do not have a historic model to apply it to. But, the details are intriguing.

The toes figure prominently and everyone knows that normal feet have ten toes. That number ten is closely connected to every Biblical reference to this kingdom. While this kingdom will have some of the strength demonstrated by Rome, it will not be unified. Apparently, a multiplicity of people will interact as part of this rulership, but they will not “adhere,” stick together, or be particularly loyal to one another.

This is a future kingdom. I state that emphatically. It cannot be historically located between the fall of Rome and the present day. But, regardless of personal opinion or any individual interpreter’s pet theories, Daniel will convince us of this fact --

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy." (Dan. 2:44-45)

In the days of this loose confederacy of ten kings that make up the last kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s image, God will set up a kingdom. It will not be left to succeeding generations to conquer or rule. Instead, it will smash and swallow up all the previous kingdoms of the earth and it will remain forever. The stone that was cut out without hands is certainly a reference to Christ. Jesus used such “stone” analogies when describing His ministry, its rejection and the ultimate judgment.

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." (Mat. 21:42-44)

The most cursory reading of this passage from Daniel is enough to convince us that this kingdom has not appeared on the stage of world history because its inception occurs when Christ descends to Earth to establish His kingdom. That has not happened. Hence, this last kingdom cannot be historic and must be yet future.

An interpretive consideration: The kingdoms represented in Daniel’s vision were all actual, physical, historic kingdoms which (though they were future to Daniel) are verifiable stages of past world history. Some writers attempt to find

the fulfillment of Daniel's final kingdom in some ancient European confederacy. They argue that the obviously Christological references found in connection with the final kingdom are strictly spiritual events, not to be expected in the physical realm, and are concluded in Christ's passion and resurrection, thereby ushering in His spiritual kingdom "which shall never be destroyed."

A version of this interpretation is common among Amillennial interpreters (we will get to the differing millennial views in a later chapter). However, this view requires us to embrace a logical non sequitur. Nowhere in Daniel's language is there the Biblical impetus or exegetical imperative to impose the sudden, inexplicable leap from chronological earthly kingdoms and human rulership to a heavenly kingdom and a timeless spiritual fulfillment. So, I argue in favor of a literal, physical return of Christ to set up a literal kingdom on Earth, superseding the previous earthly kingdoms.

Okay, back to the text: The Bible recounts six historic kingdoms that have ruled over God's chosen people, Israel –

(1) Egypt (2) Assyria (3) Babylon (4) Medo-Persia (5) Greece (6) Rome

But, Daniel introduced us to a seventh kingdom, which also appears in the book of Revelation. It has yet to occur in the course of human events. But, just as Daniel was 100% accurate about the preceding kingdoms, we can be assured that "the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

The Beasts of Daniel 7

Now let's take a look at the four beasts that appear in Daniel Chapter 7 and recognize the parallels with Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This vision occurred around 553 BC, fourteen years before the fall of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC and Nabonidus became king. He appointed Belshazzar as his coregent while he conducted military maneuvers in Arabia. Daniel recounts -

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind *as he lay* on his bed; then he wrote the dream down *and* related the *following* summary of it.

Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. The first *was* like a lion and had *the* wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs *were* in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' After this I kept looking, and behold, another

one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great *boasts*.

I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, its wheels *were* a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, and the books were opened. Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” (Dan. 7:1-14)

Again, rather than leave us to our own speculation, Daniel was given the interpretation of the vision, running remarkably concurrent to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream --

"As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 'These great beasts, which are four *in number*, are four kings *who* will arise from the earth. But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'" (Dan. 7:15-18)

Daniel was given an overview of the whole scene by “one of those that were standing by,” generally accepted to be an angel. Each of the beasts signifies a

particular king who ruled over historic kingdoms. The images are exacting in their choice of creatures and descriptive detail.

There has been some confusion concerning which king the first beast, the lion with eagle's wings, represented. Since Nebuchadnezzar had died prior to the inception of this vision, critics have debated the exact personage to fulfill the image since the text reads "four kings *who* will arise from the earth." The English phrase appears to imply kings that had yet to arise. But, the more accurate rendering of that phrase is "which shall be destroyed from out of the earth." The rising referenced here is a rising to leave, not a rising to begin something. So, the generally accepted substance to this vision is that the lion is the great king of Babylon.

The vision very purposefully plucked the wings from this lion and stood him on his feet, giving him a man's heart, marking these beasts not as kingdoms, generally - but as men, specifically. The plucking off of the lion's wings may also be an allusion to Nebuchadnezzar's experience of madness in Chapter 4, when he was humbled before God, proving that he was just a man and that the God of Heaven ruled over all the kingdoms of the earth. The lion is a common representation of royal power. Solomon, for instance, had twelve lions on either side of the steps leading up to his throne (1Kings 10:20). Winged lions guarded the gates of the royal palaces of the Babylonians. Daniel would have been very familiar with these "Griffins" and would have little trouble identifying them with the Babylonian Empire.

The second beast, the bear, is certainly the Medo-Persian kingdom and its two kings, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great. The Persian side of this delicately balanced rulership was always superior, so the bear was lifted up higher on one side. A bear is a large, ferocious creature, but it is not as quick or as stately as the lion. Just as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the kingdom that followed his would be inferior. In Daniel 8:20, the Medo-Persian Empire was named specifically and likened to a ram with two horns, but the horn that came up last was greater and stronger. That is historically accurate, as the superior Persian army swept into Babylon, absorbing the Medes into their dynasty. And, just as there were three great, decisive battles that brought the Medo-Persian kingdom into dominance, the bear has three bones in his mouth. It arose and devoured much flesh.

The third beast, the leopard with four wings and four heads, found its fulfillment in Alexander the Great who, starting in 336 BC, swept from Macedonia to Africa and eastward to India with a power and quickness that was unprecedented in the ancient world. The leopard is less grand than the lion, but it is swifter, more cunning, and was feared as an animal of prey in Old Testament times. After Alexander's death, his kingdom was divided up to his four generals - Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip and Antigonus, fulfilling the image of the four heads.

But, it is the fourth beast that drew Daniel's attention. It is often called the "non-descript" beast since no specific animal is assigned to it. Unquestionably, the description as "dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; ... It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet" equate this beast with the Roman Empire that began with the occupation of Sicily in 241 BC, conquering Spain, Carthage, Macedonia, Greece and Asia Minor. The Roman General Pompey swept into Jerusalem in 63 BC. In the following decades, Rome extended control to Southern Britain, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany west of the Rhine River. It grew gradually for four centuries, reaching its zenith in 117 AD.

The Roman Empire began its slow decline when Rome was sacked in 410 by the Visigoths and in 1453 when Mohammed II conquered Constantinople. It remains the largest, longest-standing and, some would say, greatest empire in human history.

But, then the vision identified this beast as "different from all the beasts that were before it." The difference was found in its "ten horns." Though it seemed to be part of the Roman beast, the description and the interpretation took a sudden leap forward in time. Just as the legs of iron were intermingled with the feet and toes of iron and clay, the nondescript beast had its beginnings in Rome, but its culmination could only be understood as future.

In verse 20 we read of the ten horns (which are identified as ten kings in v.24), and then another horn before which three of the other horns are subdued. That horn was said to have eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. Daniel said that the "little horn" will speak words against the Most High and will wear out the Jewish saints whose lives were separated to serve God. He will think to change the times and the laws, the Jewish customs and religion.

Now, get this - he will prevail against the saints for a specific length of time -

"He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time."
(Dan. 7:25)

This "little horn" will dominate the Jewish people for a time (one) and times (two) and half a time. That's 3½ units of time, or half of 7. That parallels Daniel's statement we reviewed previously –

"And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering ... "
(Dan. 9:27a)

But, the “little horn’s” dominion ends suddenly, according to verses 21-22, because he prevails against the saints right up until the “Ancient of Days” comes and the judgment is set. After that, the saints possess the kingdom --

“But the court will sit *for judgment*, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.”
(Dan. 7:26-27)

This chart compares these two visions:

The Dream	Daniel’s Vision	Fulfillment
Gold head	Lion with eagle’s wings	Babylon/Nebuchadnezzar
Silver arms and breast	Bear lifted on one side	Medo-Persia / Darius and Cyrus
Bronze belly and thighs	Leopard with four heads	Grecia / Alexander the Great
Iron legs	Beast with iron teeth	Rome / the Caesars
Ten clay and iron toes	Ten horns	Kingdom of the end
Stone cut without hands	Kingdom of the saints	The Everlasting Kingdom

What We Know So Far

- Daniel accurately predicted the succession of Gentile kingdoms that would persecute the nation of Israel from Babylon forward, even until the end of time and the return of Christ to establish a kingdom that will never end.
- A seven-year period will occur just prior to Christ’s return, during which a ten-nation confederacy will be established.
- A new leader will overthrow three of the nations and the seven others will give him authority over their union.
- He will make a seven-year pact with Israel, but he will break the covenant 3½ years into the deal.
- He will make war with several nations, culminating in his invasion and rule over Jerusalem where he will set himself up as a god.
- His rule will end when Christ returns to Earth and defeats him. Then, Christ will set up a kingdom that will never fail as the preceding kingdoms did. That kingdom will be ruled by the saints of God.

- The dominion of this final kingdom will be worldwide and complete. Every inhabitant of the earth will bow to and obey the King.

“Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*. They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.' Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.” (Isaiah 45:22-24)

For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." (Rom. 14:11)

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

- This dominion and the events surrounding its advent are pre-determined by God, and we can count on them to be perfectly played-out, just as surely as we are witnesses to God’s prophetic accuracy in history.

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⁴ Anderson, Robert, Sir. The Coming Prince. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. 1984. Pp.119-129

⁵ Ibid. Pp. 128-129.

⁶ Walvoord, John F. Daniel, The Key to Prophetic Revelation. Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. 1971. Pp. 223-237

⁷ Zaspel, Fred G. Daniel’s 70 Weeks. Word Of Life Baptist Church Publishing. Pottsville, PA. 1991. Pp. 10-11.

⁸ Driver, Samuel Rolles. The Book of Daniel. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge University Press. 1900.

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