



Focus 2: The Prophecies of Daniel
 Prophetic Theme #2: The End-Time Drama

Introduction

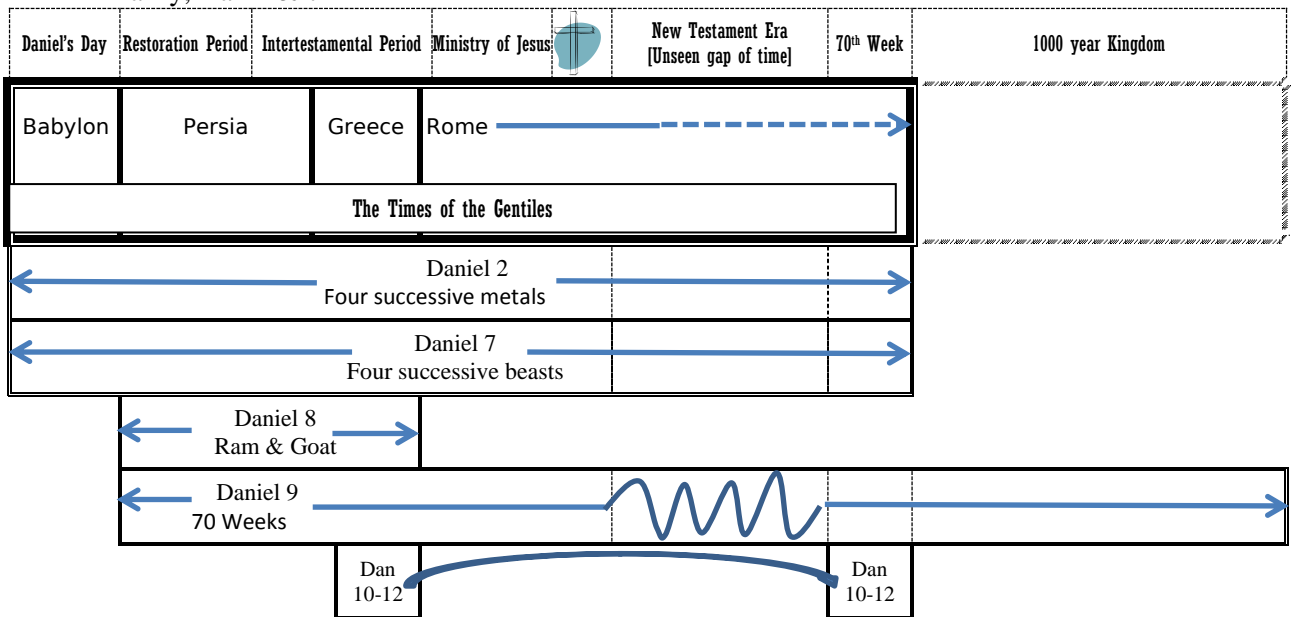
1a. A reminder: the prevailing concern in the book of Daniel is the *glory* of Yahweh.

An important specific issue in that regard: How can a covenant-keeping God (as perpetually acknowledged and celebrated in the name “Yahweh”) allow His covenant people to be destroyed and enslaved by another people in the name of their pagan god?

2a. Review: the two “Meta-Themes” in the prophetic (i.e., predictive) portions of the book of Daniel:

1b. The “Times of the Gentiles”

- Primarily, Dan 2 & 7



- An extended period of judgment upon Israel, in direct fulfillment of Deut 28:63-66
- Entirely just, given that it is in fulfillment of God’s covenant warnings
- Important: the period of judgment is *temporary*; God is not done with Israel

2b. The End-Time Drama

- Daniel 8, 9, 10-12
- Chronological and personnel details of that end-time drama by which Israel will be restored and ensconced in the Kingdom Yahweh has promised her
- Point: the Times of the Gentiles is only temporary, intended by God not only to judge Israel, but to bring that nation to Himself in order that He might fulfill His covenant promises

I. The three Prophetic passages considered separately

A. Daniel 8 [Focus: a detail regarding the *primary villain* to trouble Israel in the end-time drama]

1. Summary of the Vision:

Daniel Reports the Vision (8:1–14). Daniel saw a vision of a ram with two horns of unequal length, the longer of which grew up after the other. The ram charged westward, northward, and southward, conquering all who opposed it. However, a goat with a long horn then came from the west, shattered the ram's two horns, and trampled the ram into the ground. None could stand before the goat, but at the height of his power his horn was broken and replaced by four small horns. From one of these horns grew another horn that became increasingly strong and extended its power southward and eastward. It challenged the hosts of heaven, oppressed God's people, and disrupted the sacrifices in the Lord's temple.

The Interpretation of the Vision (8:15–27). The angel Gabriel revealed the interpretation of the vision to Daniel. The two-horned ram represented the Medo-Persian empire, and the goat, the Greek empire (of Alexander). The four horns reflected the fourfold division of Alexander's empire following his untimely death. The little horn represented Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian ruler (about 175–164 B.C.) who opposed God's people and desecrated the temple.¹

2. Relation to the End-Time Drama: Insight regarding the character of the “little horn”

3. Notes and Questions

a) What two nations are represented here?

The ram =

The male-goat =

b) Understand the inter-testamental period of history which is graphically and prophetically pictured here: the conquest of Medo-Persia by Alexander and the armies of Greece.

Medo-Persia had conquered Babylon in 539 BC., and that empire continued until it was itself destroyed by Alexander the Great in 334-331 BC. Alexander died at the height of his power (“when he was strong, the great horn was broken”--8:8), leaving no heir. After twenty years of deliberation and infighting, Alexander's kingdom was divided among four of his generals (“for it came up four notable [horns]”--8:8). Thus was the prophecy of Daniel 8 fulfilled with stunning precision.²

c) How is the vision of Daniel 8 related to that of Daniel 7?

The “little horn” of Daniel 7 (Antichrist, arising out of the fourth beast [Rome]) is very important. Greater instruction concerning this “little horn” is found in the revelation of another “little horn” in Dan 8 (arising out of the third beast [Greece], and fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler who imposed Greek ways upon Israel and thus sparked the Hasmonean revolt.

d) What reason is there for the similarity between the little horn of Daniel 7 and that of Daniel 8?

The point: the little horn of Daniel 8 (Antiochus Epiphanes) is designed by God to be the most dramatic and compelling picture of what the end-time little horn (Antichrist) is going to be like. That is, if you want to have a glimpse of the end-time enemy who will withstand God and His chosen people, consider the 2nd century BC enemy known as Antiochus Epiphanes. Compare Daniel 11:35,36.

e) Notice the description of the violent career of the “little horn” from the third kingdom, described in 8:9-14. What is pictured here?

This is the campaign of Antiochus against Judaism. In 168 BC he arrived in Jerusalem, having been repulsed in a military campaign to Egypt. Enraged with the Jews who had so constantly resisted his Hellenizing policy, he virtually outlawed Judaism. The most dramatic display of that wicked decree came when he slew a pig on the altar in the temple in Jerusalem. Ultimately, all of this sparked the Maccabean revolution which finally drove the Greek/Syrian/Seleucid overlords from Israel and ushered in a time of remarkable semi-independence, a time which lasted until the conquest of the land by Rome about 60 BC. But the emphasis here in Daniel 8 is upon the period of time during which Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the “little horn” of this chapter, desecrated the altar and caused ritual worship to cease in Jerusalem.

f.) How are we to understand the “2300 days [lit: evenings and mornings]” in Dan 8:14?

¹ Robert B. Chisholm, "The Major Prophets" In , in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 337.

²Notice that in this chapter the predictive prophecies are so exact and so detailed that the (anti-supernaturalist) critic cannot abide the idea that this was in fact written in the 6th century BC, hundreds of years before any of the events actually occurred.

B. Daniel 9 [Focus: the chronological frame-work of the end-time drama]

1. Summary of the Vision:

Daniel's Intercessory Prayer (9:1–19). In 539–538 B.C., immediately after the Persian conquest of Babylon, Daniel prayed to the Lord on behalf of exiled Israel. Daniel realized that the seventy-year period of Judah's desolation prophesied in Jeremiah 25:11–12 was soon approaching its end. Addressing God as Israel's faithful covenant Lord, Daniel confessed the nation's sinful and rebellious condition and acknowledged that they had justly suffered the covenant curses threatened by Moses. He then asked the Lord to forgive the nation's sins and once again look with favor on desolate Jerusalem.

Gabriel Reveals and Interprets the Vision (9:20–27). While Daniel prayed, Gabriel appeared to him and announced that "seventy sevens" (490 years according to many) were decreed for Israel and Jerusalem, after which time atonement would be made for their sins. He then explained the chronology of these "seventy sevens." Sixty-nine sevens would separate the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah ("Anointed One"). Sometime after this the Messiah would be "cut off" and the city destroyed by the "people of the ruler who will come." During the seventieth seven this ruler would make a covenant with God's people, which he would then violate halfway through the period.

2. Relation to the End-Time Drama: This passage provides a specific time-table regarding the drama by which the promised Messianic kingdom will be established.

3. Notes and Questions

a) Notice what events led up to the vision that resulted in the prophecy of the 70 weeks.

Daniel was reading in the book of Jeremiah, read that the captivity was to last 70 years; he realized that he had been in captivity for almost 70 years; began to beseech YHWH for revelation of what was to come after the 70 years of exile; an angel was dispatched to reveal that to Daniel.

b) Notice that the means of revelation in Daniel 9 is distinct; the angel simply arrives and instructs Daniel in what seems to be normal human language (as opposed to visions of remarkable symbolic events).

c) How are we to understand the reference to "weeks" (literally, *sevens*) here. Are these cycles of 7 *days* each (normal weeks), or are they cycles of seven *years* each? What is the chronological framework that emerges once that is determined?

d) Basically, what is the point of the 70 weeks?

Daniel 9:24--to establish the kingdom (i.e., as represented by the six blessings of 9:27)

e) Notice that there is a *gap* in the 70 weeks, and that we are today living in that gap. What two events are explicitly prophesied as occurring in that gap?

That is, there are 7 weeks, then 62 (evidently consecutive), then two events, and then the 70th of the 70 weeks. The two events between the 69th and 70th weeks are:

① *Messiah shall be "cut off, but not for himself..." (i.e., the crucifixion of Messiah);*

② *The people of the prince that shall come (i.e., of the Antichrist, the little horn of Daniel 7, and therefore Rome) shall destroy the city & the sanctuary (i.e., Jerusalem & the temple, which occurred in AD 70).*

f) Notice especially the reference to the final week in 9:27. That final cycle of seven years commences when the Antichrist "confirms a covenant" with "many" (i.e., with Israel) for one cycle of seven years. In the middle of that seven year period, he causes the sacrifice to cease (cp. the "little horn" of Daniel 8, Antiochus Epiphanes). What else do we learn about this specific chain of events in later biblical revelation?

C. Daniel 10-12 [Latter-day enemies & warfare as a harbinger of end-time enemy & warfare]

1. Summary of the Vision:

Daniel's Vision of the Angel (10:1–11:1). In 536 B.C. Daniel received his final vision. While standing by the Tigris River, he saw a radiant angelic being whose voice thundered. Totally overwhelmed by the vision, Daniel fell into a deep trance. The angel told Daniel to stand up and encouraged him not to fear. He then explained that he had been delayed in coming by the “prince of Persia,” apparently a reference to an angel who exercised jurisdiction over the nation Persia. After a three-week struggle, Michael intervened, allowing this angel to come to Daniel. He would soon be off again to fight against the prince of Persia, but before leaving he revealed to Daniel certain future events.

The Angel Outlines Future Events (11:2–12:4). Daniel 11:2–35 outlines the course of Palestinian history from Daniel's time to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Verse 2 refers to the four Persian rulers who would succeed Cyrus: Cambyses (530–522 B.C.), Pseudo-Smerdis (522), Darius I (522–86), and Xerxes (486–465). It alludes to Xerxes' campaign against Greece. Verses 3–4 then refer to Alexander the Great (336–323) and the division of his kingdom. Verses 5–20 outline the relationship between the Seleucids (“the king of the North”), who ruled Syria, and the Ptolemies (“the king of the South”), who ruled Egypt during the period 321–175. Verses 21–35 focus on the career of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164), mentioning among other things his Egyptian campaigns and mistreatment of the Jews. Verses 32–35 anticipate the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus.

Most of the details of verses 36–45 do not correspond to Antiochus's career. For example, Antiochus died in Persia, not Palestine (see v. 45). Consequently, ...[it is best to] understand a switch in perspective beginning in verse 36. The description merges into a portrayal of the Antichrist, whose hostility to God and His people was foreshadowed in the career of Antiochus.

The final verses of this section (12:1–4) anticipate a time of crisis for Israel in which Michael, the nation's guardian angel, would intervene on their behalf. Reference is made to a resurrection of the righteous and evil.

Daniel's Final Vision and Instructions (12:4–13). The angel instructed Daniel to seal up the revelation until the end times. Daniel then saw two other angelic beings standing by the river, both of whom were clothed in linen. One asked how long it would be before the revelation was fulfilled. The other responded that “a time, times, and a half a time” (probably three and a half years) would pass between the breaking of Israel's power and the fulfillment of the vision. Verse 11 apparently gives a more exact measurement of this period (1,290 days). The significance of the figure given in verse 12 (1,335 days) is unclear. In conjunction with verse 11, it implies that there would be an additional forty-five-day period before the complete fulfillment of the vision.

2. Relation to the End-Time Drama: Again, the terrors of the latter-day (i.e., inter-testamental) period are represented as a precursor of the end-time terrors to come

3. Notes and Questions

- a) Notice that all of the final 3 chapters constitute one vision.
- b) Notice that two great and horrible individuals are prophesied in this vision:
[1] Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21-35); and [2] Antichrist (11:36-45).

The relationship is deliberate and instructive.

- c) Notice that this vision appeared to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus (i.e., about 536 BC); by this time Daniel is well over 80 years of age, has been in Babylon for almost 70 years.
- d) In Daniel 10, the prophet once again is visited by an angelic messenger; he is overcome by the experience, and is strengthened by the angelic visitor in order to receive the message.
- e) The message given Daniel is recorded in 11:1-12:13. It begins with a remarkably detailed prophecy of events related to Persia (11:2), then Alexander the Great (11:3,4), the Ptolemies (Greek family ruling in Egypt, south of Israel) and Seleucids (Greek family ruling in Syria, north of Israel) until Antiochus Epiphanes (11:5-20), and then concerning Antiochus himself (11:21-35). All of these prophecies, in exact detail, have been fulfilled since they were spoken to Daniel about 530 years before Christ!

- f) The predictive prophecies concerning Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21-35) are remarkably detailed and accurate. Antiochus IV (nicknamed “Epiphanes”), who reigned over Syria as the Seleucid (i.e., descendant of Seleucus, one of the four generals among whom Alexander’s empire was divided) king from 175 to 164, came to the throne by intrigue (11:21), made several expeditions into Egypt (11:24-27), then turned his hatred on Israel (11:28). The reference to the “ships of Chittim” (11:30) is a prediction of the time when Roman ships would come from the west, past Chittim (i.e., Cyprus) to defeat Antiochus in Egypt. It was at this time that Antiochus, venting his anger against the Jews, declared the Mosaic ceremonies illegal and erected in the Holy Place a statue of Zeus (11:31). Many Jews resisted at this time and were martyred (11:32-35).
- g) There is a sudden and remarkable transition between 11:35 and 11:36. The prophet has been describing the awful reign of the “little horn” of Daniel 8, Antiochus Epiphanes. At this point, he begins to describe the reign of the end-time “little horn” (i.e., Daniel 7), the Antichrist. The two-fold reference to the “little horn” in Daniel 7 and 8 seems to be designed to prepare us for this sudden but instructive transition here.
- h) Notice what is said of the career of the Antichrist in 11:36-45. He will set himself in opposition to all that is God’s, and will build a mighty military force to resist God and His people. The maneuvers and battles of 11:40-45 are somewhat difficult to piece together entirely, but the picture is one of great victory in battle which turns very suddenly to defeat as he comes to his end with no one to help him.
- i) Daniel 12 is one of the most important passages of the Old Testament concerning the resurrection. Notice that this reference to the resurrection of all mankind is made in connection with the coming of the Kingdom which is being developed throughout this vision.

Question: How does this reference fit with the “program of resurrections” developed throughout the Scriptures?

- j) How are we to understand the two notations of time in 12:11, 12?

II. THE SUM OF THE MATTER

That is, what is it that the book of Daniel, taken together with all of its several historic and predictive sections, is intended to communicate, first of all to Daniel and his generation and then to the generations of believers who would wait anxiously for the fulfillment of Yahweh's covenant promises?

- God's GLORY will not be compromised. Even in a circumstance in which it seems inevitable that His name will be disreverenced by the peoples of the world, the Sovereign of the Universe will work to rescue His name and to cause men to be confronted powerfully and inexorably with the reality of His majesty.
- God's WORD will not be broken: He will honor His covenant promises in all of their parts.
 - Yahweh had sworn on His own Name to punish Israel's sustained wickedness with exile and submission to Gentile powers.
 - The initial horrors of that melancholy fate had already befallen the rebellious nation. The captivity to a gentile power, Babylon, had begun, the Glory-Cloud had departed the Temple in Jerusalem, and soon enough that Temple and the Holy City itself would be laid low by that marauding nation.
 - In order to make the point that those centuries of wandering and suffering are entirely in the careful plan and purposes of Israel's God, He spells out the succession of Gentile powers which would rule in the world during the period of their submission, and then goes further to describe stunning details of each of those successive kingdoms.
 - But even in the divine foretelling of the unspeakable tragedy of Gentile terror and trouble, God is careful to include the dramatic and explicit promise of ultimate destruction of those pagan nations and deliverance of the covenant people – a “stone cut out without hands” pulverizes those nations and becomes a fifth world kingdom to endure forever, and “one like unto a Son of Man” is dispatched by the Ancient of Days to establish Himself in “everlasting dominion.”
 - By the same token, Yahweh's pledge to ultimately and gloriously redeem and restore His covenant people, Israel, will in fact be accomplished “when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”
 - To make that point the more certain, and to provide sustaining encouragement and confidence to the generations of believers who will endure the seemingly interminable season of Gentile overlordship, God uses Daniel to presage the end-time drama by which He will finally – but certainly – unveil the Kingdom of the Messiah, a kingdom of righteousness in which a redeemed Israel will be restored to favor with God and authority over the nations, thus demonstrating to the world of mankind the reality of Yahweh's covenant-keeping character.
 - Specific elements of that end-time drama are predicted in successive visions communicated to Daniel
 - ✓ A basic *chronological frame-work* of that end-time drama is revealed:
 - a) a season of 70 weeks of years (490 years) will pass before that Kingdom is established;
 - b) there will be a gap of undesignated duration between the 69th and 70th week;
 - c) during that gap two onerous events will occur – the Messiah will be “cut off,” and the city and sanctuary will be destroyed by the people of a prince who had been previously foretold (i.e., the “little horn” of Dan 7)
 - d) the final (70th) week will commence when that wicked personage (the “little horn”) provides a covenant allowing the Jews to rebuild their temple and restore their sacrificial worship, but...
 - e) in the midst of that week he will violate that covenant and defile the temple with a terror reminiscent of that of Antiochus Epiphanes
 - ✓ The most important and horrific *player* in that end-time drama is carefully introduced.
 - The primary means of that introduction is to portray a sorry harbinger to the ultimate “little horn,” an earlier “little horn” who emerges not from Rome but from Greece, and whose insanely wicked reign of hatred and persecution is foretold as a providentially crafted harbinger and warning of that of the end-time villain who is the Antichrist.
 - In two visions, Dan 8 (the ram and the male goat) and Dan 11 (the willful king), the very deliberate and unmistakable connection is made between these two personages – separated by at least 2200 years, both future to Daniel's day but one already a part of history in our day.
 - ✓ God provides a painfully honest and sobering revelation of the *terrors* of that end-time drama.
 - The element of the visions which most thoroughly traumatizes and disgusts the prophet himself is the arch-villain who sets himself against God and His people, and who will not desist in his blasphemy and destruction until God's Messiah arrives to stop him.
 - God is honest to describe this coming season of final judgment and preparation as “a time of distress such as never occurred since there was nation until that time...”
 - ✓ The point is powerfully made that the drama being described is in fact an *end-time* drama, that it eventuates in the kingdom without end to which “everyone who is found written in the book” will be rescued by means of resurrection!