



villagebible.church/daniel

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

SMALL GROUP LESSONS
PART 2



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 7 How (Not) to Study the End Times: A Daniel Half-Time Huddle.....	2
LESSON 8 Apocalyptic Visions	10
LESSON 9 Storm’s Rollin’ In	18
LESSON 10 A Masterclass in Repentant Prayer	26
LESSON 11 Dream of a Lifetime.....	32
LESSON 12 Spiritual Warfare: Behind-the-Scenes.....	42
LESSON 13 Appointed Times	48
LESSON 14 At the Time of the End.....	54
LESSON 15 Unsatisfying Endings	62

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 7

How (Not) to Study the End Times: A Daniel Half-Time Huddle

INTRODUCTION

End Times Intro

Eschatology, the study of the last things, is a fancy word for something we all already do. All of us think about the end. Yes, our culture and our fears push to the periphery thoughts of our death and the life hereafter. But count on it: at some point in your life, you are going to agonize over what will happen to you after you breathe your last. You can't attend a funeral—whether of a religious or nonreligious person—without hearing somebody's eschatology, their concept of what happens after death. We are all eschatologists. But that doesn't mean we always engage the end times well. In at least three ways, we could go wrong in this most basic theological discipline.

We are tempted to engage in speculative eschatology. When end-times study is not rooted in Scripture, it becomes vain dreaming, the dogmatization of our wishes. In a time of unfathomable suffering and pain, Job asked his mostly well-meaning friends, "How then will you comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood" (Job 21:34). When it comes to matters of eternal life and death, we need more than "empty nothings." We need more than traditional religious rituals and mantras that suggest, sometimes superficially, that the best is yet to come. The effervescent goal of living a decent life falls pitifully short of guaranteeing a blessed eternity. Vague wishes of a better afterlife are impotent to deliver solid hope. Speculative eschatology is a sign of biblical illiteracy and spiritual immaturity. When it comes to the end times, we need to put childish ways behind us and listen to what God says.

We should beware of argumentative eschatology. For some of us, the very topic of the end times is off-putting because it can be such a contentious issue. Some of us have felt our Christianity questioned by those who have a different concept of the end. But surely God does not peel back the curtains of future history, giving us a glimpse into the staggering profundity of death and judgment or the glorious return of the King of heaven that we might contend with other Christians over how things will work out. It is certainly possible—and necessary—to distinguish between two conflicting end-times views without needlessly blustering about the perceived superiority of one's own view.

We must avoid avoiding eschatology. It sounds pious to say, "I don't think much about the last things. I know God is in control. I'll leave it up to Him." Is eschatology even necessary? Isn't it enough to simply trust that God will work everything out in the end? Should we not approach this topic with the attitude of David, who said, "I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me." (Ps. 131:1)?

Instead, Scripture teaches us to develop what some have called an "apocalyptic spirituality" in which we so deeply sense the dawning of the age to come that we begin to realize its wonder in this present age. The Apostle Peter captures in a single phrase Scripture's unified application of eschatology. In light of God's plan to purify the cosmos, he asks, "What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?" (2 Pet. 3:11). With Peter, Jesus (Mark 13:35–37) and Paul (1 Thess. 5:6) call God's people to respond to the coming of the end with watchful sobriety. The same emphasis is found in Hebrews 10:25; seeing "the Day drawing near" ought to strengthen our hope, devote us to worship, and galvanize us in our expressions of love and good works. If Christ is returning, if His judgment will be eternal, and if hell is as terrible as heaven is delectable, then studying the end times is eminently practical. Those who lose sight of the end can become careless in their conduct and arrogant in their rejection of God (2 Pet. 3:1–7). By contrast, a biblical eschatology provides a rationale for ethics that goes deeper than pragmatic concerns. With

God's help, eschatology can chill our blood at the thought of sin and judgment, and it can warm our hearts with God's gracious work of redemption.

God invites us to meditate on the future, not to speculate or altercate but to better share His perspective on this life and the life to come. And this is how we should study the topic. The way Scripture and the church's historic confessions teach eschatology is much more like gazing upon a dazzling sunset than analyzing and describing the chemical properties of the sun. We need more than a skeletal, technical, clinical understanding of the end times. We need a robust eschatological vision that can invigorate us with the reality that God's last work will change everything and that the change has already begun. There are a lot of reasons to be afraid in this world. Nations are collapsing. Viruses are killing. Babylon has gone digital with its language. But the message of Daniel and Jesus is the same. Despite what it looks like, God is in control.¹

OPEN IT

- 1. Can you recall any specific instances from science fiction TV shows or movies where a futuristic concept or technology was depicted, and later, in reality, materialized in your lifetime?**

The book of Daniel poses interpretive challenges for believers regarding end-time understandings due to its cryptic, symbolic visions and prophecies. These complexities lead to diverse interpretations among scholars and believers. The intricate symbolism—depicting beasts, statues, and their symbolic meanings—makes it challenging to precisely decipher their historical or future representations. Debates arise over the timing, application, and fulfillment of these prophecies, intensifying the complexity of interpretation. This diversity prompts ongoing discussions among believers about understanding and applying the teachings of Daniel within the context of end-time scenarios.

For centuries, the anticipation of Jesus' return and the events of the end times have captivated discussions and speculations. The doctrinal debates around terms like millennium, tribulation, the number 666, and the antichrist have filled discourse. Questions persist: Will Jesus physically reign on earth for 1,000 years? Do Christians undergo a seven-year tribulation? Does the Second Coming coincide with the believers' meeting Christ in the air (the rapture)? Will there be a rapture separating Christians from others left behind? And, does the nation of Israel play a role in these end-time events? These questions continue to fuel theological discussions and inquiries.²

- 2. What element of end times confuses you the most and where have you gone to address your confusion?**

¹ <https://www.spokengospel.com/devotionals/daniel-1>

² These and the following study notes come from a sermon preached on Feb 28, 2016, by Tim Badal, *Setting The Stage For The End Times*: www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove/resources/sermons/setting-the-stage-for-the-end-times--part-8/

Understanding the end times is a fascinating journey through a diverse landscape of beliefs and perspectives. It's like exploring different chapters in a book where each person brings their unique viewpoint to the table. Some approach it with excitement, anticipating what's to come, while others approach it cautiously or skeptically. Some dive deep into studying it, treating it like a puzzle to unravel, and others take a more relaxed or contemplative stance. It's this mix of convictions, doubts, and curiosity that adds depth and richness to the discussions about what the future might hold. Meet a diverse group of friends, each offering a unique lens through which they view the enigmatic concept of the end times:

- **Clueless Chloe:** Ever-present and curious, Chloe seeks understanding though she doesn't have a strong grasp of the topic yet.
- **Who-Cares Wilma:** Entangled in the distractions of the world, Wilma perceives Jesus as a historical figure and dismisses the unfolding of biblical prophecies.
- **Disbelieving Darla:** Worn by the world's struggles, Darla has grown tired of waiting for Christ's return, losing hope along the way.
- **Scared Scarlett:** Deeply devoted but anxious about the future depicted in various media, Scarlett fears being left behind and the uncertainties ahead.
- **Newspaper Ned:** Approaching Bible prophecy like a complex puzzle, Ned seeks to predict events but often misinterprets them, linking the Antichrist to opposing political figures.
- **Political Polly:** Following Ned's lead, Polly uses end-times prophecy to shape political decisions, often overlooking human value in this pursuit.
- **Confident Carl:** Anchored in scripture, Carl recognizes the danger of fixating on the future. He emphasizes the importance of living faithfully in the present, believing that a deepened relationship with Jesus outweighs the obsession with foreseeing future events. Carl's perspective echoes the wisdom of James Edward, suggesting that our focus as believers shouldn't solely be on predicting the future but on faithfully living out our beliefs, especially in challenging times.

3. **Which of the characters seems to resonate most with you? Have you always been this way or has something caused you to change?**

4. **How should you engage with others who approach the subject of end times differently than you do?**

5. How can we support each other, like Confident Carl, in prioritizing a faithful and present-focused approach to our beliefs amidst uncertainties about the end times?

Idealist view: Regards Revelation as symbolic, representing broader concepts of good and evil. They emphasize that the book symbolizes the victory of good over evil and encourages righteous living. Notable adherents include Augustine and Karl Barth.

Preterist view: Interprets the book of Revelation as events that already occurred in the first century. They see the prophecies fulfilled in events like the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus' statement about "this generation" refers to the generation to whom He spoke. Advocates include R.C. Sproul and NT Wright.

Historist view: Sees Revelation and prophecies as unfolding throughout human history, from Jesus' ascension to His second coming. Specific events aren't precisely pinpointed, but they believe these events will occur over time before Christ's return. Advocates include notable figures like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley and is the prominent view of historical Christianity.

Futurist view: Believes that the events in Revelation and certain passages like 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 are yet to occur in the future. This view gained traction again in the past century or so and is prevalent in evangelicalism today. This view could be broken into two other camps:

- **Dispensational:** Within the Dispensational Futurist view, there's a significant emphasis on the role of Israel in biblical prophecy. It anticipates a restoration and central role for Israel in the end times, interpreting certain passages in Revelation and other prophetic books as specifically pertaining to the nation of Israel's future, including the reestablishment of its prominence and significance in God's plan. This is the newest of approaches to Eschatology and became prominent through the ministry of John Darby and the CI Scofield. Adherents include Tim LaHaye, Hal Lindsey, Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, Tony Evans and Chuck Swindoll. Several well-known Christian organizations also promote it including Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary.
- **Non-Dispensational:** (VBC Teaching Position) The Non-Dispensational Futurist view, also known as the Historic Premillennialist view, shares similarities with the Dispensational Futurist perspective but differs in its approach to interpreting biblical prophecy. Unlike the Dispensationalists, they don't divide history into distinct dispensations. Instead, they believe in a future fulfillment of end-time events, often foreseeing a period of tribulation followed by Christ's literal reign on Earth for a thousand years (the Millennium), but without the detailed timeline or specific emphasis on Israel as seen in the Dispensationalist interpretation. They focus more on the general sequence of events without the intricate divisions of dispensations. Adherents include: Early church fathers like Polycarp and Justin Martyr held this view. Modern Adherehent include George Eldon Ladd, Charles Spurgeon, John Piper, Albert Mohler, Francis Schaeffer, D.A. Carson, Bryan Chapell.

6. Does the recognition of the varied viewpoints among believers regarding the end times lead you to approach this subject with caution? Why or why not?

7. Which view are you most acquainted with? Where did you learn about this view?

8. How do our individual perspectives on the end times influence our daily lives and interactions with others? Do our beliefs about the future impact our present actions and attitudes?

9. Considering the diversity of interpretations about the end times among Christians, how can we maintain unity and respect within the body of believers, despite differing viewpoints on this theological subject?

In Mark 13 we find the single most concise passage of Scripture on end times from the mouth of Jesus. You're sensible people, but let's walk through a very natural reading of the text. Notice the description Jesus gives. If anybody knows about end times, Jesus knows it. Can we agree with that? Listen to what He says in Mark 13:1–7:

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet."

So in verses one and two, what do we see? Seemingly it's the **present events of the first century**.

Then what we see is the **persistent ebb and flow of history**. There are going to be wars. There are going to be rumors of wars. Verse eight, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes." So He's saying, "Disciples, Christians, when you experience an earthquake, don't think it's My coming. There are going to be a lot of them. There are going to be famines." "These are but the beginning of the birth pains."

Then in Mark 13:9–13, He goes to the **personal experience of end-time living for Christians**:

"But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

You say, "Wait a minute. That's not happening here in America." Sure it is. Some of you are ostracized right now from your family because you follow Jesus Christ. In some of your marriages, because you're a believer and your spouse is not, you are experiencing great turmoil. There are stories upon stories of Muslim converts in the Middle East whose children are turning their parents in because they bowed the knee to Jesus. And the next thing the parents see is their children in the hands of Islamic terrorists, putting them to death. This is what's going to happen. It will be the personal experience of Christians living in the last days.

Notice what seems to be a **personification of evil**: "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing..." How can something stand? It's got to be a person. "...where he..."—notice the personal pronoun—"ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Jesus says someone is going to come, and in the moment when he comes, it's going to be ugly. You'd better start running away from this guy. He's not going to bring peace and joy. He's going to bring terror in his wake—the personification of evil.

Then in verses 15–23 there's a **period of great emergency**:

"Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not happen in winter. For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. False christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand."

So there's going to be this period of great emergency. And right when things are at their worst, He says in verses 24–30 that:

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven."

Finally we have the admonition that we won't know **the precise timing of the ending**: In verse 32-37 he tells us "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

In these verses, Jesus emphasizes the uncertainty surrounding the exact timing of His return, underscoring the need for vigilance and readiness among His followers. He likens His return to a homeowner's unexpected arrival, urging everyone to remain watchful and prepared for His coming, as it could occur at any moment. The emphasis here is on continual readiness and attentiveness rather than trying to predict or pinpoint the specific time of His return.

10. Looking at the events Jesus describes in Mark 13, how do these events echo or resonate with experiences in our world today? Are there specific parallels or similarities that you can identify?

11. Exploring the description of the Day of the Lord in Mark 13:24–27, how does this portrayal impact our understanding of the future return of Jesus Christ? How should this influence our present attitudes and actions as believers awaiting His return?

12. Considering the urgency and warnings Jesus conveys, how can we practically live in light of these teachings today? What steps or mindsets can we adopt to align ourselves with Jesus' counsel regarding the end times?

Much of our attention within Christian circles often fixates on deciphering times, dates, and signs surrounding His return. However, amid these discussions, the Scriptures consistently emphasize a different priority: the call for believers to embody lives characterized by holiness, purity, and readiness. While debates and speculations about the timing and signs of Christ's return captivate our attention, the essence of these verses lies in the call to personal sanctification and spiritual preparation. They urge us not to be consumed solely by predicting the future but to prioritize aligning our lives with the character of Christ. These passages underscore the importance of living faithfully and obediently while eagerly anticipating His glorious appearing:

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (ESV): "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."

1 Peter 1:13-16 (ESV): "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1 John 3:2-3 (ESV): "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

Titus 2:11-14 (ESV): "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

13. Reflecting on the call to live holy lives in light of Christ's imminent return, how does the pursuit of personal holiness impact our daily choices, behaviors, and relationships? What practical steps can we take individually and collectively to cultivate greater holiness in our lives as we await the return of Jesus Christ?

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Apocalyptic Visions

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 7

As we come to chapter 7, we experience a shift in the book of Daniel. We move from a chronology of events that happened to Daniel and his friends in chapters 1-6 to a series of apocalyptic visions in 7-12. While the change is quite clear even to the casual reader, we need to be careful that we don't fall into the trap of thinking of the two parts of Daniel as if they were entirely separate books with no connections between them.

Ironically, one of the ways that we can see the connections between the first half of Daniel and the second half is found in something that many critics have used to argue that it is two works. Daniel is almost unique in the Scriptures because it was written in two different languages—Hebrew and Aramaic. The languages are related but not the same. The construction of the book looks like this:

Ch. 1 – Hebrew

Ch. 2-7 – Aramaic

Ch. 8-12 Hebrew

At the same time, chapters 1-7 form a distinct literary unit as do chapters 8-12. The change in language shows both distinction AND unity because of the way that it interacts with these units. Chapters 1-7 are largely a chronological story (except ch. 7) but with a specific literary structure. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the book. Chapters 2-7 are structured around a “chiasm” which can be seen below:

- A. Four empires and God's coming kingdom (ch. 2)
- B. Trial by fire and God's deliverance (ch. 3)
 - C. A king warned, chastised, and delivered (ch. 4)
 - C'. A king warned, defiant, and deposed (ch. 5)
- B'. Trial in the lions' den and God's deliverance (ch. 6)
- A'. Four empires and God's everlasting kingdom (ch. 7)³

Wendy Widder offers this important insight into chapter 7:

Daniel 7 is the heart and hinge of the book of Daniel. It shares the Aramaic language of the narratives of chs. 2-6, but shares the apocalyptic genre of chs. 8-12. It stands parallel to the cream of ch. 2, but sets off the framework for understanding the visions of chs. 8-12. Chapter 7 prevents a tidy division of the book into two genres or two languages, and instead links the narrative and apocalyptic chapters together. Appropriately, its message that God's eternal kingdom will triumph in the face of great opposition is also central to the book whose primary message is that God's kingdom will endure.⁴

³ This outline is from J.,G. Baldwin, cited in Tremper Longman, *Daniel: The NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 19.

⁴ Wendy Widder, *Daniel*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament vol. 23 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023), 349.

You can see how the chiasm works and that chapter 7 connects directly with chapter 2. At the same time, chapter 7 is clearly a transition from the chronological approach of chapters 1-6. It reverts back several years to the first year of Belteshazzar's reign and begins a series of apocalyptic visions. The vision of chapter 7 mirrors and expands the one in chapter 2. Chapter 7 also becomes the hinge point for the book, because after this point visions take center stage and the language changes back to Hebrew. Throughout the entire book we see God's sovereignty, but from now on it is future focused.

OPEN IT

1. Do you enjoy brain teaser puzzles? If so, what is one that gave you particular difficulty until you looked at it in a different way and suddenly it seemed simple?

READ IT

Read Daniel 7

EXPLORE IT

2. Where do the beasts come from?
3. What are the four beasts?
4. How does the description of the fourth beast differ from the others?
5. How does the scene change in v. 9?
6. What does the vision do to Daniel?

APPLY IT

7. Are you already familiar with this passage or is it new to you? What sticks out to you as being most significant in the passage?

“Apocalyptic” is the key word in relation to the visions that start here in chapter 7 and continue for the rest of the book. When we hear or read that word, we often think “end of the world.” It is a word that functions in both Christian and secular culture today in everything from tv shows and movies to novels to books that seek to understand and predict the coming judgment of God. When it comes to apocalyptic literature, however, there is much more going on. It is a special kind of prophecy. Tremper Longman explains:

The term *apocalyptic* comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis* and simply means “revelation.” Indeed, the genre label is taken from the first verse of the New Testament book of Revelation (also, not surprisingly, known as the Apocalypse of Saint John) and is applied to other books, both in the Bible and outside, that have similar characteristics. . . . A violent end to history is in the ultimate purview of biblical apocalyptic [like common popular culture usage]. However, far from imparting a sense of doom and pessimism, books like Daniel and Revelation radiate with joy and optimism. Why? Because the end is the end of human corruption and the oppression of God’s people and is brought about by the audience’s warring God. Apocalyptic celebrates God’s victory over the enemies of the godly. . . . But the essence of apocalyptic is more than the content of the message. . . . Now that we have gotten used to the rather straightforward plots of Daniel 1-6 we suddenly find ourselves in a strange world, a world of hybrid beasts and riders on the clouds. Furthermore, we encounter what look like timetables, but timetables that are impossible to penetrate.⁵

This description raises important questions for us as we read books like Daniel (especially the second half), Zechariah, Joel, Isaiah 24-27, or Revelation. Longman goes on:

Apocalyptic is a metaphor-rich genre. In this regard it is like poetry. Metaphors and similes teach by analogy. They throw light on difficult concepts and things by relating them to something we know from common experience. As such, images speak truly and accurately, but not precisely. We often do not know where the analogy stops. In this way, images preserve mystery about ideas that are ultimately beyond our comprehension. It is a travesty then, to interpret apocalyptic images too finely, to press them in their details. . . . [T]his mistake is common among biblical interpreters of apocalyptic and has led to all kinds of fanciful interpretations and outlandish claims. Caution and reserve are virtues in the interpretation of apocalyptic. . . . prophecy and apocalyptic are cousins of one another; they share many similarities, most notably that both concern the future.

⁵ Longman, 177,178.

... [A]pocalyptic is slightly different in terms of the mode of revelation. Whereas the classic prophetic mode of communication is direct from God to the seer, apocalyptic literature reports a more indirect mode of communication. [e.g., dreams/visions and a supernatural interpreter].⁶

So, as we begin to look at the following chapters, it is important to keep the kind of literature we are dealing with in mind. These visions certainly refer to actual events and even people, but trying to determine things too tightly can not only be problematic, it may end up causing us to miss the larger point.

8. Does the above explanation of apocalyptic change anything about how you read this chapter? If so, how. If not, why not?

In the ancient world, the sea was understood as chaos personified, usually as a goddess (Tiamet for the Babylonians). The sea was seen as a dangerous and malevolent place. Marduk defeated her and therefore becomes chief of the gods, providing order and holding back the chaos. In addition, the number four in scripture often means totality. When we take into consideration that the four winds (v.2) signifying every or all directions, are directly followed by four beasts, we need to remember the kind of literature we are dealing with. Widder states:

The effect of reporting that four creatures were arising from the sea, which was stirred by the four winds of heaven, is one of totality: while these four beasts do refer to four kingdoms (according to the interpretation Daniel later receives: 7:17), they also refer to the totality of human kingdoms. The significance of the vision transcends its closest historical referents and encompasses all of human history.⁷

9. What do you think the significance is of the beasts coming from the sea?

⁶ IBID. 178, 180.

⁷ Widder, 358.

10. While each beast is different, what is consistent about them? (See esp. the final sentences in vv. 4,5,6, and 12)

The four beasts, like the four sections of the statue in chapter 2 have been identified with specific kingdoms. There are two major views regarding the identities of these four kingdoms. Both have strong points and weaknesses. These views are named for the identification of the fourth kingdom—either Greek or Roman. Most, though not all, conservative scholars have taken the Roman view while the Greek view is more generally taken by critical scholars, though it has an ancient pedigree. Here is how the two views look at the beasts:

Beasts	Roman View	Greek View
Winged Lion	Babylon	Babylon
Bear with 3 ribs	Medo-Persia	Media
Leopard with wings and 4 heads	Greece	Persia
Beast with 10 horns and a little horn	Rome	Greece
One like the Son of Man	God's Kingdom	God's Kingdom

Both views see the first beast as Babylon and specifically see Nebuchadnezzar's humbling and then repentance (ch. 4) in the description of v. 4. The views diverge with the second beast, and adherents give specific reasons why their view fits best. These reasons can get quite complicated and far more involved than we have space for here but include things like the leopard representing the speed of the Greek conquest by Alexander and then falling into four kingdoms when he died (Roman view) or the fourth beast being entirely different and therefore Greece because it came from the west (Greek view). In both cases, there is difficulty in identifying the ten horns of the fourth beast, though often the little horn is identified as a specific and treacherous ruler (Antiochus Epiphanes in the Greek view, various emperors such as Nero or Domitian have been suggested for the Roman view). In both views, though, there is both a difficulty in fitting all the details into the framework. Additionally, both views recognize that the difference in the fourth beast, and specifically the little horn, indicate that this beast represents more than just a specific kingdom. It represents the culmination of opposition to God. The little horn then, which comes to control the fourth beast, represents the antichrist—the one completely opposed to Christ, and to antichrists (see 1 Jn. 2:18) which could well include any or all of the above mentioned and more). In the end, the specific identity of the four beasts is less important than the trajectory that is shown—ruthlessness, destruction, and ongoing opposition to God by human powers. Each kingdom lasted for considerable time, and while v. 25's "time, times, and half a time" could refer

to 3 ½ years, (those who hold to the Greek view argue that Antiochus Epiphanes afflicted the Jews for about this amount of time, others view this as the time a future antichrist will oppress God's people), however, it could also signify something like "the rebellion of the little horn will get off to a fast start and seem like it is going to last forever, but then is suddenly cut off."⁸ In any case, it is clearly a limited and controlled time period.

11. Do you think that nailing down the specific kingdoms is necessary to understanding Daniel's vision? Why or why not?

12. Like us, Daniel himself wanted to know who the fourth beast was and especially the little horn (vv. 19-20). Do you find the fact that Daniel, the one who was renowned for interpreting dreams, couldn't figure this out, to be comforting or frustrating? Why?

13. The description of the fourth beast in vv. 7-8, 11, and 19, as well as the explanation about it and specifically the little horn in vv. 23-25, show a mindset of opposition to God as much as a specific identity, including a self-destructive spirit (the little horn uproots three of the previous ten). How do you think this spirit maps onto the kingdoms of the world and specifically the culture today?

⁸ Longman, 190-191.

We have given a tremendous amount of space to the four beasts, however, the more important aspects of the vision are actually found in verses 9-10, 13-14, 22, and 26-27. In verses 9-10 we see the throne room of God, reminiscent of Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel as well as Revelation. The description of God is set in poetry, highlighting him. He is eternal and wise, holy and a judge. Verses 13 and 14 introduce a new figure, unparalleled to this point in the Old Testament. Widder notes:

Do not miss what is happening in Daniel's vision. There is a fiery scene surrounding YHWH, seated on the throne, *and* there is a cloud with someone riding on it. In the Old Testament, YHWH *is* the one who rides the clouds. In this single vision, there are two YHWH figures: the Ancient of Days YHWH on the throne and the cloud-riding YHWH receiving the eternal right to rule. Daniel was seeing two powers in heaven—the one on the throne and a vice-regent, sharing YHWH's essence and receiving everlasting dominion and power.⁹

In other words, Daniel's vision has given us a glimpse of Jesus, a peak into what will be revealed as the Trinity. There is no hierarchy of gods, there is one God who is both judge and ruler, who is both transcendent and near to us. It is not a coincidence that Jesus' own favorite description of himself was "son of man."

14. Daniel sees the throne room of God and the son of man, yet it is the fourth beast and the little horn that strike fear into his heart and capture his attention (vv. 15, 19-20, 28). How do we fall into the same trap? How can this vision remind us to keep our eyes in the right place?

15. The power of the beasts, though ultimately allowed by God, is figuratively drawn from the chaos of the sea. The son of man, however, comes on the clouds. How can this help us to reframe the way we see and interact with the powers that be in our time?

⁹ IBID, 379.

16. The powers of the beasts were ultimately stripped and taken from them, even though they last for centuries. How does knowing that the suffering these powers can and will cause is limited, help you to stand strong in your belief?

17. Christ's power and dominion is described as everlasting and will not be destroyed. The promise in verse 27 is that the kingdoms of the world, represented by the beasts, will be given to God's people who will serve him. How would that message have been received by the Jewish people in exile? How should we receive it today?

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 9

Storm's
Rollin' In

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 8

How can we relate to visions of animals that represent nations and kingdoms? And what are we to think of little horns that rise up to destroy other horns? We wonder if any of this can be practical.

Why is this new vision given? Is it just to add details? Or is there a shift in emphasis or a new purpose? An important clue to Daniel's purpose in this vision is the fact that the language in which he is writing changes from Aramaic to Hebrew at this point. The opening part of Daniel is in Hebrew, from the first verse of chapter 1 through the third verse of chapter 2. But from Daniel 2:4 through the end of chapter 7 everything has been written in Aramaic.

Now this changes, as I said. Chapter 8 switches to Hebrew, and this is the language used through the very end of Daniel. This is unparalleled in any other biblical book, and the only explanation I can think of is that Daniel wrote in the language of the people to whom he primarily wanted these various parts of the book to be directed. Chapters 2-7 concern the predicted flow of the various gentile world empires and concern the gentile world especially. So, they are written in Aramaic, the dominant gentile language of that day. By contrast, chapters 8-12 which are written in Hebrew, chiefly concern the Jews.

What we are going to see is that these chapters deal with a particular era in Jewish history. Indeed, they predict the end of this era and thus anticipate a new era of gentile (and Jewish) blessing.¹⁰

OPEN IT

1. Describe the worst storm (weather) you have ever experienced? What kind of warning did you receive about this storm and how did you prepare for it?

¹⁰ Boice, J. M. (2006). Daniel: An expositional commentary. Baker Books. p. 90

READ IT

Read Daniel 8

EXPLORE IT

2. **Where did Daniel say he was in this vision?**

3. **What creatures does Daniel describe seeing in this vision? How does he describe them?**

4. **What transpires between these creatures?**

5. **According to Gabriel’s interpretation of this vision, which kingdoms do the creatures represent?**

6. **What is to come of the “small horn” in this interpretation? (v. 25)**

7. **What is Daniel’s response to this vision?**

APPLY IT

Forecast: Severe Storms Coming

Daniel's vision in chapter 8 of the showdown between a powerful ram and conquering goat provides more details and information about a period of Jewish history that has already been addressed twice in the book of Daniel – first in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 and second in Daniel's previous vision recorded in chapter 7. The new details in this vision concern the prediction of another "little horn", this one arising from the divided Greek empire.

This much Daniel already knows: a little horn of great depravity will arise and make himself great, even claiming divine status for himself (v. 11). He will **defeat the saints** (v. 10), **defile the sanctuary** (the temple and holy place; v. 11, 13) and **disregard the Scriptures** (v. 12).¹¹

The predictions are clear: it's going to get a whole lot worse before it gets a whole lot better.

8. This prophecy reminds us of what we've learned from Daniel 2:21 and Daniel 4:17, that God deposes kings and raises others up and that He alone reigns sovereignly over all kingdoms on earth. How does our understanding that God raises up authorities, even those who reject, challenge, and oppose Him, influence our attitudes and actions toward those placed in leadership over us?

9. What do the following passages teach us as believers about our relationship with authority in our lives?

Romans 13:1-7

1 Peter 2:13-17

1 Timothy 2:1-2

Titus 3:1

¹¹ Sermon by Daniel Akin found at <http://villagebible.church/daniel8>

Check the Radar

When Gabriel tells Daniel that his vision refers to “the appointed time of the end,” he’s primarily speaking to the end of God’s indignation with His people.

During part of his reign, this wicked “horn” appears to prevail against God; reality is otherwise. The “horn” is granted a period of time to rebel against God and to succeed, not because he is stronger than God, but because his rebellion is a part of the purpose of God. His reign is divinely purposed and permitted so that God’s indignation may be poured out on a sinful people. Because of sin, God’s indignation is poured out on mankind through this “horn.”¹²

Good news: when this happens, the end of God’s indignation is near.

Bad news: the end ain’t gonna be much fun.

10. We are oftentimes quick to identify the ungodliness and rebellion to God that is “out there.” What caution does prophecy provide for us to examine the ungodliness and rebellion to God in our own hearts first?

11. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately sick. How do we faithfully and truthfully examine ourselves for ungodliness or rebellion that may be taking root in our own hearts?

¹² Sermon by Bob Deffinbaugh found at <http://villagebible.church/daniel8b>

12. Read Hebrews 12:3-17. How have you experienced God's discipline in your own life? What should our response be to God's discipline?

It's Raining on my Parade

While struggling in my study of this text, it occurred to me that Christians today do not want this kind of revelation. They do not want to hear a word from God if it is like Daniel chapter 8. Contemporary American Christians want the truths of God's Word made clear and comprehensible, and most of all, relevant. We want a word from God which is affirming, that reassures that there are only good things ahead. We want clear, amusing illustrations with immediate, practical applications which make us more successful and cause us to feel more fulfilled.¹³

13. **The beauty and wonder of God's Word is that it doesn't only tell us what we want to hear, but what we need to hear. When have you found that God's Word has spoken "uncomfortably" to you or it's been difficult to hear?**

14. **What is your typical response when God's Word offers you a tough pill to swallow?**

¹³ Sermon by Bob Deffinbaugh found at <http://villagebible.church/daniel8b>

Weathering the Storm

Daniel's sickness passed. God's grace was sufficient. Regaining his strength, God's prophet got up and went back to work as he normally would, "he rose and went about the king's business." Sinclair Ferguson says it well, "He returned to the duties to which God had called him. He did not retire from the world in view of the evil days that were coming. Nor did he go to the opposite extreme and live on a "high" visionary excitement. Instead he did his duty."

Daniel's attitude illustrates an important biblical principle: In view of what the future holds, we must live holy lives now. He caught a glimpse of realities that would take place centuries later. How then should we live? Passage after passage gives the same answer: Do the King's business; walk in obedience; live in holiness; purify yourself as He is pure.¹⁴

15. What is one area of your life that you've noticed growth in your own walk of obedience or personal holiness before the Lord over the past few months?

16. Where is God calling you to greater holiness and obedience in your life right now?

¹⁴ Sermon from Daniel Akin found at <http://villagebible.church/daniel8>

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

“And he shall be broken – but by no human hand.”

“These words are for the comfort of the saints who, being the meek, cannot in themselves contend with enemies such as Antiochus. Because of our sins God permits such tyrants to arise and harass His church. ‘It is therefore no matter of surprise, if, instead of one Antiochus, God should raise up many who are hardened and invincible in their obstinacy, and in their cruelty make many attempts with clandestine arts, and plot for the destruction of the Church’ (Calvin). But when such things occur, let us trust in God. The battle is His, and the overthrow of the enemy will often be without hand. Tyrants like Antiochus cannot halt the working of the efficacious grace of God.”¹⁵

17. As you look at the current state of the world we live in...

Where do you have a hard time trusting in the sovereignty of God?

Where are you seeing God “overthrow the enemy”?

18. How does knowing that no ruler or cultural movement can “halt the working of the efficacious grace of God” encourage you and motivate you to Discover, Develop, and Deploy disciples of Jesus Christ?

¹⁵ Young, E. J. (1949). *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*. WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 181

Son's Out

David Helm rightly adds, "In his earthly ministry, Jesus entered the temple at a time of religious degradation and laid claim on restoring it to its rightful place (John 2:13-22) [contra Antiochus and his evil actions]... Jesus' substitutionary death and resurrection put an end to the need for morning and evening sacrifices once and for all (Hebrews 10:1-18)....**The final word is not had by the ram, or the goat, but by the Lamb**" (Daniel For You, 154-55)¹⁶

19. **Take a moment without any distractions to praise God for Jesus' decisive triumph over sin and death and reflect on what that victory means for you today.**

¹⁶ Sermon from Daniel Akin found at <http://villagebible.church/daniel8>

This study was compiled and questions were written by Jeremy Anderson (Indian Creek Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 10

A Masterclass in Repentant Prayer

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 9:1-19

Over twenty years ago I was introduced to bank-by-phone. You simply dial in your payments, and the bank does the rest. It sounded like a great plan for me — until I made a terrible mistake one day. My former practice had been to write the checks to pay my bills in the evening, then take my paycheck to the bank the next day and drop my checks off in the mail. What I did not realize about the new way of doing things was that when you bank by phone, the payment is immediately subtracted from the account. Since I did not make my deposit until the next day, all fifteen payments bounced. At fifteen dollars per check, that totaled a lot of money for a poor assistant pastor.

I could not afford to pay my penalty. So I went to the bank and asked to talk with a vice-president. I explained the story to his secretary and told her that I realized I was completely in the wrong. I had no merit on my own that I could boast. I didn't have a lot of money in the bank, and I hadn't been a customer all that long. I told her that I was coming simply to "beg for mercy." In a few minutes a gentleman kindly ushered me into his office and told me to have a seat. He looked at me with a smile and said, "Tell me your story. I have never had anyone beg for mercy before. I like that." He mercifully forgave my debt.

By the mercies of God we can cry out, "O Lord, listen!" And once we have his ear, we can go on to the next step.¹⁷

OPEN IT

1. Did you ever have to ask for forgiveness as a child? How did you feel beforehand? How did you feel afterwards?

¹⁷ Stortz, Rodney. Daniel: The Triumph of God's Kingdom. O Lord, Listen, Forgive, and Act (Daniel 9:1-19). Crossway. 2016.

READ IT

Read Daniel 9:1-19

EXPLORE IT

2. Which activity led Daniel to a prayer of repentance? (Verse 2)
3. How did Daniel prepare himself for a prayer of confession in verse 3?
4. In Daniel's confession of sin, who does he say has sinned? (Verses 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18)
5. What individual sins does Daniel confess in verses 5-11?
6. How does Daniel describe God's judgment in verse 14?
7. What specific actions does Daniel ask God to take in his plea for mercy? (Verses 16-19)

APPLY IT

Repentant Prayer Confesses Sin (9:1-11)

Daniel's prayer is worthy of many studies. It is, as Calvin said, an "example... guide... [and] kind of common form" for prayer and the whole church. It has three parts. First, it contains a confession of Daniel's and the people's sin (Dan. 9:4-11). Second, there is acknowledgment that it is because of this sin that the just judgments of God had come upon them (vv. 11-14). Third, there is a shift in the prayer to plead for God's mercy (vv. 15-19). These are the three necessary marks of all true prayer: acknowledgment of sin and of the fact that sin always brings judgment and a plea for God's mercy. There is no other way we can approach God except as sinners seeking grace.¹⁸

8. Why do you think confessing our sin is a humbling experience? Why do our sins need to be confessed at all?

9. Have you ever acted like you've outgrown the need for confession? Read 1 John 1:8-9. What should confession of sin look like for the people of our church?

10. Is there something in your life that you need to confess to God right now? Write a prayer to God admitting your offense against Him, using some of Daniel's words, and receive His grace.

¹⁸ James Montgomery Boice. Daniel: An Expository Commentary. When Shall Messiah Come? Daniel 9:1-27. Baker Books. 1989.

Repentant Prayer Acknowledges that God's Judgements are Just (9:11-14)

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Luke 18:38). This was the cry of a man who knew his situation was desperate and yet also held out the hope that the Son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, would be merciful. Daniel finds himself in a similarly desperate situation, as he recalls the terms of God’s covenant and contemplates the sin of God’s people. Without a hint of trying to downplay their plight, Daniel thus confesses on behalf of his people, “we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules” (Dan. 9:5). And while he freely acknowledges that the Lord has been entirely righteous in his care for and even his punishment of Israel, Daniel still holds out the hope that God will yet be merciful to them. Thus, in his prayer he includes “pleas for mercy” (v. 3). God’s disposition to show mercy to hopeless sinners comes into clearest focus in the gospel. “According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).¹⁹

11. Have you ever heard anyone question if God is just? What sort of questions can be asked about the justice of God’s actions?

12. In verse 14, Daniel writes “...the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done.” How can calamity be the result of God’s righteousness?

¹⁹ Wilson, Todd A. Knowing the Bible: Daniel. A 12-week Practical Study Series on the Book of Daniel.
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-the-bible-daniel#week-10-daniels-prayer-and-its-answer-91-27>

13. What does Daniel's honesty in his prayer about the sinfulness of his people teach us about how we should pray?

Repentant Prayer Pleads for God's Mercy (9:15-19)

Daniel responded to Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years with repentance and hope. The text offers no details of his response to the Seventy Weeks prophecy, though it seems likely he continued to repent of his people's sin and hope that God would act out of his gracious character. Would that our response to God's words would also be repentance and hope. We repent of our own sins and the sins of our own "family," our brothers and sisters in Christ. While we do not stand in a national covenant with God as Daniel's people did, the New Testament indicates that we are a spiritual family bound together even more tightly by the blood of Christ. Like it or not, we stand together with "one another"— a phrase that pervades the apostolic writings to the fledgling early church. We confess and we hope for that ultimate restoration. Lord Jesus, come!²⁰

14. In verse 16, Daniel writes, "O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city..." How can mercy also be the outworking of God's righteousness? (See also question 12.)

²⁰ Widder, Wendy. Daniel: Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament. Macro Unit 3: Encouragement until God's Eternal Kingdom Comes. Zondervan. 2023.

15. Daniel asks God for specific restorative actions in verses 16-19. (See your answers to question 7.) Do you often pray specifically with that kind of faith? Why or why not?

16. The Christian life is designed to be filled with hope in Jesus. Where else do we sometimes turn for hope? What would a church fully hoping in Jesus look like?

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Dream of a Lifetime

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 9:20-27

Pastor Alistair Begg playfully but wisely says of Daniel 9:24-27, "This is my interpretation this morning. However, I reserve the right to change my mind tonight. Further, I reserve the right to change my mind tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, and any other time." After spending dozens and dozens of hours studying this text, I fully understand his position. Joyce Baldwin says, "the last four verses [of Daniel 9] present the most difficult text in the book..." (Daniel, TOTC, 163). Stephen Miller says Daniel 9:24-27, "are four of the most controversial verses in the Bible" (Daniel, NAC, 252). J. A. Montgomery is perhaps the most colorful when he writes, "the history of the exegesis of the 70 Weeks of Daniel is the Dismal Swamp of Old Testament criticism (quoted in Andrew Hill, Daniel, EBC, vol. 8, 168).

There is, without question, difficulty in the details. However, we must not let that reality distract us from the big picture that is clear and plain for all to see.

Charles Spurgeon lays out God's divine plan for us with his wonderful gift of words:

"The Lord God appointed a set time for the coming of his Son into the world; nothing was left to chance. Infinite wisdom dictated the hour at which the Messiah should be born and the moment at which he should be cut off. His advent and his work are the highest point of the purpose of God, the hinge of history, the center of providence, the crowning of the edifice of grace, and therefore peculiar care watched over every detail. Once in the end of the world hath the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and this is the event before which all other events must bow. The studious mind will be delighted to search out the reasons why the Messiah came not before and why he did not tarry till yet later ages. Prophecies declared the date, but long before infallible wisdom had settled it for profoundest reasons. It was well that the Redeemer came: it was well that he came in what Scripture calls the fullness of time, even in these last days. Note again that the Lord told his people somewhat darkly, but still with a fair measure of clearness, when the Christ would come." (Sermons on the Book of Daniel, 121).

So, God has a specific plan in which Messiah will come and deal decisively with sin, though He will be executed in the process, and many troubles will precede and follow that coming. Israel, in particular, will suffer, but God has decreed how and when the end will come. Regardless of where we are or what we are experiencing, we can trust Him. He is in control. His plan will come to pass just as He has planned

Our passage can be divided into two parts: 1) Daniel's prayers (9:20-23) and 2) God's prophecy (9:24-27). Prepare yourself for a hermeneutical rollercoaster!²¹

Dream Weaver

As we embark on the exploration of Daniel's vision, let's take a moment to reflect on the profound truths we've uncovered in our series on "Kingdoms, Chaos, and the Sovereignty of God." Thus far, our journey through Daniel's narrative has revealed the chess game between earthly kingdoms, the chaos they bring, and the steadfast sovereignty of God. Now, as we delve into Daniel's vision, we continue to unravel the threads of sin, redemption,

²¹<https://www.danielakin.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Daniel-9.20-27-Daniels-70-Weeks-and-The-Glorious-Work-of-Messiah-Jesus-manuscript-mjh.pdf>

and the diverse perspectives that Christians hold regarding this captivating passage. Let us never forget that at the end of all this, God wins!

OPEN IT

1. **Share with the group what your dream day looks like for you. Who would you want with you, and what would you want to do?**

READ IT

Read Daniel 9:20-27

EXPLORE IT

2. **What was Daniel doing in verse 20? Who visits Daniel and helps him with understanding?**
3. **What will happen during the first seventy weeks in verse 24?**
4. **What happened in the next sixty-two weeks in verse 25?**
5. **What happens in the final week in verse 27?**

APPLY IT

Beyond your wildest dreams!

During Israel's exile in Persia around 539 BC, Daniel experienced a significant vision. Fueled by a deep longing for his homeland and a keen awareness of the consequences of sin, Daniel sought a remedy. Engaging with Jeremiah's prophecy of a 70-year exile, he fervently prayed for forgiveness and the restoration of his people. The intervention of the angel Gabriel during Daniel's prayer brought forth a critical revelation. While the exile would eventually end, the underlying issue of sin would persist. God's ultimate plan extended beyond a mere return to geographical roots; it aimed at addressing sin at its core.

6. Daniel's prayer life was deeply connected to his time in God's word. How does this connection allow for a rich and robust walk with God?

7. Daniel's prayer was filled with confession and petition not only on his behalf but on behalf of his people. What happens when we start following such a pattern in our own prayer lives? How does it impact our relationship with other believers?

This dramatic answer to prayer came even as Daniel prayed. Jesus said, your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him (Matthew 6:8). Whenever there seems to be a delay in answer to prayer, there is a reason for the delay. When it is right to do it, God can answer prayer immediately. Sometimes, God answers prayer even before we pray." It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).²²

8. What current prayer request could you use a quick answer to? What things can you be doing as you wait for an answer?

A Dream Come true!

The connection between Daniel's prayer and Gabriel's response unveiled the purpose behind the 70 weeks. The vision affirmed God's enduring love for Daniel and outlined a comprehensive plan – to end rebellion, stop sin, atone for iniquity, usher in righteousness, seal prophecy, and anoint the holy place. Gabriel provided specific details about the 490 years— from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the arrival of the Anointed One. The Messiah's sacrificial journey, despite difficulties, would ultimately bring an end to sin. The subsequent destruction of Jerusalem signified judgment for Israel's persistent sin. One commentator brings a practical application to this when he says:

Thus far, the message Gabriel has brought to Daniel is good news. However, there is also bad news to come. This promised transformation—the new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke—will not arrive at the end of the seventy years of the exile. In fact, that period of judgment is simply a small part of a much larger plan of God, a plan which will not be completed in a period of seventy years but will take “seventy sevens” to work itself out (Dan. 9:24). God's timescale is far bigger than Daniel had imagined... It would not take a mere seventy years to accomplish a transformation in the hearts and lives of God's people but seventy times seven to accomplish a complete and ultimate victory over sin and evil. However, this bad news is not intended to cause Daniel to despair. Even though its coming will occur after his lifetime, the promised new covenant will arrive in due season, and it will accomplish everything that God has designed for it. We need to hear the challenge that this passage poses to our expectations of the way God works in our lives. We live in the age of the “instant,” when we expect everything to come to us now, if not sooner. To satisfy our impatience, we have invented meals that can be prepared rapidly in a microwave and rice that takes no more than a minute to cook.²³

9. Daniel may have thought that the culmination of things was closer than it really was. What might Daniel have been tempted to do in light of this news? Are these temptations similar to our day of waiting?

²² <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/daniel-9/>

²³ Daniel / Iain M. Duguid — (Reformed expository commentary)

“The first seven sevens (forty-nine years) commence with a command to rebuild Jerusalem (either the decree to Ezra in 458 B. C. or the decree to Nehemiah in 445 B. C.) and terminate with the completion of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah about forty-nine years later (either ca. 409 B.C. or ca. 396 B.C.).”²⁴

10. Daniel learned that there were another 49 years to the captivity. Most of his life would be living faithfully and obediently under some serious duress! How has your ongoing faithfulness over a lifetime shown Christ to a watching world?

11. While Gabriel’s message brought a level of bad news to Daniel, there was reason for some hope. God had a plan and was going to see it to completion. How does having a similar hope enable us to live more confidently and courageously in our day?

²⁴<https://www.danielakin.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Daniel-9.20-27-Daniels-70-Weeks-and-The-Glorious-Work-of-Messiah-Jesus-manuscript-mjh.pdf>

In Your Dreams!

*The richness of Daniel's vision is accompanied by its inherent difficulty. Christians hold diverse viewpoints regarding the interpretation of this passage, from dating decrees to the identity of the Anointed One. Disagreements may arise, but the overarching message remains clear: **The Messiah's mission is to deal with sin.** One commentator addresses this by saying:*

By the end of the “seventy weeks,” three things would be ended. The ending of these three things is described in the language of termination: “finish,” “put an end to,” and “atone.” The things that were to be ended were “transgression,” “sin,” and “iniquity.” These three words describe the same thing—what we generally call “sin”—though in slightly different ways. “Transgression” implies that there is a line that has been overstepped. “Sin” means to miss the mark, which implies that there is a target that has not been hit. “Iniquity” speaks of open and blatant rebellion or wickedness.²⁵

12. God is all about bringing an end to sin, are we? In what ways do you seek to address sin in your life? Give specific processes or steps to your personal fight against sin.

13. The only way to fully address the problem of sin would mean the death of the Anointed One (Jesus). How does this realization cause you greater gratitude for Christ's sacrifice?

²⁵ Sermon by Stuart Chase found @ <https://brackenhurstbaptist.co.za/the-good-news/>

In examining the interpretations of the seventy-sevens, Stephen Miller presents four major views that have shaped discussions on this complex passage:²⁶

- The seventy-sevens are literal years from 605 or 586 BC to the reign of Antiochus in 167–164 BC.
- The seventy-sevens are symbolic periods leading up to the first century AD.
- The seventy-sevens symbolize periods ending with the second coming of Christ, representing church history from Cyrus' decree in 538 BC to Christ's return.
- The seventy-sevens are literal years concluding with Christ's second coming, encompassing both his first and second coming. It introduces a prophetic gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week, with the climactic seventieth week still in the future. This perspective stands out as the most convincing and is the teaching position of our church. It can be illustrated as follows.

27

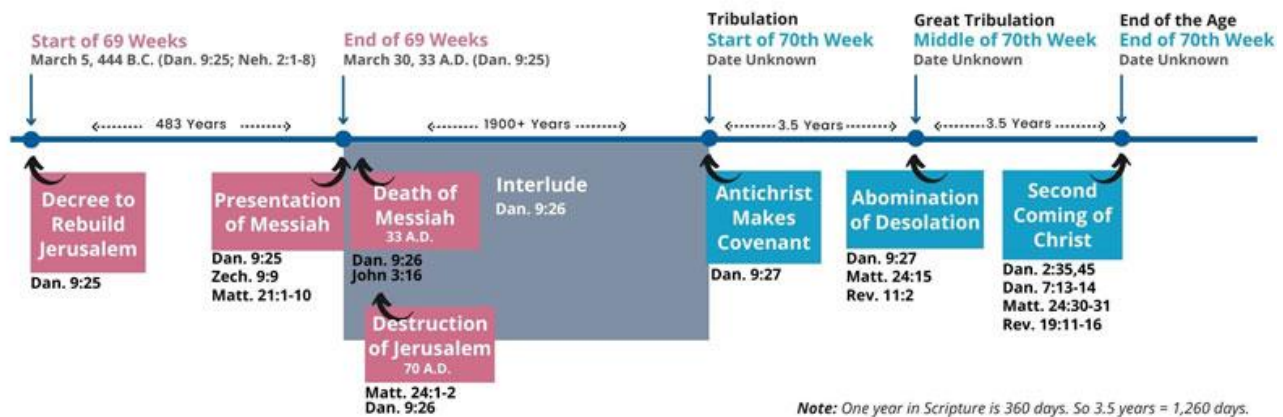


SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

By David Sheldon

Messiah's Salvation, Deliverance, & Eternal Kingdom

Daniel 9:24-27



14. According to the timeline above, if position four is correct, we find ourselves in an “interlude” which means that times of difficulty are on the horizon. Jesus says these times will come with labor pains that will intensify as we get closer. Looking at the present landscape in the world, what types of things or signs should we be expecting?

²⁶ Daniel (New American Commentary, by Stephen Miller)

²⁷ Timeline created by 4 Truth Ministry found @ <https://www.4truthministry.org/what-are-the-seventy-weeks-of-daniel/>

Gabriel speaks about a moment where “the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” Most scholars believe that this took place on the heels of Christ's death, burial and resurrection in AD 70 when all of Jerusalem and the Temple were utterly destroyed. This serves as a prototype of what is to take place in the time to come. In Matthew 24, Jesus foretells the Temple's destruction and offers guidance to His disciples. He:

- *Advises watchfulness for signs of the end times*
- *Encourages endurance in faith*
- *Emphasizes the importance of preaching the Gospel*

15. In light of what was ahead, what things had Jesus omitted from this list to a generation on the cusp of such difficult days in AD 70? What does this say about our purpose and pursuit in these last days?

It seems that the next event in God's timetable is the appearance of the antichrist. This global leader will begin with a covenant or peace treaty but will end in him wreaking havoc in the world.

16. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. As we reflect on historical events, it becomes evident that leaders with harmful intentions often amass a significant following on their journey to power. What factors contribute to people being susceptible to the influence of such figures with harmful motives?

Gabriel says, "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week, he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering." Many believe that this leader will present himself as God and demand he be worshiped.

17. What might cause people to worship this man as God? What type of signs and wonders would it take for your unbelieving friends or family to affirm deity to such a man?

18. Does knowing that "desolations have been decreed" for our days ahead bring comfort or concern? How will these future days change the way we view our relationship with God and our connection to other believers? Do you think your present engagement/involvement might look different than it does in our times of ease?

Works like a dream!

Understanding the profound truths of Daniel's vision transforms our approach to life. Recognizing sin as the root cause prompts a continuous commitment to repentance and reliance on Jesus as the ultimate solution. This truth brings confidence in forgiveness and secures eternal hope, transcending temporary trials. We are called to live in the light of these profound truths. In every circumstance, believers find assurance in the enduring righteousness made available through faith in Christ. Daniel 9:20--27 serves as a guide, not so much about discerning the future but instead directing believers to a purpose greater than earthly concerns – the eternal significance of Christ's victory over sin.

- 19. How might taking a long view of God's involvement in human history change your pursuits and goals in light of the coming days? What needs to change so that we might honor God in even greater ways?**

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 12

Spiritual Warfare: Behind-the-Scenes

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 10

If you have been studying the Book of Daniel carefully, you may have noticed that the visions of the book tend to increase in length and complexity as they unfold. Or, to put it another way, later visions expand the earlier ones. This feature is particularly evident as we come to the last three chapters. They form a unit, the longest unit in the entire book, and they contain a vision. Up to this point the visions have been handled in one chapter each. Now there is a lengthy vision, presented in chapter 11, to which a preface chapter 10 and a postscript chapter 12 are added.

The chapter may be studied from a number of directions. It gives insight into Daniel's concern for his people and for the work being done so far away in Jerusalem. It contains important lessons about prayer. Chiefly, however, chapter 10 opens the door on the spiritual warfare that we know from other passages is being waged around the work of God. The chapter begins by saying that the message Daniel received concerned a great war, described in chapter 11. But before this earthly war is described we are given a glimpse of a greater earlier war going on in heaven.²⁸

OPEN IT

1. **What's your favorite glimpse behind-the-scenes you've experienced?**

READ IT

Read Daniel 10

²⁸ James Montgomery Boice. Daniel: An Expository Commentary. Spiritual Wickedness in High Places. Daniel 10:1-11:1. Baker Books. 1989.

EXPLORE IT

2. What does Daniel do for three weeks according to verse 2? From what does he fast?
3. How does Daniel describe the Messenger who shows up? (Verse 5-6)
4. How did Daniel respond to the presence of the angel in verses 8, 9, 10, 11, 15?
5. Who helped overcome the prince of the kingdom of Persia to allow this conversation with Daniel? (Verse 13)
6. What needed to happen to Daniel so he could speak in the presence of such glory? (Verse 16)
7. What does verse 21 tell us to expect in chapter 11 of Daniel?

APPLY IT

Our Prayers Are Always Heard by God

When the vision was revealed to Daniel, he had been mourning for three weeks, abstaining from meat and wine and the normal hygienic anointing (10:2-3). Fasting could accompany sorrow and mourning, and that was the case for Daniel. Although he does not explain his reason for mourning and fasting, the timing of the vision is significant. A vision came to him on “the twenty-fourth day of the first month,” which was the month of Nisan. The days of mourning and fasting would have continued through the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which immediately followed. Daniel is distressed.²⁹

8. Even our Biblical heroes experience great distress. Name your top two stressors right now. What’s stressful about them?

²⁹ Mitch Chase. Daniel: A Commentary by Mitch Chase. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/daniel/#section-16>

9. **Read Philippians 4:6. Do you find it helpful when people share verses like this with you when you're stressed? Why or why not?**

10. **Could you see yourself engaging in an intense season of prayer and mourning like Daniel? Have you before? Are there any situations in your life that could use this kind of prayer?**

The heavenly figure strengthened Daniel, helping him from his prostrate position (10:9–10). The figure came in response to Daniel's prayer. In fact, from the first day Daniel began to seek understanding (probably three weeks earlier; see 10:2), God heard his words. Part of what Daniel needed to understand was the spiritual warfare that was currently being waged. An angelic—demonic—power, whom the figure calls the “prince of the kingdom of Persia,” had opposed the figure for twenty-one days, which was the same amount of time Daniel had been mourning and fasting. In the spiritual realm there had been spiritual warfare, and Daniel was learning about it from the divine figure in this vision.³⁰

11. **Do you think there's anything the people of Village Bible Church can do to come to worship service with greater expectation of encountering God's presence?**

³⁰ Ibid.

12. Describe a time when you have been overwhelmed with God's goodness and glory? What regular practices can help us behold God's goodness more often?

This May Have Been the Preincarnate Son of God

The details of the Angel's appearance are meant to ignite the imagination and fill it with both awe and fear. And Daniel was afraid. The men with Daniel could not see the vision, but they fled to hide anyway (10:7). Only Daniel beheld this overwhelming sight, and his strength and color left him (10:8). This set of descriptions is the source for John's words about Jesus in Revelation 1. John saw that the exalted Son of God had eyes like fire, feet like bronze, and a roaring voice (Rev 1:14–15). The face of Christ shone brightly, and when John first saw him, John fell at his feet like a dead man (Rev 1:16–17).

John's use of imagery from Daniel 10 to describe Jesus in his vision may confirm that the Old Testament figure was divine and not a created angel. In fact, John saw that the Son of Man in his vision wore a long robe with a golden sash around his chest (Rev 1:13), and this detail alludes to what the prophet Daniel saw, a man clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold around his waist (Dan 10:5). Reading these Old and New Testament chapters together, readers may conclude that not only did the prophet Daniel see a divine figure but that this divine figure was the preincarnate Son of God.³¹

13. A number of commentators think that one of the figures Daniel speaks with is Jesus. Read Revelation 1:13-16 and write down one parallel you see with the figure here.

³¹ Ibid.

14. God's comforting presence continues within us, His redeemed. What does that mean for your everyday life?

Ongoing Spiritual Warfare Is Waged in the Spiritual Realm

Though Daniel was overwhelmed with anguish and weakness, the angel strengthened him to receive the revelation that follows in chapters 11 and 12 (10:15-19). But, there was more angelic struggle ahead. The angel had to return at once to fight against the prince of Persia. Then he told Daniel that the prince of Greece would come (10:20). This indicates that the demons of Satan's kingdom are always at war against God's kingdom and servants. It's this warfare that you can't see the war in the spiritual realm-that you must be prepared to wage (see Eph 6:10-18).³²

15. What's the danger in ignoring the reality of the spiritual battles going on in the spiritual realm? Are there any dangers in over-emphasizing spiritual warfare?

³² Evans, Tony. The Tony Evans Bible Commentary. United States, B&H Publishing Group, 2019.

16. Read through Ephesians 6:10-18. Of all the various ways to prepare for the temptations and lies of Satan, which one seems most helpful for the week ahead of you? Pray to ask God for extra strength in that area.

We have been forewarned that an enemy relentlessly threatens us, an enemy who is the very embodiment of rash boldness, of military prowess, of crafty wiles, of untiring zeal and haste, of every conceivable weapon and of skill in the science of warfare. We must, then, bend our every effort to this goal: let us not be overwhelmed by carelessness or faint-heartedness, but with courage rekindled, let us stand our ground in combat.³³

³³ Calvin, John. Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol 1. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960. 173. This study was compiled and questions were written by David Wood (Aurora Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Appointed Times

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 11:1-35

Overview of the chapter – This chapter contains perhaps the most detailed prophecy in Scripture. It covers a period of around 375 years with stunning accuracy and precision. And the last parts of the prophecy point to the end times and the final war over Jerusalem.

The prophecy starts off with Persia. Then it moves to Persian aggression against Greece, the Greek invasion of Persia, the splitting of the Greek kingdom into four parts, and the centuries long war between the Ptolemy and Seleucid empires.

The prophecy is so accurate that atheists refuse to accept the traditional date for the writing of Daniel. Since they don't believe in God, they cannot believe that these prophecies were made before the fact. Therefore, they date the book of Daniel over four hundred years later to a time after these events were already history. It should be noted that they do so without evidence, simply believing that it is impossible that this could have been written before the events happened.

But God controls time and history.

He knows the future better than we know the past.³⁴

OPEN IT

1. If you could go back in time and talk with your 17 year old self, what piece of advice would you be sure to share?

READ IT

Read Daniel 11:1-35

EXPLORE IT

2. Who is speaking in this chapter?

³⁴ David Guzik, www.enduringword.com

- 8. What are some of the reasons that God might allow evil kingdoms to rise to power? Do you believe that God uses difficulty to work in His people? If so, how has he used it in your life?**

Then a mighty king will arise, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases. After he has arisen, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others. Daniel 11:3,4

Scholars agree that this mighty king refers to Alexander the Great.

The Jewish historian Josephus records an amazing encounter between Alexander and the high priest. Alexander often allowed his army to ransack cities he conquered. But before he came to Jerusalem, he had a dream. In his dream, he saw the high priest and others coming out of the city to him in white garments.

When he approached the city, the dream was fulfilled. The high priest actually showed Alexander the prophecies in the book of Daniel concerning a mighty Greek ruler who would conquer Persia. Alexander the Greek took this to refer to himself. He was so pleased that he offered sacrifice to God according to the high priest's direction. He believed it was a sign from God of his coming victory. And so, Alexander spared Jerusalem and continued his conquest of the Persians.³⁵

Alexander's kingdom was divided into four parts. Two of these kingdoms were neighbors of Israel. The "kings of the south" refer to the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. And the "kings of the north" refer to the Seleucid dynasty in Syria. Daniel 11:5-20 covers years of fighting between these powers.³⁶

- 9. Verse 10 tells us that "sons shall wage war." Can patterns of sin be passed down through a family's generations? How have you observed this in your own life and/or in the lives of others?**

³⁵ For a detailed account of this story, read Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, book XI, chapter 8: <https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-11.html>

³⁶ To learn more about the fulfillment of this prophecy go to <https://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/understanding-the-book-of-daniel/daniel-11/>

10. What do you want to be remembered for? What are you hoping to pass on to the next generation? How does believing that God is in control of your life help you in building a heritage for the next generation?

Scholars agree that the “contemptible king” referred to in Daniel 11:21 is Antiochus IV. He was not heir to the throne. His older brother, Seleucus III was king. Seleucus III was assassinated. Many suspect Antiochus IV was responsible as he assumed the throne soon after. As the text says, Antiochus IV engaged in extensive flattery with relevant parties to win their favor.

Antiochus IV gave himself the title Epiphanes, which means “illustrious.” Many Jews instead called him Epimanes, which means “madman.”

The rest of the chapter paints a very ugly picture of this wicked man. Here are some of his character qualities:

- Flatterer (21) – He was skilled in intrigue and smooth speech, using it to his advantage.
- Deceiver (23) – Alliances he made were just a mask for him to carry out his sinister purposes.
- Wicked (27) – The text describes him as “bent on doing evil.” Many politicians have evil motivations and desires, but attempt to cover it up. With Antiochus IV, there was little façade.
- Treacherous (27) – He would sit down and feast with his enemies, pretending to make alliances and deals. But his words were lies and he never intended to carry them out.³⁷

11. How does the story of the “contemptible king” remind us of the potential danger of manipulative leadership?

³⁷ <https://studyandobey.com/inductive-bible-study/daniel-studies/daniel-11/>

12. Read Proverbs 21:1. How do you see the truth of this verse in Daniel 11? How can this truth help you and the Church as we go through another election cycle?

Antiochus Epiphanes persecuted the Jews (vv. 28-34)

Daniel 11:30 – For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.

History tells us that he had 80,000 Jews killed, 40,000 enslaved, and 40,000 taken prisoner. Here are some of his worst acts he committed:

- Parents who circumcised their sons were hung along with the circumcised child.
- The temple was desecrated.
- The altar was desecrated when he had a pig sacrificed on it and sprayed pig blood around the temple.
- An image of Zeus (Antiochus IV was Greek) was set up in the temple.³⁸

13. Verse 32 says that the people who know God “shall stand firm.” In the face of oppression by the “contemptible king,” what role does faithful resistance play? How can you apply this principle to your life?

³⁸ <https://studyandobey.com/inductive-bible-study/daniel-studies/daniel-11/>

Prophecies like Daniel 11 remind us of God's sovereignty.

Knowing that God is sovereign over the past, present and future encourages us in the following ways:

- **Faith** – Since he has proved Himself to be faithful and His promises to be sure in the past, He will do the same in the future. The prophecies that have not been fulfilled yet (such as His second coming), will be. We can take it to the bank.
- **Perseverance** – Knowing that God is sovereign over history, encourages us to persevere. We are not subject to ill luck or random chance. Instead, God is working behind-the-scenes for our good. He wants to accomplish His perfect plan in our lives. Therefore, we should persevere and not give up.
- **Hope** – We have great hope for the future. The world will not end through some chance disaster such as an asteroid or a nuclear war. Something even better than what we have now is coming.
- **Boldness** – One of the key themes in Daniel is that God is on the highest throne. His kingdom endures forever. These prophecies remind us that worldly powers will not last. The person who is sitting in judgment toward you will himself be judged. The one who claims authority over you, has an authority. You do not need to fear man. Boldly do what is right without compromise because all will answer to the Lord one day.³⁹

14. What does Daniel 11 teach about the relationship between world events and God's larger plan? How does the intricate detail of this prophecy strengthen your trust in God's sovereignty?

15. Do you believe that God is sovereign over all the details of human history, even our lives today, or only those events in which He specifically prophesied?

16. Can you draw any parallels between the geopolitical struggles outlined in Daniel 11 and those in the world today? How might understanding this chapter change your perspective on current world events?

³⁹ <https://studyandobey.com/inductive-bible-study/daniel-studies/daniel-11/>

This study was compiled and questions were written by Steve Lombardo (Plano Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 14

At the Time of the End

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 11:36-12:4

“We still have the final section of this chapter and the verses in Daniel 12 that go with it. These are difficult, as every scholar or commentator acknowledges, and there are many views. Do they relate to history or to events that have not yet occurred? Are they literal or symbolic? ***The answers to these questions result in quite different approaches, and since there have been great minds arrayed on all sides, it is wise to proceed carefully and with humility.***”

Earlier I mentioned that there are three chief approaches to this section. The first is that it is continuing to speak of the career of Antiochus Epiphanes. The best argument for this is that there is no obvious break between verses 35 and 36. So when verse 36 begins, “The king will do as he pleases,” it is natural to identify this king as the last-mentioned king of the previous section, Antiochus. The difficulty is that what is said in this section does not fit Antiochus’s known career. Calvin in particular notices this, and so do other scholars. It is possible that Antiochus Epiphanes may be a type of a greater evil character prophesied for the last days – I believe that is the case – but if these verses refer to either, it must be the later character and not Antiochus himself whose career is highlighted.

The second view is that these verses prophesy part of the history of the early Roman Empire. This was Calvin’s view and he went at it with great thoroughness. No one can easily discount Calvin, of course. But it is significant that Calvin was not entirely satisfied with this own interpretation, at least as I read him. For one thing, he refers to the “king” whose career is described in these verses, not to a specific individual, but to the “kingdom” of the Romans as a whole. He defends this at some length. But if this is right, it is out of step with the way kings are referred to in the first part of the chapter. There “king” refers to a known individual. It should be the same here, in my judgment. Moreover, Calvin has difficulty fixing the details of each prophecy, which is the chief reason I have for saying that the prophesied events must be future.

The third view is that these verses refer to the Antichrist who is said elsewhere to appear at the end of all things – just before the return of Jesus Christ. There are a number of additional reasons for seeing the verses this way. In verse 40 the angel speaks of “the time of the end,” which is neither the time of Antiochus Epiphanes or the time of the early Roman Empire. It refers to the end of the world immediately before the final judgment. Since the events of verse 40 are picking up from the verses that have gone before, the phrase “the time of the end” fixes the time frame of this section.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Boice. 114-115.

OPEN IT

1. What is something that you are looking forward to in the next few months?

READ IT

Read Daniel 11:36-12:4

EXPLORE IT

2. What are some of the defining characteristics of this king in verses 36-39?
3. How does this passage speak about this king's conquests with foreign nations?
4. What is the ultimate end for this king?
5. At that time, what awaits God's people according to Daniel 12:1?
6. What will happen to those who "sleep in the dust of the earth"?
7. What was Daniel instructed to do with this book in Daniel 12:4?

APPLY IT

Here we shift from what was fulfilled in the Ptolemies and the Selucids to what will be fulfilled in the Antichrist, the final world dictator. Daniel was told that this revelation pertained to the latter days (Daniel 10:14), and Daniel 11:36 begins to look more towards this final world dictator, who is sort of a “last days Antiochus Epiphanes.”

We know that everything about this prophecy was not fulfilled during the career of Antiochus Epiphanes. Jesus specifically said the real abomination of desolation was still in the future (Matthew 24:15). The Apostle Paul paraphrased Daniel 11:36 in reference to the coming Antichrist: Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Antiochus Epiphanes is important, but mostly as a historical preview of the Antichrist. This is why so much space is given to describing the career of one evil man – because he prefigures the ultimate evil man. Antiochus Epiphanes is the “trailer” released well before the Antichrist, who is like the “feature.”⁴¹

8. In the opening paragraph of this lesson, we read that James Montgomery Boice recognizes that there are differing views and interpretations of this passage. Why is humility necessary for us both personally and as a church to study passages like this?

9. The commentary above identifies Antiochus Epiphanes as a “type” or “trailer” of the Antichrist who is prophesied to come later. How does studying and understanding these “types” benefit us today?

⁴¹ Guzik, David. Found at: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/daniel-11/>

10. God frequently works through “types” throughout the Bible. These “types” are people or events that personify, characterize, and foreshadow greater fulfillments in the future. What are some other examples of “types” you can think of in God’s Word?

This passage introduces us to the Antichrist that is yet to step into power on the world stage. At the end of Daniel 11, we are given a snapshot into the Antichrist’s:

- **Character** (Daniel 11:36-39)
- **Career** (Daniel 11:40-44)
- **Collapse** (Daniel 11:45)

Verse 45 tells us nothing about how the Antichrist will be defeated. Evidently his end will be sudden, swift, and unexpected. This fits with the picture given in other passages in Daniel regarding the suddenness of Christ’s coming. It is like ...

- The Rock that hit the Statue in Daniel 2
- The Court that passes judgment in Daniel 7
- The end that comes without human power in Daniel 8
- The end that is decreed in Daniel 9.

The battle is over before it starts. Men run for cover but there is nowhere to hide. The great day of judgment has come and no one can escape. The message is clear. You can’t take on God and win. You can fight him if you like, but as the wise man said, your arms are too short to box with God.⁴²

11. In what ways do we see the character of the Antichrist reflected in present day ideologies?

⁴² Pritchard, Ray. “Who is the Antichrist?” <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/who-is-the-antichrist/>

12. What does the sudden collapse of the Antichrist's career teach us about the eminence of God? What attributes belong to God that contribute to this conclusion?

Our view of history is foundational to the way we live. If history is an assortment of random circumstances, coming from nowhere and going nowhere, then faithful suffering has no possible meaning. It is a wasted life that could have been better spent on pursuing pleasure instead. But if history is actually following God's predetermined course to a final end, then our actions are filled with meaning. Any sacrifices that are demanded of us will be made more than worthwhile by our hope of glory on the last day, when the dead shall rise: "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:2-3).

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, if it is only for this life that we have hope, then we are of all men most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19). If all of God's plans are being worked out within the scope of time and space, then persecuted believers are being short-changed and missing out on much that life has to offer. But if there is a heaven to come, in which earthly deeds will be judged and faithfulness to God will be rewarded, then those who are faithful to God, even unto death, have made the best choice of all. As Jim Elliot once said, not long before he was martyred by the Auca Indians of South America, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." The hope of glory, rooted in God's sovereign control of history, makes any sacrifice worthwhile for the sake of faithfulness to God.⁴³

13. Do you feel that knowing God will fulfill His plans and purposes through human affairs gives greater or lesser significance to your life?

⁴³ Duguid, Iain M.. Daniel (Reformed Expository Commentary) . P&R Publishing, Kindle Edition.

14. How does studying biblical prophecy shape or guide the perspective of the current events and circumstances of our own lives today?

But those who have placed their trust in the Lord and have been redeemed by his mercy will endure forever. Those who have washed their robes and made them clean in the blood of the Lamb will shine for all eternity, endued with the glory of God. The saints will not endure forever because of their own faithfulness and suffering, however. There is no redeeming power intrinsic to the blood of the martyrs. Those who enter heaven, whether as martyrs or as regular believers, do so through the power of the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14; 12:11). It is because Christ has suffered and died and has risen again that history has meaning and purpose. It is because Christ has shed his blood for me that I can look forward to spending eternity in his light.⁴⁴

15. There are great men and women of faith who have gone before, many of our own day, and many who will come after. How do we avoid idolizing these individuals and still learn from their lives and examples?

⁴⁴ Duguid, Iain M.. Daniel (Reformed Expository Commentary) . P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

16. We all hope to be faithful and persevere to the end. How does one accomplish this and where does one find the strength for faithfulness and endurance?

Boice concludes this section of his commentary with this statement: "The bearing of these things on our lives is that we are to live for the Lord Jesus Christ and honor Him regardless of the circumstances."⁴⁵ I understand this to mean that outcomes belong to the Lord. We don't always see the whole puzzle and we don't know what tomorrow will bring, but we have been given today and today belongs to the Lord just as much as tomorrow.

17. When it comes to serving the Lord faithfully this week, what changes in priorities, actions or perspectives that you need to make?

⁴⁵ Boice. 116.

In order for justice to be meted out at the coming of the Messiah and of His kingdom, the dead must be raised so that all men receive their just reward. This resurrection of the righteous and the wicked is very plainly prophesied in verse 2 of our text. The righteous will be raised and rewarded with everlasting life, while the wicked will be raised and given the recompense of everlasting contempt.⁴⁶

18. When you are called to give an account before the Great Judge, what will be your claim to righteousness?

⁴⁶ Sermon by Bob Deffinbaugh. Found at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/hope-heaven-daniel-121-13>

This study was compiled and questions were written by Jeremy Anderson (Indian Creek Campus) — www.villagebible.church/smallgroup

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Unsatisfying Endings

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 12:5-13

Have you ever read a book or watched a movie that you really enjoyed all the way through and then at the end something changed? The ending just seemed off, unfulfilling, maybe even wrong or bad?

Sometimes we want the predictable ending because it's the comfortable one, the familiar one. Hallmark Christmas movies follow a formula. They get panned by critics and have become memes in popular culture, but they keep getting made because people want them. We want the "happily ever after" fairy tale, we want the final scene to end with an air of hopefulness and fulfillment that we don't often get in real life. Sure, it's saccharine, overly sentimental, but that's why those kinds of movies get watched.

We often apply a similar idea to the books of the Bible—end it on a high note please! We often get it too. Think of the end to many of Paul's letters which include encouraging words or the final verses of Jude which have become a regular benediction for worship services. Daniel does not end on such a note, at least not in the way that we want or expect. Chapters 10 and 11 along with the first four verses of chapter 12 relay Daniel's vision of things to come, a vision at once incredibly specific and difficult to understand. At verse 5 things take a strange turn. Nine remaining verses. We might expect a vision of hope or at least clarity as to what is going on, but that is not the way Daniel ends. We may well be tempted to say, or at least think, "can you try again please, this really is a terrible way to end a book." It's an understandable response. Normal. But a deeper look at the end of Daniel, one that looks at where the book has come so far as well as where it ends up, reveals something deeper, something true not only for the future but here and now as well.

OPEN IT

1. Is there a specific book or movie that you saw and hated the ending to at one point in your life, but now looking back on it you see the ending as jarring but actually very good? What changed your mind.

READ IT

Read Daniel 12:5-13

EXPLORE IT

2. How does v.5 change in perspective from the previous verses?

3. What does one “man” ask the other? (v.6)

4. What does Daniel focus his inquiry on?

5. What is the final response to Daniel?

APPLY IT

We have come a long way from chapter 1 in which we were introduced to the teenage Daniel and his friends. Now Daniel is an old man, in his 80s, and likely quite near to the end of his life. From chapter 10 to the beginning of chapter 12 he is given one last vision, at once specific and full of difficulties. When the vision is finished, we come to these last few verses and find ourselves in an ending that at least feels anticlimactic and perhaps even maddening. One of the two angelic beings does not understand at least the timing of the events in the prophecy and asks the other for explanation. Daniel himself asks about the outcome and doesn't get a clear answer. Especially for those of us who want to figure things out, to know “what's going on”, this cryptic answer feels quite unsatisfactory. However, when we look closer we see that Daniel's ending is actually quite in line with the rest of the book and provides true answers for Daniel, for the people who would be living during the times to come and to us today.

Verses 5-7 record an interaction between what seem to be two angels. Longman states:

it is fitting, now that the message of prophecy has been delivered, to return to the scene and characters described in 10:4-21. We are back at the bank of the river, the celestial being still hovering over the water. Now, however, there are clearly two other figures (probably angelic) on each side of the river. One of the two is surely the angel who delivered the message (conceivably Gabriel, though unnamed both here and in ch. 10). The other angel is unnamed, but (and this is more of a stretch) he might be Michael, who was mentioned at the end of chapter 10 as the angel who helped fight the way to reach Daniel in the first place. The ambiguities . . . make the scene a bit murky, but this ambiguity does not affect the interpretation. . . .

This figure then delivers an enigmatic answer that reminds us of the answer given in 7:25: “a time, times and half a time” (12:7). As we saw there, the intention is not to give a precise time period but rather to indicate that just as wickedness seems to be gaining momentum, it will be slowed and then stopped. Such cessation will happen at a time of great distress, since it will be at the moment when “the power of the holy people has been finally broken.” Deliverance comes at the most unlikely time. God seems to work that way. When human resources run out, God steps in to demonstrate his power.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Tremper Longman, *Daniel: The NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 286-287.

This does not mean that there isn't a 3 ½ year period also represented (whether it relates to the time of Antiochus Epiphanies, the Antichrist in the future, or both). Rather, it is a reminder that no matter the time and place, God grants both the time and extent of evil's reign. It will not last forever. If this ambiguous time period were not enough on its own, two more time periods are mentioned in verses 11 and 12: 1290 days and 1335 days. While these are roughly 3 ½ years, why the 45-day difference? Several suggestions have been made but none are completely clear or without doubt. Of this question, Longman says "God alone knows—and that seems to be the point. God knows that there is an end that he has determined, but we cannot figure it out because we are not supposed to."⁴⁸ This does not mean that we cannot have specific and even strong beliefs on one position or another, rather, that we are to hold them with an open hand (we may be wrong) and to remember that ultimately this time of suffering and opposition to God is in his hands.

6. What do you think is the significance of the fact that one of the angels in this passage doesn't know how long it will be until the end? (v.6)

7. As you look back on the studies through Daniel, how have your views on specific timeframes changed? Why?

8. Verse 10 says that the time of suffering will purify, cleanse, and refine God's people but that the wicked will still act wickedly. How should this be both an encouragement and warning to us?

⁴⁸ IBID, 287.

9. In verse 11, Daniel is told that the wicked will not understand but the wise will, even though Daniel himself doesn't understand (v.8). Clearly the praise given to Daniel earlier in the book shows that he is not wicked, so the wise seems to refer to whenever that last time is. How can this be an encouragement to us when we do not understand?

10. In the very last verse, we see the continuation of the thought begun in verse 9—Daniel is to go his way because some things are hidden—go on your way, finish your life, rest in death for you will be resurrected and receive an inheritance at the end. How can this be an encouragement to us when things seem dark?

As we conclude the book it is appropriate to see how this ending in many ways is the perfect ending. Daniel has lived long and faithfully. He has been pulled away from everything and everyone, but has risen to the position God has had for him—a career spanning perhaps seven decades and two empires. He has gained a reputation for understanding and insight, but here at the end he doesn't understand and is reminded of the very thing that he said in 2:28. God reveals mysteries. God holds even the arrogant and powerful empires of the world that oppose him in his hands and to his timeline. God does not require that we know everything, but that we trust him.

11. What theme from Daniel has become most significant to you over the course of our study and why?

12. What has been the thing that you understood least but now feel that you have a better handle on?

13. What are the questions you still have or want to study further?

14. How does the example of Nebuchadnezzar and his gradual understanding of who God is and his repentance give you insight on how to think about or interact with the nonbelievers you know? (and how perhaps do you fall prey to thinking like him)?

15. How does Daniel's example of faithfulness in the small things set the stage for his faithfulness in the big things? How can you begin to take steps in a similar way?

16. Over the course of our study through Daniel we have repeatedly seen themes surrounding the kingdoms and chaos of our world and how through it all God is still sovereign. As you look back through the book of Daniel, how have you been challenged to reconsider what you believe and how you live your faith in light of this truth?