

Daniel's Visions

Daniel's visions are seen as a minefield by many, who then ignore them as being in the 'too difficult' tray. Others, with vivid imaginations, use them as fodder for all sorts of wacky eschatological ideas, enabling them to lay down all sorts of cultic foundations. Yet others use them as a prime source for Premillennial and Dispensational doctrines.

What I want to show is that, if you carefully examine them in context, comparing them with each other, most of them are found to be quite simple to understand. Indeed, they are a huge proof for the authenticity of Scripture as they accurately foretell what happened in world history from Daniel's time onwards.

Concerning the major parallel visions (and including Nebuchadnezzar's vision explained by Daniel), the best way to show their meaning is by use of a tabular format containing simple comments.

Regarding the subsequent more controversial and complex visions, these are covered after the table in a concise exposition.

In this way one can observe the salient features of the visions and see a simple explanation of world history culminating in the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ, ruling over all with his saints.

Nebuchadnezzar's Vision Dan 2:31-45	Daniel's Vision Dan 7:2-28	Meaning
The great statue (idol)	Four great beasts	Four empires
	Winds stirring the sea (7:2). Four great ('monstrous'), different beasts came up from the stirred sea (7:3).	Sea equals peoples, 'great sea' = mankind in tumult. [Note 7:17, 'kings from the earth'.] Wind = God's sovereign power over mankind. Beasts equals empires subsequently arising from the peoples in series. ¹
One: The Babylonian Empire		
Head of statue made of gold (v32)	Lion with eagle's wings (7:4). Wings plucked and stands like a man with a human heart.	Babylonian empire, centred in Nebuchadnezzar at its height (2:38). Wings speak of swiftness, eagle's wings speak of power to pluck up. The sphinx (lion with wings and face) was a symbol used in Babylonia. ² Plucked wings equals conquering ceases. The human imagery refers to the humanising of the originally beastly kingdom after the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar.
Two: The Medo-Persian Empire		
Chest and arms of silver (32)	Bear , raised up on one side (7:5). Three ribs in its mouth, devours much flesh.	An inferior empire following the Babylonian; ie. Medo-Persian (2:39). Raised up on one side refers to the Persian aspect being raised up as the Persian Empire. Three ribs = 3 kingdoms conquered (Babylonia, Lydia, Egypt). Devours much flesh – bigger empire than Babylonian, further conquests.
	Daniel 8:3-4 Ram with two horns, one higher than the other. Expands west, north and south.	The two horns are the kings of Media and Persia (8:20). The directions equate to the three ribs of the bear.
	Daniel 11:2 Three kings of Persia, then a rich fourth who stirs up Greece.	Kings = Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius Hystaspis, Xerxes. ³ Xerxes spent vast sums raising a huge army, attacking Greece.
Three: The Macedonian (Greek) Empire		
Belly and thighs of bronze (32).	Leopard [rather, a panther] (7:6). Four wings of a bird. Four heads. Dominion given to it.	A third empire (2:29). Panther equals swiftness, agility, intelligence. Four wings re-affirms swiftness, but less powerful and noble than eagle's wings, but greater ability to travel. This is the Macedonian (or Greek) Empire of Alexander. Defeats the Persian Empire swiftly and thoroughly then expanded further. Four wings also refers to the split of the empire between Alexander's generals.

¹ In the OT Gentile nations are often called 'beasts' (Ezek 29:3ff.; Isa 27:1, 51:9).

² One was excavated at Nimrud. Nebuchadnezzar had been compared to a lion and an eagle (Jer 4:7, 49:19, 22, 50:17, 44; Lam 4:19; Hab 1:8; Ezek 17:3, 12). The lion is the king of beasts and the eagle the king of birds; gold is the chief metal. Note that this means that the book was written by someone who knew Babylon well (liberals date it much later).

³ Smerdis, an unimportant impostor, is ignored. Alternatively, some count the kings subsequent to Cyrus and include Smerdis.

		Dominion given to it shows that it became the greatest empire (at the time) in boundaries.
	<p>Daniel 8:5-27 Male goat from the west comes suddenly with single horn. Attacks the ram furiously. Breaks ram's horns. Goat's large horn broken and replaced by four horns. One little one attacks the 'Glorious Land', exalts himself against God, stops the sacrifices and defiles the sanctuary for 2300 days.⁴</p>	<p>Goat = Greece (8:21). Horn is Alexander. Breaking ram's horns equals breaking Persian power. Large horn broken = sudden death of Alex. In 323 BC. Four horns are the Greek empire generals who had less power. Symmachus over Thrace; Cassander over Macedonia; Seleucus over Syria and Ptolemy over Egypt.⁵ Little horn (Lit. 'out of littleness' i.e. not mighty) is a powerful king late in the Greek Empire with sinister motives (8:23). He attacks the Jews (8:24), the glorious land. 'Host of heaven' is metaph. for Israel; 'Prince of host' = Yahweh. Some of host = Jewish deceived apostates (transgressors, 8:12). Causes deceit to prosper (8:25) though not mighty, prospers by deceit and cunning. 2300 days (8:14; 6 years 140 days) is less than a week of years; i.e Israel punished less than they deserved. Eventually broken without human means. All points to Antiochus Epiphanes (died of plague in the bowels). See: 1 Macc 1-2; 2 Macc 9:10. Time of the end = the period under Antiochus will parallel the reign of Antichrist.</p>
	<p>Daniel 11:3-4 A mighty king with great rule arises. At his height, his kingdom is broken and divided not to his sons but to the four winds, though not in as great power.</p>	<p>Alexander the Great; who died aged 32. Alexander's empire was divided amongst his twelve generals and his sons killed. In due course the empire was split into four. Over the decades they degenerated into petty kingdoms.</p>
Four: The Roman Empire		
<p>Legs of iron, feet partly of iron and ceramic clay (33). [Note: no mention of ten toes.]</p>	<p>Fourth terrible beast with iron teeth (7:7). Trampled down the others. Ten horns. Claws of bronze (7:19).</p>	<p>A fourth empire (2:40). This breaks the power of all the others. This kingdom is divided (2:41), partly strong, partly fragile (2:42). This is the Roman Empire which controlled the known earth (7:23). The ten (= completeness) horns are disputed but refer to kings coming afterwards (7:24). A multiplicity of rulers; many kings.⁶ This is the kingdom history subsequent to the</p>

⁴ It is not 1150 days (i.e. 2300 evening and morning daily sacrifices, thus divided by two), which is claimed to be roughly equal to 31/2 years, (which is not in the text anyway). 1150 days is 3 years 54 days. In Scripture an evening and a morning constitute one day (Gen 1:5). This cannot be forced to fit the Dispensational scheme. In any case 7:25 is speaking about the persecution caused by the Antichrist; 8:14 regards the persecution caused by Antiochus. Furthermore, though the number is prophetically symbolical, the period is roughly equal to the period of Antiochus' abominations.

⁵ EJ Young states that the successors were Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip and Antigonus; the four regions were Greece, Western Asia, Egypt, & Persia. However, he views the four heads as the four corners of the earth (Daniel portrays rulers as 'horns' not 'heads').

⁶ All attempts to portray the ten kings have failed in a morass of idle speculation, going as far as saying it was the Common Market in the 70s (till the membership grew). Identifying the ten kings with ten toes of the statue has no Scriptural basis but is common in Dispensationalism, referring to a modern revived Roman Empire split into ten kingdoms (Gaebelein). The ten horns grew on the beast which is alive (i.e. historic Roman Empire); it does not die and get revived with ten horns. It is a second phase of Roman history (Caesars after the republic?). The Roman Empire ceased in 476.

		Roman Empire.
	<p>A little horn appears which plucks up three horns (7:8). It has the eyes and mouth of a man, speaking pompous things. Appears large (7:20). It makes war on the saints (7:21). The saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. This horn is judged, the beast is slain in fire (7:11).</p>	<p>The little horn is a small kingdom. It appears larger than it is through its hubris and swagger. The focus of power is on the king (eyes / mouth). Three horns = three unknown kingdoms. He subdues three kings (7:24). Characteristics: 1) speaking blasphemies (7:25; Rev 17:3), 2) lawlessness (7:25);⁷ and 3) persecuting the saints (7:25) who arises after the ten kings (7:24). (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-10.) A man in whom Satan dwells – pride and self-exaltation. Time, times, half time is supposed to = 3½ years,⁸ but refers to the Gospel period. It is a period, followed by a longer period, followed by a short period. Thus the early church, the long period since and the last short time of great persecution (Rev 12:14), cut short by God (7:22; Matt 24:22).⁹ Horn is judged and slain (7:26). Fire = hell (Rev 19:20). This is a picture of the final antichrist.</p>
These four kingdoms, therefore, summarise world history from Nebuchadnezzar to the end when God's kingdom rules over all.		
<p>Parenthesis: Description of God and judgment (7:9-12) Clothes like snow, hair like pure wool, throne of fire with burning wheels.</p> <p>Fire coming forth. Thousand thousands. Court sat. Books.</p>		<p>Compare the description in Rev 4:2ff. Righteousness (white) and omnipresence (wheels). Judgment on sinners. Innumerable saints serving God. Judgment. The record of human actions to be judged, but especially of the beasts.</p>
<p>The empires are ended but their influence continues for a time (7:12).</p>		<p>All the empires were judged and fell. The Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires have long since lost their influence. The Hellenic influence of Alexander's empire continued for a time and set the scene for the Gospel proclamation and spread. The Roman influence continues to this day.¹⁰</p>
The end – God's kingdom in Christ		
<p>Stone initially crushes the feet (34). All crushed (35).</p>	<p>One like a Son of Man from heaven (comes with the clouds) (7:13). Dominion given to him by God (7:14). All people's serve him in an everlasting kingdom.</p>	<p>The kingdom of God (2:44). This destroys all other kingdoms and lasts forever. The Son of Man (a term favoured by Christ) implies one from heaven but with a human nature; however, the prophet here just says, 'like' a man.¹¹ Note that this kingdom is not beastly but ruled by one like a man who is God (comes with a cloud).¹² The saints of God (elect) possess this kingdom</p>

⁷ He changes times and laws. This is the changing of accepted laws from the beginning of civilisation and divine seasons that entered human tradition; something contrary to the human conscience of all people and associated with denying God. For instance, establishing laws to establish homosexual marriage, honoured by the state, is a case in point. Another case is establishing Sunday trading, removing the day of rest.

⁸ Especially in Dispensationalism. The very words used show that a definite chronological period is not in view but rather is symbolic.

⁹ All these periods contained persecution but the worst is kept for the shortest period and is ended by the coming of Christ in judgment. The little horn is the strongest expression of the beast-like character of world rulers (Antichrist).

¹⁰ Note the Holy Roman Empire in the Middle Ages. The tie-in between the Roman Church and the Roman Empire.

¹¹ Christ had not yet taken human flesh.

¹² For 'Son of man' see: Matt 25:31; Mk 10:45; Lk 17:24.

		forever (7:18) after the war on the saints (7:27).

Summary of these visions

World history from the time of Daniel

A series of empires that are beastly in nature from God's viewpoint.

The Babylonian Empire

reaching its height with Nebuchadnezzar.

The Medo-Persian Empire

that developed into the Persian Empire.

The Macedonian or Greek Empire

that began with Alexander the Great but was then divided between four generals over Western Asia, Syria, Greece, Egypt.

- A smaller aspect of this divided empire is the story of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, who made an unsuccessful war with Jerusalem and the saints at the time of the Maccabees [167-164 BC]. Antiochus is a type of the Antichrist that would arise at the end.¹³ His end was by divine means.

The Roman Empire

that was brutal, powerful but also fragile (often due to insane or inept rulers). It crushed what went before and expanded to conquer the known world. This began as a republic then developed into an imperial system with a multiplicity of emperors.

- Out of the remains of this empire a world leader emerges who becomes the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness at the end. He makes war on the saints but God cuts this persecution short.

The Kingdom of God

which comes down from heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ. This kingdom crushes all that went before it, which is judged by God. The saints (elect) of God rule with the Lord Jesus forever.

¹³ Mk 13:14: "When you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountains" (see also Matt 24:1-36; Lk 21:6-33). This refers to the desecration of the temple modelled by Antiochus who poured swine blood all over the temple and sacrificed a pig to Jupiter. He also tortured and killed thousands. Jesus' words first refer to the desecration of the temple by the Romans in 70AD, warning Christians to flee Jerusalem (which they did and were the only ones saved). But then this itself is also a model for the end (Matt 24:3), which Paul explains in 2 Thess 2:1-10. The Antichrist will appropriate to himself the things of God, pretend to be Christ himself and will 'sit in the temple' (not a physical temple but be the head of a corrupt church, demanding worship; Rev 13:12).

The seventy weeks; Dan 9:24-27

24 'Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

25 'Know therefore and understand, *That* from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, *There shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

26 'And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it *shall be* with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 'Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.'

What it doesn't mean

Premillennialists affirm that this prophecy is exclusively for Jews; 'Jerusalem' and God's people are taken literally as the Jews Daniel was then praying for. This excessive literalism (a strong feature of Dispensational interpretation) has been dismissed in other papers.¹⁴

The literalism forces the interpretation of this prophecy to mean a definite period of time covering thousands of years. But this breaks their own rules since a literal interpretation would cover 490 days (70 weeks). So they say that a week in prophecy is a week of years, therefore 70 weeks equals 490 years.

Furthermore, different Premillennialists have a different starting point for the period: 'from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem' is given variously as:

- Cyrus' decree for Judah to return to Jerusalem.
- Darius' permission to rebuild the temple.
- Artaxerxes letter (Neh 2:8).

Vast numbers of books and calculations, of all sorts, have been published to find schemes to fit the premillennial theological framework. These are not worth discussing here. The chief issue is that the main Dispensational scheme proposes 49 years (7 weeks) to the rebuilding of the temple. Then 62 weeks (434 years) between the testaments up to some point in Christ's life (some say his baptism, others the triumphal entry). That gives us 69 weeks of years so far. However, the 70th week, (which is the last week, a period of seven years of tribulation in the future including a rapture) does not follow the 69th week but is thousands of years later. This gap cannot be explained.¹⁵

In this scheme the 'he' of verse 27 is the Antichrist. He makes a covenant with Israel for 3½ years to restore Palestine. In the middle of the week he begins to persecute Israel for 3½ years. At the end of the 70th week Jesus returns to destroy Antichrist and reigns for 1,000 years from Israel.

None of this can be found in the text at all.

¹⁴ Such as my book 'The Veil of Moses'.

¹⁵ See 'The Great Parenthesis' by H.A. Ironside (1943) and 'Lectures on Daniel the Prophet' (n.d.).

Serious problems with this

Firstly, this section is an apocalyptic¹⁶ prophecy in the midst of a book filled with apocalyptic prophecies. Apocalyptic texts must be interpreted carefully and with regard to that type of literature, which is filled with symbols and typology. Numbers are rarely to be taken literally but have symbolic import. For instance the book of Revelation is apocalyptic and the numbers there are mostly symbolical. Furthermore, this was a vision given to Daniel and visions are full of symbolism. It is a mistake to ignore this symbolism.

Secondly, there is no basis for saying that the weeks (literally, 'sevens') are definite periods of seven years. Nowhere in Scripture does 'week' mean 'seven years'. It is preposterous, and damaging to the text, to suggest that there is a gap between the 69th and 70th week of over 2,000 years.

What does it mean?

The purpose of the seventy sevens

70 is a symbolical number and 'sevens' is the Hebrew word for 'week'. 'Seven' means divine perfection; multiplying this by ten (which is symbolic for divine completeness) means a period of divine perfection and fulness.

This period is said to achieve the following six things for the people of God:

- to finish the transgression,
- to make an end of sins,
- to make reconciliation for iniquity,
- to bring in everlasting righteousness,
- to seal up vision and prophecy,
- to anoint the Most Holy.

Even a cursory glance at this shows that it is the period leading up to the fulfilment of God's covenant in sending the Messiah to end the transgressions of his people, making reconciliation for them and bringing in righteousness. This is the work of the atonement of Christ, the resurrection, ascension and anointing, followed by the outpouring of the Spirit.

The first three deal negatively with sin and the effects of the curse on sin. The guilt of sin is propitiated; the NT explains that this was done by Christ (Heb 9:26). The second three positively bring in righteousness, seal up OT prophecy,¹⁷ and anoint the 'holiness of holinesses' – the anointing of the Messiah (Isa 61:1).

The breakdown of the period

The prophecy begins in history with the command to rebuild Jerusalem (v25). This was fulfilled in the decree of Cyrus in 537BC.

69 weeks from this brings us to the revelation of the Messiah (v25, the anointed Prince). This period is divided into two parts: 7 weeks and 62 weeks. The 7 weeks refer to the problems of building Jerusalem under Zerubbabal, Nehemiah and Ezra. The 62 weeks is the period between the testaments. The appearance of the Messiah is the end of the 69 sevens.

¹⁶ Apocalyptic: the original Greek word meant to uncover, such as opening a curtain at a theatre. Thus it means revelation, usually of the future or of a mystery. In modern parlance it is usually connected with the thought of the end of the world, the apocalypse.

¹⁷ Under the New Covenant the type of prophecy common in the OT (lots, visions, dreams) etc. are no longer needed since the believer has God within. OT type prophecy finished with the Old Covenant.

After the revelation of the Messiah (after the 62 weeks), he is cut off (the crucifixion). He then confirms the covenant (not Antichrist). This occurred in the 70th week (the one-week of v27). The fulfilment of God's covenant is in the 70th week because that is when Christ died and was raised. Thus the cross puts an end to the sacrifices and oblations of the Old Covenant ('He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering'). The final end of the Old Covenant in practice was actually when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed so that the Jewish system could no longer continue; this was but the practical outworking of the splitting of the temple veil at the time of the cross. This was perpetrated by, 'the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary'. The desolations refer to the same kind of abominations perpetrated by the Romans that Antiochus Epiphanes did, except that the Romans destroyed the whole city.¹⁸

Summary

- Seventy weeks to fulfil God's decree.
- Starting point: the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the city and temple.
- Seven weeks until the restoration of the city of Jerusalem and the temple. This was done amidst great conflict and affliction.
- 62-week gap after this period until the Messiah/Prince appears to end transgression and bring in righteousness. This is the inter-testament period.
- One week during which the Messiah is cut off (the cross; Isa 53:8), ends the sacrifices (Old Covenant system), and confirms the covenant. The fulfilment of this was with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which ended the OT Jewish system. This was done by the Romans amidst desolations.

Exegetical details

- 'Sevens' is a masculine plural whereas the word is usually feminine. This is to draw attention to the fact that the word is not to be taken in the normal sense of 'weeks' but as a symbolic period. It literally means, 'divided into sevens'.
- 'He' (v27a) cannot refer to 'the prince' (v26). The subject of verse 26 is 'the people of the prince', i.e. Roman soldiers. This cannot be forced to suggest the Antichrist is in view, who is not mentioned at all in this prophecy.
- 'He' refers to the Messiah Prince, the subject of the prophecy.
- The covenant is 'confirmed' (v27; 'caused to prevail') i.e. already existing. Premillennialists affirm that the Antichrist makes a new covenant with Israel. Jesus confirmed and fulfilled the covenant made with Abraham and decreed in eternity. The ordinary Hebrew expression used in making a new covenant is 'to cut a covenant' and this is not used here. The covenant is for 'many', i.e. the elect; not 'all'.
- The city is destroyed by the people of a prince who is to come. Dispensationalists believe the city is Jerusalem in 70AD but affirm that the prince is the Antichrist, not Titus. How can the Roman armies of Titus belong to a prince (Antichrist) who is yet to come thousands of years after 70AD?
- The two events of verse 26 occur after the 69 sevens. However, the events of verse 27 are NOT said to occur after those of verse 26. The word 'then' in the NKJV should be 'and'. Since v26 shows the death of the Messiah, his work in confirming a covenant must occur before or at the time of his death in v26. Thus the confirming of the covenant is part of the 70th week and is contemporaneous with verse 26. The 70th week

¹⁸ Josephus gives details of the Jewish War, which included people eating shoes and mothers cooking up their babies.

includes: the cutting off of the Messiah, the confirming of a covenant, the ending of the sacrifice, and the destruction of the city and sanctuary (temple).

- ‘And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate’ is clearly difficult language. It refers to the pinnacle (‘wing’) of the temple, which became an abomination (given over to idolatry). This occurred when the cross finished the need of blood sacrifices in the temple so that any offering after the cross was a blasphemy against the work of Christ. The temple veil was split to show that God had left and the holiest was open to the world thus Jewish worship from that point was an abomination. The Old Covenant was cancelled (Heb 8:13, 10:8-9). Judaism was spiritually finished at the cross but only practically ended with the destruction of the temple and priesthood. The one making desolate is Titus who destroyed the temple. ‘Even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate’, refers to the desolation of the ruined city and people.

Conclusion

This prophecy regards the future of God’s people from the time of Daniel. It is chiefly concerned with the fulfilment of God’s covenant to put away the sin of his people and bring in righteousness under the Messiah Prince. This refers to the period up to the death of Christ to bring in the New Covenant (a confirmation of the covenant promise to Abraham; it is ‘new’ in comparison with the Mosaic, or old, Covenant) and seal it with the destruction of Biblical Judaism in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. This was to encourage Daniel (and God’s people) that the purpose of God to save his people would be fulfilled by the Messiah.

Historical Note

Far from being an obscure interpretation, the view above is the traditional messianic interpretation that has been held in the Christian church for thousands of years. It was firmed up by Augustine [354-430], then expounded by Haevernick, Hengstenberg [1802-1869], Pusey [1800-1882] and many others throughout history. The best modern exposition is by EJ Young in the Banner of Truth Geneva series of commentaries, and David Engelsma gives a summary of it in a Protestant Reformed Church tract.¹⁹ Contrary to this, the Dispensational view (which is the most popular interpretation today) only appeared with the introduction of Dispensationalism (after 1830) and particularly Ironside’s parenthesis argument in 1943, which was then taken up by Gaebelien and others.²⁰ The most popular modern interpretation thus a recent aberration.

The kings of the north and south; Dan 11:1-35

By any reckoning, this is a complex piece of narrative; however, the historical period that it covers was also extremely complicated. It relates to the history of the Seleucid dynasty²¹ ruling over Syria and part of western Asia from 311 to 65BC with its capital at Antioch. A significant portion gives details about Antiochus Epiphanes.

For a summary of this period see the commentary in Fausset’s Dictionary given in appendix one.

¹⁹ *The Seventy Weeks: The time of Prophecy*; probably available on the PRC website.

²⁰ E.g. A. J. McClain, C. I. Scofield, John Walvoord.

²¹ The name comes from Seleucus Nicator; the name of the founder, one of Alexander the Great’s generals.

The end of this vision changes (common in prophecy) from the near future view to a foreshortening of the end of time. Thus the details about Antiochus become mingled with details of the Antichrist. This will be considered separately in the next section.

The final victory; Daniel 11:36-12:13

There is no doubt that the time of the events mentioned in Daniel 12:2-4 refers to the end:
 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. ... But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end.

This is clearly a reference to the Day of Judgment. Chapter 12 also begins with the words, 'At that time', which connects the events at the end of chapter 11 with the Last day. So there has been a merging of the description about Antiochus Epiphanes with the Antichrist towards the end of the vision in chapter 11; the most logical break is with verse 36. The final vision, therefore, ought to begin here and end in chapter 12.

Daniel 11:36-39

Though disputed by some, many believe that there is a change of subject in verse 36. In other words, there is a different king to the one previously described in 11:21-35. The identity of this king is a matter of great debate. The traditional view, going back to Jerome, is that it refers to the Antichrist, and this is the view of the present writer.²²

Reasons why it is not Antiochus

- Antiochus did not exalt himself above all other gods (v36). Antiochus, (like many contemporary kings) deified himself but did not set himself above all other gods.
- He did not hold the gods of his fathers in disregard (v37).
- He did not ignore all gods (v37).
- He did not magnify himself above all (v37).
- He did not spend gold, silver and gems upon a god of war (v38).

This king is noted for:

- Doing according to his will (v36).
- Exalting and magnifying himself against all known gods (v36).
- Speaking monstrous things (i.e. blasphemies) against the true God (v36).
- Prospering materially (v36).
- Showing no regard for the gods of his fathers (v37). The phrase is very Jewish and refers to the Jewish religion. This suggests that the Antichrist may be of Jewish origin.²³
- Having no regard for the desire of women (v37). Most commentators see this as a reference to a lack of humanity but I believe that it points to homosexuality. This is the logical meaning of the phrase '[has no regard for] the desire of women'. This king is either homosexual or asexual.
- Magnifying himself above all (v37).
- He honours war (v38, 'the god of fortresses'). This is not an existing god since we have been told that he did not regard known gods. He spends his fortune on supporting war.

²² Others see here: Antiochus, Constantine, Omar ibn El-Khattab or the Roman Empire (Calvin). Dispensationalists have a variety of views – the little horn of Dan 7, the Antichrist (but not the little horn of Dan 7), the pope, or Herod the Great.

²³ Many agree with this; see Young p249 and Gaebelein.

- He prosecutes war with the help of a foreign god (i.e. a god unknown to his fathers).
- He rewards strongholds (rulers of powers) with honour, might, wealth and land (v39), i.e. those who submit to him.

This perfectly suits the coming man of lawlessness. However, this evil reign continues only until the end decreed by God (v36).

Daniel 11:40-45; the final conflict

Note that this is the 'time of the end' (v40), i.e. the end of the world, and the interpretation of these verses is very difficult.

What is certain is that it cannot refer to an expedition against Egypt by Antiochus in his eleventh year since that contradicts history. After the successful rebellion of the Jews he fell sick and died on campaigns in Persia, having run out of money. In any case Egypt was then under Roman protection and any war with Egypt would have meant a war with Rome, which never happened.

The two opponents of a great battle are the Antichrist and the King of the South of which the battles with the Ptolemies were typical. The battle is initiated by the King of the South. The King of the North storms against the King of the South, by land and sea, overflowing on to the land (v41).

The King of the North comes into Palestine ('land of Delight': Israel, Jordan, Lebanon) but avoids Edom, Moab and Ammon (three of Israel's enemies). These are symbols of all the enemies of God's people who escape the wrath of Antichrist.

All nations that oppose Antichrist are seized, especially Egypt (v42). Antichrist takes the treasures of Egypt (v43). Essentially this refers to a complete conquest of the world.

A rebellion arises in the north and east (v44). Antichrist travels and stations himself between the Mediterranean and Jerusalem (v45). The destruction of the antichristian empire occurs near Jerusalem (as in other passages; Joel 3:2, 12ff; Zech 14:2).

Thus we try to make sense of difficult verses. But we must remember that this is apocalyptic and figurative text, so the real meaning applies to the church. In essence we can say this:

- Antichrist overcomes the whole world and takes its treasures.
- There is much warfare in doing this; perhaps particularly a war between the north and the south.
- Antichrist seeks to take his place as head of the church ('coming into the land of Delight'). Many in the church apostatise ('many will stumble') to avoid persecution.
- The enemies of the church are not persecuted ('these shall escape').
- There are revolts against this totalitarian state.
- In one of these rebellions, Antichrist is finished.

Daniel 12:1-4; the deliverance of God's people

At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. Dan 12:1

‘At that time’ refers to ‘the time of the end’ (11:40). When the Antichrist is oppressing the world, and especially the church, Michael will stand.

Some see Michael as a picture of Christ (e.g. Calvin) but he is rather to be seen as the warrior angel of God sent to inflict judgment and protect the elect from the King of the North (Antichrist). The distress in the world is such as has never been seen before. There is no way that this can refer to Antiochus.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. Dan 12:2

‘Dust’ = the grave. ‘Sleep’ = death.

The objective here is not to explain the general resurrection of men to judgment, but to encourage people in the period just prior to that. ‘Many’ refers to the future resurrection of those saints who died in the Antichrist’s persecution pogrom. Of the huge numbers who died in the wars (Non-Christian and Christian), the elect (the ‘many’) will be resurrected. It refers to the coming general resurrection but the point is to encourage those elect who would die in persecution.

‘Life everlasting’ – the first reference to this in Scripture.

Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. Dan 12:3

Those who walk righteously and witness in this persecution will be glorified. ‘Wise’ implies divine knowledge garnered from Scripture. It is possible to extend this to all those wise martyrs throughout history. Note that this is not just converts, but converts who walk righteously.

But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase. Dan 12:4

This prophecy (including all Daniel’s visions, ‘book’) is sealed up, that is shut up and stored in preservation for the times of the end.

The running to and fro is a worldwide search for knowledge, particularly divine knowledge, but failing to find it. History is characterised by a growing knowledge of things. Though knowledge vastly increases, knowing God is only for the few. This accurately sums up today’s situation where vast amounts of information are thrown at people everyday, with technical means to store this information, and yet the world is more unrighteous and foolish than it has ever been, and even the church is in apostasy.

In summary, God’s word, containing all the knowledge of him necessary for men, is in the world yet people search out knowledge and fail to find God.

However, there is the implication that at the time of the end, the words of Daniel will begin to make sense to righteous people; the elect who are righteous in Christ and not themselves.

Dan 12:5-13: the conclusion of the prophecy

Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, 'How long shall the fulfilment of these wonders *be*?' Dan 12:5-6

This is a new scene. Two other angels now appear by the River Tigris and talk to Daniel. The 'wondrous things' refers to the events just described regarding the end.

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished. Dan 12:7

The angel utters an oath so important that he raises both hands (it was usual to only raise one hand). This is God swearing by himself. The duration of the end is 'a time, times, and half a time'.

The period is the Hebrew equivalent as the Aramaic statement in 7:25.²⁴ This is a set or appointed time and refers to the Gospel age; the time of the end, which began with the cross. The last time is the final portion of those end times.²⁵

The Lord's people (the church at the end; saints – holy people) will be so oppressed that they appear to the world to have been destroyed (completely shattered). At this very point in time the Antichrist is himself destroyed. God waits until his people are in deepest need before he responds.

Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, 'My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?' Dan 12:8

Daniel is asking what the end of all the things regarding the future he has been told from chapter 11 onwards. He wants a further explanation of all that he has been told, especially the closing stage of all the events.

And he said, 'Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed *is* he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But you, go *your way* till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.' Dan 12:9-13

²⁴ Portions of Daniel were written in Aramaic (Chaldee), usually those with reference to Chaldean events in Babylonia. Chaldea was the southern portion of Babylonia, or Lower Mesopotamia, lying mainly on the right bank of the Euphrates, but commonly used of the whole of the vast Mesopotamian plain which was formed by the deposits of the Euphrates and the Tigris, extending to about 400 miles along the course of these rivers and about 100 miles in average breadth. The Hebrew name is Kasdim, which is usually rendered 'Chaldeans' (Jer 50:10, 51:24, 35). Abram was born at Ur of the Chaldees. 'Chaldees' is a mistranslation of Kasdim, Kasdim being the OT name of the Babylonians, while the Chaldees were a tribe who lived on the shores of the Persian Gulf, and did not become a part of the Babylonian population till the time of Hezekiah. Ur was one of the oldest and most famous of the Babylonian cities.

²⁵ The spirit of Antichrist has been operative throughout the end times since the cross (1 Jn 4:3) but is especially prominent at the very end.

The full explanation is not given to Daniel but reserved for the time of the very end. Daniel is not involved in this and, therefore, does not need to know. The elect at the time of the Antichrist do need to know and will understand. God only gives us the grace that we need (Heb 4:16).

The wicked will never understand; revelation is only given to the righteous, the elect. This is a general principle applicable throughout all time.

Then we have a timeline as a final piece of revelation:

- ‘And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.’
- ‘Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.’

Scores of speculations have appeared regarding these numbers, which we will ignore.

1290 days does not exactly equal 3½ years.²⁶

The best explanation is that the numbers are symbolic, as we would expect, and refer to Antiochus, which was an episode of Israel’s history that typified the end under Antichrist.

The 1290 days is a specific period (hence ‘days’ instead of ‘times’) of extreme persecution following the ceasing of the daily sacrifices. The 1335 days is the full period of persecution. After that, blessing comes. This is typical of persecution under Antichrist.

The lesson is that seven years is a period of divine fulness and perfection. The period of persecution for the church is just a little more than half of this period (1335 days), but the most severe persecution is less still (1290 days).

This antichristian persecution (typified by Antiochus) includes the following aspects:

- Removing the ability of the church to worship (ending the daily sacrifices).
- Making war on the people of God.
- Making war on other nations to seek sovereignty.
- Renouncing all gods.
- As the persecution under Antiochus was cut short (three years and ten days) so will the final persecution of the church.

The passage ends with a common exhortation to perseverance and long-suffering.

Conclusion

The purpose of this prophecy, as in all prophecies, is the encouragement, rebuking and strengthening of the Lord’s people. In Daniel’s case the stress is upon predictive prophecy (foretelling) in order to encourage God’s people that he is on complete control of all the coming events. The proof that God is in control for his people is the fact that he accurately predicts the events years, decades, centuries and millennia before they happen.

²⁶ Jewish months consisted of 29 and 30 days in length.

Appendix One

Antiochus Epiphanes

Anti'ochus ['an opponent'] was the name of a number of kings of Syria who lived during the interval between the Old and New Testaments; they are referred to in the Apocrypha.

Antiochus IV [Epiphanes, = 'Illustrious'] was the son of Antiochus III who became king after his brother, Seleucus IV, had been murdered by Heliodorus. As a boy Antiochus lived at Rome as a hostage. The Pergamene monarchs, Eumenes and Attalus, succeeded in placing upon the throne the brother of Seleucus, although Heliodorus had wished to ascend the throne himself. The young king was even more enterprising than his father. He was called in to settle a quarrel between Onias III and his brother, Jason, the leader of the Hellenizing faction in Jerusalem, and Onias was driven out (2 Macc 4:4-6). Jason became high priest in his stead (2 Macc 4:9-16; 1 Macc 1:10-15; Ant, XII, v, 1). Antiochus himself afterward visited Jerusalem and was signally honoured (2 Macc 4:22). On the death of Ptolemy VI in 173, Antiochus laid claim to Coele Syria, Palestine and Phoenicia; whereupon war broke out between Syria and Egypt. In this war Antiochus was victorious. Ptolemy Philometor was taken prisoner, and Antiochus had himself crowned king of Egypt (171-167 bc) at Memphis; whereupon Alexandria revolted and chose Ptolemy's brother as their king. The Roman ambassador, Popilius Laenas, demanded the surrender of Egypt and the immediate withdrawal of its self-constituted king. Antiochus yielded; gave up Pelusium and withdrew his fleet from Cyprus, but retained Coele Syria, Palestine and Phoenicia.

While Antiochus was on a second campaign in Egypt, he heard of the siege of Jerusalem. He returned immediately, slew many thousands of the inhabitants and robbed the temple of its treasures (1 Macc 1:20-24; 2 Macc 5:11-21). By his prohibition of the Jewish worship and his introduction or substitution of the worship of the Olympian Zeus (1 Macc 1:54; 2 Macc 6:2; Ant, XII, v, 4) he brought about the insurrection of the Jews, under the Maccabees, upon whom he made an unsuccessful war in 167-164 BC. After this war Antiochus retired to the eastern provinces and died, after having failed in an attack on the temple of the Sun in Elymais, in Persia.

- *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*; James Orr, M.A., D.D., General Edition.
- Dr. William Smith; *Smith's Dictionary* (1884).

Antiochus IV. succeeded, surnamed Epiphanes, "the Illustrious," for establishing the royal line against Heliodorus. Nicknamed Epimanes, "madman," for his great unkingly freaks, carousing with the lowest, bathing with them in public, and throwing stones at passers by. Hence, and because of his craftily supplanting Demetrius, the rightful heir, he is called in Daniel 11: "a vile person." He "came into the kingdom by flatteries" to Eumenes and to Attalus of Pergamus, and to the Syrians high and low. With his "flood" like hosts the Egyptians and Ptolemy Philometer, "the prince of the covenant," were "overflowed from before him." Philometor was in covenant with him by right, being son of Cleopatra, Antiochus's sister, to whom Antiochus the Great had promised, as dowry in marrying Ptolemy Epiphanes, Coele Syria and Palestine.

Philometor's generals in trying to obtain these covenanted promises were defeated, and Pehsium, the key of Egypt, was taken 171 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes "worked deceitfully,"

feigning friendship to young Philometor, and "with a small people" or force, "peaceably" in pretense, he took Memphis and "the fattest places," and seized Philometor. Thus he "did that which his fathers had not done," namely, gained Egypt, and "scattered among (his dependents) the prey." "He forecast his devices against the strongholds" of Egypt. He gained all except Alexandria. Retiring Judaea, where the Jews in joy at the report of his death had revolted, he took Jerusalem. He then "stirred up his power with a great army against the king of the S.," Ptolemy Physcon (the gross), made king by the Egyptians because Philometor was in Antiochus's hands. The Egyptian king did "not stand," for his own nobles "forecast devices against him."

At last Antiochus, when checked at Alexandria, met the Egyptian king at Memphis, and "both spoke lies at one table," trying to deceive one another. In his capture of Jerusalem, guided by Menelaus the high priest "against the holy covenant," he took away the golden altar, candlestick, vessels of gold and silver from the temple, sacrificed swine on the altar, and sprinkled swine broth through the temple; his spoils from it amounted 1800 talents. A second time he openly invaded Egypt, but his invasion was not successful "as the former," Popilius Laenas, the Roman ambassador, arriving in Graeco Macedonian ships ("of Chittim") and compelling him to return. Finding that God's worship had been restored at Jerusalem, "he had indignation against the holy covenant." He "had intelligence (correspondence) with them that forsook the holy covenant," Menelaus and others, who had cast off circumcision and treated all religions as equally good for keeping the masses in check, and adopted Greek customs and philosophy.

Antiochus's general, Apollonius, dismantled Jerusalem, and from a high fortress slew the temple worshippers. Antiochus commanded all on pain of death to conform to the Greek religion, and consecrated the temple to Jupiter Olympius or Capitolinus. Identifying himself with that god "whom his fathers knew not," and whose worship he imported from Rome, he wished to make his own worship universal. The Jews were constrained to profane the sabbath and monthly on the king's birthday to eat of the idol sacrifices, and to go in procession to Bacchus, carrying ivy. This was the gravest peril that ever befel the theocratic nation; hence arose the need of a prediction so detailed as Daniel 8; 11. Porphyry the opponent of Christianity, had to admit the accurate correspondence of the facts to the prediction, but explained it away by alleging the latter to have been written after the events.

But as Messianic events are foretold in Daniel, Jesus' adversaries, the Jews, would never have forged the prophecies which confirm His claims. Daniel 9 would comfort the faithful Jews amidst the "abominations" against "the covenant," with the prospect of Messiah, who would confirm it. Bringing salvation, yet abolishing sacrifices, He would show that the temple services which they so missed were not indispensable to real worship. Language is used (Dan_11:31-45) which only in type applies to Antiochus, but exhaustively to Antichrist. Antiochus "took away the daily sacrifice, and placed (on the 15th day of Cisleu, on Jehovah's altar) the abomination (idol, Jupiter Olympius' image) that maketh desolate," i.e. that pollutes the temple.

The Maccabees (see 1 and 2 Maccabees in Apocrypha), "who knew their God, were strong" in their determination not to deny Him, and "did exploits." Judas, son of the patriot Mattathias, took as his motto the initials of Mi Camokah Baelim Jehovah (Exo_15:11), "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?" Allusion occurs to the martyrs under Antiochus in Heb_11:35-37; "others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Seven brothers and their mother submitted to a torturing death rather than deny their faith, the third saying, "Thou takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up who have died for His laws unto

everlasting life" (compare Dan_12:2). Two women who circumcised their infant boys were cast down with them headlong from the wall. Eleazar when forced to eat swine's flesh spit it out, choosing to suffer death at fourscore and ten rather than deny the faith (compare the apocryphal 2 Maccabees 6 and 2 Maccabees 7).

Some were roasted alive "by flame" in caves, whither they had fled to keep the sabbath. The first of the seven brothers, after his tongue was cut off, was fried to death in a heated pan. The persecution lasted three years; then, by the Maccabees, who defeated Antiochus's troops under Lysias, the Jews were "holpen with a little help," i.e. saved from extinction until the times of the Romans. Antiochus, while invading Egypt, hearing "tidings out of the E. and out of the N. of a revolt of his vassal Artaxias, king of Armenia, in the N., and Arsaces of Parthid in the E., went forth with great fury, on the way took Arad in Judah, devastated Phoenicia (according to Porphyry), "planting the tabernacles of his palace between the seas" (the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean), attacked the temple of Nanae at Elymais, ("the desire of women," the Syrian Venus; but the antitypical reference is to Messiah, whom Antichrist shall try to supplant,) to replenish his treasury, so as to renew the war with the Jews.

But, failing, "he came to his end" at Tabes, and "none helped him" (1Ma_3:10-37; 1Ma_6:1-16; 2Ma_9:5). "The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, smote him with an incurable plague; for as soon as he had spoken these words (that he would make Jerusalem a common burying place of the Jews) a remediless pain of the bowels came upon him," etc., 164 B.C. The prominence given to Antiochus in Daniel is because it was the turning point in Jewish history, deciding whether Greek worldly refinements were to stifle Israel's true faith. Persecution was God's appointed way to save His people from seductions which had wellnigh made them compromise their witness for His truth.

Antiochus was the unconscious instrument. At first he followed the liberal policy of his predecessors; but when it suited his purpose to plunder the Jews and destroy their polity, he did not hesitate, and the corruptions prevalent and the rivalries of Jason and Menelaus for the high priesthood afforded him the occasion. Disregarding his hereditary gods himself (Dan_11:37-39), and only recognising the Roman war god or "god of forces," he regarded "fortresses" as the true temples (the Hebrew for "forces" may be translated "fortresses"), and was incapable of appreciating the power which true religion can call forth. Thus he is the vivid type of the last Antichrist, whose terrible, though short, persecutions shall drive Israel to their Saviour, and so usher in their coming glory (Zechariah 11; 12; 13; 14; Daniel 12; Ezekiel 37; 38; 39).

- Andrew Robert Fausset; *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*.

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