

Seven Bible Studies 2017

Prophecy

August 11: Daniel 1-6 (Wade Stanley)

Good morning all. Please find a guide to today's reading below. There are a couple of embedded links to other documents. Please let me know if you have trouble opening anything.

Happy reading!

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ypf2A6EfSdZUKwwwuLGRDwMxq2KLrg0K_Fmpyq012t0/mobilebasic

Chapter 1

Daniel and his three friends were taken to Babylon in the first wave of captives in ~606/605 BC. The first chapter shows the moral fiber of this young man who took a principled stand far from home. These four youths commit themselves to a life of integrity in the earliest days of their captivity. Chapters 3 and 6 show the consistency with which they held to their convictions even in the face of near-certain death.

Chapter 2

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8zorFt46MawcHFWQkFWRXFGemM>

Chapter 3

Verse 1: From the Archaeological Study Bible, "Large statues of this kind, though made of wood, were plated with gold. This particular statute was 90 feet (27 m) high and probably represented the god Nabu, whose name formed the first element in Nebuchadnezzar's name."

Verses 16-18: Among the most inspiring statements of pure conviction in the Bible. These three men acknowledge that God does have the power to deliver them, but that may not be His will. Regardless, they resolve not to bow down to the image.

Verse 25: Some speculate that the fourth being in the furnace is a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. If you consult newer translations, you will notice that the being appears god-like to the Babylonian observers. In all likelihood, this is an angel sent to preserve the lives of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-Nego. See Isaiah 43:2.

Chapter 4

This chapter, though loaded with symbolism, is fairly straightforward, especially given that the dream is interpreted for us. We once again encounter the archetype seen with Isaiah's description of the king of Babylon as well as what God says about the king of Tyre.

It is comforting to think that we may see Nebuchadnezzar one day with the Lord. The last years of his reign are clouded in obscurity, especially for a man who rose so quickly to the pinnacle of his age. These seven years of delusional behavior likely took place in those latter years which means his final recorded words in chapter 4 leave us with hope that the humility learned by this son of pride may save his soul.

Chapter 5

The irresponsibility and decadence of this event is staggering. On this night, Babylon is surrounded by the combined forces of the Medes and Persians. In the two short decades

since Nebuchadnezzar rose, Babylon has quickly fallen and now stands on the precipice of ruin. Daniel, still serving Babylon nearly 70 years after his captivity, displays his God-given ability for interpretation once again.

Darius the Mede is made ruler of Babylon at the end of this chapter (~538 BC). In a rather confusing bit of history, he shares the same name as another Persian ruler. It appears that Darius the Mede served as viceroy over Babylon for Cyrus the Great (who we meet in chapter 6) while the latter continued his military campaigns in the Middle East. After two years, Darius is relieved and Cyrus assumes rule over Babylon. To help clarify, I assembled this brief overview of the successive rulers of Babylon, Persia, and Greece:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8zorFt46MawenVnbFpBcHNheEE>

Chapter 6

The annals of ancient history testify of many effective and influential kings of men. Daniel served two of the greatest -- Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus the Great. God in his providence placed a man above reproach in position of great influence. Cyrus obviously held Daniel in high esteem as this chapter testifies. And it is through the influence of Daniel that a second ruler of men is compelled to praise the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jewish tradition holds that it was Daniel who convinced Cyrus to return the first Jewish refugees to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (see the early chapters of Ezra). Tradition also holds that Daniel shared Isaiah 44:28-45:7 with the Persian king.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Wade!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Marc read all 6 chapters during the car ride home from stl. Full attention from the kids the entire time. In my opinion 6 of the best chapters in the Bible. I love seeing Holy Scriptures through the eyes of a child. Thanks for your notes, Wade. I love this book!

August 18: Daniel 7-12 (John Morris)

Reading for August 18, 2017
DANIEL 7-12

It's been difficult to know just what to include in the following. By necessity, had to go with something somewhat skeletal, but know that it has resulted in creating considerable voids. I know we all don't have equal exposure to these prophecies, and so all of this will be old hat to some, and some of it may be quite new to others. Feel free to ask for clarification. Hope your reading today was blessed!

CHAPTER 7

- 7:4: The beast "like a lion" is the kingdom of Babylon. Over time, the kingdom became less of a threat to the surrounding nations, and perhaps more humane. The symbolism here may well apply not only to the nation, but to Nebuchadnezzar himself.

- 7:5: "another beast...like a bear." The Persian (Medo-Persian) Empire. Raised up on one side, since the kingdom was dominated by the Persian portion (cf. 8:3, 20). Three ribs may

represent three conquests which were integral to its rise among nations, possibly Egypt, Lydia, and Babylon.

- 7:6: “another, like a leopard.” The Macedonian/Greek Empire. Its initial conquests under Alexander the Great were historically quick, and with Alexander’s death, power over the conquered lands fell primarily into the hands of his four generals (cf. 8:8): Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus, Cassander (btw, have song, will sing, if anyone’s interested =)).
- 7:7: “a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong.” Rome. Its iron teeth match up with the iron legs and feet in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (cf. 2:33,40) and its bronze nails (2:19) represent the enormous influence Greek culture, philosophy, architecture, religion, etc. had in the Empire. The ten horns represent the “barbarian” kings/kingdoms (7:24) which assumed power as/after the Western Roman Empire collapsed. Ten may be literal or figurative.
- 7:8-27: This little horn seems to symbolize the papacy, whose rise to prominence began among the barbarian kingdoms (it was initially aided by the power vacuum in the west, created by absent and/or weak Roman imperial authority, and eventually the removal of the Roman emperor altogether in 476 AD). The pope’s words and works during the so-called dark ages, particularly, but well beyond, have certainly fit the description given of the little horn’s words and works. It is my understanding that this little horn is synonymous with the “man of sin” in 2 Thess. 2:3-10.

CHAPTER 8

- 8:3-4: “a ram which had two horns.” Medo-Persia, the higher horn being the Persians. The two horns correspond to the image’s two arms (2:32) and the bear-like creature’s two sides (7:5). The Medo-Persian Empire’s conquests did, in fact, stretch westward from Shushan (where Daniel was in this vision) into Babylon, Syria, and Asia Minor; northward into Armenia; and southward into Israel, Egypt, and even Ethiopia.
- 8:5-8: “a male goat came from the west.” This is Greece (8:21). Enraged by Persia’s former attempts under Xerxes to conquer Greece, Alexander and his soldiers moved to break the Persian Empire (then ruled by Darius III), and did so successfully. Alexander, however (the notable horn), died young, and after the battle of Ipsus (301 BC), the empire fell into the hands of his four generals (see above).
- 8:9-27: Another “little horn,” but unlike the one in the previous chapter, this one arises out of one of the four Greek kingdoms. This is almost universally understood to be Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth king of the Seleucid Empire (Seleucus was one of the four generals). He reigned from 175 to 164/3 BC. His fulfillment of these predictions can be read about in the Jewish books of 1 and 2 Maccabees (1 Maccabees being the more reliable of the two). Antiochus IV Epiphanes waged a war on the faith of the Jews, attempting by force to make them idolaters. His most memorable crime was sacrificing a pig on the altar of burnt offering and setting up an idol in the temple precincts. He ultimately failed in his attempt to paganize the Jews, was struck by God and died. His exploits and those of the faithful Jews (led by Judas Maccabeus) who opposed him will be revisited at length in ch. 11.

CHAPTER 9

- 9:1-3: In the first year of Persian rule over Babylon, Daniel comes to understand by reading Scripture that God intended the captivity to last 70 years. Realizing the expiration date was near, and conscious of the people’s sins that caused the captivity, he devotes himself to prayer and fasting.

- 9:4-19: Daniel's prayer.
- 9:20-23: God sends Gabriel in response to Daniel's devotions. Prayer and fasting sometimes precede unexpected blessings!
- 9:24-27: The famed "Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks." As with every passage in the second half of this book (but to an even greater degree), there's a lot here! 70 weeks = 490 days, prophetically standing for 490 years (one rotation of the Earth representing one revolution of the Earth (comp. Ezek. 4:5-6)). This period of 490 years is broken up into various parts. We'll notice a few. Daniel is told that in 483 years (69 weeks) from Artaxerxes' decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8), the Messiah will come (fulfilled at Jesus' baptism when He was anointed with the Holy Spirit). This specific timeline helps explain why the Jews were anticipating the Son of God's arrival during John the Baptist's ministry (Lk. 3:15). Daniel is also told that 3 1/2 years after Messiah's manifestation, He will be killed (vs. 26-27), and that His death will bring an end to sacrifices and offerings (cf. Heb. 9-10). The remaining 3 1/2 years (the second half of the 70th week) is then devoted to confirming the New Covenant (vs. 27)—that is, to the best of my understanding, to bring the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, as well (Ac. 10). The prophecy closes out (last half of vs. 27) with a prediction of the Romans bringing desolation on Jerusalem in 70 AD, an event closely connected with Christ's coming and ministry; Jesus, Himself, said that Jerusalem's destruction was the result of the Jews' rejection of Him (Mt. 23:37-38).

DANIEL 10

- 10:1-3: Two years after Cyrus made his momentous decree (Ezra 1:1-4), Daniel engages in a partial fast for three weeks. His mourning may be connected to the opposition his countrymen were facing in Jerusalem as they attempted to rebuild the temple (Ezra 4:4-5).
- 10:4-14: A heavenly personage appears to Daniel. Again, fasting (even partial) and prayer are followed by an unexpected blessing! This heavenly being is not named, but appears at least one other time in the book (12:7ff), and his description is very similar to what we read in Rev. 1:13-16. He is not Divine, since he requires the aid of Michael the archangel to move past one of Satan's angels (the prince of the kingdom of Persia) who withstood him for three weeks, delaying his meeting with Daniel. Like Gabriel who was sent in ch. 9, this heavenly being has some prophetic words for Daniel.
- 10:15-19: Daniel's response to this being is similar to John's response in Rev. 1:17.
- 10:20-21: Another glimpse (like vs. 13) into what is happening in the heavenly places simultaneously with events here on Earth. I don't claim to understand it, but there is an obvious interplay between the worlds that is fascinating to contemplate! Compare Rev. 12:7-11.

DANIEL 11

The predictions in this chapter are especially troublesome for skeptics. The predictions are not in highly symbolic, apocalyptic language (like Revelation), but quite straightforward, explicit, and undeniably accurate. This chapter, more than any other, drives skeptics' futile efforts to date Daniel to the 2nd century BC or later, three hundred-plus years after it was actually written. They want the accurate predications to POST-date the events!

- 11:2-4: Prophecies concerning Persia and Greece. Three more Persian kings were coming after Cyrus (who was reigning at the time, vs. 1): Cambyses, Smerdis, and Xerxes. Xerxes, as was mentioned earlier, will stir up Persia in an attempt to annex Greece. "Then a mighty king

shall arise.” This is Alexander the Great, and for the third time in the book, the four kingdoms that succeeded his short-lived united kingdom are referenced (7:6; 8:8).

- 11:5-9: Early history of the interplay between the Greek Ptolemaic and Seleucid Kingdoms.
- 11:10-19: More Ptolemaic and Seleucid history, specifically conflicts between Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC), Ptolemy IV Philopater (222-205 BC), and Ptolemy V Epiphanes (205-182 BC).
- 11:20: Seleucus IV (187-175 BC), Antiochus IV Epiphanes’ brother
- 11:21-39: More on Antiochus IV Epiphanes. An amplification of 8:9-26.
- 11:40-43: I’m not sure. As far as I know, we have no record of a fourth campaign by Antiochus IV Epiphanes into Egypt. That doesn’t mean there wasn’t one—absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence—it just means history is silent (as far as I know). It has been suggested that these verses may simply be a recapitulation of the life of Antiochus. Maybe. Perhaps they refer to something farther into the future, though?
- 11:44-45: This may have a clearer interpretation. While trying to put down the Maccabean revolt in Palestine, Antiochus received news that insurrection was afoot in Parthia (north) and Armenia (east), and so left on an expedition to quell it. His armies were in the field in Judea during this time, possibly fulfilling the prediction, “he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas (Mediterranean) and the glorious holy mountain (Zion in Jerusalem).” He came close to having total victory over the Jews, but ultimately failed, and died a miserable death that even he acknowledged was punishment from God for what he had done. No one helped him, because no one could.

CHAPTER 12

- 12:1-2: Like others among the prophets, Daniel here seems to get a glimpse of the end, the resurrection!
- 12:3: “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” Sure sounds like our times.
- 12:7: “time, times, and half a time.” One year, two years, half a year—that is, 3 ½ years. We saw this very expression earlier in 7:25. This timeframe, like so many predictions in Scripture, may have multiple applications. Firstly, perhaps to Antiochus Epiphanes (Josephus says the he put a stop to the daily sacrifice in the temple for 3 ½ years), and later, to the little horn of Daniel 7, the man of sin, the papacy (more on that below). The similarities between the behavior of Antiochus and the papacy are striking, and both are depicted as little horns. The first seems to anticipate and foreshadow the second.
- 12:11-12: Here is perhaps the single most challenging prophecy in the book. It mentions the daily sacrifice being taken away and the abomination of desolation, which makes us think of the heinous acts of Antiochus Epiphanes (11:31). If we attempt to interpret it that way, then 1,290 days may be a more exact accounting of how much time elapsed from Antiochus desecrating the temple to the Maccabees purifying the temple. 1,335 days, then, might be the time that elapsed from the desecration of the temple to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. I only submit these as possibilities, however, and know of no way to prove them.

I will go ahead and share what I believe is another possible (secondary?) understanding. If we apply the so-called “day for a year principle” (seen in Ezek. 4:5-6, and evident in the prophecy of the 70 weeks), then this chapter may be giving us a progression of three very long time

periods: (1) “a time, times, and half a time” (1,260 days/years) (7:25; Rev. 12:6, 14; etc.); (2) “1,290 days/years”; and (3) “1,335 days/years.”

If the 1,260 years is, in fact (as I believe), providing a starting and ending point for the papacy’s greatest power (~533 AD to ~1793 AD), then the other two numbers would have some application to the papacy, as well. I will submit, as a possibility, that the three numbers are marking stages in the process of the papacy’s gradual loss of power. In 1793 (end of 1,260 years), the events of the French Revolution brought papal supremacy crashing down in events that forever changed the world. In 1823 (end of 1,290 years), Pope Leo XII was elected who determined to make the guiding theme of his pontificate, not politics, but religious renewal. Popes had been stressing the papacy’s political role for centuries, and this was a huge shift in focus and exercise of influence. In 1868 (end of 1,335 years), the First Vatican Council was called for the purpose of declaring papal infallibility an official doctrine of the Catholic Church. This decision triggered events which quickly resulted in the papacy’s total loss of temporal power. The popes had ruled over the Papal States for over a thousand years, had their own standing armies, etc. They were kings. But due to that decision in 1868, they lost that. Within two years, Rome was incorporated into the new Italian state, and the pope declared himself a “prisoner in the Vatican.” Those of that time who lived to see it were, in fact, blessed.

- 12:13: Let’s live so that God can say this to us!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, John! Definitely a challenging book.

Comment:

Butch O’Neal:

Thank you, John! This is very helpful!

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Thank you very much brother John! I saw this come in last night, but, we were having some company with us in our home at the time. I was just now able to read your study! Very good! Oh and SING IT! Btw :)

Replies:

Ginger Hermon:

Likewise, John! Thank u so much. Lord willing I'll be able to catch up on the Friday study soon. In the meantime thx again for your efforts! This group is a great blessing!



Comment:

Cassie Crane:

This was timely for me, John. Thank you so much for the work that went into this, it was helpful!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

That's a big chunk to summarize! 😊

Amidst the unfolding and troublesome times, I especially like the assurances:

Daniel 2:44 (NIV-WS)

44 “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

Daniel 7:13-14 (NIV-WS)

13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Matthew 26:63-65 (NIV-WS)

63 But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

64 “You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.