

## The Visions of Daniel: A Preterist Perspective

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March 2014

The purpose of this article is to give a basic summary of the visions of Daniel from a Preterist perspective. I do not intend to give any detailed exegesis here but only a simplified outline of what I presently believe concerning the visions of Daniel, and how they were fulfilled.

There are four key visions that have as their goal the coming of the Messiah and the kingdom of heaven, things that were evidently fulfilled in first century events, especially in the events leading up to, and including, the Day of the Lord in 70 AD. These four visions together form a chronological framework for understanding the key events surrounding the arrival of Jesus the Messiah as the Son of Man, along with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple & the end of the old covenant age, and the subsequent establishing of the kingdom of God.

These key visions are found in Daniel chapters 2, 7, 9 & 12. I will consider these first. Any detailed exegesis will be left for another time (although I will elaborate a little when dealing with chapter 7 in particular, with further details in the endnotes). I began writing a study series on the book of Daniel some years ago (having completed about three articles up to now), but due to some adjustments in my thinking in recent years, particularly since October 2012, there needs to be some slight revision to bring things up-to-date. I'm beginning this forthcoming revised series with this overview from a Preterist perspective.

### Daniel Chapter 2: The Vision of the Great Image (or Statue)

<sup>31</sup>“Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. <sup>32</sup>The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. <sup>34</sup>While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. <sup>35</sup>Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

<sup>36</sup>“This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. <sup>37</sup>Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; <sup>38</sup>in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

<sup>39</sup>“After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. <sup>40</sup>Finally, there will

be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. <sup>41</sup> Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. <sup>42</sup> As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. <sup>43</sup> And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

<sup>44</sup> **“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. <sup>45</sup> This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

“The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

(Daniel 2:31-45 NIV)

In this first vision, Daniel gives the divine interpretation of a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had, which Daniel was shown in a vision. It reveals the rise of four kingdoms that would have a great impact on God’s covenant people, Israel. The head of gold represented Babylon; the chest and arms of silver represented Media-Persia; the belly and thighs of bronze represented Greece; and the legs of iron, with feet partly of iron and partly of clay, represented Rome. (The majority of biblical commentators throughout the centuries have also interpreted it this way.)

These four kingdoms were to be followed by the kingdom of heaven, which was pictured as a heavenly stone smashing the image into pieces by striking its feet and blowing it away in the wind. The stone or rock then becomes a huge mountain that fills the whole earth. Verse 44 reveals that this kingdom of God would be established in the days of the kings of the fourth kingdom of Rome, implying that the 10 toes of the image represented 10 kings of Rome.

This becomes more explicit in Daniel 7. The kingdom of heaven would be given the authority of the previous kingdoms of men, and it would never be destroyed. Ultimately, the worldly authority depicted here was the spiritual authority of Satan and his kingdom, which would be conquered by the Messiah and His kingdom (cf. Luke 4:5-8).

It can be shown from history that there were 10 Caesars who ruled before, and up to, 70 AD. It was during the days of these kings that the messianic prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, along with the heavenly and earthly events in the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD – the year in which the great Day of the Lord occurred thereby fully establishing the kingdom of the heavens in both realms of heaven and earth.

## Daniel Chapter 7: The Vision of the Four Beasts

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. <sup>3</sup> Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

<sup>4</sup> "The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.

<sup>5</sup> "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

<sup>6</sup> "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

<sup>7</sup> "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

<sup>8</sup> "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

<sup>9</sup> "As I looked,

"thrones were set in place,  
and the Ancient of Days took his seat.  
His clothing was as white as snow;  
the hair of his head was white like wool.  
His throne was flaming with fire,  
and its wheels were all ablaze.

<sup>10</sup> A river of fire was flowing,  
coming out from before him.  
Thousands upon thousands attended him;  
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.  
The court was seated,  
and the books were opened.

<sup>11</sup> "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. <sup>12</sup> (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

<sup>13</sup> “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. <sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> “I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.”

(Daniel 7:1-15 NIV)

In this vision, four kingdoms were prophesied to arise, followed by the kingdom of heaven. These are clearly the same four kingdoms of Daniel 2. Virtually all bible commentators agree that the four kingdoms/empires were Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and *Rome*. The ten horns on the fourth beast (Rome) were said to be *ten kings* or rulers who would come from this kingdom. This was also being shown in the vision of the Great Image in Daniel 2, where the ten toes were evidently these same ten kings. It was to be *in the days of those kings* that the kingdom of God (i.e. the kingdom of the heavens) would be set up (cf. Daniel 2:40-41, 44).

Then another horn, a little (eleventh) one, is said to rise up after three of the previous rulers had been subdued. This little horn/ruler was to wage war against the holy people of God for a period of three and a half years (expressed as ‘a time, times and half a time’) and he would seemingly defeat them.

Nevertheless, at the end of this period of war, the Ancient of Days would come and pronounce judgment in favour of his holy people, the true Israel; that is, there would be a coming of God in righteous judgment to rescue his chosen ones. Then the heavenly court would give the authority of the kingdoms of the world to the people of God (the focus here ultimately being on the *spiritual* powers and authorities rather than just merely the human kingdoms). This universal kingdom was to be given to the Son of Man at the time of a great judgment of God in heaven where multitudes stood before the fiery throne. Here is the interpretation that was given to Daniel.

“So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ‘The four great beasts are four kings (*or kingdoms*) that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.’

“Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

“He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour

the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. **The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.**

“But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. **Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High.** His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’

(Daniel 7:16-27 NIV)

I believe the historical and biblical evidence is strong enough to accept the interpretation that ‘*the great tribulation*’ upon Israel, which would last for three and a half years, was fulfilled in the Roman/Jewish war of February/March 67 to August/September 70 AD – a period of three and a half years. At the end of this war, the city of Jerusalem and the temple were completely destroyed, officially ending the Old Covenant era.

Amazingly, this ‘end of the age’ event occurred when the *tenth* ruler of Rome, Vespasian, was the new emperor (beginning the count with Julius Caesar).<sup>1</sup> That would then make his son Titus the ‘little horn’ eleventh ruler; and he was the one who actually destroyed the temple after laying siege to the city of Jerusalem; and Titus was also the only Roman ruler who was directly involved with the whole war. The three of the ten horns/rulers who were previously subdued were Galba, Otho and Vitellius, with Vespasian and Titus coming out as victors after the infamous ‘Year of the Four Emperors.’

If this is the case, and I believe there is good reason to accept that it is, then the coming of the Son of Man, the Day of the Lord – in fact, all of the events prophesied in Daniel’s visions - must’ve occurred at this time as well; and that would have to include the resurrection and judgment also to be consistent, particularly taking into account the NT evidence of the near expectation of these things for that generation.

In verses 9-12 of chapter 7, Daniel describes a heavenly court scene where thrones are set in place alongside the fiery chariot-throne of God himself, and a river of fire is seen flowing out from before him. Many thousands are seen attending him and tens of thousands stand before him, as the court is seated and books are opened. This ‘judgment scene’ account follows with the little horn/beast being destroyed and thrown into the river of fire – with the added words that the other beasts had been stripped of their authority but were allowed to live for a time. Here’s the passage in question.

“As I looked,  
“**thrones** were set in place,  
and **the Ancient of Days** took his seat.  
His clothing was as **white as snow**;  
the hair of his head was **white like wool**.  
**His throne** was flaming with fire,  
and its wheels were all ablaze.  
**A river of fire** was flowing,  
coming out from before him.

Thousands upon thousands attended him;  
ten thousand times ten thousand **stood before him**.

The court was seated,  
and the **books** were opened.

"Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until **the beast** was slain and its body destroyed and **thrown into the blazing fire**. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

(Daniel 7:9-12 NIV)

Now it is very evident that this is describing the Day of Judgment associated with the establishing of the kingdom of God. When you take all the elements here and carefully compare them with the details in Revelation chapter 20 concerning the First Resurrection (verses 4-6) and the judgment of the dead at the Great White Throne (verses 11-15), they are essentially the same.<sup>11</sup>

Not only that, but the destruction of the spiritual 'beast/little horn' power into 'the fire' is also being described in the previous chapter (Revelation 19:11-21); and this is the result of the Second Appearing of Christ as 'the Rider on the white horse' coming in judgment to establish his kingdom (equivalent to the coming of God in Daniel 7:21-22).

It is very evident that the culmination of these two visions in Daniel 2 & 7 were fulfilled in the events of 70 AD in the prophesied Day of the Lord, which Jesus and the apostles in the writings of the NT referred to as the coming of the Son of Man, the second appearing or advent, the presence or Parousia of Christ, the revelation or manifestation of Christ in the Day of the Lord Jesus. That is, momentous events took place in both the spiritual dimension and the earthly world that established the full authority of the kingdom of God and His Christ over the whole universe – a heavenly, spiritual kingdom that will never end.

## Daniel Chapter 12: The Final Vision

In chapter 12 of Daniel we have the final portion of the final vision of the book, which actually began in chapters 10 and 11. This portion also speaks of the events of the first century AD – and this would also include the resurrection. That is, the eschatological event of the resurrection & judgment would occur at the end of the age *within history*. Only the NT prophetic writings reveal these things in greater detail as they unfolded in the events of Jesus' life & the early church. In the same way as Christ's resurrection occurred within history, so the resurrection depicted in Daniel would also occur within that generation – as the First Resurrection of many to follow in the full establishing of the kingdom of God.

"At that time **Michael**, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found **written in the book**—will be delivered. <sup>2</sup> Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

<sup>5</sup> Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. <sup>6</sup> One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"

<sup>7</sup> The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "**It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.**"

<sup>8</sup> I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"

<sup>9</sup> He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end...

<sup>13</sup> "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then **at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.**"

(Daniel 12:1-9, 13 NIV)

Now if the details above are carefully compared with Jesus' Olivet Discourse and the vision of Revelation in the NT then it will be seen that there are a number of parallels. What we have are the following details.

At the time of the end (i.e. the messianic era) the chief messenger (or archangel) *Michael* would arise to do battle (cf. Revelation 12:7-10); there would be a *great tribulation* or time of distress for Israel lasting *three and a half years* (i.e. time, times, and half a time), unequalled before that time (cf. Daniel 7:25; Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 7:14; 11:2-3; 12:13-14; 13:5-10).

At the end of this period (at the conclusion of the age), *all these things would be completed*, resulting in the people of Israel being finally broken, while the true holy people of God, Daniel's people (i.e. the faithful remnant of the Israel of God), who are written in the book (of life), would be saved (cf. Luke 21:20-23, 28; Revelation 11:17-18).

At this time there would also be a resurrection of multitudes sleeping in the earth – both of the righteous (who are given eternal life) and the unrighteous (who are given eternal shame and contempt). Daniel himself was told that at the end of the days (that is, *on the last day*; cf. John 11:24; 6:39-40, 44 & 54) he also would rise to receive his (heavenly) inheritance. It is also evident from the NT that these things were all related to the soon-coming Day of the Lord (or coming of the Son of Man) promised to occur within the 1<sup>st</sup> century generation (e.g. Matthew 24:30-35).

And Daniel was then told to *seal up* the words of the prophecy because the time of the end was a long way off (about 500 years). This was contrary to what John was later told in the vision of Revelation when the time of the end had finally arrived; for he was told *don't* seal up the prophecy because *the time is near!* That is, the prophetic events of Revelation were to shortly be fulfilled in the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD – and NOT hundreds or thousands of years later.

Again, like the previous visions, the culmination of this vision clearly points to the events of 70 AD.<sup>III</sup>

## Daniel Chapter 9: The Prophecy of the 70 Weeks

<sup>24</sup> **“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city** to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.”

<sup>25</sup> **“Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’** It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. <sup>26</sup> After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. <sup>27</sup> **He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.** And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

(NIV footnote for verse 27c – “Or *And one who causes desolation will come upon the wing of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city*”)

(Daniel 9:24-27 NIV)

In the prophecy of the 70 Weeks or Sevens, a total period or cycle of 490 ‘sevens’ (or sabbatical years) was given, towards the end of which time the Messiah would arrive, the Anointed Ruler or Prince, to confirm a covenant with many and to cause the Temple sacrifices and offerings to cease.

Six conditions were given in relation to the people of Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem that were to be fulfilled by the end of this prophesied period: to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy one or place. These things were evidently to be brought to completion by the Anointed One.

As a result of the Messiah’s death (being cut off), the rebuilt city of Jerusalem and the Temple (i.e. the second Temple) would ultimately be destroyed, accompanied by abominations, desolations and war. This event would mark the end of the old covenant system (followed by the establishing of the Messiah’s kingdom, as per the other visions of Daniel already considered).

Without going into too much detail here, I firmly believe that this prophecy has been completely fulfilled in the events of the first coming of Christ and that which followed in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the Day of the Lord of 70 AD.

Even though there are a number of possible interpretations as to how the 490 years were fulfilled, the view that I presently hold begins the 70 weeks with the decree of the Persian king Artaxerxes I Longimanus in 458 BC, which sent Ezra the priest to Jerusalem to complete the spiritual and physical restoration of Judah and Jerusalem. The endpoint of the 490 years would be 33 AD. This is widely recognised as the year in which Jesus was crucified, followed by his resurrection, ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.<sup>IV</sup>



There is some debate as to whether there are two rulers or Princes in this prophecy, or just the one, Messiah the Prince. If verse 26b were referring to another "coming Prince" and his people, then I would say that this was referring to the spiritual power of the Roman ruler Titus who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.<sup>v</sup>

As it stands at the moment, I accept the interpretation of there being only one ruler in the prophecy – and that is the Messiah. Nevertheless, it is also true to say that the Jewish nation, as the people of the Messiah, were the ones that brought the desolation and judgment upon themselves through murderous abominations and rebellious factions fighting one another.

It needs to be said that there are a number of difficulties that have to be overcome when seeking to interpret this text correctly, which has led to a number of differing interpretations of this prophecy throughout church history. The first would be that of having to deal with the various translations of this text where certain sentences are rendered quite differently. This in itself can cause a number of problems. For instance, I don't fully accept every aspect of the NIV rendering quoted above, and I would make some changes to the text based on other renderings, especially portions of verse 27. That is, one's interpretation of specific details will depend on which rendering one accepts. Be that as it may, all accurate variations can be shown to have had a fulfilment by 70 AD.

Secondly, it has to be determined what units these "sevens" represent. Some commentators have understood them to be symbolical, but I have never found this view to be satisfactory. By far the most common understanding of these "sevens" or "weeks" is that they are Sabbaths of years; that is, units of sevens of years. This totally makes sense in the context of this chapter.

Once this understanding has been accepted, though, there is also the issue of how to understand the subdivisions of the 70 weeks; that is, the 7 sevens, the 62 sevens, and the final seven. This begs the question, why are there three divisions? There is also the related issue of whether there are any gaps of indeterminate length in-between these divisions. And even the final seven appears to be divided in half.

If the full 70 weeks of 490 years were to be understood as one unit without any gaps, then the view that I presently hold, briefly mentioned above, would make the most sense. However, if we were to allow for gaps in-between the subdivisions then a slightly different approach would need to be found.

Thirdly, to throw a spanner in the works, I have to admit that a good case can be made to show that the word or commandment that went forth to cause a restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity was that of the Persian king Cyrus in either 537 or 534 BC. If that is the case, then there has to be gaps in-between the three subdivisions. What would those gaps be?

A good case can also be made for dividing the final week of 7 years into two periods of 3 ½ years each; the first being applied to Christ's ministry, which ended with his death on the cross, which caused the sacrificial system to cease before God, and the other being applied to 'the great tribulation' of the Roman/Jewish war of 67-70 AD, which culminated in the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

It does seem highly probable that this event in 70 AD is the endpoint by which time the whole prophecy of the 70 weeks was fulfilled. Again, this would mean that there is a gap in the middle of the final week of years, leading to the possibility of other gaps in the previous divisions. This would account for the fact that the prophecy was stated in terms of three groups of 'sevens' and not explicitly 'years'.

That is to say, the fulfilment of the '490 sevens', along with all the specific details of the prophecy, took place somewhere between the decree of Cyrus and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD (a period of about 600 actual years within which were hidden the 490 sevens). And the termination of this period was the time when vision and prophecy were completed, with the main focus of the whole prophecy being on Jesus the Messiah and the confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant through his sacrificial death.

I began writing a study paper on The Seventy Weeks Prophecy a few years ago now, continuing my study series in Daniel, but I had to put it to one side when I was about halfway through it due to some other matters that needed dealing with. I hope to be able to continue this study in the near future.

### Daniel Chapters 8 and 11

It is widely accepted amongst biblical scholars and commentators that Daniel chapter 8 is giving details about the Media-Persian Empire (the two-horned ram) and the Greek Empire (the he-goat); followed by the Greek Empire's division into four kingdoms after the death of Alexander the Great, and the later rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid kingdom (the little horn) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

I used to believe that the details of the little horn given in verses 23-25 could also be applied to Herod the Great, although I wouldn't push that interpretation now. Only in a secondary sense, in a typological way, could Herod be viewed as an antichrist-type figure here similar to Antiochus. I give my reasons for this in my original article *The Vision of the Ram and the He-Goat*.

Nevertheless, the prophecy clearly stated in verse 9 (see also verse 23) that this 'little horn' would arise from one of the four Greek kingdoms towards the latter era of their rule (i.e. before they were taken over by the fourth beast of Rome). King Herod did not arise from one of these Greek kingdoms, but Antiochus did – and he fulfilled the details of the vision. Chapter 11 is essentially focusing on the same period that chapter 8 does, with much more detail.

In Daniel chapter 10, as a prelude to the final vision in chapters 11 & 12, Daniel is given an insight into the powers and authorities in the heavenly realms, that is, the powers at work in the spiritual dimension. He is shown that there were spiritual princes or rulers who were opposed to the kingdom of God, and they held sway over their human counterparts on earth. This becomes the key to understanding what certain elements of the visions of Daniel and Revelation are really talking about. They are ultimately revealing things concerned with the spiritual world, and the battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

Most biblical commentators agree that Daniel chapter 11 is giving further details about the Persian Empire followed by the Greek Empire (verses 2-4), with the

majority of the chapter focused on various significant rulers of the Seleucid Empire (referred to as the king of the North) and the Ptolemaic Empire (referred to as the King of the South). It is generally accepted that verses 21-32 are referring to the campaigns of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his attack on Jerusalem and Judea, and verses 33-35 are describing the resistance of the Jewish Maccabees.

The interpretive problems usually arise after this in relation to verses 36-45, which is the latter part of chapter 11 (although the prophetic narrative continues in chapter 12 with things related to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD). This text has proved to be a very difficult passage to interpret, resulting in a number of interesting views being put forward over the centuries. Every view has its own problems somewhere though.

Some try to apply the description of "the King" to Antiochus IV, as a continuation of what has gone before, but this creates a problem because it appears he did not fulfil all of the details in this passage, particularly the war campaign in verses 40-45. Verse 40 also states that this would occur at "the time of the end" when "the time of wrath would be completed" (see also v36). These phrases are usually understood as referring to the era of the Messiah and his kingdom (which is the subject of chapter 12:1).

Be that as it may, Daniel 8:17, 19 & 23 also mention the phrases "the time of the end" and "the time of wrath" in relation to the latter period of the rule of the Greek kingdoms, particularly in relation to the events of Antiochus IV and his persecution and Hellenisation of the Jews. Therefore, in this context these phrases are better understood as referring to the judgment of God being completed upon these Greek kingdoms through their subjugation by the emerging Roman Empire in the latter days of their reign.

Anyhow, as difficult as this passage is to interpret, especially from a Preterist standpoint, it is nevertheless evident that these things were fulfilled in the ancient past in the centuries leading up to the NT events of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. At the present time, I believe that there are two probable scenarios that fulfil the words of this passage, at least to a large extent.

For a number of years, the most satisfactory interpretation that I had come across was that of Philip Mauro in his book *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*. Simply put, he viewed the King of verses 36-39 as being Herod the Great, distinct from the King of the North; the King of the North as being the Romans under Octavian (who had taken over the territory of Syria previously held by the Seleucid Empire); and the King of the South as the final ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty (that is, Cleopatra in league with Mark Anthony). The war details in verses 40-45 he viewed as being the battle of Actium, which subjected Egypt to Rome and brought an end to the kingdom of the Ptolemies. Octavian then became the first true Emperor of Rome, Caesar Augustus.

The second view is the 'Titus' model, which has been ably put forward by Duncan Mackenzie in his book *The Antichrist and the Second Coming Volume I: Daniel and 2 Thessalonians*. This interpretation applies the details of the King to the Roman general Titus, son of Vespasian, who is also viewed as the little horn of Daniel chapter 7, and the beast of Revelation 13, and the man of lawlessness of 2

Thessalonians 2. Verses 40-45 of Daniel 11 are applied to the Roman/Jewish war of 67-70 AD.

Although I agree with Duncan Mackenzie's view that Titus was the little horn (earthly) ruler of Daniel chapter 7 (and the beast of Revelation 13 & most probably the man of lawlessness as well), I am not convinced that Titus fulfils the details of the King of the North of Daniel 11:36-45. One of the biggest problems for me is that he views the King of the South as the Jewish rebels fighting against Rome. The whole context of this portion of Daniel 11 is the latter reigns of the Seleucid Empire and the Ptolemaic Empire at the time that the Roman Empire emerges as the fourth beast, just before the arrival of the Messiah.

I think both of these views contain much that is commendable, though upon close examination both have their difficulties in certain places. There is much that I can accept in both views, but at present I am strongly persuaded by the Actium war model of verses 40-43 more than anything else. This view makes so much sense in the context, and it can be shown to have had an accurate fulfilment in history.

Having said that, I no longer accept the view that 'the King' was Herod the Great for it is evident to me that there are only two kings in this text who are the main subjects of this prophecy, namely the King of the North and the King of the South. The King of verses 36-39 is evidently the King of the North, the main ruler of the Seleucid territory. In this light, many of the details do not apply to Herod, particularly if the battle of Actium is being portrayed in verses 40-43.

At this time of writing I am researching the possibility that Octavian/Caesar Augustus was the King of the North who subdued Egypt after the battle of Actium, and also secured his rule over Jerusalem and all Palestine through Herod the Great. He also became the first emperor of Rome and was the ruling Caesar when Jesus was born. He was also the first living Emperor to be deified and called the son of god, thereby magnifying himself above all gods, even the gods of Rome and the God of Israel. In my research so far, I have found that the available historical evidence does fit most of the details of the prophecy, especially within the historical context of this passage.

I will attempt some detailed exegesis on this in a future article after further study, research and contemplation. So far this view seems quite promising, but time will tell!

### "To Fulfil All That Is Written"

"When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. **For this is the time of punishment** (*lit. the days of vengeance*) **in fulfillment of all that has been written.** How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! **There will be great distress** (*or tribulation*) **in the land and wrath against this people.** They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

(Luke 21:20-24 NIV)

All the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jerusalem and Israel were fulfilled in the events leading up to, and including, 70 AD, particularly those that spoke of the terrible yet glorious Day of the Lord, for Jesus had stated unequivocally "...for these are days of vengeance, **to fulfill all that is written.**" This is especially true in relation to the prophecies of Daniel. It is evident that a number of Jesus' words quoted above were alluding to the prophecies of Daniel, including the following.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered..."

"...It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

(Daniel 12:1,7 NIV)

And after the sixty-two weeks, the anointed one shall be destroyed, and there is no judgment in him: and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary with the prince that is coming: they shall be cut off with a flood, and to the end of the war which is rapidly completed he shall appoint the city to desolations.

And one week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink-offering shall be taken away: and on the temple shall be the abomination of desolations; and at the end of time an end shall be put to the desolation.

(Daniel 9:26-27 LXX)

The divine timing of these events was remarkable in its accuracy. On the day of Passover, in the spring of 70 AD, the Roman armies began to encamp around Jerusalem in preparation for the coming siege. This was 40 years from when Jesus began His ministry.<sup>VI</sup> After 5 months, the Temple was burned and the city destroyed. The temple was destroyed on the 10th of the Jewish month Ab. This was the very same day that the temple of Solomon had been burned in 587/586 BC (cf. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 5:13:7). Certainly not a coincidence! Both the First and Second Temples were divinely judged and destroyed on the same day! (Herod's Temple was essentially the Second Temple that was built after the Babylonian captivity, only enlarged and beautified.)

Then on the Passover of 73 AD, the Romans defeated the last group of Jewish Zealots as they made their final stand in the fortress of Masada. Apparently, they committed mass suicide rather than allow the Romans to kill them. This officially ended the Jewish/Roman War of that period. It occurred exactly 40 years from the crucifixion of Jesus (33-73 AD) - to the very day (cf. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 7:9:1). Again, certainly not a coincidence! The pivotal moment from the point of view of biblical prophecy was the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in August/September 70 AD.

These prophetic fulfilments heralded something of great magnitude - the end of an official divine transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, from Israel after the flesh to the spiritual Israel of God, from the 'already' aspect of the kingdom to its 'fullness' in a New Creation.

The official, legal beginning of the War, when the Emperor Nero sent Vespasian to subdue Palestine, occurred in February/March 67 AD. The city of Jerusalem was

finally subdued and the temple destroyed under Titus by August/September 70 AD.<sup>VII</sup> This was a period of three-and-a-half-years; or put another way, 'time, times and half a time' in the prophetic language of the books of Daniel & Revelation.

"...It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

Be that as it may, Luke's account records the words of Jesus concerning the consummation of this Great Tribulation for the Jews, the final completion of the era that Jesus called '*the times of the nations*' (or times of the Gentiles), which would end Jerusalem's domination by the nations begun at the time of Daniel. Take careful note of the words in this text.<sup>VIII</sup>

"They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

(Luke 21:24 NIV)

This War was truly a pivotal, and a hugely significant, event in Jewish and biblical history. Jesus made it clear that it would be unparalleled, because these '*days of vengeance*' would fulfil **all** that is written concerning Israel and Jerusalem.<sup>IX</sup> The era of ancient Israel under the Old Covenant, which had lasted for over 1500 years, officially ended in 70 AD. The focus has since been on a New Jerusalem, a New Mount Zion, a New Creation, a New Covenant, a New Promised Land, a New Temple of God, even a New Humanity.

This 'New Creation' is the fullness of the Kingdom of the heavens ruling over all peoples on the earth under the King Messiah, Jesus, in a 'millennial' reign that will last until the consummation of earth history – and beyond. And in accordance with Daniel 7:13-14 & 27 this heavenly coronation of the Son of Man resulted in the kingdom of God being handed over to the true Israel of God so that His holy people would then co-reign with Christ in His heavenly kingdom forever and ever.

And the NT makes it very clear that this 'coming of the Son of Man' & His kingdom would occur within the confines of that 1<sup>st</sup> century generation, because it was near and soon to occur.

"You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. **Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.**"

(Matthew 10:22-23 NIV)

"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. **Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.**"

(Matthew 16:27-28 NIV)

"Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. **Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.**"

(Matthew 24:33-34 NIV)

## Endnotes

<sup>I</sup> Even though Julius Caesar was technically not the first Roman Emperor (Augustus was the first), the vast majority of Roman historians viewed Julius as the first of the Caesars for obvious reasons; all the others were named after him, and he was the first to be deified. Dr. Ken Gentry cites the Roman historians Suetonius and Dio Cassius, and the Jewish writer Josephus, among those who viewed Julius Caesar as the first 'king' (*Before Jerusalem Fell*, Revised Edition 1998, American Vision, pp. 152-159).

Therefore, the ten kings/horns were as follows:

1. Julius Caesar (49-44 BC)
2. Augustus (31 BC-14 AD)
3. Tiberius (14-37 AD)
4. Gaius Caligula (37-41 AD)
5. Claudius (41-54 AD)
6. **Nero** (54-68 AD – the sixth king ruling when Revelation was written)
7. Galba (68-69 AD)
8. Otho (69 AD) [7, 8 & 9 = the three horns uprooted/subdued]
9. Vitellius (69 AD)
10. **Vespasian** (69-79 AD)
11. (**Titus** was the 'little horn/beast' who was the Roman general who led the invasion of Judea and Jerusalem in 70 AD as virtual co-ruler with his father Vespasian; and he was the one who was worshipped in the Jewish temple after its destruction)

In my previous studies on the visions of Daniel, I put forward the view that the ten kings were concurrent (as senatorial rulers) rather than successive (the first ten Caesars) due to Revelation 17:12-14, where the ten kings are viewed as existing at the same time. I believe that the solution lies in the fact that these powers and authorities symbolised in the beast and the horns, etc, are primarily the specific *spiritual* principalities and powers that were the real powers behind the human counterparts on earth (cf. Daniel 10:4-11:1). It is these very powers that Paul was referring to in Ephesians 6:10-18; that is, all the 'angelic' powers under the authority of the Dragon, which symbolises Satan, who is head of the powers of darkness.

It is very evident though from Daniel chapters 2 & 7 that the ten kings are initially seen as being the first ten rulers of the Roman Empire followed by a 'little horn' ruler who would destroy the city and the sanctuary (cf. Daniel 9:26-27). This fits with the historical fulfilment, as well as the eschatology of the NT.

<sup>II</sup> For example, note the following: Thrones for co-rulers (Daniel 7:9; Revelation 20:4, also cp. verse 6); White associated with God's throne of judgment (Daniel 7:9; Revelation 20:11); a river and a lake of fire (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:14-15); tens of thousands of people standing before the throne (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12-13); books are opened (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12, 15); & the destruction of the (spiritual) beast in the fire (Daniel 7:11; Revelation 19:20).

J. Stuart Russell, in his book *The Parousia*, made a good case for connecting 'the First Resurrection' overcomers in Revelation 20:4-6 with the Great White Throne judgment scene

in 20:11-15 (pp. 519-525). I didn't accept this view at first, but after further re-examination, I now believe Russell was correct. In his book, Russell didn't attempt to link Revelation 20 with Daniel 7 as he was focusing primarily on the NT, yet it is evident that if he had done so this would've strengthened his position.

I went on to find confirmation of this view in the work of Duncan W. McKenzie, who was also eventually persuaded by Russell's position on Revelation 20. He makes a strong case for interpreting the judgment scene of Revelation 20 as being one and the same as the judgment scene in Daniel 7 (*The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination – Volume II: The Book of Revelation*, pp. 362-380, Xulon Press, 2012). I tend to agree with him here.

The extra detail of Satan's release at the end of the '1000 years' in verses 7-10 of Revelation 20 are viewed as being parenthetical in nature, where John was shown what would take place in the distant future in relation to the loosing of Satan after the '1000-year-reign.' This would be the only portion of the vision that wasn't 'near' or 'about to occur' in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, unlike the rest of it that was near; nevertheless, the *beginning* of this '1000-year-kingdom' was about to be fully established at Christ's revelation or manifestation in 70 AD. Hence, J. S. Russell's Preterism was Premillennial. Hence, my own view is Consistent Premillennial Preterism; that is, it recognises a premillennial pattern (not to be confused with Premillennialism as a futurist system) while using an amillennial hermeneutic.

Some preterists have difficulty reconciling the 'forever and ever' reign of Christ and His people stated in Daniel 7:14, 22 & 27 (see also Revelation 11:15 & 22:5) with the somewhat limited '1000-year-reign' of Revelation 20, which is shown to have a yet-future fiery consummation in verses 7-9. I think the difficulty disappears when the '1000-year-reign' is viewed as being a symbolic description of Christ's heavenly reign since 70 AD over the nations of the earth (similar to traditional Amillennialism); a reign that is shared with His people in the spiritual dimension (again, not unlike traditional Amillennialism, which views deceased believers as being with Christ in the spirit world; though I would say that this 'reigning' of deceased believers is not just in spirit, but involves having a spiritual resurrection body with fullness of life in an actual new creation). This 'temporal' aspect of the kingdom will last until the consummation of world (or earth) history in the future. The New Creation Kingdom of God is already eternal and lasts 'forever and ever.' (See my chart *Two Ages/Two Realities*).

<sup>III</sup> There are actually four specific time periods altogether revealed in the visions of Daniel:

- a.** time, times, and half a time (Daniel 7:25 & 12:7)
- b.** 2300 evenings and mornings (Daniel 8:14)
- c.** 1290 days (Daniel 12:11)
- d.** 1335 days (Daniel 12:12)

Time period **a.** is not usually accepted as being fulfilled in Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but in the Jewish/Roman war of 67-70 AD (or for Historicists and Dispensationalists in some other later event). Time period **b.** is widely accepted as being fulfilled in the events of Antiochus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, while periods **c.** & **d.** are viewed as being fulfilled in either Antiochus or the Jewish/Roman War of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Dispensationalists/Futurists largely view period's **a.**, **c.** & **d.** as yet to be fulfilled in relation to the end of this present age.

It is possible that time periods **b.**, **c.** & **d.** *may* be related, but it makes better sense to see **a.**, **c.** & **d.** as connected in relation to the Jewish/Roman War of 66-70 AD - particularly as **a.** is repeated in Daniel 12 which is then followed by **c.** & **d.** That is, the time periods of chapters 7 & 12 are all related to 1<sup>st</sup> century AD events.



Time period **b.** is widely accepted as being fulfilled in the events of Antiochus Epiphanes, as is 'the abomination of desolation' of Daniel 11:31. The remaining three periods appear to be related to the 1st century events of the destruction of the temple, as Jesus prophesied that a further 'abomination of desolation' would occur in relation to that catastrophic event (cf. Matthew 24:15). Time period **a.** is also repeated in the book of Revelation (in three different forms) in relation to the three-and-a-half-year War of 67-70 AD.

Either way, I think it is very evident that all these time periods have been fulfilled in either the events of Antiochus or the Jewish/Roman War - or possibly in both! Of course, all the above is true only if these periods are taken literally. It is also probable that some may have a figurative meaning and application as well.

<sup>IV</sup> This view is very similar to that of Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. as expressed in chapter 1 of his book *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil*.

<sup>V</sup> Duncan W. McKenzie ably puts this view forward in his book *The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination – Volume I: Daniel and 2 Thessalonians*.

<sup>VI</sup> Although the dating of Jesus' birth often appears highly speculative, with dates varying from 1 to 12 BC (!), I think a strong and balanced case can be made for accepting that 2 BC is the correct date. See Dr. Stephen E. Jones, *When REALLY was Jesus Born?* (a booklet available via his website God's Kingdom Ministries); Ernest L. Martin, *The Star That Astonished The World*, (ASK Publications, 1996); & Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Revised Edition* (1998, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.).

I also accept the year of Christ's death and resurrection as 33 AD as opposed to the other most probable alternative of 30 AD. See Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Revised Edition* (1998, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.) & Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of The Life of Christ*, (1977, Zondervan). I therefore see Christ's ministry as beginning in about autumn 29 to spring 30 AD, depending on whether one accepts a three-year ministry or a three-and-a-half-year ministry.

<sup>VII</sup> F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (1969; Doubleday 1980) pp. 381-382; Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell* (Revised Edition 1998, American Vision) pp. 250-253.

<sup>VIII</sup> It is highly probable that Jesus was referring to the three-and-a-half-year period of the war when he spoke of Jerusalem being trodden down by the nations (i.e. the Roman armies & Idumean rebels) until the times of the nations were fulfilled (cf. Revelation 11:1-2). I once accepted the view that this was also referring to something much greater that encompassed the whole of this present age until the Consummation, but I think it is more consistent to accept that this was confined to the first-century events concerning Israel & Jerusalem.

<sup>IX</sup> Jesus himself had indicated that the writings of the Hebrew prophets (OT) would be fulfilled by, and in, the events of 70 AD (cf. Luke 21:22; "These are days of vengeance to fulfil all that is written.") This was based in particular on Daniel 9:24 ("to seal up vision and prophecy") and 12:7 ("When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.") The apostle Paul also spoke of 'the ends of the ages' as having already arrived on the Christians of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11; see also Hebrews 9:26-28). And all of the prophetic details in the vision of Revelation were said to be near & soon to occur (see *Table 3: Time Indicators in the Book of Revelation*). In fact, the whole of the NT paints the same picture of a near & soon expectation of the Day of the Lord, the Second Appearing of Christ (see *Table 1: References to the Last Times*, etc).