

Dreams, Visions and Prophecies of the Times of the Gentiles

The period of time between the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 52.12-23) and the return of Christ at the conclusion of "time of Jacob's trouble" (Revelation 19.11-16) is referred to by many, including Jesus, as the "Times of the Gentiles." This is the descriptive term for this very long period when God's chosen people are under Gentile dominion.

The substance of the dreams, visions and prophecies of Daniel (and others) are essentially outlines of God's plan for the ages with the details filled in by the visions given to John on Patmos which of course he recorded as the Book of Revelation.

The early years of Daniel's ministry in Babylon were not prophetic so much as he was a government administrator and he was relied upon to interpret dreams that troubled King Nebuchadnezzar that his Chaldean wise men were unable to unravel for him. In these times he turned to Daniel, who turned to God, who in turn gave Daniel an understanding heart of the Kings dreams and their interpretation.

The Links to Parallel Scriptures & Time Periods of History & the Future

Times of the Gentiles

Jesus

In Luke 21:24, Jesus speaks of future events, including the destruction of Jerusalem and His return. He says that "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (ESV).

Paul

A similar phrase to that used by Jesus is found in Romans 11:25, which says, "A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (ESV).

Ezekiel

The Old Testament does not contain this exact phrase, but there are references that match up such as Ezekiel 30:3 which points to "a time of doom for the nations" in connection with the Day of the Lord.

Daniel

Daniel's series of visions deals with Gentile world powers and their role in God's plan for the earth. Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay (Daniel 2:31-45) represents successive Gentile kingdoms that will dominate until Christ returns and establishes His reign. Daniel's vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7:1-27) likewise speaks of four kings, or nations, which will dominate for a time until Christ comes to rule forever. The

vision of the ram and the goat (Daniel 8:1–26) gives more detail about these Gentile rulers and the time involved in their dominion. In each of these passages, the Gentiles have dominion over the world, including the Jewish people, for a time, but God will ultimately subdue them all and establish His own kingdom once and for all. Each prophecy culminates with a reference to Christ's kingdom.

John

When we examine the book of Revelation, we find similar references to the time of Gentile dominion ending with the return of Christ. In Revelation 11:2, John indicates that Jerusalem will be under Gentile rule, even though the temple has been restored. The armies of the Beast are destroyed by the Lord in Revelation 19:17–19, just before the millennial reign of Christ is initiated.

The Time of Jacob's Trouble

This seven-year period following the rapture or catching away of the church from the earth, is otherwise referred to as the tribulation period and was prophesied by Daniel.



This is a period of unparalleled peace for 3.5 years as the antichrist makes a treaty with Israel (Daniel 9.27) to erect the third temple, otherwise known as the temple of Ezekiel due to his very detailed Messianic prophecy in chapters 40-43 which is also reflected in Revelation chapter 11.

This time of peace will be brought to a crunching halt when the antichrist immediately desecrates the temple by demanding to be worshipped. At this point the Jews will realise they have been duped and that will signal the beginning of the great tribulation, or the time of Jacob's trouble as God pours out His wrath from heaven onto the earth in a series of judgements detailed in the book of Revelation and known as the 7 seal judgements followed by the 7 trumpet judgements and finally the 7 vial judgements culminating in the return of Christ and the battle of Armageddon (Revelation chapter 19).

The Church Age

We currently live in the church age or as it is otherwise referred to the age of grace. This period of time is not detailed by the Old Testament prophets and is referred to by Paul as a mystery which it was his privilege and duty to make known. The reason why the age of grace is not mentioned in the Old Testament is because the prophecies of the Old Testament are about Israel, Gods dealings with Israel and the Kingdom of God



As the prophet Daniel foretold the unfolding of the kingdoms of the world spanning the Times of the Gentiles, so John uses letters sent to 7 churches in Asia Minor to outline the 7 eras of church history across this church age period which is now 2000 years and counting. These letters are found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Ephesus: The loveless church	Revelation 2.1-7
Smyrna: The persecuted church	Revelation 2.8-11
Pergamos: The compromising church	Revelation 2.12-17
Thyatira: The corrupt church	Revelation 2.18-29
Sardis: The dead church	Revelation 3.1-6
Philadelphia: The faithful church	Revelation 3.7-13
Laodicea: The lukewarm church	Revelation 3.14-22

The Millennial Kingdom of Christ

This period of time is so named as it will last for 1000 years with Christ ruling and reigning over the earth from Jerusalem. This millennial period is widely prophesied across many scriptures including the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and of course, by Jesus Himself.

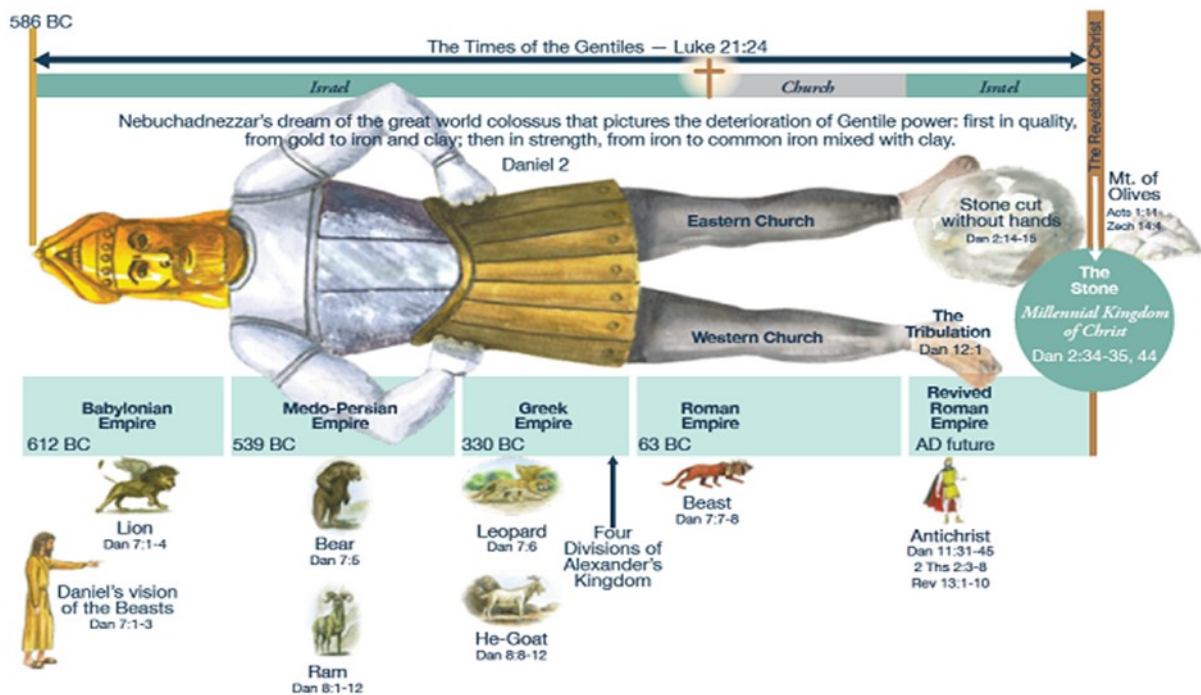
Daniel's First Dream – the Times of the Gentiles

The first of these dreams was of a "great image" (Dan 2.31). The interpretation of this dream given to Daniel by YHWH is the history of the kingdoms of the world which is still unfolding in our day. The order, according to the image from head to toe, and subsequently borne out by world political history is as follows:

Head of Gold	Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar)
Breast & arms of silver	MedoPersian (Cyrus the Great)
Belly & thighs of brass	Grecian Empire (Alexander the Great)
Legs of iron	Roman Empire (Mark Antony & The Caesars)
Feet of iron mixed with clay	Revived Roman empire (yet future)

The Revived Roman Empire is linked to the fifth and final kingdom (Daniel 2:41—43). While the iron legs represent the Roman Empire, the feet made "partly of iron and partly of baked clay" (Daniel 2:33) represent the final world empire or what prophetic scholars identify as the revived Roman Empire. This connection to Rome is warranted based on the fact that it shares the element iron with the fourth kingdom, and the ten toes probably imply a ten-nation confederacy (matching the ten horns in Daniel 7:20, Revelation 12 .3 and 13.1) led collectively by a single powerful ruler.

Daniel's Prophetic Timeline (Daniel 2, 7, 9-12)



The stone cut out of the mountain without hands

*"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, **but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure"*

(Daniel 2.44-45)

Daniel's Second Dream

This was a personal message from YHWH to Nebuchadnezzar condemning him to live like an animal in the field due to his excessive pride and arrogance. Daniel interpreted this dream for him with some dread (Daniel 4.25).

Daniel 4.29-33 describes the fulfilment of this dream that Daniel interpreted.



Daniel Chapter 7 - The Key to Prophetic Revelation

In the interpretation of biblical prophecy, the seventh chapter of Daniel occupies a unique place as it provides the most detailed and comprehensive prophecy of future events in the entire Old Testament (Walvoord 1971).

Daniel traces the course of four great world empires, namely Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece and Rome, concluding in the climax of world history in the second coming of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the eternal Kingdom of God, represented as a fifth and final kingdom which is from Heaven (Walvoord 1988).

Understood this way, this seventh chapter adds considerable detail and understanding of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2. The four kingdoms which are symbolized in chapter 2 by the different parts of the human image are the same as those symbolized by the four great beasts rising up out of the sea in chapter 7 (Keil). Chapter 7 also forms a major outline of future events to which further detail is added later in the book of Daniel, throughout the New Testament and particularly in the Book of Revelation.

The Prophetic Use of Symbolism

To understand the prophetic scriptures, a definition of a few terms will be helpful. Here are some that appear in Daniel chapter 7 and frequently throughout the book of Revelation:

Sea	Refers to the general mass of humanity or the populace at large, but does not imply oceans, etc
Wind	Wind is a term symbolic of the sovereignty and power of God
Beasts	An expression referring to forms of human world power, dynasties, kingdoms

But Why Such Reliance on Symbols

The answer lies in the fact that human language is always evolving, driven by changes in community attitudes and standards of ethics and morality. A good example is the word charity. In the 1600's, when the King James bible translation came into being, charity was synonymous with love. Today, however, it has a very different meaning as follows:

*"A **charity** is an organization which raises money in order to help people who are sick"*

(Collins English Dictionary)

Across time, charity has undergone such change it is now used as a noun as well as an adjective, completely changing its meaning.

Symbols, however, do not change their meaning over time. A "beast" in the year 35AD is still a beast today. There are many examples of symbols and their unchanging meaning:



This Christian symbol was found in caves beneath Rome in the first century and today on bumper stickers of people claiming to be Christians



This symbol needs no explanation and has not changed in 2000+ years



What does this symbol represent?



How about this one?

Daniel 7.1-3

In these opening three verses, the Prophet states that he had a vision.

Where was he when he had the vision and what was he doing at the time?

What year was it?

How did he describe the vision?

Daniel 7.4 The First Beast (Babylon)

The relationship between Nebuchadnezzar's dream interpreted by Daniel in chapter 2 and Daniel's own vision in chapter 7 is critical to understanding what Daniel describes.

How do we know that this first beast that Daniel describes represents Babylon? Let's look at chapter 2.38 for a very definitive answer

Important Point on Biblical Interpretation

The best commentary on the bible is ALWAYS the bible

Lions with the wings of an eagle



The lion is a common representation of royal power. Solomon had 12 lions on either side of the steps leading up to his throne (I Kings 10.20) and winged lions guarded the gates of the royal palaces of Babylon. In like manner, the eagle was the king of the birds of the air. In Ezekiel 17.3 & 7, an eagle is used as a picture of first Babylon and then Egypt

In this vision of Daniel, in spite of the powerful symbolism involved, the lions wings are plucked off and the lion made to stand upon its feet like a man and the beast is given the heart of a man, heart implying nature or character as opposed to the blood pumping organ in the chest.

Noted expositor on the book of Daniel, Herbert Leupold states; "This is undoubtedly an allusion to the experience of Nebuchadnezzar which is related in detail in chapter 4." What was the "experience of Nebuchadnezzar" that Leupold is referring to in Daniel chapter 4?

Daniel 7.5 The Second Beast (Medo-Persian)



The vision is that of a bear which;

- Raised itself up on one side
- Has 3 ribs in its mouth
- Instructed to arise & devour much flesh

The imagery of a bear.

While it is true that the bear has no symbolic place in the Old Testament, it was regarded as the second most violent and aggressive animal in the Middle East, second only to the lion. It is notable that when David was convincing King Saul he was the man to challenge Goliath, he noted that he had protected his flock from a lion and a bear. The Medo-Persian empire, like the bear, was renowned for its great strength, ferocity and violence when dealing with its neighbours (Isaiah 13.17-18).

The beast in Revelation 13 which gathers into its power the characteristics of all previous beasts is said to have the feet of a bear (Rev 13.2).

The bear raised himself on one side, but why? The reason is indeed symbolic and most conservative scholars believe it most likely depicts the power asymmetry of the Medo-Persian empire. The Persian empire, although coming after the Median empire was by far the most powerful and influential and this asymmetry is borne out in the next chapter of Daniel where the symbolism is that of a ram with unequal horns which is identified directly as the "Kings of Media and Persia" (Daniel 8.20).

The ribs in its mouth & the command to rise up and devour much flesh. The three ribs, and the concomitant command to rise up and devour much flesh is thought by E J Young (1949), past Professor of Old Testament theology at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), is that they represent the three nations conquered by the Medo-Persian empire. Those three nations were Babylon, Lydia and Egypt. Youngs interpretation fits quite precisely with the historical accounts as shown below.



Daniel 7.6 The Third Beast (Greece)



The vision is that of a leopard which;

- Had wings of a fowl
- Four heads
- Was given dominion

The leopard, in contrast to the lion is less grand and majestic but is swifter and much feared as an animal of prey across the Middle East in OT times. The wings on its back enhance the image of great speed. This symbolism describes perfectly the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great who swept across the middle east with great speed to take dominion over lands from Egypt and Macedonia all the way eastward to India. The lightning fast conquests were like nothing ever before seen in history.

The four heads. These are symbolic of the four governmental regions established by Alexander. The heads, of course, are symbolic of rulers or kings. Following the death of Alexander, these four governmental regions were indeed ruled by four kings, namely Lysimachus (Thrace & Bithynia), Cassander (Macedonia & Greece), Seleucus (Syria, Babylonia & as far east as India) and Ptolemy (Egypt, Palestine & Arabia Petrea). The validity of the book of Daniel is shown here with much certainty as we see the prophecy of the fourfold division of the Grecian empire prophesied precisely by Daniel several hundred years before it came to pass.



Daniel 7.7-8 The Fourth Beast (Rome)



Who does this fourth beast symbolize?

The crucial issue in the interpretation of the entire book of Daniel, and especially of chapter 7, is the identification of the fourth beast. With few exceptions, conservative scholars identify this fourth beast with Rome (Walvoord 1967; 1988).

The well documented characteristics of the Roman Empire that are harmonious with the description of this fourth beast (devouring, breaking in pieces and stamping the residue with the feet) is the ruthlessness with which they conquered enemies, destroying civilizations and peoples, murdering and plundering people by the thousands and selling others by the droves into slavery. Daniel says this fourth beast is different to the other three and indeed, none of the other three acted with anywhere near this same level of violence, brutality and wanton destruction.

Rome had no interest in raising the conquered nations to any high level of development. All Rome's designs were imperial: Let the nations be crushed and stamped underfoot (Leupold 1949 pp 297-298).



It is beyond the scope of this course to cover in fine detail all the reasons from history, politics and scripture why the above statement is true. We will, however, look at it in enough detail to at least establish the facts. The details of the Roman Empire being the focus of this vision of the fourth beast is the subject of Daniel 7.15-28 and will be discussed in that section.

Daniel 7.9-10 The Vision of the Ancient of Days

In these two verses Daniel has a vision of Heaven at the time of the final judgement of the nations. In verse 9 he sees thrones in Heaven as they were *placed or put in place* (Walvoord 1967;164). This is establishment, not destruction of thrones in Heaven. The scene as a whole corresponds to what John saw and recorded in Revelation chapters 4-5.

The personage occupying the throne corresponds with God the Father and Jesus, God the Son is introduced in Daniel 7.13 with the unmistakable title Son of Man.



Daniel 7.9 The Ancient of Days

Note carefully the language in verse 9. Daniel initially describes thrones (plural) in this verse, but then later describes the Ancient of Days as seated upon a throne (singular). The major characteristic of the singular throne which is occupied by God the Father is that it is a burning flame (NB the words "*like as*" are not found in the original Aramaic manuscript), a common representation of the glory of God in scripture. Fire is also a poignant and dramatic picture of judgement and is associated with Theophanies in other Old Testament scriptures.

In this scene of blazing glory, innumerable Saints and angels (Revelation 5.11-12; Matthew 26.53) surrounding the Throne ministering to God, in whose incomparably glorious presence the books are opened, and judgement is set.