

Daniel 7



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 7.*

Memory Text: “Until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (*Daniel 7:22, NIV*).

If Daniel 2 provides powerful, rational evidence not only for God's existence but for His power to control the future, Daniel 7 provides even more. Daniel 7 covers the same ground as does Daniel 2, as well as provides a key element not explicitly expressed in Daniel 2: the great judgment in heaven that leads directly to the second coming of Jesus and the end of this world as we know it. In short, in Daniel 7 we are shown the pre-Advent judgment.

The key to understanding Daniel 7 is found in Daniel 2. “In fact, the two visions [Daniel 2 and 7] follow a parallel development. They cover the same time span, from Babylon to the end of human time, and evoke the same four kingdoms represented symbolically by metals in chapter 2, and by beasts in chapter 7. Such a parallel is more than a unifying factor—it is the key to our method of interpretation. We must read chapter 7 in the light of chapter 2.”—Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 2000), p. 100.

There's so much in Daniel 7 (we will return to it later); for now, we will get a quick overview of this amazing prophecy, with an emphasis on its climactic scene: the heavenly judgment, which leads to the return of Christ and the fulfillment of our great hopes as believers in Jesus.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 22.*

Daniel's Dream

Read Daniel 7:1-14. On the lines below, summarize in your own words the essence of Daniel's dream.

As you read, you've probably noticed a few parallels with Daniel 2, such as (1) the same number of different entities appear, (2) there is emphasis on the last entity (in Daniel 2 it was the iron), and (3) both end with God establishing His eternal kingdom.

Are there any other parallels?

In verses 16 and 17, Daniel is immediately given the basic interpretation of his dream. What is the interpretation, and how does it parallel Daniel 2?

It's obvious that what we have in Daniel 7 is a more detailed depiction of what was revealed in Daniel 2. Though more details are given about these powers, the four beasts in Daniel 7 represent the same four kingdoms as in Daniel 2. Scholars have long recognized them as the following:

Babylon (lion)
 Media-Persia (bear)
 Greece (leopard)
 Rome (fourth beast)
 God's final kingdom

Here, again, we are shown that the foundation of the prophecies in Daniel is based on *history*. Daniel sweeps over world history from ancient times right through to ours and beyond. If that point wasn't made clear enough in Daniel 2, it's repeated in Daniel 7.

How blessed we are to know not only that our God is in control but that, regardless of what happens here and now, in the end, He will set up His eternal kingdom.

The establishment of God's final kingdom is assured. What assurance do you have that you will be there when it is? What is your assurance based on?

The Fourth Beast

There's an important parallel between Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 that we don't want to miss. In Daniel 2, the iron, the fourth power, arises after Greece (*vss. 32, 33, 39-45*), and, though taking another form, it remains until the end. It was destroyed only when God set up His kingdom.

In Daniel 7, with the fourth beast, the fourth power, the same thing happens. The fourth beast, which arose after Greece (*vss. 6, 7*), remains until the end of time (though taking another form), when it is destroyed at the establishment of God's eternal kingdom (*vss. 19-27*).

Thus, in both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, the fourth power, the one arising after Greece, remains until the end of the world.

Read Daniel 7:19-27 and then answer the following questions:

What parallels do you see between the description of the fourth beast (*Dan. 7:19*) and that of the fourth power in Daniel 2 (*vs. 40*)?

From where does the little horn arise?

What ultimately brings about the demise of the little-horn power in Daniel 7?

In Daniel 7, more time is spent dealing with this little-horn power than with any of the other powers. Obviously, this little horn, which arose out of the fourth beast, and thus remains part of it, is deemed very serious by the Lord, for so much time is spent on it. This power, though arising out of the fourth beast, exists until the end of time, when—*after the judgment in heaven*—God sets up His earthly kingdom. Only then is it destroyed.

People have often talked about trying to build a kingdom of God on earth here and now. Inevitably, all these have failed. Why? Why is our ultimate hope only in God's supernatural intervention in our behalf, as depicted in this chapter?

The Little Horn

Daniel 7 goes from Babylon, Media-Persia, and Greece to pagan Rome, the phase of Rome that arose right after the downfall of Greece. Then, while depicting this Roman power, Daniel 7 describes the rise of the little horn, which is still part of the fourth beast, though another phase of it. Who is this little horn? The Protestant Reformers almost unanimously saw it as papal Rome. Indeed, even before the Reformation, some Jewish scholars also identified the little horn as the papal phase of the fourth beast. It's hard to see how it could be anything else. In fact, it *can't* be anything else. You might need faith to believe in the Second Coming or the resurrection of the dead, but you don't need much faith to see papal Rome as the power depicted here.

Below are some traits of the little horn. Given however much you know about the papacy, how do these descriptions match it?

- ❶ The little horn arises from pagan Rome (*Dan. 7:19, 20*).

- ❷ The little horn makes war with the saints and prevails against them (*Dan. 7:21, 25*).

- ❸ The little horn thinks to change “times and laws” (*Dan. 7:25*).

- ❹ The little-horn power is blasphemous (*Dan. 7:25*).

All these attributes have been powerfully and graphically recorded in history. There's no question here regarding the identity of this little-horn power. Though we have to be diplomatic in how we deal with these prophecies, and seek to teach them in a way that doesn't hurt other people, we would be unfaithful to our biblical mandate (*see Rev. 13:1-9, 14:6-12*) were we, in the interest of political correctness, to abandon this position in favor of something less controversial.

Time, Times, and Dividing of Time

Read Daniel 7:25. What is the time prophecy given there?

Even non-Adventists have recognized that the time, times, and dividing of time here means three and a half years. One study Bible by Thomas Nelson says: “A time, times and the dividing of time . . . is an expression used in Daniel and in Revelation to refer to three and a half years, or 1,260 days, or 42 months (12:7; Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5).”

How do the texts in the above quote help you understand why the time prophecy in Daniel 7:25 is the same as 1,260 days?

As others have done, Adventists apply the day-year principle to this prophecy, which means it's dealing with 1,260 years, not 1,260 literal days. Later we will spend a whole week on the day-year principle. For now, we can see that Daniel 7 is full of symbols: a lion with wings, a beast with iron teeth, a little horn that has eyes. Why would a time prophecy, imbedded among these symbols, be anything but symbolic itself?

Thus, we're given a 1,260-year period delineating an aspect of papal Rome, in this case, a period of persecution.

If we date the beginning of papal Rome to the late fifth, early sixth century, 1,260 years later brings us to the late eighteenth, or early nineteenth, century. Again, history bears out that the long period of papal political dominion, which included massive persecution, petered out in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

What happens in the prophecy after the 1,260-year period is depicted? *Dan. 7:25-27 (see also Dan. 7:8-10, 21, 22).*

After the rise of the little horn, which came after all the preceding beasts, the prophecy depicts a great judgment in heaven that leads to the Second Coming.

The crucial point here is that, according to this prophecy, the judgment in heaven comes *after* the 1,260-day prophetic period, sometime *after* that phase of persecution that ended in the late eighteenth, or early nineteenth, century yet before the Second Coming.

Thus, within the interpretation, we are given historical evidence to help us understand the timing of this judgment, which leads to the demise of the little horn and to the end of this world.

One thousand two hundred and sixty years is a long time. What message is there for us, who might die before seeing all our hopes and dreams realized in this life?

Horn, Judgment, Kingdom

Yesterday we saw that Daniel 7 presented a specific sequence of events: There was the little-horn power, followed by a judgment in heaven, which ended in the establishment of God's kingdom. This sequence is so important it's found three times in the chapter itself.

Read Daniel 7:7-10, 14. How is this specific order—little horn, judgment, God's kingdom—shown there?

Read Daniel 7:19-22. How, again, is that same sequence depicted?

Read Daniel 7:24-27. How, again, is that sequence presented?

Three times in Daniel we are given this sequence:

Little horn
Judgment in heaven
God's kingdom

Obviously, this sequence must be of major importance; otherwise, why would the Lord have given it *three times* in the prophecy? What's fascinating, too, is that with the little horn, we are given our first apocalyptic time prophecy (*apocalyptic* simply means dealing with end-time events), a time prophecy that helps us understand the timing of this judgment, which occurs after the 1,260 years and yet before God's eternal kingdom is established.

Thus, we can express the prophecy like this:

Little horn (late eighteenth, early nineteenth, century)
Judgment in heaven
God's eternal kingdom

What's crucial to understand about this judgment, too, is that though it results in the demise of the little-horn power, it also results in the end of this world. As Daniel 2 showed, everything is going to be swept away and replaced by God's kingdom.

Daniel doesn't depict the end of the world as some sort of compromise: It culminates, instead, in the total victory of good over evil. What lesson is there for us in how we deal with evil in our own lives on a day-by-day basis? Are you compromising with evil now, in any way?

Further Study: Below is all of Daniel 7, with the first apocalyptic time prophecy imbedded in the sequence. What we've added, too, are the approximate times that each of the empires collapsed. Though historians often put specific dates on these events, centering often around decisive military battles, the collapse of one empire and the rise of another usually occurs over many years, not just one (remember, too, that the fourth beast and the little horn that comes out of it are depicted in Scripture as one power):

Babylon

(Ends early mid-sixth century B.C.)

Media-Persia

(From early mid-sixth century to early mid-fourth century B.C.)

Greece

(From early mid-fourth century to mid-second century B.C.)

Pagan Rome

(From mid-second B.C. to fifth–sixth century A.D.)

Papal Rome

(Persecution from sixth century A.D. to eighteenth–nineteenth century A.D.)

Judgment in heaven

Second Coming

Sure, the papacy didn't end in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, but that's not what the prophecy says. Instead, it says only that persecution would last for this length of time, or at least that phase of that persecution (Revelation 13, of course, talks about a resurgence of papal persecution, but that's another issue).

Thus, what's clear so far from Daniel 7 is that this massive judgment scene in heaven leads to the establishment of God's kingdom and occurs sometime *after* the 1,260 years of papal persecution, sometime after the late eighteenth, or early nineteenth, century but before the Second Coming.

Discussion Questions:

1 Daniel 7:22 says that judgment was given in “favor of the saints” (*NIV*). As a class, discuss what that means. What else in Daniel 7 shows us that the judgment is such good news?

2 Review the evidence that helps give us a positive identification of the little horn. How can we present this teaching in a way that's as least offensive as possible and yet, at the same time, doesn't compromise what the Scripture teaches?

New Church in the Neighborhood

Altanundral

Two years ago a new church was built in our neighborhood in Mongolia. It was big news in our town, and people visited the church out of curiosity. I went too, just to see what it was about. I had no religion; I did not even know whether there was a God.

The simple wooden church felt like a peaceful refuge, and the music, prayers, and sermons fed me. I decided to return.

I realized that my life was full of bad things, and I needed some peace. My husband is an alcoholic, and when he drank too much, he beat me. I worked in a factory, cared for my three sons, and kept house for my family. Church became a place of refuge for me. The pastor's sermons were practical and related to my life and experience. Once I started attending, I did not want to stop.

At first my husband objected to my church attendance. But I persisted, and I took my sons with me. I taught them to pray. One day my youngest son picked a tiny potato in our garden. He asked me to cook it for him. Then he put it on a plate and prayed, thanking God for that one small potato. It touched my heart.

Then I learned that I was pregnant. The baby was breech, and I needed to have a caesarian section. While I awaited surgery, I prayed, and the prayers brought me peace. I healed much more quickly than the doctor thought possible. I think that is because I entrusted my life to God.

Because of this experience, I realized how relevant God is in our lives. When my son was two months old, I returned to church and asked to be baptized.

My husband's attitude toward God continues to change. We invite him to join us when we pray. He is praying more and drinking less. I have learned that prayer really works.



If this little church had not been built in our neighborhood, I might never have experienced God's love in such a personal and powerful way.

Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings in 2001 helped make this church a reality. Thank you.

Altanundral lives in Darhan, Mongolia.