



martyrs
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

autumn teaching week

The End Times

Monday 24th - Friday 28th October 2011
Dr Alan Cairns



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A TEACHING WEEK FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

Hosted by Martyrs Youth Fellowship

*"...Tell us, when shall these things be?
and what shall be the sign of thy coming,
and of the end of the world?"*

Matt 24:3



THE END TIMES

The Bible's Prophetic History of the World Until the Return of Christ

Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 are critical to an understanding of the Bible's portrayal of the future history of the Gentile nations—but it must be remembered that this history is recorded primarily with a view to showing their relation to Israel.

In our study I will adopt two fundamental positions:

- First*, that the book was written when it claims to have been written—that is, in the 6th century B.C. and not, as liberals claim, in the 2nd century B.C. That means that its prophecies are genuine prophecies and not history dressed up as prophecy.
- Second*, that its prophecies of a terrible persecuting power against the Jews did not have their full or final fulfilment either in Antiochus Epiphanes or in Titus and his Roman hosts in 70 A.D. but in the yet to be revealed Antichrist and his dealings with Israel at the end of the age.

The first I will take as given, otherwise we would be wasting our time studying *Daniel*.

The second I will argue throughout these studies.

I. DANIEL 2—Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great image and Daniel's interpretation

A. The Dream

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed and saw a great image of a man, whose bodily parts were made of different materials that, starting with the head and ending with the feet, were of decreasing value and increasing strength (verse 31-33). Nebuchadnezzar kept looking at this image until he saw a *stone cut without hands* smite the feet and destroy the image and then itself grow into a great mountain that filled the whole earth (verse 34-36).

B. The dream was intended to be prophetic, verse 28-29.

C. The dream set forth a succession of kingdoms or empires, verse 36-45

1. *The head was of GOLD* and depicted Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, v. 37-38
2. *The breast and arms of SILVER* depicted the Medo-Persian Empire, v. 39
3. *The belly and thighs of BRASS* depicted the Greek empire, verse 39
4. *The legs of IRON with feet of iron and clay* depicted the Roman empire, verse 41-43.
5. Some see the feet and toes as a 5th power, verse 41-43, Islam, which followed Rome as the possessor of Jerusalem in A.D. 633 and continued to hold it until 1917, since when it has never ceased to make it the target of its aspirations and its rightful possessors as intruders to be exterminated.
6. *The stone cut without hands* depicts the Kingdom that God will set up by destroying the entire structure of worldly government and replacing it with His own worldwide dominion, verse 44-45.

II. DANIEL 7—Daniel's vision of four wild beasts

Some commentators divide the book into two parts:

First, chapters 1-6, dealing in a general way with world history;

Second, chapters 7-12, a more detailed revelation of the end of the times of the Gentiles and Israel's relation to their history.

Others suggest three parts:

First, chapter 1, an introduction.

Second, chapters 2-7, the times of the Gentiles (written in Aramaic, the Gentile language of that time).

Third, chapters 8-12, Israel in relation to the Gentiles (written in Hebrew).

In both these schemes chapter 7 is pivotal and deals with the kingdoms of chapter 2, only now as God sees them:

Carl Friedrich Keil (*Daniel*, p. 245) gives this view and cites Luther in support:

"The four kingdoms or dynasties, which were symbolized (ch. 2) by the different parts of the human image, from the head to the feet, are the same as those which were symbolized by the four great beasts rising out of the sea. ... These four kingdoms, according to the interpretation commonly received in the church, are the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Macedo-Grecian, and the Roman. 'In this interpretation and opinion,' Luther observes, 'all the world are agreed, and history and fact abundantly establish it.'"

John F Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 151:

"Chapter 7 views world history from God's standpoint in its immorality, brutality, and depravity. In detail of prophecy, chapter 7 far exceeds chapter 2 and is in some sense the commentary on the earlier chapter."

The details of the four beasts:

- A. A lion with eagle's wings, verse 4—Babylon
- B. A bear raised on one side, verse 5—Medo-Persia
- C. A leopard with wings of a fowl, verse 6—Greece
- D. A beast dreadful and terrible, with iron teeth and ten horns, from among which arose a *little horn*, verse 7-8—Rome, including (according to those who see the *little horn* as yet future, its revival in the very last days.

However there is another very plausible interpretation:

Chapter 7 cannot cover the same historical ground as chapter 2 because:

- It describes four kings which *shall arise*, meaning that at least it cannot include Babylon and Medo-Persia, for they had already arisen when this vision was given—which was some 23 years after Nebuchadnezzar's death and just a couple of years before Babylon's overthrow (verse 1).

- The 4th beast cannot describe the rise of Rome for it has 10 horns when it is first seen. When Rome arose it did not have ten kings reigning with or through it. The 4th beast is the same as Revelation 17:12, where the 10 horns represent ten kings who were yet future when John wrote and who will *receive power one* (possibly = *one and the same* as in Romans 3:30) *hour* with the Beast.
- The message of the image in chapter 2 climaxes with its feet and toes and how the stone cut without hands smites them.
The vision of chapter 7 goes straight to the message of the toes: the four beasts are *four kings* (verse 17), not *kingdoms* that succeed one another, but *kings who live at the same time* (verse 12).
That time is yet future and so the vision of the four kings looks forward to an end time development arising out of the Islamic world (which generally succeeded to the old western part of the Roman empire).

In this view, we are not yet in a position to identify the kings or the significance of the particular descriptions of each beast in the vision. They will be recognized when they arise.

III. DANIEL 8—Daniel's vision of the Ram and the He-goat

- Chapter 8 begins a new section of the book. From 8:1 to the end the book is written in Hebrew, in contrast with 2:4-7:28, which is in Aramaic.
- Chapter 8 records events already fulfilled, verse 20-21; and others as yet unfulfilled, verse 17, 26.
- The history is of Persia and Greece, especially as they relate to Israel.
- **Note the accuracy of divine prophecy:** Daniel, in vision, stood in Shushan (Susa) which was to become the capital of the Persian empire, but in Daniel's day it was an utterly insignificant place. Again, the symbols of the ram and the goat which later became so identified with Persia and Greece were in Daniel's day unknown, except by divine revelation.

A. The *Ram* is Persia, verse 20

1. The ram is the acknowledged symbol of Persia. Persian coins bore its image; Persian kings wore a golden ram's head; the sculptured pillars of Persepolis bear the image of the ram.
2. The two horns are interpreted in verse 20 as the kings of Media and Persia.
3. The higher horn that came up later and eclipsed the other in power represents Persia assuming the dominant role.
4. The *pushing westward* etc *so that no beasts could stand before him*, verse 4, describes the spread of Persian power.

B. The *He-goat* is Greece, verse 21

1. The goat is the acknowledged symbol of Greece. The first Greek colony was directed by an oracle to take a goat for a guide and build a city—they did and called it *Egeæ*, from *aix*, a goat; images of goats on Greek monuments were plentiful.
2. The *notable horn*, v. 5, is Alexander the Great, v. 21. The description denotes the rapidity, completeness and violence of his conquest of the ancient world.
3. Upon Alexander's death his kingdom was split among four kings, v. 8, 22. History records the fulfilment of this prophecy:
 - a. **Ptolemy** took Egypt, Palestine and parts of Asia Minor (modern Turkey).
 - b. **Cassander** took Macedonia and Greece.
 - c. **Lysimachus** took Bithynia (part modern Turkey), Thrace (Bulgaria), Mysia (another part of Turkey).
 - d. **Seleucus** took Syria, Armenia and the area east of the Euphrates (modern Iran).
4. Out of one of the four, a *little horn*, arose the great malignancy against Israel, verse 9-12. Many see this as Antiochus who was a king of Syria and who did many of the things here predicted.
5. However, verse 13^f show that with the description of the *little horn* history merges with prophecy—see verse 17, 19, 23, 26 (note in v. 23: *when transgressions are come to the full*, something that could not be said of the days of Antiochus or indeed of the Romans).

C. The *Little Horn* is Antichrist, whose character and course are described.

1. *By him the daily sacrifice was taken away*, verse 11 (cf. v. 13). This subject is resumed in 9:27—which establishes the true meaning of that text.
2. For the desecration of the holy place see also 9:27; 11:31; Matthew 24:15.
3. The 2300 days cannot be reconciled with the history of Antiochus; nor can they be interpreted by the so-called year-day theory; they are yet future. The precise details may not be knowable until the time of the end. Dr. S. P. Tregelles held that they represent the period between when the *little horn* first became associated with the temple and its cleansing (Hebrew, *justified*).

IV. DANIEL 9—Daniel receives the message of the 70 prophetic weeks

- A. *Weeks* meaning 7 *days* does not actually appear in the Hebrew text, so it lends no support for the year-day theory of prophetic interpretation.
- B. When actual weeks are intended, the Hebrew uses *weeks of days*, as 10:2.

- C. What are described are 70 sets of sevens, what some translate as *heptads* or *hebdomads*. The unit is clearly years, not days, for years had been the subject of Daniel's prayer, verse 2.
- D. The scope of the 70 weeks is defined, verse 24
- E. The 70 are distributed into 3 sections:
1. First, there are 7 weeks, or 49 years, verse 25
 2. Second, there are 62 weeks, 434 years
 3. Third, one week of 7 years.
- F. It is not clear why the 69 weeks are divided into 7 and 62.
1. It is possible that it took a full generation after Nehemiah to restore Jerusalem to a thriving capital again—hence the 7 weeks, 49 years.
 2. The 62 weeks plus the 7 give 483 years. The start of these years is the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the end is *Messiah the Prince*, verse 25.
 3. Nehemiah 2:1f sets the date of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem at 445 B.C. Sir Robert Anderson calculated that from that year 483 years bring us to A.D. 32, which he takes to be the year of Christ's death. In fact, he argues his case right down to the very day!
- G. It is clear that the 70th week is considered separate from the 69:
1. Verse, 25 brings us to the end of the 69 weeks and the 70th is not mentioned until verse 27. Between the 69th and 70th weeks we have the events listed in verse. 26. Thus, any attempt to make the 70th following on immediately after the 69th ignores this fact.
 2. The events of verse 26 deal with two great events that occur between the 69th and 70th weeks.
 - a. The vicarious death of Messiah the Prince.
 - b. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. This occurred almost 40 years after the death of Christ when the Romans sacked the city and wrecks the idea that the 70th week follows on immediately after the 69th.
 3. The destruction of verse 26 is carried out by *the people of the prince that shall come*—that is, the reference is not to this prince himself but to the people from whom he shall arise.
 4. Here then is a critical point: when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 there was a prince whose arrival was still in the future.
- H. Verse 27 describes the actions of that *prince that shall come* and the terms employed make it clear that they are yet to take place:
1. This cannot refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, for he never made and broke such a covenant as this verse records.

2. It refers to a time when there is a temple in Jerusalem. Since the Romans destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 there has never been another in Jerusalem. Thus this verse remains to be fulfilled in the future.
3. The reference is to Antichrist, the *little horn* of 7:8. The same title is used in 8:9, though he is described from a different viewpoint. In chapter 7 we learn that he arises out of the midst of the Roman empire; in chapter 8 we learn that he comes from that particular section of it that had been ruled by the Seleucid successors of Alexander the Great (see III.B.3.a above).

V. DANIEL 11—which again prophesies events that have already been fulfilled and others that remain unfulfilled.

A. There is a wide difference of opinion as to the line of division between the fulfilled and the yet to be fulfilled sections.

1. Dr. Tregelles limits the fulfilled prophecy to verse 1-4 and makes all from verse 5 to refer to end time prophecy.
2. B.W. Newton distributes the chapter as follows:
 - a. The climax of the Persian empire and its fall to Alexander, whose kingdom would be broken into four parts and not ruled over by his posterity, verse 1-4.
 - b. The Syrian and Egyptian kings (that is, the dynasties of Ptolemy and Seleucus), verse 5-20. The various relations of the king of the north (the Seleucids of Syria of whom Antiochus Epiphanes, v. 15, was one) and the king of the South (the Ptolmies of Egypt) accord very closely with the know history of that place and time.
 - c. The terror reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, verse 21-32.
 - d. The reign of Antichrist in the end time, verse 33-45.
 - e. Personally, I incline to start the prophetic section at verse 21. All that follows elaborates the promise of the angel to instruct Daniel concerning *the latter days*, 10:14.

B. We will here deal only summarily with the rise and reign of Antichrist:

1. He stands in the place of Antiochus, but a long time after him, verse 21.
2. Yet he is not just another in the succession of the *kings of the north*. Verse 40 distinguishes him from both, for both of them attack him.
3. He is a vile person, verse 21.
4. He comes in by falsehood and flattery, verse 21
5. He breaks a covenant he made with another prince and proceeds to destroy him, verse 22-23.

6. By such methods, though he has but a *small people*, he uses deception to advance in power, verse 23.
7. Returning to his own land with great riches, he makes and breaks the covenant he made with the Jews at the beginning of the 70th week (9:27), verse 30.
8. He sets up the *abomination that maketh desolate*, verse 31.
9. He will *exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God*, verse 36; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.
10. He will prosper until God pours out His indignation on him, verse 36*b*. This will occur in the Holy Land, after a time of unparalleled tribulation in Israel, 11:45-12:1, 7. Cf. Zechariah 13:8-14:5, 12-13; Isaiah 63:1-4; 66:14-16; Ezekiel 39:1-12; Revelation 16:14, 16.

Note: The final battle mounted by the nations against Israel is not, as popularly supposed, the Battle of Armageddon. Armageddon is the gathering place; Jerusalem is the real target (Zechariah 14:2: *I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle*).

The fall of antichrist will mark the end of the Times of the Gentiles.

This is the final point to which world history is “progressing.”

After that Jerusalem will never again be trodden down by the nations.

However, we should remember that this dark history is not all that the Lord is doing among the Gentile nations.

He is calling out of them a people for Himself, Acts 15:17, and according to Romans 11:25 the end of this age will mark *the fulness of the Gentiles*, that is, the bringing in of the full complement of that great number of His elect from every tribe and nation—many of them saved during the very time of Antichrist’s worst wickedness, Revelation 7:9-14.

SOME PRACTICAL LESSONS

1. Our God is in control of all the events of time.
2. He is working out His own perfect purpose and that purpose will stand.
3. No power of earth or hell can overthrow the plan of God but will in the end be seen to be part of the means God uses for its accomplishment.
4. God’s view of men and events is very different from man’s and it alone gives their true value and meaning.
5. The history of the world is leading to a God-ordained end—it is not aimless; it is not determined by blind forces or even by human wisdom or power—and that end is the glorious coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.