

The Beastly History and the Son of Man

Daniel 7 and Its Interpretation

ESV Daniel 7: 1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.

² Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

³ And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

⁴ The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it.

⁵ And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'

⁶ After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

⁷ After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

⁸ I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

⁹ "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.

¹⁰ A **stream of fire** issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

¹¹ "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, **the beast was killed**, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.

¹² As for the rest of the beasts, **their dominion was taken away**, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with **the clouds of heaven** there came one like **a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

¹⁴ And **to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.**

¹⁵ "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me.

¹⁶ I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.

¹⁷ 'These **four great beasts are** four kings who shall arise out of the earth.

¹⁸ But **the saints** of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'

¹⁹ "Then I desired to know the truth about **the fourth beast**, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet,

²⁰ and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes **and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions.**

²¹ As I looked, this horn **made war with the saints** and prevailed over them,

²² until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when **the saints possessed the kingdom.**

²³ "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

²⁴ As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.

²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear **out the saints of the Most High**, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for **a time, times, and half a time**.

²⁶ But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.

²⁷ And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

²⁸ "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.

(Daniel 7:1-28)

Daniel 7 in Popular Christian Culture

In his best seller *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a book that changed the very fabric of Evangelicalism for some 40 years, Hal Lindsey wrote, “The seventh chapter of Daniel, written before the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, was known by the scribes as the greatest chapter in the Old Testament.”¹ This

¹ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 90.

is how Lindsey begins his discussion of interpreting Daniel 7 in his chapter called “Rome on the Revival Road.”

Written back in 1970, the *New York Times* said it was [the bestselling nonfiction book of the 1970s](#), raking in sales from more than 15 million copies sold. The book was featured in a 1974 TV special that had an audience of 17,000,000 people and in 1976 it was turned into a film narrated by [Orson Welles](#). It paved the way for 50 years of eschatological speculation about the return of Christ in ways nothing before it could match. There would be no *Left Behind* series without Hal Lindsey and the term “Rapture” would most likely only be known by most people through a Blondie song. Why did the book capture the imagination of a generation of people when there were plenty of books written on the topic before that?

I’d say [three things came together](#) at just the right time. First, [Israel had become a modern nation state](#) in 1948 and according to Dispensational eschatology at the time, Jesus would return within one generation of its establishment, or by 1988.² Second, there was [a treaty made in 1957 called the](#)

<https://archive.org/details/TheLateGreatPlanetEarthByHalLindsey/page/n89/mode/2up?q=daniel+7%3A13>.

² See especially [Edgar C. Whisenant](#), *88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988* (Nashville: World Bible Society, 1988).

Treaty of Rome which effectively created the European Union. This, there was the marketing machine of the young Evangelical movement. Nothing could match it. Let's return to this treaty. In Dispensational thinking, this effectively remade the Roman Empire and thus, together with the nation-state of Israel, effectively made fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies immanent. Lindsey explains,

Rome fell. And Caesar died as any mortal must. And the mighty Roman empire of the ancient world lost its strength.

However, the prophetic Scriptures tell us that the Roman Empire will be revived shortly before the return of Christ to this earth. A new Caesar will head this empire and "Veni vidi, vici" ["I came; I saw; I conquered"] will leap out of the first-year Latin books and become a reality of the times.

Twenty years ago no one would have dared to believe that Rome as an empire would be put back together. And yet we are seeing significant movements of nations today which are indications that this is what is happening ...

Where in prophecy do we find a prediction about the revival of Rome? First we shall examine the great prophet, Daniel. Chapter 7 ...³

³ Lindsey, 88-89.

Today we will look at the interpretation of what is indeed one of the greatest chapters in the OT. I will do so **comparing this popular eschatology** that so many believe to the words of the angel and then to another explanation that seems to me to fit better. The point isn't to rag on Dispensationalists, for they are our brothers in Christ. But it is important that we come to a good interpretation. In this regard it is good to hear the words of Jay Rogers, “[Daniel] is a prophecy given to the Jews to prove the time of the coming Messiah.”⁴ By “coming,” he does not mean the Second Coming, for they do not believe that he has even come the first time. If you can get this principle straight, you have a huge head start.

Daniel 7: The Vision and Structure of the Chapter

We saw last time that Daniel 7 is a **highly stylized chapter** where the organization of the material of the first 14 verses mirrors the organization of the entire chapter, minus the prologue and epilogue with an ABCB'A'C' pattern:⁵

⁴ Jay Rogers, *In the Days of These Kings: The Book of Daniel in Preterist Perspective* (Clermont, FL: Mesia House International, 2017), 99. <https://www.forerunner.com/daniel/structure-composition-and-authorship>.

⁵ Paul R. Raabe, “Daniel 7: Its Structure and Role in the Book,” *Hebrew Annual Review* 9 (1985): 267-75. https://kb.osu.edu/bitstream/handle/1811/58698/1/HAR_v9_267.pdf.

Daniel 7:2-14

Daniel 7:2-27

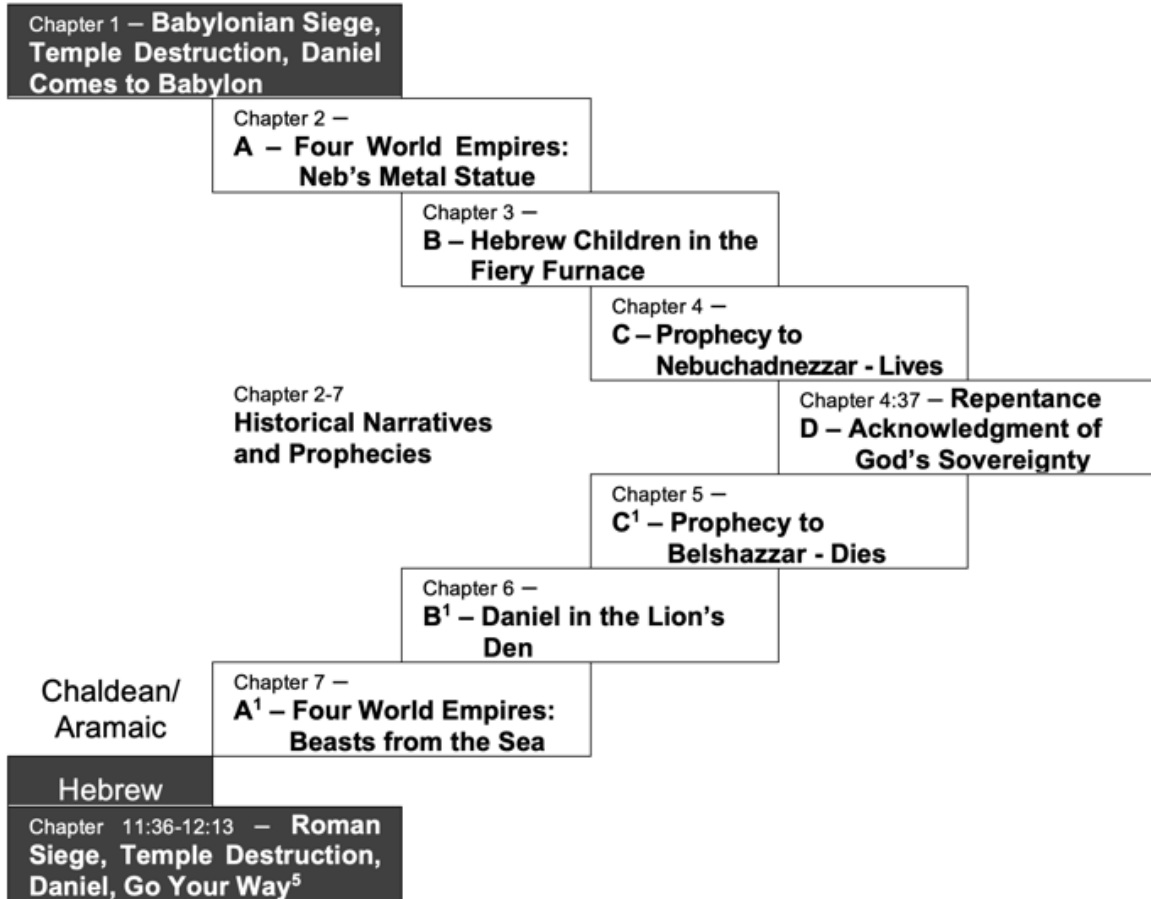
A	vv. 2b-7 ----- Four beasts	A	vv. 2b-14 ----- Vision
B	v. 8 ----- Little horn	B	vv. 15-16a ---- Seer's request for clarification
C	vv. 9-10 -- Throne scene	C	vv. 16b-18 -- Angel's brief interpretation
B'	v. 11a ----- Little horn	B'	vv. 19-20 ---- Seer's request for further clarification
A'	vv. 11b-12 ----- Four beasts ¹⁰	A'	vv. 21-22 ----- Vision
C'	vv. 13-14 - Throne scene	C'	vv. 23-27 --- Angel's lengthier interpretation

After his vision, an angel comes to Daniel to interpret it, and in the structure the **interpretation becomes the center** of the unusual chiasm. In other words, getting the interpretation right is vital.

If we set the two structures side-by-side, we see that the parallel to the angel's interpretation is the **throne scene** of the vision. Thus, **to get the interpretation right, you need to get the throne scene right**. This, unfortunately, is precisely where Dispensationalism goes astray. For it misses the meaning of the throne-scene in a fundamental way.

Just here, it is important to remember that **ch. 7 concludes the Aramaic section** of Daniel and that this whole section (chs. 2-7) forms its own chiasm of parallel chapters. In the chiasm's center, chs. 4 and 5, the stories of two kings being given information about their future directly from God but with two very different responses **parallel**; the two stories of God's people being thrown into a furnace and a lion's den to die **parallel**; and the dream of the statue and the vision of the beasts **parallel**. This means that we have already

seen something of the interpretation of these beasts and what we said there will be true here. This will have more relevance as we move along.



The Interpretation of Daniel’s Vision (Dan 7:15-28)

Daniel’s Request for Clarification (15-16a)

We pick up where we left off last time. The main part of Daniel’s two-scene vision ends, and it now says, “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me” (15). Given what we’ve seen about these terrifying beasts, not to mention having a glimpse into

the very throne room of God, seeing myriads of the heavenly host, seeing the watchers, seeing the destruction of the beasts, and seeing the son of man ascend on the clouds of heaven, I would be alarmed too. It was clear that this was no ordinary dream.

But it is worse than that. Calvin notices,

Daniel says, his spirit was either cut off or vanished, as if he suffered some mental deficiency. In this way God wished to communicate to his servant the magnitude of the vision. And he inspires us also with reverence for this vision, lest we should treat it coldly and commonly ... For if Daniel, whom we know to have been a remarkable Prophet, felt his spirit to be so deficient and nearly vanishing away, surely we who as yet know so little of God's mysteries ... never can attain so great a height, unless we overcome the world and shake off all human sensations...

He says, therefore, in the first place, *his spirit was cut off*, or vanished, *in the midst of his body*; as if he had said he was almost lifeless and nearly dead. And he added, as a reason, *the visions of his head had frightened him* ... When that terror called a panic seizes upon some persons, we observe how they become deprived of self-possession, and lie almost lifeless.⁶

⁶ John Calvin and Thomas Myers, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 47.

Given this condition, the next words are remarkable. “I approached one of those who stood there and ask him the truth concerning all this” (16). The one who stood there is an angel, by which I mean a function—a messenger. We do not know what species he was. To see such a sight and have enough courage to go up to a heavenly being and talk to him is amazing. My guess is that Daniel has seen them before. Jeremiah explicitly tells us that the mark of a prophet is that he has “stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word” (Jer 23:18). Daniel has prophesized in this book already, therefore he has seen something of this place before.

The Angel’s Brief Interpretation (16b-18)

It says next, “So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things” (16b). Not only did the entity not destroy him, he began talking to Daniel as a friend! And this is what he said, “These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth” (17). Now, in the parallel of the statue, there were four segments of the idol (head, chest, middle, and legs/feet) and they were said to be kingdoms. I take kingdoms and kings to be chiasmic metonymy where one-word substitutes for the other because they are closely

associated with each other. Kings rule kingdoms. **Dan 8:23** demonstrates this explicitly. The point is, the words are interchangeable and our interpretation should not force one or the other.

“**Four**” is clearly the number. However, this hasn’t stopped some from seeing “**five.**” *MacArthur’s Study Bible* tells us, “**Five empires in succession would rule.**”⁷ He says this in his comments on Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the idol. What’s going on here is that he sees **the feet as distinct from the legs**—a fifth part of the statue. He describes them this way. “**These empires are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the later revived Rome, each one differentiated from the previous as indicated by the declining quality of the metal.**” I suspect if he were here, he would argue that a revived Roman Empire is a 4b of the original Roman Empire, but he used the word “five” and many others do the same.

There are several problems with this. **First, the feet do not have a different metal from the legs, but both are iron.**

⁷ **John MacArthur**, “Note on Dan 2:36-45,” *ESV MacArthur Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). He adds, “... over Israel.” Rather than seeing the empires ruling the entire world, he focuses in only on Israel. This prescription suits his Dispensational eyesight and allows him to talk about a Great Tribulation later in the book that is only for the nation of Israel.

The difference is that the iron is mixed with clay.⁸ This doesn't refer to a fifth empire, but to the gradual weakening that causes the demise of the entire statue. **Second**, Daniel's interpretation clearly says that there are only four empires, not five (**Dan 2:40**). That's what we are seeing here in the angel's interpretation as well. And interestingly, MacArthur himself sees it in the parallel, "**In Dan. 7, the same empires are represented by four great beasts.**" As we move carefully through Daniel 7, we will see that the Dispensationalists are seeing here something that isn't said—a revived Roman empire just isn't in the text. There is no fifth empire or even a 4b. That has to be read into the passage.

The angel continues, "**But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever**" (**Dan 7:18**). Notice that he focuses on the "**kingdom.**" Its length is forever and ever and ever. It will not end. Why does he talk about the kingdom? This was seen at the end of Daniel's vision. To the son of man "**was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples,**

⁸ Long ago Theodoret said, "**We should take careful note that he mentioned four empires here and four in the case of the image, and we should not think the clay one was a different empire from the iron one; there he said the end of the iron empire would be weaker, and here likewise he said three horns were rooted up from the ten, obviously being weaker in placement.**" **Theodoret**, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on Daniel*, Society of Biblical Literature: Writings from the Greco-Roman World 7, trans. Robert C. Hill, ed. Richard Price (Boston: Brill, 2006), 193.

nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an *everlasting dominion*, which shall not pass away, and his *kingdom one that shall not be destroyed*” (14). But what is meant by the kingdom? We’ve barely begun the interpretation and already we have differences of opinion that shape and form the rest of the fulfillment.

According to [pop-dispensationalism](#),⁹ the kingdom of God is a physical manifestation of God’s complete rule on earth and they don’t mean just his basic sovereignty. For many, God kept trying to usher it in, but sin kept getting in the way. Clarence Larkin explains, “It is clear from the Scriptures that God has been trying to set up a “visible” Kingdom on this earth ever since the creation of man ... But that dominion was lost by the ‘Fall,’ and Satan set himself up as the ‘Prince of this World.’”¹⁰ He says that God took the first step towards setting up a visible Kingdom on earth with Abraham, but it was blocked by the Jews going into captivity.

He tried again in the days of Jesus, but the offer, which was to the Jews, was rejected and thus the [Kingdom was postponed](#). John MacArthur says, “Had God’s people Israel accepted their King when He first came to them, there would

⁹ I won’t deal here with better, newer forms such as Progressive Dispensationalism, nor with worse and more fringy forms such as Ultra-Dispensationalism.

¹⁰ [Clarence Larkin](#), *Rightly Dividing the Word* (Philadelphia, PA: Clarence Larkin, 1921), 50.

be no interim kingdom. The kingdom at hand would have become the kingdom of a thousand years, which, in turn, would have ushered in the eternal kingdom. But because they killed the forerunner of the King and then the King Himself, the millennial kingdom, and consequently the eternal kingdom, were sovereignly postponed.”¹¹

On the other hand, most other Christians have seen the kingdom of God as coming in type form through Israel in the OT, and in fulfillment in the NT in two stages. The first stage is an inaugurated kingdom which comes at the First Coming. This is a very real kingdom that has very physical manifestations on earth. But there is still conflict in the world. The second stage is the consummated kingdom where Christ puts all his enemies under his feet and rules in the new heavens and new earth for eternity.¹² But those stages are of one kingdom, not two. These are very different ideas and can lead to some radically different conclusions about prophecy.

Now, the verse also says that the kingdom was given to “all peoples, nations, and languages.” It isn’t just for one group of people, like the Jews. It is to all peoples. This can’t

¹¹ John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7*, New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1989), notes on Matthew 3:1-6: The Motive.

¹² Of course, this is simplistic. I have not put the millennial differences in here, but essentially, Pre-, Post-, and Amillennialism all agree on this basic already-not yet structure in principle.

possibly mean every single person, because not everyone receives this kingdom. Rather, it refers to *groups* within the nations. **Vs. 18** is a parallel and it clarifies this. It identifies them as “**the saints of the Most High.**” “**Saints**” is the word *qaddish* and it can be translated as “holy ones” (the LXX has *hagios*). The word appears in **vs. 18, 21, 22, 25, 27.**

Almost all translations make them **humans**, but long ago, Calvin acknowledged that “**by sacred holy ones some understand angels.**” While he was convinced that they were humans, this old interpretation of angels has been revived in our day.¹³ This is based on the fact that most times this adjective is used in the OT, it refers to **celestial beings** (**Ex 15:11; Dt 33:2; Ps 89:6, 8; Job 5:1; 15:10; Zech 14:5**). It is, however, also a fact that the word clearly describes humans at least once (**Ps 34:10**). The question is, which is correct here?

If we look at how the **Jews during the Second Temple** used the word, among the many uses found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is not a single undisputed case where it ever refers to humans. However, those books often saw a deep **interconnection between the saints and the good angels.**

¹³ **Gerhard F. Hasel**, “The Identity of ‘the Saints of the Most High’ in Daniel 7,” *Bib* 56 (1975): 173–92; **John Joseph Collins** and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 312-19.

Sometimes the saints on earth will dwell one day with the holy angels in heaven (1En 39:5; 47:2). Other times they will become angels (like) in heaven (51:4).¹⁴ This seems to be how our book actually ends, “And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (Dan 12:3).

I agree with J. J. Collins that this close association between God’s people and the angels is “fundamental to the understanding of Daniel’s vision[s].”¹⁵ You have to remember that we have just seen the Son of man being surrounded by the myriad of hosts of heaven—angels. And later in the book, we will see the close identification between Michael and Israel (even as the nations are identified with their “princes”). In fact, I identify Michael as the one like a son of man here in Daniel 7:13 (so does Collins), which means that he is the Angel of the LORD who incarnates and becomes a man. Therefore, our identification as holy ones is because we are found in him—the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁴ Nickelsburg writes, “m, β, the text should be translated ‘And all of them will become angels in heaven.’” He sees no problem theologically, but disagrees contextually on this reading. George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 181 n. b on 1En 51:4.

¹⁵ Collins, 317. He cites Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, 578–83.

To sum this up, “Nothing could be more relevant than that their angelic patrons should ‘receive the kingdom.’”¹⁶ The whole idea that Michael and the angels who fight for him shall receive the kingdom is vital. Those loyal to Christ in heaven are part of this great battle. And God will not fail to reward them.

However, I disagree with the normal “angelic” interpretation in that I think the word here is a **double-entendre** and that the **human saints** have to also be in mind.¹⁷ What else should we expect from such a close identification between the heavenly and earthly realm? But in fact, they appear to be the prominent meaning. How is an angel-only interpretation consistent with this fulfilling the “**peoples, nations, and languages**” prophecy? Without this double meaning, I don’t think we can make good sense of the passage or of the rest of Daniel or the Bible.

But just here we have another difficulty. Listen to how Dispensationalist Clarence Larkin interprets this. He says they are the martyred souls of **Revelation 6:9** who shall perish “**during that time of persecution.**” They are “**not the**

¹⁶Ibid., 318.

¹⁷ **Collins** (316) does not take it this far, and yet he has the following comment that makes me wonder why not. “**Confusion arises because the human community is believed to mingle with the heavenly host in the eschatological war, in the cult, and in the community itself, and it can be called the people of the holy ones.**”

Martyrs of the Christian Church,” but are “Daniel’s people,” “mainly Jews.” “These are the Saints of the Most High that Daniel foresaw would receive the Kingdom.”¹⁸

Like all Dispensationalists, he sees the saints as human, but they are mostly Jews. I’ll explain why when we get further into the interpretation. For now, ask yourself how this jives with “all peoples, languages, and nations.”

Daniel’s Request for Further Clarification (19-20)

After the brief explanation, Daniel wants more clarification. It is interesting to think about what he does *not* want to understand better. He said, “I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater

¹⁸ Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation: A Study of the Last Prophetic Book of Holy Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1919), 59. “Daniel’s people” comes from p. 111.

than its companions” (19-20). What does Daniel not ask to know more about? **The first three beasts**. Why?

It is clear that from the angel’s words that these beasts refer to four kingdoms that he remembers Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The chiasm reinforces this parallel. Therefore, we know exactly what these beasts represents. The one like a **lion** is clearly **Babylon**. The mightiest of beasts and the regalest of birds (eagles wings) corresponds to the head of gold.

The second beast, the **lopsided bear** with three ribs in its mouth corresponds to the silver torso (its two arms are figurative, not technically part of the interpretation). This is the **Media-Persian** empire of Darius (the Mede) and Cyrus (the Persian). The Mede only lasted two years before he died and Cyrus took the power for Persia.

The leopard with four wings and four heads is like that bronze torso; it is the empire of **Greece**. There has never been, before or since, a more ferocious engulfment of land and rapid expansion of power than what **Alexander the Great** accomplished in ten short years. He began with the small region of Macedonia and conquered the largest empire in world history and was continuing to most outward until his untimely death. When he died, **his four generals** (the four

heads of the beast) Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy divided up his kingdom into Macedonia, Thrace, Syria, and Egypt. Daniel got it exactly right.



What Daniel wants to know about is [the fourth kingdom](#). In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, this was the legs of iron connected to the feet of iron and clay. This symbolized that while it began strong it would eventually crumble under its own corruption. This is [the Roman Empire](#).

Daniel points out again how terrifying the fourth beast was. It had iron teeth and claws of bronze. It was utterly

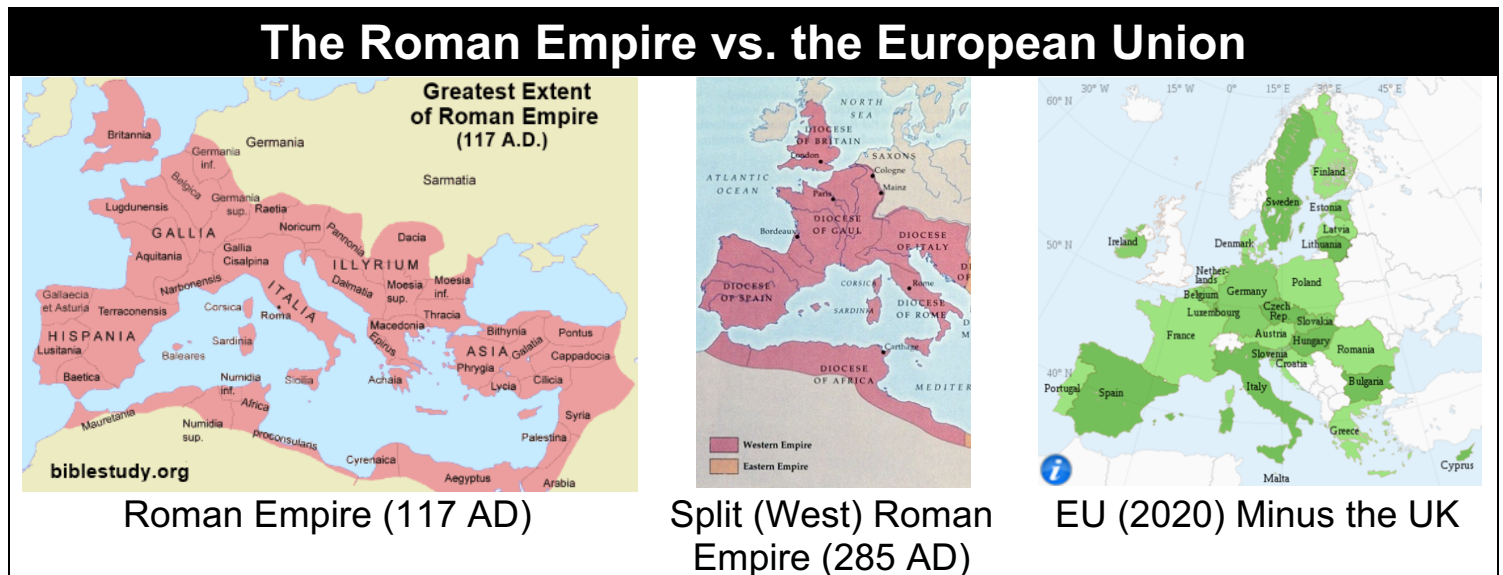
ferocious. Surely, nothing in history, not even Alexander, could match [the war machine that was Rome](#). It completely obliterated any who tried to stand against it. But it is the horns that have captivated Daniel's attention. There are [ten of them](#) and they seem to correspond to the ten toes of the statue, although this is never pointed out in Daniel.

I grew up under the Dispensational thinking which was that [sometime in our very near future a revived Roman Empire](#) in the form of the European Union would gain [ten nations](#) under the treaty and once that happened, the end of all things was near. This all originated, supposedly, from Daniel's fourth beast with ten horns. When Lindsey wrote in 1970, there were only six nations in the union. [Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg](#), the [Netherlands](#), and [West Germany](#) came in with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. In 1973, [Denmark, Ireland](#), and the [UK](#) came in, making nine. In 1981, [Greece](#) joined, making ten! Dispensational eschatology began to go crazy with speculation.

But then, in 1986, [Portugal](#) and [Spain](#) joined, making 12. Suddenly, they were saying that two would have to leave. That didn't happen. In 1995, [Austria, Finland](#), and [Sweden](#) all joined. Then, in 2004, ten more, mostly from the former U.S.S.R. joined ([Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia](#),

Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia). Today, when you add Bulgaria, Romania (2007), and Croatia (2013) you have 27 countries! Oops. But hope still survives, since the UK is trying desperately to get out; nations are leaving!

Supposedly, this is all going to end up in a revived Roman Empire. But while Italy was a founding nation, a look at maps of the EU and the Roman Empire, and even the split Roman Empire (taking the East and West as the “two legs” which is not found anywhere in an inspired interpretation), we don’t have a corresponding match. This is the problem with newspaper eschatology. Looking at today’s paper to determine the meaning of a prophecy is hopelessly misguided.



The Final Part of the Vision (21-22)

Things are going to need to stay messy until we make our way through the entire passage and begin to **use clearer Scripture** to interpret what we are seeing here. We've just seen Daniel's desire to understand more about the fourth beast and his horns. Suddenly, the last part of the vision comes into view.

The way people normally split up this chapter into the simple outline of vision/interpretation does not allow for the recognition that **vv. 21-22** see a continuation of the vision. Nevertheless, this last portion of the vision teaches us something about the little horn. It says, **"As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom."**

Up to this point, all we have seen is that a little horn comes up from among the others and that it **plucked three up by the roots**. It had **eyes like a man** and **spoke great things** (**Dan 7:8**). Then we saw that **the beast was killed**, and its body was destroyed and given over to be burned with fire (**11**). Now we learn why. It was **making war with the**

saints.¹⁹ Indeed, it even prevailed over them. I should state up front that this becomes one of the key texts in describing a figure popularly called **the Antichrist**.

A word of caution should be heard here. I say “popularly called” because the Bible itself does not talk about a singular Antichrist figure *with that terminology*. Instead, it uses this language to speak of “**many antichrists**” (1Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2Jn 7). That doesn’t mean it doesn’t talk about a figure, or perhaps figures, that especially embody this spirit, which John says “**denies that Jesus is the Christ,**” “**denies the Father and the Son**” (1Jn 2:22), “**does not confess Jesus is from God**” (4:3), and “**do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh**” (2Jn 7). I believe it does (e.g. “the man of lawlessness” in 2Th 2:3). But this has been a focus of heated debates since the beginning of Church history and we aren’t going to settle that question here.

My own current view of this puzzling question is that Daniel 7 is talking about **something that has already happened**, but that Jesus, Paul, and John, often borrowing (sometimes heavily) upon our chapter, leave room for a new fulfilment (or perhaps a double fulfilment) in our own

¹⁹ I won’t discuss it elsewhere, but it should be noted that on the angelic meaning of “saints” or “holy ones,” later in chapter 10 we see heavenly beings fighting with each other (cf. Dan 10:13).

future. I want to tell you this because though there may be something here still in our future, my job is to help you see the vital importance of not missing what has already happened. This is the very thing almost all popular interpretations of Daniel 7 miss.

The Angel's Longer Interpretation (23-27)

It is impossible to speak about what this entire vision means unless we consider the totality of the angel's interpretation. We **will come back to** a few things in **vv. 21-22**, but let's at least familiarize ourselves with how the passage finishes. "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces ...'" (23). Notice here how it uses the word "kingdom" rather than "king." This goes back to how I said before that the two terms are synonymous as far as **the four beasts with seven heads** are concerned. Other than that, this verse doesn't add a whole lot to **vs. 19** which we have already looked at. The fourth beast is Rome.

“As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings...” (24). The focus moves now to **the ten horns**. Now it calls them “kings.” Reading the text non-literally, the Dispensational view has often seen these as **ten nations** that will make up a revived Roman Empire. My current view is that this does in fact refer to **10 kings**.²⁰ We are not talking about beasts here, but horns, and one of those horns seems to be a person rather than a kingdom, because of its eyes and mouth and words. In the Bible, the horn is often used to describe a singular person while representing power (**1Sa 2:1; Ps 89:24; 112:9; 132:17**; etc.).

It continues, “He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time” (**Dan 7:25**). This now adds to what we have seen the little horn do. Besides waging war on the saints (which comes in the form of “wearing out the saints”), he now he begins to blaspheme the Most High God. The **parallel** is in **Revelation**

²⁰ Many have argued against what I’m going to propose here, but I find the arguments persuasive.

13:1, 5-6 where there is a beast with ten horns and seven heads with blasphemous names on its head and a mouth that utters blasphemous words. These are all attributes that in some ways mark the beasts, but in others especially mark this special horn.

Importantly, it gives us a time-frame here. First, it talks about changing the times and the laws. Calvin explains this difficult expression this way. “We may understand it generally of the small horn [temporal] overthrowing whatever was formerly customary in the world ... not the Law of God or the Gospel, but any rites, customs, and institutions.”²¹

The second period of time is “a time, times, and half a time.” We find this same expression used again in Dan 12:7 and in the NT in Rev 12:14. Revelation also calls it 1,260 (11:2; 12:6), 42 (11:2; 13:5), and 3 ½ (11:9, 11), though they might not be referring to the same thing in each instance. Now, here’s how Dispensationalism interprets this number. You are perhaps aware that they describe a future Great Tribulation as being a period of exactly seven years. They

²¹ John Calvin and Thomas Myers, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 66.

get this from Daniel 9, which we will talk about when we come to that passage.

Nearly all Dispensationalists divide this Great Tribulation into **two halves of 3 ½ years**. The first half is a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity; the second sees the Antichrist turn against God's people, who are "mostly Jews" because the church has been raptured out (this is true for both pre- and mid-trib rapture views), and the worst period of persecution in human history begins. They get this from our verse (among other places). That means that they are seeing in our passage, the Great Tribulation. And that means, they are interpreting our passage as being in our own future. This comes, in part, because they see the little horn as an **end-times** figure called The Antichrist.

Let's continue with the interpretation. The angel says, **"But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end"** (26). In the vision, this corresponds to when the beast was killed, and its body was burned with fire (11). In their interpretation, the Antichrist will be judged at the end of the second half of Great Tribulation, **just prior to Jesus' Second Coming** where he will set up 1,000 year perfect reign of his

kingdom on earth. That is when the Kingdom of God will finally be realized.

But let's look at the last verse. “*And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him*” (27). This parallel to that verse should be even easier to spot. It is when the son of man comes to the Ancient of Days and receives a kingdom and dominion that is for all peoples, nations, and languages (13-14). Keep in mind that the parallel in ch. 2 is the coming of a great stone that smashes the kingdoms into pieces.

The Epilogue (28)

That takes us to the end of the interpretation, and before discussing the interpretation, I think it is appropriate to look at the epilogue. It says, “*Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart*” (Dan 7:28). Now, Daniel obviously eventually let his vision be known, otherwise we wouldn't even be talking about this.

But the prophet does **something wise** here. He recognizes first and foremost that this is a terrifying sight. It caused him to be very distressed. I think when reading this chapter that if we have not first come away with that kind of a response at least once in our lives that we had better keep reading it until we do. **God does not give us prophecy to be speculative or to play head games with the future.** He gives it to tell us what he is going to do at some point in time after the prophecy was given.

In as much as this is true, God gave to Daniel a frightening vision of coming world empires which would **dominate** the world like none had before. And this certainly came true with Babylon, the Medes/Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. To understand their rule, you have to appreciate that they are beasts and that they devoured human flesh, not caring at all about God's image on earth.

At the same time, where was **some humanity in them.** The bear was made to stand like a man. The wild lion was turned human. The **Babylonians** gave us great art and stories. The **Greeks**—philosophy. The **Romans**—government. There are things to learn from positively from them. But their empires were at the root **satanic**. That's the imagery of the seven-headed sea-monster we saw last time.

But it is especially the horns that caught Daniel's attention and caused him to keep his mouth shut for so long. Strangely, I think **many of us have the opposite attitude about this**. Many libraries of books could be filled with the speculation the church has written about concerning this and coming visions. It's like we are eager to say what it means rather than to keep our mouths shut and ponder. My confession to you is that I am not entirely certain what the exact fulfillment(s) of this vision is and so I enter into my explanation with trepidation. I've been burned predicting things I should not have, and I have no desire to make that mistake again. May God be pleased to bless this interpretation in as much as it glorifies his sovereignty and the rule of his Son Jesus Christ.

Daniel 7 and Our Past

Having given you a basic outline of the pop-eschatology which we've seen has come to prominence by the works of Hal Lindsey and others, I would like you to consider **a very different way of looking at all of this**. I said previously that in the structure of the outline of the chapter, the interpretation was center for the chapter, but the vision of

the Ancient of Days was center of the vision itself. That means, to get the interpretation right, you have to get the coming of the Son of Man right.

Let's look at this key passage one more time. “Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given ... a kingdom that shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14). Dispensationalists and others, including many Church Fathers,²² take this as a prediction of the Second Coming. So, it isn't a new thing to

²² “The blessed Daniel openly teaches what our Lord says in the Gospels: “You will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with his angels” [Mt 24:30. The Father's often conflated Jesus and Daniel here]; and the blessed apostle, “For the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead shall rise immortal. And we who remain alive will be snatched in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” Daniel foretells the second coming of the Savior.” (Theodoret, *Commentary on Daniel* 7:13-14).

“If such power is shown to have accompanied and still now accompanies his passion, just think how great shall be his power at his glorious advent! For, as Daniel foretold, he shall come on the clouds as the Son of man, accompanied by his angels.” (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 31).

“For as two advents of our Lord and Savior are indicated in the Scriptures, the one being his first advent in the flesh, which took place without honor by reason of his being made nothing, as Isaiah spoke of him previously, saying, “We saw him, and he had no form or beauty.”¹ ... But his second advent is announced as glorious, when he shall come from heaven with the host of angels and the glory of his Father, as the prophet said, “You shall see the King in glory,”² and, “I saw one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven; and he came to the Ancient of Days” ... and he was brought to him. And there were given him dominion and honor and glory.” (Hippolytus, *On the Antichrist* 44). Hippolytus does seem to have a kind of already-not yet in this interpretation. See *Commentary on Daniel*, 4.9.2; 4.11.3-5).

“For instance, Daniel the prophet, under the influence of the divine Spirit, seeing his kingdom at the end of time, was inspired thus to describe the divine vision in language fitted to human comprehension.... It is clear that these words can refer to no one else than to our Savior, the Word who was in the beginning with God, and who was called the Son of man because of his final appearance in the flesh.” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.2).

do that. The Fathers did this as they saw Jesus using the language in the Olivet Discourse and they interpreted it as being still in their own future.

All I want you to look at for now is **where is the Son of Man coming to?** The Second Coming idea must have him coming to *earth*. But that isn't what the passage says. Rather, it says that he comes "**to the Ancient of Days.**" Where is the Ancient of Days? He is in heaven. The entire scene was a heavenly throne scene. I would argue that since he is called the Son of Man, this has to be **after his incarnation**, not before it, because the Word of God was not called the Son of Man until he was born of the Virgin. If that is true, then **when did the Son of Man come to the Ancient of Days** after that moment? **At his ascension.**²³

My question is, how is this passage not talking about Christ's ascension to heaven? What does the Scripture teach us about this event? Immediately after it happened, Peter

²³ "Christ comes into the presence of the Father at his ascension, in order to receive his mediatorial kingdom. 'I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him' (Dan 7:13). He himself declares that he leaves the world so that he may 'come' to the Father: 'Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You.... Now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world' (John 17:11, 13a; cp. Luke 9:51; 24:51; John 8:14; 13:1, 3; 14:28; 16:28; Acts 1:10). Thus, he comes into heaven upon his leaving the earth." **Kenneth L. Gentry Jr.**, *Have We Missed the Second Coming?: A Critique of the Hyperpreterist Error* (p. 19). Victorious Hope Publishing. Kindle Edition.

told the first Christians that the Father “exalted” Christ “at the right hand of God” (Acts 2:33). Ephesians says, “When he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places” was put “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion ... and he put all things under his feet and give him as head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:20). We could multiply these kinds of passages tenfold. The point is, Christ is exalted, he has all power in heaven and on earth and he does this through his church today.

What about the kingdom? Throughout the NT, people are called to faith in Christ so that they may come into Christ’s kingdom. Now. “We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (1Th 2:12). The verb is a present active, not a future verb. God is calling us *now* to his kingdom, not in the future. At the end of Acts, Paul “welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:30). Why would he do this if it wasn’t something that could be entered into for another 2,000 years by anyone?

It isn't like there is nothing different about the kingdom in the future as it appears now. Peter says, "In this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:11). Paul says, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom" (2Ti 4:1). That's why we speak of the already/not yet.

However, that doesn't mean the kingdom hasn't come. In fact, this is precisely what Jesus tells us. "The kingdom of God has come near" (Lk 10:11). More specifically, Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk 17:20-21). This doesn't mean that in the future it won't be more easily observed; it means it wasn't to be observed that way in his First Coming. Quite frankly, it is absurd to say that this is a different kingdom of God from the kingdom of God. This isn't a different kingdom; it is simply the kingdom manifested differently in different time periods.

Now, I said that Jesus combines the images of Daniel 7 in his Olivet Discourse. Specifically, he says, "When will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the

tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt 24:30). This is what he told Caiaphas at his trial (Matt 26:64). Many people read this as a yet future event, but I believe they are greatly mistaken, not that the entire Discourse is past, but that these words are (the main turning point of past/future is Matt 24:36, see below).

Look at the key markers. “*This generation will not pass away until all these things take place*” (24:34). This is all in answer to the question, “*Not one stone will be left upon another that will not be thrown down*” (24:2). He was speaking about the destruction of the Second Temple. The disciples asked him to clarify, but they gave him two questions. “*Tell us, when will these things be*” and “*what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?*” (Matt 24:3). He explained the first in very specific terms, including armies surrounding Jerusalem (Luke 21:20) and Jesus coming on the clouds which is apocalyptic language for the end of an age, specifically in this case, the end of the old covenant. He answered the second question by saying, “*No one knows the day or the hour*” of my Second Coming (Matt 24:36).

It is into this that I want you to consider something you **may have never heard before**. There is a very different view which sees the events surrounding the ten horns and the little horn as being fulfilled at the destruction of the temple, exactly as Jesus said. Taking the fourth beast and the iron legs and feet to be one single empire with no large gaps of time between, the ten horns correspond, as Calvin notes “**without doubt,**” **to the Caesars**. Perhaps here the word “kings” should be highlighted in your mind. Here are the ten:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Julius (100 - 44 B.C.) | 6. Nero (54 – 68 A.D.) |
| 2. Augustus (63 B.C. – 14 A.D.) | 7. Galba (68 – 69 A.D. seven months) |
| 3. Tiberius (14 – 37 A.D.) | 8. Otho (69 A.D. 3 months) |
| 4. Gaius/Caligula (37 – 41 A.D.) | 9. Vitellius (69 A.D. 9 months) |
| 5. Claudius (41 – 54 A.D.) | 10. Vespasian (69 – 79 A.D.) |

Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius were all assassinated to make way for Nero who was not in the line of succession. These are the “**three horns that were plucked up by the roots**” (**Dan 7:8**). At #6, he came up, “**among the horns.**”

It is true that **vs. 24** says “**another shall arise after them**” and this seems to refer to an eleventh horn. But **the text never says there is an eleventh horn**. Ten is the only number

that is used. Instead, the special horn seems to be one of the ten. James Jordan takes “after” to refer to “**after the sequence of the ten horns begins, after it comes into being,**”²⁴ and that makes sense. If this is right, then this little horn is not some future Antichrist, but, Nero.

It was during Nero’s reign that Christians **suffered the first great horrible persecutions** and mass martyrdoms. Here he made war with the saints and prevailed (**Dan 7:21**). His persecution lasted from about Dec 64 – June 68, which is **3 ½ years**. The things he did made him so infamous that he became identified with 666 in the early church—the mark of the beast. He sought to overthrow **whatever was formerly customary in the world, especially the rites, customs, and institutions of Christians**. Then, he ingloriously committed suicide having his dominion taken away (**26**). In a sense, “**The beast was killed.**”

But what about this being **about the end times** (possibly also **vs. 26**)? Well, first, the passage never says that, though it could be implied. I would respond to that by saying that Jesus’ first coming ushered in the end times. Hebrews says,

²⁴ **James Jordan**, *Handwriting on the Wall: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2007), 386. For a longer discussion of this see Jay Rogers, “Daniel 7:24 – Is the Little Horn ‘After Them’ or ‘Among them?’” <https://www.forerunner.com/daniel/daniel-724-is-the-little-horn-after-them-or-among-them>.

“In these last day God has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:2). The last days of what? Of the old covenant. That covenant was given to the Jews and with the destruction of their temple, which comes about during that tenth king’s reign, that covenant was destroyed forever. In its place, God finalized the new covenant and gave judgment for the saints (22), the church, who now become the means by which all men are saved.

No, Rome was not destroyed, but that’s also what it tells us. There were other horns that came up, and after Nero, Rome’s power began to weaken. And the totality of the beasts, “Their lives were prolonged for a season and time.” The nations are allowed to remain in rebellion to God for an unspecified amount of time while the kingdom of God begins to fill the earth through his church, as the Idol-dream parallel explains.

All this said, while I think Daniel has in mind this past fulfillment, and I think Jesus in fact does as well when he refers to Daniel 7, that doesn’t mean I think the Bible doesn’t leave room for an end-times Antichrist kind of figure.²⁵ Just

²⁵ There were speculations after Nero died that he would come back. They called it Nero *redivivus* (resurrected). As such, the early church used Nero resurrected as an image of the future Antichrist (Martyrdom of Isaiah 4.1-8; Sib.Or. 3.808; 5.28, 138ff; Commodian, *Instructions* XLI, etc.). See AELIUS_STILO@Yahoo.com, “Nero as the Antichrist,” https://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/gladiators/nero.html.

because one prophecy is about the past, it doesn't mean another can't come along, even using the same kinds of ideas, and see it as still in our future. Two different prophecies of similar things do not mean they are identical things. We will see this in Dan 8.

I'm not going to dwell on that as our time has come to an end. What I want to leave you with is this. As you consider Daniel 7, [are you quick to jump over the First Coming for the Second?](#) Please, don't be hasty in this. As I said, Daniel was given to the Jews to show them the coming of their Messiah. They deny that he has come at all, because they did not believe his own words about his ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and the events of 70AD. To them, his First Coming is still future. That means they are seeing this passage as referring to the *First Coming*. I do too. But missing the actual First Coming is the cause of eternal damnation, because Jesus Christ is the Son of Man who has come to the Ancient of Days and now has a kingdom that is eternal which is even now presenting itself physically in this world through God's people—his Church.

[This kingdom is for all people](#) ... all who will trust that Jesus Christ has fulfilled this prophecy. All who will believe that God has become a son of man. All who will bow to this

King of the Eternal Kingdom. Don't let yourself move too quickly to our own future if it means forgetting to bask in the Glories that have already been shown to us in the Coming of the Son of Man to the Ancient of Days to receive his Glorious Kingdom which he invites all to enter now through faith.

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