

Daniel the Prophet

Chapter

2 : 34-35

7 : 7-8, 19-21, 24-25

9 : 24-27

11 : 36-40

1. Introduction – the making of a prophet

What made Daniel into one of the greatest prophets of Israel? In this book, he is described as a "man greatly beloved". He was one of heaven's favourites, and also the recipient of these great prophecies that we are about to consider.

In I Timothy chapter 3, Paul says about the deacons or servants

Let these also first be proved and then let them serve.

Daniel proved himself in chapter number 1. He and his three companions found themselves in a situation which was not of their own making.

1.1. A change of location

He and his friends were of the royal seed in Jerusalem – men of noble birth. Suddenly, they find themselves as captives, led away against their will to Babylon. We are often in new situations of our own making, and we are responsible to God for the choices we make. But sometimes, things change beyond our control. How do we meet the challenge?

1.2. A change of name

Daniel and his friends had Jewish names, which reminded them of their links to Jehovah. Daniel means "God is my judge", but he was renamed "Belteshazzar, "prince of Bel", Bel being one of the pagan gods of Babylon. It is to his credit that throughout this book, he is often referred to as Daniel and not by his pagan name (see the words of the queen in chapter 5:10).

The same was also true of Daniel's three friends. Their previous names which linked them with Jehovah were changed to Babylonish names – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

1.3. A change of learning

Daniel is instructed in the learning and language of the Chaldees. His mind is filled with new ideas regarding the culture of his new masters.

1.4. A change of diet

He is given meat and drink from the king's table, the very best in the land. But at this point, he decides to take a stand. He refuses the king's meat and asks rather for a diet of pulse. So too do his friends.

They are putting God to the test. Will God honour them as they have honoured God? Well God did honour them in three different ways.

1.4.1. Physically

They were fairer and fatter in flesh than the other eunuchs of the palace

1.4.2. Intellectually

The king found them ten times better than the wise men of his court.

1.4.2. Spiritually

God gave Daniel wisdom and understanding in visions and dreams.

This indeed was the making of the prophet. God can use such a man who has already proved his worth.

The same can be said of Daniel in chapter 6. A change of ruler has taken place which again is beyond his control. Belshazar has been slain and Darius the Mede has taken the kingdom. Soon a new challenge rises up. Whoever asks a petition of any god or man except of the king for thirty days, is to be thrown into a den of lions. A number of compromises were open to Daniel.

1. Stop praying for thirty days. Who would have known but God?
2. Pray only once a day – not three times as was his custom.
3. Close the curtains over his windows.

Daniel chose none of these options but continued praying to his God three times a day with the windows open towards Jerusalem. The result was inevitable – his enemies are looking in through the open windows and witness the prayers of Daniel. Hence Daniel was cast into the den of lions. The king comes fearfully the next morning. He pays him an immense compliment. "Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?" God indeed did deliver Daniel from the lions' mouths. Daniel again has honoured God and God will now favour him with fresh revelations of things to come.

This principle of obedience followed by God revealing his mind to His saints is first illustrated by the life of Abraham. In Genesis chapter 12, God tells Abraham to get out from his father's house, his country, and his kindred. What did God promise Abraham in return? The patriarch simply heard of a land that God would show him. Abraham only partially obeyed – he took with him his father Terah, and his nephew Lot. Both would prove to be a stumbling block to Abraham. Abraham came with Terah only as far as Haran in Lebanon. He remained there until the death of Terah, then he headed south into the land of Canaan. Only then did God speak of the "land that I will give thee". But then in chapter 15 of Genesis, Abraham believes God regarding the birth of an heir to himself and Sarah. "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for

righteousness". God then revealed to His servant the full extent of the land – it would extend from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates, a territory that Israel still hasn't inherited.

We can see at once parallel applications in the New Testament. In Luke chapter 10, the Lord rejoiced in spirit and said, "I thank Thee Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes". It pleases God to reveal divine truth to such as ourselves, when often the great minds of men are of no avail. And how does God do this? It is done by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, the Spirit of truth. We are looking here at prophecy and the Lord said of the Spirit, "He will show you things to come". Things to come are also in Paul's mind when he wrote thus in I Corinthians 2, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him". If we stopped here, we might well excuse ourselves and say, "Well even Paul said that things to come are too difficult for us to understand". But Paul didn't stop there for in the next verse he continues, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit".

2. The rise and fall of Babylon

The story of Babylon is an interesting one. It begins with Babel in Genesis chapter 11. This was an attempt to introduce a form of unity. Let us build us a city and a tower...lest we be scattered upon the face of the earth". It seemingly had a religious motive - "whose top may reach to heaven". But its true motive was self interest. "let us make us a name". "God divided their tongues and scattered them.

Babel re-appears as the Babylon of Daniel. The city has become an empire which uses its military might to impose religious uniformity. In the book of Revelation, the empire has become universal – the whore sits upon many waters. These many waters are tribes, and tongues, and nations. She also sits upon the beast to make use of his military power.

We can see though in the response of Daniel how we need to rise to the challenge of Romans chapter 12. "Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind".

3. Why should we be interested in prophecy?

Many might well think that the study of prophecy is only for an elite few and "is not for us". But there are good reasons to consider it.

3.1 It should give us a different view of things in this world.

2Pe 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Material things are temporary, spiritual things are eternal

3.2 It should spur us on in the gospel.

As days grow darker, the knowledge of things to come should encourage us

further in spreading the gospel. If we really believed in judgment to come, should we not be doing more?

3.3 Knowledge dispels ignorance and fear.

The Thessalonians had fear regarding those who had fallen asleep. Paul tells them about the rapture to dispel this fear of the unknown.

4. The Prophecies of Daniel

We have selected only four of Daniel's prophecies because they are those which most affect Israel and are still to be fulfilled. Other revelations are given him regarding Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar as well as the little horn of chapter 8 etc.

When we think of the subject of prophecy, there are two books in the Bible which immediately leap out at us – the books of Daniel and Revelation. Indeed without the book of Daniel, much of what is written in Revelation would be beyond our comprehension.

It is probably true that there is much in the prophetic books that we can never strictly interpret in our day. But as people actually live through the days in which these things are being fulfilled, I suppose that much of what is unclear to us will become apparent to them.

What makes the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation so distinct? While other prophecies in the Bible speak of judgement about to fall on the then present generation in order to try and arrest the decline, Daniel and Revelation both look forward to days which are still future, and which map out the future of the nation of Israel in particular.

Some of the chapters in Daniel are purely historic in character and describe actual events that took place in the lives of Daniel and his three companions. But it is because of what they were before God and men that made them fit to be used of God in these great things.

We want to limit ourselves to look at chapters 2, 7, 9, and 11, for therein do we find the main prophetic teachings of this book.

4.1 Daniel chapter 2

Because of the stand that Daniel and his friends took in chapter 1, by refusing the meat from the king's table, we read that God gave them "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (chapter 1:17). In chapter 2, the king of Babylon had a dream which disturbed him greatly, but he had forgotten the contents of the dream. He commanded the magicians and the wise men to reveal to him the dream and its interpretation. The wise men were right when they said that this was impossible. Only God who gave the king the dream could do such a thing, and of course He did just that through Daniel, and Daniel made it known to the king.

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great image. Daniel describes the image first of all, then makes known to the king its meaning. The image was that of a man whose body consisted of very differing materials. Its head was of fine

gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet a mixture of iron and clay. We will not go into conjecture about this image but simply repeat what Daniel says. The head of gold is Nebuchadnezzar himself. Gold speaks of deity and we can see the hand of God working in and through this man. Judah was increasingly moving away from God despite the words and the activities of the many prophets whom God sent in those days. For all that, they did not repent and so at last we read of the last king of Judah that the Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, "with part of the vessels of the house of God". Nebuchadnezzar was a divinely appointed ruler. After him there would arise another "inferior to thee", to be replaced by a third and then a fourth kingdom. The image then is about a succession of kingdoms, each one progressively inferior to its predecessor. That is why we degenerate from gold to iron and clay. I believe this decline is not in power or in territory for arguably each successive kingdom swallowed up the one before it. But in moral condition before God there is decline. So what does the image represent as a whole? It surely portrays for us what are described in Luke 21:24 as "the times of the Gentiles". When God gave power to a Gentile ruler, He took that power away from Israel. This power has remained in the hands of the Gentiles ever since and will continue to do so until the Lord returns to earth and then Israel will become the head of the nations and not the tail.

This degeneracy of the image from gold to clay speaks much about the history of God's creation.

1. Angels

In the beginning, He created the angels, the sons of God in the book of Job, who preceded the creation of the world. Amongst those angels was Lucifer, the highest angel of all. God made Lucifer, but He did not make the devil. God Thus God addresses Lucifer in Ezekiel 28:

15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

2. Eden

God created a garden, a paradise, but soon that paradise would be lost and the earth would produce thorns and thistles.

In this garden, God placed a sinless man and his wife, but soon they fell under the power of Satan, and God drove out the man.

3. Israel

God chose a nation and gave them His law and then a land, but as a result of increasing idolatry, they lost the land and were taken into captivity.

4. The Church

God brought the church into being in Acts chapter 2, but soon it fell into empty profession and failure.

5. The Gentile nations

Returning to Daniel chapter 2, God bestowed upon the king of Babylon the power to conquer Judah. But soon that power was abused, and in this same chapter, the king sets up an image of gold, and every subject

of his empire was compelled to bow down before it.

The nations of this world have continued on this downward spiral to this very day.

Do we know who these four kingdoms are that are spoken of in Daniel chapter 2? We are told that Babylon is the first, that is true, but it is not until we come to chapters 5 and 6 that we read of the victory of the Medes and Persians over Babylon and then we read of the second kingdom. The third kingdom is said to be Grecia. This we read of in chapter 8:21. "And the rough goat is the king of Grecia". We do not know from Daniel who the fourth kingdom is. It is usually said to be Rome, but my one difficulty is that Rome was never a confederacy of nations as suggested by the visions of chapters 2 and 7 – the ten toes of the image and the ten horns of the beast. Also Rome was not destroyed by the Lord, "the stone", but by the advancing tribes of northern Europe. But what about a revived Roman empire? Why could it be not just a kingdom in last days, the likes of which we have never seen before for its power and its ferocity.

The image stands intact until a stone appears "cut out without hands" ie not of an earthly or human origin, and it smites the image on its feet. The whole image with its gold, silver, brass, iron and clay is then blown away like chaff in the wind. We understand from the New Testament that this stone is the Lord Jesus Himself. He is "the chief corner stone" according to Peter.

1Pe 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious:

He is also the "stone which the builders rejected" which has become the chief corner stone.

Ps 118:22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

Not just the fourth kingdom will be destroyed but the whole image itself. Gentile rule will be destroyed.

Before passing on, what can we say about the iron and clay that comprise the feet of the image? Just as iron is strong, so the clay is weak. The feet are an admixture of strength and weakness. When we come to chapter 7, we shall learn that the ten horns are ten kings, who form a confederacy. There is strength in their unity yet weakness in their diversity. The Common Market is not the fourth kingdom for in 2012, it is composed of no less than 27 member states. Economists today would argue that its size is its potential weakness. We are papering over the cracks as it were. We are guessing now but is it not likely that the EU will dissolve in last days to re-form in its final state as 10 nations under the Beast, its federal head?

4.2. Daniel chapter 7

In this chapter, it is not the dream of a king that concerns us but the vision of a prophet, Daniel himself. Chapter 2 deals with the interpretation of a dream given to a Gentile ruler. It is Gentile rule from a Gentile perspective. Daniel chapter 7 gives us the same history but as revealed to a Jewish prophet, hence

it is the future as seen from a Jewish perspective. Four great beasts are seen arising out of the sea. The first is like a lion, the second is like a bear, the third is like a leopard.. The fourth beast cannot be described as one particular animal. Indeed in Revelation 13, it has the features of the lion, the bear, and the leopard.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

The lion would speak of the ferocity of the first kingdom ie Babylon. The bear would symbolise crushing strength as seen in Media-Persia. The leopard would speak of speed – seen in Greece by the rapid conquests of Alexander the Great.

The fourth beast in Daniel 7 is described as being "dreadful and terrible". The interpretation of the 4 beasts is given to Daniel in verse 17. "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth". We see a parallel with the four kingdoms spoken of in chapter 2 as part of the image – Babylon, the lion, Media-Persia the bear, and Grecia, the leopard, followed by the last which is indescribable.

In verse 7, we read of this fourth beast that it had 10 horns. Verse 24 tells us that the ten horns are ten kings that shall arise. These would correspond with the ten toes of the image in chapter two. It is a confederacy of nations.

From amongst these 10 horns arises another little horn. Why is he a "little horn"? Perhaps he will come from one of the smallest and most unlikely of the 10 states. Yet he quickly removes the power of three kings – they are plucked up by the roots. This difference between the seven and the ten in Daniel 7 would explain the disparity between the seven and the ten in Revelation chapter 13:1. There we read of the beast "having seven heads and ten horns". The little horn of Daniel 7 is the Beast of Revelation 13:1. He is the head of the confederacy of the last days. We see a number of other points of comparison between the two men in the two chapters, Daniel 7 and Revelation 13.

1. An object of worship

One of the features of the Beast in Revelation 13 is that all men bow down and worship him. Do we not see the similarity with the "man of sin" in II Thessalonians chapter 2, who sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. He is also the one that the Lord spoke of in Matthew 24:15. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place.."

2. A mouth speaking great things

Another feature of the little horn is that he has, "A mouth speaking great things"(Daniel 7:8). We read this very same expression in connection with the Beast in Revelation 13:5.

3. Making war with the saints

In Daniel 7:21, the little horn "made war with the saints". In Revelation 13:7, "It was given unto him to make war with the saints". Twice over in Rev 13, we read of what was "given unto him". In verse 5, "power was

given unto him to continue 42 months" – this power was given to him by the dragon in verse 4. It is limited to 42 months only. But is the licence to make war with the saints perhaps given to him by the permissive will of God? We can only make our suggestion.

4.3. Daniel chapter 9

From verse 24 to the end of the chapter, Daniel receives another revelation from the angel Gabriel. The scope of the vision is laid out for us in verse 24. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness". The subject matter is quite clear. It is in regards to Daniel's people, the Jews, and Daniel's holy city, Jerusalem. All prophecy indeed has to do with Israel. They are the summation of all God's plans for this earth.

What are these "seventy weeks"? The word for "weeks" I am told, is a Hebrew word simply meaning "sevens". Seventy "sevens" are determined upon thy people ie 490 in total. We resort again to the golden rule of prophecy – that the prophecy is true when the prediction is seen to come to pass. The period begins, according to verse 25, when the commandment goes forth to restore and to build Jerusalem. This was fulfilled in Nehemiah chapter 2 when the Persian king Artaxerxes gave a letter to Nehemiah permitting him to return to Jerusalem and begin rebuilding the city walls. The street was built again, even in troublous times, and we see throughout the book of Nehemiah the opposition of men like Tobiah and Sanballat. This decree marks the beginning of this period of 490. The period would end with the Messiah being cut off ie the Lord's death at Calvary. Between these two events, the decree of the king and the death of Christ, we are told 483 years elapsed ie 7×69 . The number 69 comes from the phrase "seven weeks and threescore and two weeks or $69 \times 7 = 483$. Thus each "week" or "seven" represents a period of 7 years. This first part of the prophecy has therefore been seen to have been fulfilled. So also was the destruction of the city and the sanctuary as described in verse 26. It was done by the Roman general Titus in AD 70.

But we believe verse 27 now takes us on to what is yet future. The prophetic clock stopped when the Lord was crucified. The Jews rejected their Messiah and, as a result, God has set aside His earthly people. The last period of seven years will begin, not with the Rapture of the Church, but with the event of verse 27 – "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week". Who is the "he" in this verse? He is "the prince that shall come", as stated in verse 26. He is also the Little Horn of chapter 7 – the great confederate head of the nations. The "many" we believe are the majority of the nation of Israel in the last seven years. But what is the "covenant" in this section of Daniel? Is it not the covenant that we read of in Isaiah 28, "Ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us. The "we" in Isaiah 28 is again the nation of Israel. Linking this with Daniel 9, we see that the beast makes a covenant with the nation of Israel. It is meant to last the full seven years. But why is the covenant made at all? It is because of what is called in Isaiah 28, "the overflowing scourge". When we go to Daniel chapter 11, we

read of someone who "shall overflow and pass over". He is identified as the King of the North. During these last days, two kings, the King of the North and the King of the South, shall be at war with each other. The king of the South is clearly identified as the king of Egypt. The king of the North is reckoned to be the king of Assyria. The battle ground of these two kings is described in Daniel 11:41 as "the glorious land", which could only be Israel. Their battles shall ebb to and fro, through the land of Israel. Israel will be weak at this period of time, and will require protection. Who else should they turn to but the most powerful man on earth at the time, the first Beast of Revelation 13, the Little Horn of Daniel chapter 7. The beast makes a covenant with Israel, and the nation is hopeful that this covenant will protect them from the king of the North. But in Isaiah chapter 28, God replies in verse 18, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it". This phrase "trodden down" takes us on to the end of this seven year period.

But something else happens during this time. Daniel chapter 9 says, "In the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease". The covenant will give Israel protection to offer up sacrifices in their newly built temple in Jerusalem. But after only three and a half years, the Beast breaks his part of the covenant. He himself takes on the role as being the object of worship. This is what we read of in II Thessalonians chapter 2 – "He as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God". The Beast usurps the place of God. We see a type of the Beast in Daniel chapter 6 with king Darius issuing a decree that no-one should ask a petition of any god or man apart from Darius himself. We see another type in Herod in Acts chapter 12. He sits on his throne dressed in royal apparel and makes a great oration to his audience. They say, "It is the voice of a god and not a man".

In Matthew 24, the Lord speaks about "the abomination that maketh desolate" standing in the holy place. That is the signal for the faithful remnant in Judaea to flee. It is the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

5. Daniel chapter 11

In verse 36, we read of "the king". He is sometimes called "the wilful king", because he "shall do according to his will". Our first task must be to identify this man, and also relate him to other scriptures elsewhere. In which country is he the king? In verse 40, we read of how the king comes under pressure from two sides. The king of the North and the king of the South are both pushing against him. We have seen that the king of the South is Egypt. And what lies to the north of Egypt? Surely the land of Israel. In verse 41, the king of the North comes into "the glorious land" which could only be Israel. The wilful king is therefore the king of Israel. But is he a Jewish king? What might seem an obvious reply is answered for us in verse 37. There we read, "Neither shall he regard the god of his fathers". The fathers would again suggest the fathers of Israel. In verse 38, this king honours the "god of forces". It is the god of fortresses, someone who is marked by military might. In Revelation 13, we read of the first Beast, "Who is able to make war with him?" But we have a second beast in Revelation 13. He is described as a beast out of the earth. This would lead us to believe that he comes out of the nation of Israel – he is a Jew.

What other things that we can say about this wilful king?

5.2. He looks like a lamb

Verse 11 says about him, "He had two horns like a lamb". He is an impersonation of the true Lamb, in other words he is the Antichrist." "Anti" means not only that he is opposed to Christ but that he also seeks to replace Christ. He is the Antichrist of John's first epistle.

But as soon as he opens his mouth to speak, his true character is revealed – "He spake as a dragon".

Other features in Revelation 13 also show him to be an impersonator of the true Christ.

5.3. He is a great miracle worker

Verse 13 of Revelation 13 says, "He doeth great wonders". Verse 14 also speaks of "those miracles which he had power to do". Miracles were expected of the Christ by the Jews. When the Lord did many miracles, many were beginning to ask, "When the Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man doeth?" In this respect, can we not now link this Beast with the wicked one of II Thessalonians 2. If the man of sin is the first beast of Rev 13, the "Wicked" one is the second Beast, the Antichrist. II Thessalonians 2:9 says, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders".

5.4. He has no power of his own

Rev 13 says of the second beast – "Those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the first beast". He derives all his power from the first beast. In this respect, he is an impersonator of the true Christ. The Lord said this about His miracles. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." Also, "Many good works have I shown you from My Father". The Son derived all His power from the Father who sent Him.

5.5. He gets men to worship the first beast

The second beast of Revelation 13 does not seek worship for himself, but demands that all men should worship the first beast. The first beast you will remember is the man of sin who sits "as God in the temple of God". He demands the worship of men.

The Lord Jesus came to declare the Father to men. In John chapter 4, the Lord says to the woman at the well, "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him".

Therefore the man we are considering in Daniel 11 has many titles.

1. The wilful king – Daniel 11
2. The second Beast – Rev 13
3. The Antichrist – I John
4. The False Prophet – Rev 19

If the Lord is the King, the Christ, the Prophet, then this impersonator assumes all three titles also. The only title missing is that of Priest. Even an unbelieving orthodox Jew in these days will know that a king cannot be priest.

Returning again to Daniel 9 and Daniel 11, we saw that the Gentile ruler makes a covenant with the Jewish king in the land. But the covenant fails on two counts. The sacrifices cease after three and a half years and the Gentile ruler is unable to protect Israel against the king of the North.

So where does prophecy in general leave us? We might say, "It leaves us cold, because it doesn't affect us directly". But can we not delight in the final victory of our Lord Jesus over all His earthly foes? Can we not delight in His faithfulness towards His earthly people? Can we not delight in the day of the appearing of His glory? Can we not delight in the knowledge that one day our Lord will receive in this world His rightful place as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Daniel chapters 2, 7, 9, and 11 set out for us God's plans for His earthly people. Great trials await the Jews, for Satan's men will have their day of glory, but the Lord of glory will triumph in the end.