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The Book of Daniel & its Failed Prophecies by Ken Koskinen

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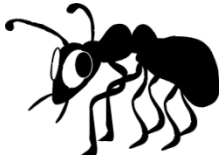
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A GRAND BEGINNING!

To celebrate the launching of my website I've posted my ebook *"What I Told My Son About the Bible: Things the Clergy Doesn't Want You to Know."* It's about 185 pages of entertaining and

About Ants Publications

Ants stands for (A)nswers (N)onsense (T)ruthfully and the "s" pluralize(s) and stands for repeatedly. Ken Koskinen is the founder of **Ants Publications** and this site is currently a vehicle to post his writings; but eventually others may also be able to contribute. Ken writes academic essays, books, poetry and some short comedy pieces. His writing is not well suited for certain individuals. He does **not** for example accept the teachings of **any** major world religion. There are many myths and teachings that are nonsense and he writes factual rebuttals. He exercises **the freedom of the press** but it isn't **his intention to offend others**. **Please do not read his material if you aren't open-minded.**

Ken primarily writes from a scientific mode of mind. This means his information processing leads with reason and observation but intuition and emotion assist. When he writes serious essays and books he uses the persona, "**Ken Koskinen**." When he writes poetry he's "**The Naked Psalmist**." When he writes comedy he takes on one of several personae such as "**Ken the Wildman**" or "**SureFoot Helms**."

People who want to discuss the issues and themes raised on this site are invited to log on to the **Ants FORUM**. It might take time to attract some traffic to the venue but "big things always grow from small beginnings." You can also post your opinions and/or questions in **Comments**.

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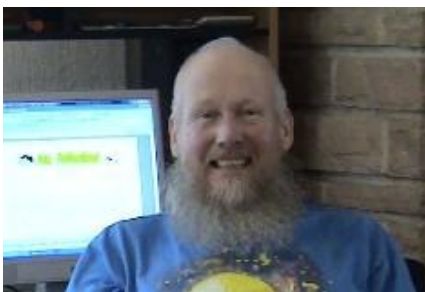


informative discussions between a scholarly Father "Dad" and his intellectually gifted son, an early teen named "Charlie." When Charlie asks Dad about the Bible the fun begins.

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About the Author

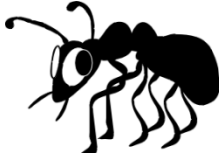
I was born in Helsinki, Finland but immigrated with my family to Toronto, Canada when I was about 2 -1/3 years old. My Finnish given name is "Jarmo Olavi Koskinen" but I use the English nickname "Ken" Koskinen. I'm a naturalized Canadian and have lived most of my life in Ontario, Canada. I studied at Centennial & Niagara Colleges in Ontario but earned my BSc. at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California. I majored in psychology but also studied history and biblical subjects.

I love to write. As a writer my goals are to **inform/educate**, **stimulate/challenge** and **inspire/entertain** readers. I write serious pieces as well as some comedy. Over the last several years I have taken a great interest in science with an emphasis on physics & cosmology. I am currently writing my first science book, **"The Big Vibe: Steps Towards a Theory of Everything."** In this work I hope to add to the quilt of theoretical science. I do not currently plan to make it available on this site since I hope to publish with a scientific book publisher. However you can learn more about current unsolved scientific mysteries by reading my posted essays.

I enjoy working out with the 1/2" thick steel cable skipping rope I invented, **"The Skip Walker/Jogger."** I use it to skip walk; that is, I skip rope while walking for several miles. You can view my video of me skip walking. I've also written the lyrics to a light country/rock song **"The Unemployment Line."** I'm neither a musician nor a good singer but you can view me singing the song, without accompaniment. I hope somebody with some real talent, like Billy Ray Cyrus, contacts me and puts music to it and turns it into the next big hit! I've also invented a very good carpet cleaning detergent and a skin cream that helps to clear up blemishes and outbreaks. It is also a good topical dressing on burns. Both of these products are in the research and development stage.

I also love nature, comedy, good food and beer. I love to learn and enjoy the mystical awareness and feeling of being alive while exploring & experiencing life within **"All That Is!"** It is the **"everything"** in which we have our being!





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Faith readers beware! This is not an essay about beliefs but rather is a rational analysis of OT prophecy that points out failures and flaws. There is a lot of other literature that is more suitable for you to read. Please do not read any further.

The Book of Daniel & its Failed Prophecies

This is the third essay on biblical prophecy of a planned series. “Pseudo Prophecies in the New Testament” is the first and “The Templegate Crisis & the Failed Second Coming” is the second. You can freely download them on my website: <http://antspub.com>

Daniel and OT Prophecy

You might wonder why I am interested enough in the Book of Daniel to write this essay. It is a fascinating and strange book filled with imagery, coded language and mystery. It is sometimes said the NT book of Revelation was written in like manner and Daniel had obviously influenced the later writer's style. In any case heated controversy over the interpretation and meaning of much of Daniel has been ongoing over the centuries. My treatment will no doubt be rejected by some. In any case either the author(s) had a meaning in mind and left enough clues for readers to discern his intent or he played his readership by writing a no solutions puzzle.

Some OT scholars say the book was really written by two authors. They claim the first six chapters differ from the rest of book in style and content and thus make their case. This is not an unusual suggestion as far as OT scholarship is concerned. Claims have also been made for multiple authors for other books like Isaiah, Psalms & Proverbs. Of the surviving manuscripts we have much is written in Hebrew but chapter 2:4 to chapter 7 are written in Aramaic. The later is a language related to Hebrew that the Jews acquired during their captivity in the Babylonian and Persian periods. Aramaic became the common spoken tongue of the people and was so even in Jesus' time. The second author lived in the 2nd century BC and wrote in the Maccabean period. I will have much to say about this later.¹

The Catholics accept a larger version of Daniel than is in Bible's used by Protestants. They include an additional chapter and some lines not seen in other modern Bibles. This is not a surprise as the book has been controversial from the get go. The canonization of the Hebrew Bible is unclear. It has been suggested that in 90 AD a council of Jewish leaders assembled in Jamnia, then a town in Judea. (In modern day Israel it is a small city called Yavne). There the Jews supposedly conferred over which books were acceptable. What is interesting is that Daniel was supposed to have been amongst the controversial books but in the end was included as it had already made its mark on the consciousness of many Jews. The idea is the council merely accepted what had already been in popular use and acceptance amongst many of their people over history.

Of course the Jews in Alexandria, Egypt also had their canon and it differed somewhat from that of those in Judea. They had even built a temple and thrived during periods of religious tolerance in Egypt. It may even be possible that the Jewish Egyptian canon preceded the one in Judea. It's

¹ “Book of Daniel, Maccabean Author,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel

an important academic point, but the main idea is that Daniel appears in both canons and is a pivotal book in the Hebrew Bible. It at least attempts to give an overview to Jewish and world events in a prophetic format, unseen in any other book. Yes, that means it also claims to predict the future and we will explore how accurate it is in its expression. One must always try to understand ancient writings from the perspective of the original writers and not from those of modern readers who imagine elements of their own time and project them onto the text.

Another point is that in some ways the Book of Daniel sits as a hinge pin in the world of OT prophecy. There are several OT prophecies that relate to its content or at least to interpretations of the same. The Jews were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in the 6th century BC. He had their temple destroyed and survivors were deported to Babylon. Later the Cyrus the Great, the Persian king, conquered the Babylonian and other empires but allowed the Jews and other peoples to return to their homelands. The Book of Daniel sits in the midst of the transition between the power shifts from Babylonian control to that of the Persians. It is in this context that the protagonist of the book made his predictions or at least it was made to appear to be so.

This essay is in part a discussion of real history as we have very good evidence there was a Babylonian/Persian period captivity. This is to be contrasted to the earlier biblically claimed Egyptian captivity and so-called exodus for which we do not have any extra biblical evidence. ([Down load my essay "The Day the Sun & Moon Stood Still" http://antspub.com](http://antspub.com)). In a future essay I plan to discuss other OT biblical prophecies. Some of these were also portrayed to have been made within this general time frame of those in Daniel. I will show how several of these predictions were either very vague or failed to predict the future in their details.

Daniel's Prophecies, Chapters 1 – 6

Daniel One

The Book of Daniel opens by giving readers a time reference. It speaks of the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah and how Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. It speaks of the time when the Babylonian king took items from the Jewish Temple and placed them into the treasure chest of the house of his own god. This was the time of initial subjugation of the Jews and not the destruction of the temple and the deportation of a large part of the population that occurred about ten years later. Nebuchadnezzar at this earlier time only requested that some of the Jewish nobles and educated and talented young men be sent to Babylon to learn their language and the customs. Daniel was amongst this group and it is said he was gifted in understanding visions and dreams. He was soon chosen, along with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to serve before the king of Babylon ([Dan. 1](#)).

Daniel Two & Three

Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream in the second year of his reign. The king demanded his wise men tell him his dream and its interpretation. They could not do it and so he sent out a decree to kill all of the wise men in the land. They sought for Daniel and his companions to kill them as well but Daniel asked for an audience with Nebuchadnezzar. He told the king he had dreamed of a great image. Its head was of gold, chest and arms were silver, belly and thighs were bronze, its legs were iron and feet were partly iron and partly clay. Then a stone was cut out without hands and it struck the image and it was crushed. It and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors and a wind blew it away. Then the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth ([Dan. 2:31-35](#)).

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar the golden head represented him and his kingdom. After him there would be an inferior kingdom of silver, then a third one of bronze and a fourth will be of iron. The iron kingdom would be strong but also fragile as its feet were partly made of clay. In the days of

these iron time kings the God of heaven will set up an everlasting kingdom that will break up and consume all these kingdoms. The mountain in the dream represented the final divine kingdom ([Dan. 2:36-45](#)). Up to this point the author had identified the first kingdom as the Babylonian Empire of King Nebuchadnezzar and the fifth kingdom as a future divine one. The current question is who are the other three kingdoms?

Daniel received great gifts and was promoted. He was made ruler over the whole province of Babylon and became the chief administrator over the wise men. He had his three Jewish friends watch over the affairs of the province while he sat in the king's court. After this there was some drama as Daniel's three Jewish companions refused to worship a gold image Nebuchadnezzar had made. The jealous Chaldeans had approached the king and accused the three Jews of refusing to worship the Babylonian gods and the gold image in particular. They are now called Shadrack, Meshach and Abed-Nego which are apparently their Babylonian names. They were thrown into a fiery oven but miraculously survived, and were not harmed, nor even had the scent of smoke on their garments. While in the flames they were joined, to Nebuchadnezzar's surprise, by one who had the form of the son of God ([Dan. 3:1-30](#)). When many Christians read this they think of Jesus or a being that became him. However the fourth being that Nebuchadnezzar saw and identified in the fire had to have similarity to an image he was familiar with. His vision or what he saw in the flames was most probably like some revered religious image within the then Babylonian religion.

It is puzzling that Daniel is strangely absent in the story. One wonders where this tale originated and why Daniel is not in the story. Surely as second in command he would have known about the planned execution of his good friends and would have intervened; it doesn't make much sense.

Daniel Four

It wasn't too long till Nebuchadnezzar had another dream and issued a decree that all the wise men of Babylon come before him. This time he did not ask them to tell him the dream but only its interpretation; even so they couldn't understand it. I pause at this point to ask why the king firstly asked others when Daniel was in his service? Hadn't he gained his confidence on the incidence of his first dream? Also one has to wonder why the writer changed styles in reporting this story. It is written in more poetic language and it changes to the first person mode as per the king's direct telling of the dream and the surrounding details. It reads as if the writer patched the story in from a source document. In any case Daniel, who Nebuchadnezzar calls Belteshazzar, was told the dream.

The dream was about a great tree with birds sitting on its branches. A holy one came down from heaven and chopped it down but left its stump and roots. The remnant was bound with a band of iron and bronze. Strangely the stump's heart was changed from that of a man into a beast and seven times passed over him. Daniel told the king he would go insane and graze with beasts for seven years. The writer claimed this actually happened as he says Nebuchadnezzar ate grass like oxen and his body was wet with dew and his hair grew like eagle's feathers and his nails became like birds' claws ([Dan. 4:1-37](#)). It is very hard to believe this story even if he really became mentally ill. Humans can't even digest grass and why would his servants and family allow their ill king to eat it and live outside like an animal? This is most probably a made up story as there isn't any evidence that this actually happened. In any case, it is not crucial to the prophecies that concern us.

Daniel Five

The story continues but a new king named Belshazzar suddenly appears in the text. He is depicted as Nebuchadnezzar's son but this is not true; but some suggest the term "son" in the text could mean ancestor implying Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar's forefather ([Dan. 5:2](#)). Even

this is hard to accept since they were not even blood related. The Babylonian king is known to history as Nebuchadnezzar II and was the last Chaldean ruler of Babylon (reigned 605 – 562 BC). Belshazzar was an Assyrian and was not even the real the king. Also, there were four kings who ruled after Nebuchadnezzar II. Nabonius was Belshazzar’s Assyrian father and was the last real king before the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 BC. He reigned 556 – 539 BC. Nabonius had made his son Belshazzar co-regent and this is supported by evidence found in ancient Babylon.² The writer of Daniel just leaped over the kings who ruled Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar and re-started the story with Belshazzar.³ It is a mystery as per why he did it.

View the chart of kings below and notice the names and reigning periods of the four kings after Nebuchadnezzar II. It is difficult to see how the move in any way aided the writer’s cause. In other words it was not necessary to create his fictional narrative and merely led to historical criticism.

Dynasty XI of Babylon (Neo-Babylonian or Chaldean Dynasty)		
Ruler	Reigned	Comments
Nabu-apla-usur (Nabopolassar)	626 – 605 BC	He was a Chaldean king who ejected Assyrian armies in 616 BC. He allied with Cyaxares and pretty much destroyed the Assyrian Empire.
Nabu-kudurri-usser (Nebuchadnezzar II)	605 – 562 BC	He defeated the Egyptians and Assyrians at Carchemish. He is featured in the Book of Daniel and in other OT prophetic books like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He was greatly feared by people in the area.
Amel-Marduk	562 – 560 BC	
Nergal-shar-usur (Nergal-sharezer/Neriglissar)	560 – 556 BC	
Labashi-Marduk	556 BC	
Nabu-uaid (Nabonidus)	556 – 539 BC	He was the last Mesopotamian king of Babylon. He was from Harran in Assyria and was not a Chaldean. He often left the ruling of the empire to his son Belshazzar. His son is incorrectly referred to as the son of Nebuchadnezzar and the king in the Book of Daniel.
Cyrus II of Persia	539 – 530 BC	He actually ruled over his empire from 559 – 530 BC. The earlier date range only refers to his time over the Neo-Babylonian Empire. He was also known as Cyrus the Great and he conquered the Median, Lydian & Neo-Babylonian empires. His empire extended from the Mediterranean Sea and Hellespont in the west to the Indus River in the east. He created the largest empire the world had yet seen. He is remembered by the Jews for his famous edict that allowed captured peoples to return to their homelands i.e. 539 BC. He is even portrayed as a “Christ” or “Messiah” in the Jewish Bible (see Isaiah 45). This is a title given to Jewish leaders and does not always refer to any one specific person. It means “anointed” or “anointed one” such as king, high priest or even a successful military leader who delivered the people from foreign oppressors.

² “Babylon” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon>

³ “List of Babylonian Kings” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_kings

The story of Belshazzar opens with an unusual tale. During a feast he and his guests drank wine from the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. A hand mysteriously appeared and wrote a message on the wall of the king's palace. Belshazzar called for the wise men of Babylon and asked them to interpret the writing. They could not tell the king what it meant and Daniel was summoned ([Dan. 5:1-9](#)).

The message read "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." Daniel said it meant God has numbered Belshazzar's kingdom and it is finished. He had been weighed in the balances and was found wanting. His kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Daniel was given gifts and was promoted to be the third ruler of the kingdom. The account says that Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, was slain that very night and Darius the Mede received the kingdom ([Dan. 5:10-31](#)). For some reason we are told his age i.e. about 62 years old.

Many of the details in this story are extremely hard to accept. It says Belshazzar gave Daniel great gifts and promoted him to the rank of third in charge of the empire. *It is very hard to imagine that any king would reward anyone who pronounced such dire predictions; just imagine Daniel predicting his defeat and then afterwards the king giving him gifts and promoting him. Also how would Belshazzar have known if anything Daniel said, at this point, was even true? It does not sound very likely to me.*

If Belshazzar was slain that very night as stated in Daniel, he would have already have had his armies fighting the Persians. He would have been in a state of war. History says the Babylonians fell in the Battle of Opis in September 539 as this is when Belshazzar's father Nabonidus and his troops were defeated. The details are not certain but Belshazzar could have even been in charge of the battle and died in the conflict.⁴ A few days later, the nearby city of Sippar surrendered and after which Cyrus' forces entered Babylon apparently without a fight. Cyrus was subsequently proclaimed king of Babylonia and its subject territories. *Whatever the fine details of what historically happened in the final days of Babylon, the story that precedes the fall of Babylon in Daniel does not make much sense.*

Another problem with Daniel's account is that history tells us that Cyrus II had conquered the Median kingdom some years before he conquered Babylon. There was not any Medo-Perisan kingdom that divided the Babylonian Empire as predicted in Daniel ([Dan. 5:28](#)). The Persians were in control and Darius the Mede is unknown to history. There have been various attempts to identify Darius with known individuals but none are really satisfactory.⁵ *I think he is probably an invented character considering that the dual empire Daniel claimed also did not exist.*

Perhaps this account of Belshazzar was written much before the fall of Babylon during a time when the Median and Persian Empires stood as formidable and potential foes. The writer could have concluded that due to the sins of the Babylonians against the Jews their kingdom would fall and the two powers would split the spoils. It was a reasonable guess but in the end Persia prevailed. Darius the Mede never ruled Babylon since he was a part of the overall fiction. Scholars have been searching for him ever since but can't be found in the debris.

Chapter Six

The sixth chapter speaks of an early time after Darius became the king. He divided the empire into 120 satraps or regions and the leaders of these reported to three governors and Daniel was one of them. After this, Daniel was made the overall ruler and this evoked much jealousy. Those

⁴ "The Battle of Opis" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Opis

⁵ "Darius the Mede" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darius_the_Mede

under him appealed to Darius to set up a royal statue of him and who ever appealed to another god during the next thirty days should be cast into the lion's den. This story has the same appeal as the one depicted under Nebuchadnezzar when three Jews were cast into the fiery furnace. King Darius agreed to the vain appeal and signed the decree.

Daniel was cast into the lion's den and as many school children know the lions did not harm him. Daniel prospered under another foreign king but there is a verse at the end of the chapter that appeals to a known historic figure. It says it occurred during the reign of Cyrus the Persian (**Dan. 6:28**). However we have to look back at a textual constraint in the first chapter. We are told that "Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus" (**Dan. 1:21**). The text in context means he continued to have a favored position until then. **So what are we to think about this claim? Firstly Daniel appears to have fallen out of favor after Nebuchadnezzar deceased or at least disappeared from the story line. Belshazzar did not even know him and this would be very unlikely if he were Nebuchadnezzar's son. In fact he had to be told about Daniel's existence and his abilities by the Queen (Dan. 5:9-13).**

When we compare Dan. 1:21 with verse 6:28 we also encounter a puzzle. Does it mean Daniel only remained in a favored position until Cyrus conquered the Babylonian Empire? It can't mean that, since we just discussed Daniel's time with Belshazzar, during Cyrus' reign. Dan. 1:21 has to mean he remained in a favored position only during and up to the end of the first year of Cyrus' reign. However, it does not end here. We will see another contradictory statement related to the time of King Cyrus and Daniel's services to a Babylonian king in a later chapter. The analysis of this book will become even weirder.

Daniel's Prophecies, Chapters 7 to 12

Here is where things get funny. The seventh chapter opens with a statement about how Daniel had a dream and visions; but it was during the first year of the reign of Belshazzar. We also see that in chapter eight another of Daniel's vision is depicted, but during the third year of King Belshazzar. Now recall according to the earlier narrative Belshazzar had already died and the timeline had moved on to speak of events in the reign of the next king, Darius the Mede. However, now for some reason the chronology of events is mixed up. Also earlier in the story, it was the king who had the vision of the mysterious hand and Nebuchadnezzar was the one who had a dream. Now it is Daniel who is disturbed by these kinds of experiences. This is reversal of the earlier depicted events.

One could say the timeline was just tweaked as the writer had merely harkened back; but it is a strange way to write a historical account. Why write out of sync? It is of the clues that indicate another writer had added to a preexisting manuscript. If this were the case, the second author merely built upon the first and was adding material to the earlier narrative but only at the manuscript's end. Whatever happened, I will firstly deal with the content of chapter seven.

Chapter Seven

Daniel's first vision occurred in the first year of Belshazzar's reign. It was of four beasts that arose sequentially from the sea. The first is like a lion and had eagle's wings. The wings were plucked off and it was made to stand on two feet like a man and was given a human heart. The second was like a bear; it stood up on one side and had three ribs between its teeth. It was told to devour much flesh. The third beast was like a leopard and had four wings on its back. It also had four heads and it ruled over a dominion. The fourth beast was dreadful, terrible and exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth and devoured and broke things up while trampling the pieces with its feet. This beast also had ten horns but a little horn appeared and plucked out three horns by the roots and spoke pompous words (**Dan. 7:1-8**).

After this Daniel had a vision that includes the Ancient of Days, presumably an image of a god being seated on throne. This being wore a garment that was white as snow; his hair was like pure wool. His throne was fiery and a blazing stream flowed out from it. A large multitude of beings administered to him and stood before him. The beast with the little horn who spoke pompous words was slain and its body was destroyed and burned. The other beasts had their dominion taken away but continued for a time ([Dan. 7:9-12](#)).

Daniel's vision continued and he saw one like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. This being came before the throne of the Ancient of Days and acquired an everlasting kingdom. This kingdom will be universal and rule over all nations and peoples and will never be destroyed ([Dan. 7:13-14](#)). I claim this prediction in Daniel influenced Jesus as in his Olivet prophecies he proclaimed he would be the Son of Man who comes with clouds and institutes the kingdom of God on earth, only in his time ([Mt. 24: 30-35](#); [Mk. 13:26-31](#); [Lk. 21:27-33](#)). ([Download my essay: "The Templegate Crisis & the Failed Second Coming"](#)). If you compare the texts, you will see Jesus' statements are a close fit to the Son of Man prophecy in Daniel.

The vision continued and Daniel asked one who was nearby about the identity of the beasts and was told they are four kings which shall arise from the earth. However in the end the saints of the Most High shall receive the everlasting kingdom. Daniel then asked about the fourth beast with ten horns and the horn that displaced three of them. The horn not only spoke pompous words but made war against the saints and prevailed. Then the Ancient of Days intervened and gave the saints the everlasting kingdom ([Dan. 7:15-28](#)).

We are looking at the same five kingdom theme that we see saw in the second chapter. Some details have been added to the fourth kingdom but we are still in the dark as per the identity of the third and fourth kingdoms or kings. Recall the second kingdom was identified earlier but only in the textual sequence as the Medo-Persian kingdom ([Dan. 5:28](#)). Recall chapter seven is looking back in time and even precedes the time implied in chapter five; I will explain more shortly. In any case, Daniel had another vision which added more clarity and it is stated in chapter eight.

Chapter Eight

Recall Daniel had this vision during the third year of Belshazzar. The vision depicts a battle between a ram and a goat. The ram had become great and no beast could defeat him. The goat had come from the west and had a notable horn between his eyes. The goat attacked and broke the ram's two horns and then trampled him. The goat became even greater but his large horn was broken and four grew in its place. Out of the four a little horn became exceedingly great, toward the south, the east and to the Glorious Land. The little horn exalted himself as the Prince of the host and he took away the daily sacrifices and the place of His sanctuary or temple was trampled. His evil was to last 2,300 days and then the temple would be cleansed ([Dan. 8:1-24](#)).

Then Gabriel, presumably an archangel, appeared and told Daniel the ram with two horns was the kings of Media and Persia. The male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The first horn is the first king of Greece and that four kingdoms would grow out of that nation. In the later times of those four kingdoms a king with fierce features would destroy the holy people. He would magnify himself in his heart and arise against the Prince of princes but he would be destroyed. The vision would be sealed as it refers to a time in the distant future ([Dan. 8:15-26](#)). [So now we know the third kingdom is Greece and there is a strong implication that the fourth kingdom could be one that arises out of the demise of the Grecian kingdom! This follows since the little horn depicted arises out of the four horns or kingdoms that arose out of the Grecian empire.](#)

[The writer gave us an important clue as the fourth beast grew ten horns and his is also suggested in the toes \(people have ten\) of the image of the human figure reveal in chapter two. Most](#)

convincingly the fourth kingdom in chapter seven is depicted by beast that also has ten horns. It looks like the author used the ten horns as a literary device that can be used to identify the fourth kingdom. It has to be one that arose from within one of the four divisions of the former Grecian Empire of Alexander the Great. It will be identified in short order.

Chapter Nine

In this chapter the scene shifts back to the first year of Darius the Mede but now we are told he was the son of Ahasuerus. It says he had been made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. Daniel had been studying Jeremiah the prophet and how seventy years would follow the desolations of Jerusalem. Daniel's heart was heavy and he prayed appealing to the Lord God to forgive their sins and to act sooner, and suddenly Gabriel appeared to him again. This time he had some sorrowful news in the seventy weeks prophecy.

This prophecy is another one written in poetic form. It implies that seventy weeks or sevens were determined for the people and the holy city before the sins are atoned and the Holy of Holies is anointed or cleansed. It goes on to detail events before the final event just mentioned. It says there will be a command to restore Jerusalem but there would be seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks (it equals 69 weeks) until Messiah the Prince appears. The streets and wall will be rebuilt but during troublesome times. It goes on to say the Messiah will be cut off or killed and an evil prince will come to destroy the city and the temple. However he will make an agreement or covenant with some; but in the middle of the week he will bring an end to the sacrifices. However before the destruction of the temple there will be an abomination that makes desolate. It implies some image or event in the temple that will profane the Jewish religion.

Recall that Nebuchadnezzar took the people away and destroyed the original temple in 586/7 BC. Then the Persians took over and so Gabriel is predicting a restoration of the temple and the Jewish people in Jerusalem. This is good news but bad news follows. Gabriel goes on to predict a Messiah or anointed one will come but be killed. An unknown evil prince will also appear and destroy the city and temple again. However before this the daily sacrifice will cease and their religion will be profaned. In other words history is going to repeat itself but who is the Messiah and evil Prince? (*This prediction also influenced Jesus as he thought that he was the Messiah who would be killed before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in his time. Download my essay "The Templegate Crisis & the Failed Second Coming*). Also who is the fourth kingdom and are these events connected to it? Also Jeremiah's seventy years and Gabriel's seventy weeks or sevens seem to be connected; but how?

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire. The decisive point was at the Battle of Issus where the Greeks won in November of 333 BC. Alexander reigned from 336 – 323 BC and had created one of the greatest empires in the ancient world. He died at the early age of thirty. After his death there was much confusion and conflict about ascension and eventually it led to murder. Finally in 321 four of Alexander's generals strong armed the process and agreed to divide the empire into four regions: the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt, Seleucids in the east, the Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor and Macedon. Hence we can see why the writer spoke of four horns that appeared after the large horn i.e. Alexander was broken! As we will see later, the ones that had an impact in the later history of Judea and that which is depicted in chapter eleven are only the earlier two. However it is time to look at what we have been told up to this point and see if any of the other clues in the text allow us to make sense of the mysterious text.

Recap

The first issue I want to raise is the Daniel depicted in the first six chapter does not have visions and predictive dreams. His fame grew out of his ability to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream *and* its interpretation. Now in the last six chapters we have Daniel having visions and dreams but is

confounded and equally bewildered. It takes Gabriel or some other spirit to tell him the meaning. Daniel in these chapters is as ignorant as the kings he advised in earlier chapters. Recall that Daniel in chapter five interpreted the hand writing on the wall for Belshazzar and said his kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. This was depicted on the last day of his reign. However Gabriel had already told Daniel there would be an empire of Medes and Persians as depicted by the ram with two horns during the third year of the Belshazzar's reign. It means he already knew that empire was coming before Belshazzar's last night as king. He also had been told that the Medo-Persian kingdom would eventually be conquered by the Greeks, symbolized by the goat in chapter eight. The second half of the book depicts a less insightful Daniel. It is a strange case of changing his characterization!

Recall the bear in chapter six had three ribs in his teeth. We know this is the second kingdom incorrectly referred to as the Medo-Persian Empire. We know the Persian Cyrus the Great had conquered the Lydian, Median and Babylonian Empires and so this is probably what the imagery of the three ribs alludes to. Of course the four horns on the head of the goat depict the divisions of the Grecian Empire. However in chapter eight it speaks of a little horn that arose from among the four horns. This is an evil ruler who will cause the holy people much harm, cease the sacrifices and defile the temple. He will persecute the Jews and it would last 2300 mornings and evenings or 1150 days or a little over three years ([Dan. 8:9-14](#)). We are also told in chapter eight it refers to the later days of a kingdom and implies it is related to the original Grecian Empire. History tells us this was the Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid Empire as he did this in the 2nd century BC. There also was a Messiah of the militant sort who was a leader of the Maccabean revolt or uprising. He was Judas Maccabeus and was killed in 160 AD in battle against the Syrian army. The later were of the Seleucid Empire. Earlier Judas had successfully routed them out of Judea and the Jews cleansed the temple after Epiphanes had profaned it. It was after this victory that he was proclaimed by many glorious titles; no doubt many thought he was a Messiah. However the temple was not destroyed in this time frame.

After Judas' death the country feared another major Syrian invasion but it never came. Epiphanes died suddenly of disease in 164 BC during an eastern campaign against the Parthians. He had died "without hand" as stated in Daniel eight since it was by natural means rather than having been killed in battle or murdered. Afterwards there was much trouble and strife over rightful ascension. Eventually Demetrius I Soter assumed control but three rulers were taken out of the way before he solidified his rule. The boy king Antiochus V, and son of Antiochus V Eupator, was too young to rule. The regent named Lysias ruled in his place. Both were murdered and that adds to three dead rulers/kings before the route was clear for Demetrius 1st to solidify his reign. This was suggested in the symbology of the fourth beast that had ten horns in chapter seven. It speaks of a little horn that came up among the other horns and three horns were plucked out by the roots ([Dan. 7:7-8](#)). After this the little horn spoke pompous words and the fourth beast was slain. The prediction goes on to speak of the Son of Man receiving the fifth and eternal kingdom from the Ancient of Days or God ([Dan. 7:11-14](#)). This means the end of human rule was supposed to have occurred in the wake of the destruction of the fourth beast. It did not happen.

The ruler described in Daniel 8 was Antiochus IV Epiphanes who persecuted the Jews, took away the Jewish sacrifice and profaned their temple. However, I think the ruler described in Daniel 7 was Demetrius I Soter and the Jews feared he would invade Judea and finish the job that Antiochus IV had started. They feared he would come back and again profane their religion, kill people and even destroy their temple. The Seleucid Empire had developed into a remarkable realm and often had warred with the Ptolemies of Egypt. These were the two of the four original divisions of the Alexander's empire that had an impact on the history of Judea. The Jews were firstly dominated by Egypt but later by Syria. In any case the Seleucid dynasty had eleven rulers up to and including Demetrius and this is what Daniel seven implies as the fourth beast had ten

horns plus another that raised in their midst. I can confidently declare the writer gave us enough clues to identify the fourth beast as the Seleucid Empire. There will be more evidence to follow but in the meantime study the list of the “Dynasty of Seleucid Rulers” as it is a good visual overview of the writer’s thinking. Later I will also discuss some of the modern interpretations and why these ignore the evidence in the text and imagine unfounded connections.

Dynasty of Seleucid Rulers		
Ruler	Reigned	Comments
1. Seleucus I Nicator	312 – 280 BC	He was one of the four generals i.e. the Diadochi, that served under Alexander the Great. He started the Seleucid dynasty. In 312 he established himself in Babylon. He ruled the entire eastern part of Alexander's empire, from Phrygia to the Indus.
2. Antiochus I Soter	280 – 261 BC	
3. Antiochus II Theos	261 – 246 BC	
4. Seleucus II Callincos	246 – 226 BC	
5. Seleucus III	226 – 223 BC	
6. Antiochus III the Great	223 – 187 BC	
7. Seleucus IV Philopater	187 – 175 BC	
8. Antiochus IV Epiphanes	175 – 164 BC	He started a terrible persecution of the Jews, took away the sacrifice and profaned the temple. He is depicted in Daniel eight. He died of natural causes i.e. “without hands” Dan. 8:25.
9. Antiochus V Eupator	164 – 162 BC	He was a boy king and son of Antiochus IV. He was too young to rule and was murdered.
10. Regent or acting king Lysias	164 – 162 BC	He ruled in place of the boy king Antiochus V Eupator. He was murdered.
11. Demetrius I Soter	162 – 150 BC	Three horns (rulers) were plucked out by the roots to make room for the eleventh horn (Dan. 8:8). During his rule the Seleucid Empire started to diminish. It eventually petered out. The fourth beast did not become the great empire that devoured other people as predicted in Daniel’s prophecies. Most importantly the fifth or divine kingdom did not appear at the end of the fourth kingdom, as also clearly predicted!

Chapter Ten

This chapter does not add anything to our understanding of the writer’s prophecies. Curiously it says Daniel received the message in the third year of Cyrus the king of Persia (Dan. 10:1). Firstly it seems to contradict Daniel 1:21 that in context, means he continued in the service of the king until the first year of King Cyrus. Of course the king in the first chapter is Nebuchadnezzar and he was dead some years before Cyrus conquered Babylon. However Nebuchadnezzar could have had Daniel in his court or at his service until the third year of Cyrus, as counted from the time Cyrus became a *Persian ruler*. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC and Cyrus became a king of his then lesser kingdom in 559 BC. One can count a three year difference and so it was the third year of Cyrus’ original ascension to his throne. The problem appears to have a solution but it is a strange way to account for the timing of events in Babylon. The time references throughout the book are not uniform and the stories lines and texts are mixed up; especially when you compare the style of the first six books to the last ones. This adds to scholarly Hebrew textual criticism that changes in writing style also suggest there were more than one author. It looks like a second writer, at least, added to and possibly edited an earlier work.

The content of chapter ten is bewildering as it speaks to an unnamed spirit being who had fought the princes of Persia but finally got help from one named Michael. As this being spoke to Daniel, one like the sons of men touched his lips and he was so weak he could not talk. After another touch he gained strength. Then the unnamed spirit claimed he had to return to fight the princes of Persia but afterwards he also predicted the prince of Greece will come. It appears that chapter ten is mainly reiterating the unstated time when the Greeks will conquer the Persians (**Dan. 10:17-21**). Up to this point all of the kingdoms were specifically named in the text other than the fourth kingdom. I will show how the remaining chapters also agree and add to the earlier clues that the Seleucid Empire is the writer's fourth empire.

Chapter Eleven

Chapter eleven is a very revealing chapter. As I will show, the writer left many clues that indicate it is mainly a symbolic history of the many conflicts between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. The kings of both dynasties are not specifically named but are called either "the king of the South" i.e. an Egyptian king or "the king of the North" i.e. a Syrian king.

The chapter opens by claiming when its contents were revealed. It states: "Also in the first year of Darius ..." This is strange since it proceeds to give a series of prophetic statements as if someone who is unnamed were speaking to Daniel. It looks as if it connects to and continues after the end of chapter nine where Gabriel had given Daniel a long prophetic speech. The later was also given during the first year of Darius. Chapter ten is strange because it seems out of place. It looks as if had been cut and pasted in between chapter nine and eleven. *It is a strange way to arrange the text but the reader of chapter eleven can reasonably assume the spirit speaking to Daniel is supposedly the angel Gabriel cited earlier in chapter nine.*

Daniel was told that three more kings will arise in Persia and the fourth will be far richer. He will stir up his people against Greece (**Dan. 11:2**). This could be a reference to Darius 1st who was the fourth king of Persia, counting from and including Cyrus the Great. Be careful to realize that this is not Darius the Mede whose unknown rule supposedly started after Cyrus' forces conquered Babylon. Darius 1st is known to history and he reigned from 522 to 486 BC. They just happen to have the same name, even though some have tried to make a case they were the same person. A major event during his rule was his expedition to punish Athens and Eretria for their aid in the previous Ionian Revolt. During this campaign he succeeded in subjugating Greece. Darius also conquered Thrace and Macedon and invaded Scythia. The Scythians were nomadic tribes who earlier had invaded Media and killed Cyrus the Great in 530 BC.⁶ Darius had gotten his revenge and greatly expanded the Persian Empire.

The account in Daniel goes on to refer to a mighty king whose kingdom would be broken and divided to the four winds. It implies his offspring would not share in the inheritance of his kingdom as it would go to others (**Dan. 11:2-4**). The later king is another obvious allusion to Alexander the Great who ruled from 330 – 323 BC. After his death much battle ensued but in 301 BC his kingdom was divided amongst his four generals. It sets the stage for the later discussion about the kings of the north and south who were two separate dynasties that grew out of the original four. However there is a gap of unmentioned Persian kings between Darius 1st and Alexander the Great. The later conquered Persia in 330 BC and there were over 150 years while ten earlier Persian kings had ruled from the end of Darius' rule (522 – 486 BC) to the beginning of Alexander the Great's reign (330 – 323 BC).⁷ That is quite a leap in time and over the reign of these un-cited Persian kings. *It is puzzling; why wouldn't the writer simply cite the last Persian king who ruled when Alexander conquered Persia? It was Artaxerxes V who started his rule earlier in the same*

⁶ "Darius I" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darius_I_of_Persia

⁷ "List of kings of Persia" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Kings

year that Alexander conquered Babylon. Alexander had him killed in the following year i.e. 329 BC. See the following two text boxes for more of my commentary on chapter eleven.

The Kings of the North & South in Daniel 11:5-13

⁵ Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion.

Comment: The strong king of the south was Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 BC), who extended his territories at the expense of the Seleucid king Antiochus I. The later had trouble even securing the throne (ca.280-279 BC). The prince was Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BC), and he became an even stronger Egyptian ruler.

⁶ And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times.

Comment: Antiochus II Theos left his wife, Laodicea, in order to marry the daughter of Ptolemy II, Berenice. He wanted to create an alliance with Ptolemy II but it was short-lived. After five years Antiochus II returned to be with Laodicea but soon died of mysterious causes. Laodicea and Berenice hated each other and both had Antiochus' offspring. The dispute over ascension came to a head. Laodice had Berenice and her young son murdered. Her son Seleucus II Callinicos became king.

⁷ But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail.⁸ And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North.⁹ Also *the king of the North* shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land.

Comment: Ptolemy III (246 -222 BC) was Berenice's brother and he avenged her murder. He inflicted a heavy defeat on the Seleucid Empire during the 3rd Syrian War (246-241 BC). He attacked Antioch, the Syrian capital, and defeated Seleucus II Callinicos (247-226 BC). He looted the temple and took many treasures but had to rush back to Egypt to put down an uprising. Ptolemy III did rule until 222 BC and therefore continued longer than Seleucus II Callinicos. Seleucus II did move against Egypt in an attempt to get his treasures back but was forced to return to Syria. His brother Antiochus Hierax attempted a coup and he put it down.

¹⁰ However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and *one* shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife.¹¹ And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his *enemy*.¹² When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail.¹³ For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment.

Comment: The sons of Seleucus II were Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 BC) and Antiochus III (223-187 BC). The most notable one was Antiochus III the Great. He strengthened and rebuilt the Seleucid Empire. In 218 BC he took his forces all the way to Ptolemais and retook all of their previously lost territories and defeated Ptolemy IV Philopator (226-204 BC). The next year (217 BC) Ptolemy IV responded and won a decisive battle at Rafia. However Antiochus III was not out of moves and more battles ensued.

The Kings of the North & South in Daniel 11:14-24

¹⁴ Now in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South. Also, violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall. ¹⁵ So the king of the North shall come and build a siege mound, and take a fortified city; and the forces of the South shall not withstand him. Even his choice troops shall have no strength to resist. ¹⁶ But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one shall stand against him. He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction in his power.

Comment: After his victory at Rafia, Ptolemy IV went to Jerusalem to make a sacrifice and tried to enter into the temple. The Jews resisted but he got his way; hence “they shall fall.” However he died in 204 BC and Antiochus III had again attacked Egypt and by 202 BC had taken Gaza “the well fortified city.” He had gone further than any previous Seleucid king. It was in this time frame that Judea came under Seleucid control; hence “he shall stand in the Glorious Land.”

¹⁷ He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do. And he shall give him the daughter of women to destroy it; but she shall not stand with him, or be for him. ¹⁸ After this he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many. But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him. ¹⁹ Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

Comment: Antiochus III tried to legitimize his conquests by giving his daughter Cleopatra I (Sira) to Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-180 BC) in marriage. The arrangement did not last. Antiochus then led his army into Asia Minor and the Aegean coastlands. This resulted in a direct confrontation with the Romans and they defeated him at Magnesia in 190 BC. He was required to pay enormous reparations and gave them his son Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a captive. In 187 BC he was killed while attempting to rob the temple of Bel in Elymais, Persia. It was in “his own land.”

²⁰ There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle. ²¹ And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue. ²² With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant. ²³ And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people. ²⁴ He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time.

Comment: Antiochus III's successor was Seleucus IV Philpator (187-175 BC). His reign was burdened by the reparations he had to pay in the wake of Antiochus III's defeat at Magnesia. He sent ‘an extortioner’ to Judea who despoiled “the glorious kingdom” or stole from the temple treasury. In 175 BC Seleucus IV was assassinated by his minister Heliodorus. He seized power claiming to be the regent ruler for Seleucus' IV's five year old son who was named Antiochus. Since Seleucus IV was murdered he did not die “in anger nor in battle.”

In 176 BC the Rome Senate insisted that Demetrius I Soter, an eleven year old son of Seleucus IV, be exchanged for the older Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus III. After his release, he learned that Heliodorus had taken the Syrian throne and he plotted to take control. His nephew Demetrius was in Roman hands and only the boy king Antiochus and he were available legitimate heirs. Antiochus IV was aided by Eumenes II of Pergamum, king of a neighboring country to Syria, who had supplied him with money and guards. He made it back to Syria. In a short time he became co-regent with the Queen mother Laodice. Within five years the boy king was dead and he was the sole Seleucid king. As we have already seen, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 – 164 BC) became an evil ruler and oppressed the Jews. Much of the rest of chapter repeats his persecution of the people in Jerusalem. However there is a surprise at the end of the last section of the chapter. Read on!

Antiochus IV Epiphanes & Demetrius I Soter

Verses 23 to 28 speaks of the king of the North's invasion of Egypt and how the king of South i.e. Egypt would not be able to withstand his attack. However it implies while returning to his land with great riches he will do damage to "the holy covenant." This may be referring to Antiochus' first invasion of Egypt in 170 BC in which he succeeded in conquering all but Alexandria. However he left for fear of Roman involvement.⁸ He probably did some damage in Jerusalem on his way back, and looted the temple.⁹

Verses 29-30 speaks of the king of the North returning to the south. It says: "at the appointed time, he shall return and go toward the south ... For the ships of Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage . So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant." We know that in 168 BC Antiochus led a second attack against Egypt and even sent a fleet to capture Cyprus. On his march to Alexandria he was confronted by an old Roman ambassador named Gaius Popillius Laenas. He told him the Roman Senate commanded him to withdraw his armies from Egypt and Cyprus. If he did not he would be at war with the Roman Republic. Antiochus said he would discuss it with his council. Popillius drew a circle around him the sand and said, "Before you cross this circle I want you to give me your reply for the Roman Senate!" Antiochus had to withdraw as he did not want to risk a war with Rome.¹⁰

Verses 31-39 repeats much of what is said in the "Seventy Weeks prophecy" (Dan. 9:24-27). We know Antiochus IV did stop in Jerusalem on his way back from his failed second campaign in Egypt. He profaned their temple, outlawed their religion and killed many people. He had set up the statue of a pagan god Zeus in the temple, an abomination of desolation. The Hasmonean Mattathias organized open resistance in 167-166 BC. This is probably what verse 32 refers to as it says: "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery." This is probably a reference to the Hellenized Jews who sided with Antiochus. The same verse goes on and says: "but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." Mattathias' son and successor Judas the Maccabee even defeated two large and well-equipped Syrian armies. Antiochus realized he had to put down the rebellion, but was occupied fighting the Parthians in the east. Lysias, whom he had appointed as acting king or regent in Syria, received instructions to send a large army against the Jews and utterly exterminate them. The generals Ptolemæus, Nicanor, and Gorgias, whom Lysias dispatched with large armies, were also defeated (166-165 BC). Finally the Syrians were compelled to take refuge upon Philistine soil.¹¹

The temple was cleansed and the Jews resumed the daily sacrifices. However Antiochus IV still had his hands full in Syria fighting the Parthians. He died in 164 BC in Tabae, Persia. His feared invasion did not happen. All seemed to be well in Judea but soon after Demetrius I Soter (162 – 150 BC) ascended to the throne he attempted to regain control of Judea. His troops warred with Judas Maccabeus' and initially Judas was successful but in 160 BC he died in the battle of Beerzeth. It was a terrible loss to the nation. Their messiah was dead. Many, no doubt, thought this was the beginning of much more suffering but the Syrian army eventually left Judea due to concerns at home. It was a close call, and the Jews most certainly feared Demetrius and his army would still come back and profane and outlaw their religion, kill many people and perhaps even destroy their temple (Dan. 9:26). It did not happen.

⁸ "Antiochus IV Epiphanes" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes

⁹ "Antiochus IV, Epiphanes" <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1589-antiochus-iv-epiphanes>

¹⁰ "Antiochus IV Epiphanes" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes

¹¹ "Antiochus IV, Epiphanes" <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1589-antiochus-iv-epiphanes>

A fourth century AD Roman writer/philosopher named Porphyry commented extensively on the book of Daniel. Very little of his original writings remain but some of his ideas are preserved in St. Jerome's commentary on Daniel. Jerome says that Porphyry's historical sources claim that in 164 BC the Egyptians attacked Epiphanes in Syria. Other events are also cited and Porphyry makes his case that the imagery in **Daniel 11:40 – 45** goes right up to Epiphanes' death in the same year. This section of text speaks of the time of the end when the king of the South attacks but the king of the North goes against him with chariots, horses/men and ships. It says the later will overwhelm his enemies and enter and overthrow many countries including Egypt and the Glorious Land, i.e. Judea. Edom, Moab and the prominent people of Ammon will escape his hand. The king of the North would have Libyans and Ethiopians following him and he would loot Egypt of its gold, silver and precious treasures. However news from the east and north will trouble him and he will go with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. He shall also camp and plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious mountain. Yet he shall come to his end or die and no one will help him.

Of **Daniel 11:40-41** Jerome wrote: "Porphyrius says that this too refers to Antiochus, because in the 11th year of his reign he again fought against his sister's son, Ptolemaeus Philometor. When Ptolemaeus heard that Antiochus was coming, he assembled an army many thousands strong. But Antiochus "stormed out" against many countries "with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships" and devastated them all as he swept through them. He "invaded the glorious country", that is Judaea . . . and he fortified the citadel with the ruins of the city wall, and then he set off for Egypt . . . They say that Antiochus, while hastening against Ptolemaeus . . . did not harm the Idumaeans, Moabites, or Ammonites who lived on the border of Judaea, lest by becoming involved in a different war he should give Ptolemaeus the chance to build up his strength."¹²

Of **Daniel 11:44-45** Jerome wrote: "In this passage Porphyrius imagines some reference to Antiochus as follows. While fighting against the Egyptians, and crossing the land of the Libyans and Ethiopians, he will hear that war is being carried out against him in the North and the East. So he will return, he will capture Aradus despite its resistance, and he will devastate all the coast of the province of Phoenicia. And he will immediately proceed against Artaxias, the king of Armenia, who will arise from the East, and after killing many of Artaxias' army he will place his tent in the place called Apednus, which is situated between the two broad rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. But when he reaches this point, [Porphyrius] is unable to say on which "renowned and holy mountain" he will stand . . . because he is following the translation of Theodotion, which says "between the sea on top of the holy mountain of Saba". He thinks that Saba is the name of a mountain in either Armenia or Mesopotamia, but is unable to say why it is holy . . . he says "and he will come to the summit of this mountain" in the province of Elymais, which is the most easterly region of Persia. There he tried to plunder the temple of Diana, which contained innumerable offerings, but he was routed by the barbarians, who regarded the temple with remarkable veneration. He was consumed with remorse, and died at Tabae, a town in Persia."¹³

It should be noted that most historical sources do not acknowledge the events suggested by Porphyry that mirror the language of Daniel 11:40-45. Whatever happened I am in general agreement with Porphyry of a Maccabean author but I think the much of the second part of the book of Daniel was written after Judas Maccabeus died. Therefore we can date the second or Maccabean period writer as finishing his addition around 160 BC, but after Judas Maccabeus died in battle. The account's accuracy begins to drop off after the death of this messiah (**Dan. 9:26**). Also note the temple was not destroyed in time of the Maccabees and the Jews maintained some degree of autonomy until 63 BC when the country fell to the Romans. I think this is the reason why Jesus almost two hundred years later predicted that an abomination of desolation

¹² "Porphyrius: Comments on the book of Daniel" <http://www.attalus.org/translate/daniel.html>

¹³ ibid

would be set up in the temple in his time, but obviously it had to occur before it was destroyed (Mt. 24:1-3,15). The Romans did destroy the temple in 70 AD but there wasn't any pagan statue or altar set up prior to its destruction and nor was there any extended period of the cessation of the daily sacrifice that is much touted in Daniel (download my essay "The Templegate Crisis & the Failed Second Coming"). The prediction of the two events in Daniel is linked in the same time frame (Dan. 9:26-27). Daniel had the abomination of desolation apparently right but not the destruction of the temple. Jesus had the destruction of the temple apparently right but not the abomination of desolation. Since the temple is now long gone neither Daniel's nor Jesus' prediction can come true. Note that neither speaks of a new temple being rebuilt *in our time* as some have mistakenly suggested!

Chapter Twelve

Chapter twelve concludes with some end time religious teachings. It says Michael shall stand up and he presumably is a sort of guardian angel over the Jews, referred to as a great prince. The end time is predicted to be a time of trouble unlike any before it. Those who are favored and written in the book and those who are dead shall be resurrected or awakened. Some will awaken to shame and others will become like stars and live forever. Daniel is told two times the words of the prophecy are sealed until the time of the end. One has to keep in mind Daniel at this point is depicted as living in the first year of Darius the Mede. It is the Persian period and the Greek period and the Ptolemies and Seleucids hadn't yet arrived. This of course is only the appearance portrayed by the writer.

The time of the end is also depicted as a time of much traveling and that knowledge is greatly increased. This is as good of a general and vague description of the Greek period of empire building as any. Roads were built and libraries and centers for learning were set up and Greek became an official language. The book ends with a reference to the time the sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up, there would be 1290 days, which is about 3½ years. It harkens back to Daniel 9:27. It also says those who wait until the 1335 days are blessed. So, those who suffer through the persecution, martyrdom, temple desecration and other terrible troubles are given hope. However, the end time as per Daniel is very connected to events in the temple at Jerusalem; since it is long gone the prophecies have obviously failed. The end time did not ensue and the fifth or divine and everlasting government did not arrive. Both events were supposed to happen in the time frame clearly portrayed in the book of Daniel. The prophecies have irreparably failed. However we will revisit these numbered days again.

Porphyry & the Christians

In any case you can easily see that Daniel 11 is mainly an outline of the history of the struggles between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. The writer was batting a thousand as long as he was writing history made to look like prophecy. His accuracy dropped off as soon as he put his pen to writing the future about the supposedly terrible end time and the coming of the kingdom of God. It did not happen as expected in the wake of the Maccabean Revolt, the angry and revengeful Seleucid kings and the death of the Messiah, Judas Maccabeus. The temple and city were not destroyed (Dan. 9:26-17) in this time frame as expected and predicted!

Obviously I am not the first to suggest Daniel is largely history written as if it were prophecy, sometimes called "post-diction." Porphyry in the fourth century AD made the earlier case as have others since. Although Porphyry's contemporary Christian commentators nit-picked him on minor points his general idea was devastating. The Christians needed Daniel to predict the death of Jesus and the appearance of the anti-Christ and other future events and liberally read those themes into the text. Porphyry called them on their bluff. He also criticized Origen, a contemporary cleric and writer, on his allegorizing of the biblical text. In other words when one encounters a problem in the text you cannot just take refuge by claiming it is symbolic and say it

really means something else. That is called cheating by any standard of the rules of reading. Why aren't the many non-troubling texts also allegorical? *If the words do not mean what they say then no one can say what they mean!*

Porphyry was born in the city of Tyre on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (AD 234–c. 305). His name in ancient Greek is “Πορφύριος,” translated as “Porphyrios.” He was a prolific writer and Neoplatonic philosopher. He edited and published “*Enneads*” which is the only collection of the work of his philosophy teacher, Plotinus. He also wrote “*Isaqoge*” which is an introduction to logic and philosophy. In its Latin translation it was the standard textbook on logic throughout the Middle Ages. He also wrote a commentary on Euclid’s “*Elements*” and was used as a source document by Pappus of Alexandria. His “*Philosophy from Oracles*” outlined many of the contemporary religious practices and pagan beliefs of his time and also criticized the Christianity for its offbeat religious forms such as the lack of sacrifices. His “*Against the Christians*,” was a direct attack on Christianity and includes his analysis of the book of Daniel. He was involved in controversy with a number of early Christian intellectuals and the later is what we briefly discussed earlier.

“*Against the Christians*” was a lengthy work, and records claim it was expressed in fifteen books. Porphyry’s writings attracted the attention and disdain of several generations of Christian intellectuals such as: Eusebius, the church historian; Methodius, an early proponent of virginity; Apollinarius, an innovative theologian from Syria; St. Jerome the famous biblical scholar whom we discussed; and St. Augustine who wrestled with Porphyry’s ideas late in life when he wrote his “*City of God*.” Porphyry stirred up so much grief that in 448 A.D. the emperor Theodosius II put his writings to the torch. Robert Grant in his “*Porphyry Among the Early Christians*” wrote: “*The vigor, scope and sheer size of [Porphyry’s] attack must have stunned the Christian communities.*”

Historical research has suggested that others may have used Porphyry’s name and wrote much assuming his identity. It is difficult to sort out but some have also suggested that Porphyry was once a Christian and he or a masquerader claimed that Jesus was a Platonist philosopher. The later implied Jesus was not divine or equal with God, as the fourth century Arian controversy on the divinity of Jesus also claimed. Check out the following quoted section from the internet article: “*The Two Porphyrii - Porphyry the Platonist and Porphyry the Christian author.*”

In the 4th century a Christian version of “*Philosophy from Oracles*” attributed to Porphyry, was accepted by Eusebius and appealed to by apologists like Theodoret. The fact that Augustine was one of the first to reject it, and that Dr Nathaniel Lardner rejected the attribution in the 18th century, does not influence the fact that Eusebius accepted the attribution. Modern treatments such as the following by Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, are providing new insights, and are resurrecting evidence of a 4th Christian identity fraud masquerading in the Academy of Plato in the guise of Porphyry:

“The gravity of Porphyry's criticism of Christianity is evident from the many books and edicts against him. Although he was not the first educated Greek to criticize Christianity, for Celsus and Galen preceded him, he was a distinguished philosopher, one well versed in Christian literature and perhaps an apostate - so his work seemed particularly dangerous (p.135). Although “*The Philosophy from Oracles*” appears to be favorably disposed toward the figure of Jesus, O'Meara showed that its attitude toward the contemporary Christian belief and worship is far from complimentary. Rather, its arguments are such that early Christians could well have seen as a fierce attack on the very foundation of their faith. Noticing Eusebius' and Augustine's hostile attitude to this work, O'Meara observed that “... in both of their lengthy and important works, ... having chosen Porphyry as an opponent worthy of their most serious attention”, they gave no more than “passing notice to his “*Against the Christians*”, but concentrated deeply on his “*Philosophy from Oracles*”. Obviously this work seemed more important to them than it has ... to us.” Eusebius also suggests its critical tenor by linking it specifically with the “*compilation against us*”. References in the “*Philosophy*

from Oracles" to Jesus as a pious sage, a reader, and a disciple of Plato, once seemed consonant with Porphyry's early regard for or even attachment to Christianity. A more careful reading however shows that this presentation challenged a fundamental aspect of Christian teaching, for it denied the divinity of Christ. ... [This was serious] ... Constantine issued imperial edicts charging that the Arians, Christians who denied that Christ had equal divinity with God the Father, have imitated Porphyry (Socr, H# 1.9) - [Lactantius, Porphyry, and the Debate over Religious Toleration](#)¹⁴

Whatever the actual case, Porphyry's writings were very inflammatory and influential and his impact still trickles down from his time to ours. His treatment of Daniel was most important to this essay even if what remains of his ideas is sparse. However, Porphyry's impact obviously had a long reach.

Funny Numbers in the Book of Daniel

There are some numbers related to the timing of prophecies in the book of Daniel and I have refrained from commenting on them until now. The *Seventy Weeks Prophecy* in chapter 9 is telling of the confusion and disagreements as per what the numbers in Daniel actually mean.¹⁵ It says:

²⁴ "**Seventy weeks** are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.

²⁵ "Know therefore and understand,
That from the going forth of the command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;
The street^{sq} shall be built again, and the wall,
Even in troublesome times.

²⁶ "And after the **sixty-two weeks**
Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it *shall be* with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many **for one week;**
But **in the middle of the week**
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is poured out on the desolate."

Seventy weeks or sevens equal 490 days but this does not agree with known timing of events around the temple. Many have run calculation schemes on the seventy sevens but it makes most sense to say the writer was simply using it and related time pointers symbolically. Most interesting

¹⁴ http://www.mountainman.com.au/essenes/Nicaean_academies_of_Plato_Chrest_and_Jesus_Christ.htm

¹⁵ "Prophecy of Seventy Weeks" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophecy_of_Seventy_Weeks

to me is it predicts the Messiah would come within the time period i.e. 69 weeks and be killed before the temple and city is destroyed. It then looks back by claiming an event “in the middle of the week” when an evil prince ends the daily sacrifice and sets up the abomination of desolation. This language fits perfectly with what happened. Judas Maccabeus did deliver the people from the Syrians and the temple was cleansed. Judas died in 160 BC in battle resisting an invasion led by Demetrius I Soter, the new Seleucid king. No doubt the people feared the city and temple would be destroyed. It just did not happen.

Daniel 12:7 says:

⁷Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be for a time, times, and half a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.

Daniel 12:11-12 says:

¹¹“And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days*. ¹²Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the *one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days*.”

These verses are in the last in the chapter of the book and the numbers cited are clearly related to events related to the temple in Jerusalem. 1,290 days is given as the length of time from the time the daily sacrifice is forbidden and time when a pagan image is set up. This is close to 3½ years and could be the author connected it to his vaguer terms “a time, times and half a time.” The 1,345 days cited is 45 days longer than the 1,290 days and is supposed to signal a blessing on some chosen people. One could deduce the abomination of desolation would only stand for 45 days; after which the Jews would be triumphant. In light of the book as it makes sense to say the writer wants us to think this is when the kingdom of God would arrive and completely deliver the people from their tormentors. Whatever the writer had in mind, the common denominator among these numbers or time periods appear to be events around or connected to the temple in Jerusalem.

Porphyry also apparently interpreted these, like other verses, in light of Maccabean times. St. Jerome, our source for what Porphyry believed, critiqued him on these interpretations. Here is what he wrote about Daniel 12:7:

Porphyrius interprets "a time, times and half a time" as three and a half years, which we do not deny is consistent with the meaning of the holy scripture . . . Porphyrius says that this refers to Antiochus and the three and a half years in which the temple was abandoned.

Here is what St. Jerome wrote about Daniel 12:11:

Porphyrius says that the 1,290 days were fulfilled in the time of Antiochus through the desolation of the temple, which as we said lasted for only three years, according to Josephus and the book of Maccabees.

Here is what St. Jerome wrote about Daniel 12:12:

Porphyrius interpreted this passage as follows. The 45 days which are in addition to the 1,290 days refer to the length of time of the victory over the generals of Antiochus, when Judas Maccabaeus fought bravely against them, cleansed the temple, cast down the idol, and offered sacrifices in the temple of God. This

interpretation would have been plausible, if the book of Maccabees said that the temple was defiled for three and a half years, rather than three years.

It appears to me the Seventy Weeks Prophecy was the last piece the writer really wrote, however it lacks a conclusion. Chapter twelve ends the book but assumes a victorious outcome after the temple had been defiled as it assumes it would be cleansed and all the Jews would live happily ever after. Mysteriously the writer appears to have earlier predicted Antiochus IV Epiphanes' death in chapter eight ([Dan. 8:25](#)). He was the Seleucid king who had done evil in the Jewish temple and Judas Maccabeus had routed his forces out of the country. This leaves the suggestion that there was unfinished business or much wanted revenge from the Syrian perspective. Chapter seven is less hopeful since it predicted the Messiah would be killed. Judas Maccabeus met his end in the final confrontation with the forces of Demetrius I Soter. However the city and temple were not destroyed as predicted ([Dan. 9:26](#)).

I think the mysterious numbers in the second half of the Book of Daniel were used mainly symbolically but roughly agree with the history. These were clues left by the Maccabean writer but he or someone after him also shuffled the chapters or text sections around and so now the chapters do not follow the sequence of Maccabean history. Chapters eight & twelve were written after the death of Antiochus (164 BC) while chapter seven was written after Demetrius I Soter came into power in Syria (162 BC) and three rulers i.e. horns had been "*plucked out by the roots*" to make way for his reign ([Dan. 7:8](#)). Chapter nine was written after the death of Judas Maccabeus (160 BC). The twelfth chapter ends with hope and so it makes sense to place it as the last chapter but it is historically and sequentially out of place. This is just as some of the other chapters we saw earlier in the second part of Daniel are also mysteriously out of order. Dare I suggest this "*Rearrangement of the Text*" theory helps to solve the puzzles posed by the Book of Daniel? Well, I do!

Conclusion

Scholarly Concerns

Earlier I had stated there were probably two authors who wrote the book of Daniel at different times. One was the earlier Babylonian period writer and the second was the Maccabean period writer. I should say that are differing views about this amongst scholars; many still claiming one early author but others argue for two or more. There have also been linguistic studies over the years of the words and terms in existing manuscripts. The study of especially the Aramaic sections has led many scholars to criticize the Maccabean author thesis. Gerhard F. Hasel (1935 – 1994) was a Seventh Day Adventist theologian and scholar and espoused a "high view" of inspiration and was opposed to the use of the "purely" historical-critical method of biblical study. In 1981 Hasel, then of Andrews University, published his paper: "*The Book of Daniel and Matters of Language: Evidences Relating to Names, Words, and the Aramaic Language.*" After fifteen pages loaded with examples of word studies and the findings and opinions of many scholars he concluded the following:

"From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the classical problems of the syntax and spelling of the Aramaic of Daniel used in the past by certain scholars as support for an alleged late date and a Western provenance appear now in an entirely new light. The new evidence and reassessment point to a pre-second-century-B.C. date and to an Eastern (Babylonian) origin. On the basis of presently available evidence, the Aramaic of Daniel belongs to Official Aramaic and can have been written as early as the latter part of the sixth century B.C.; linguistic evidence is clearly against a date in the second century B.C. Even if the exact

date of Daniel cannot be decided on linguistic grounds alone, there is abundant and compelling linguistic evidence against a second-century Palestinian origin.”¹⁶

Hasel clearly argued against the Maccabean author thesis. However there is some diversity of opinions as per the date of the Hebrew and Aramaic in the book. Another expert, John J. Collins expressed a slightly different opinion. He claimed the Aramaic chapters 2-6 may have been written earlier in the Hellenistic period than the rest of the book, with the vision in chapter 7 being the only Aramaic portion dating to the time of Antiochus. He at least has one chapter in the Maccabean time frame. He claimed the Hebrew portion is, for all intent and purpose, identical to that found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This suggested to him that chapters 1 and 8-12 were in existence before the late 2nd century BC. Another expert, E.C. Lucas, doesn't place any text in the Maccabean period. He considered the wide geographical spread of the language elements from which the text originates calls in doubt that they were uniformly used in the manner Collin's assumed. This is similar to how some terms are used the American South, for example, differ in meaning to how they are commonly used in California. His assessment is the character of the Hebrew and Aramaic could support a fifth or fourth century BC date.¹⁷

The issue of dating the book is not solely about linguistics as Hasel even admitted. The bottom line is we do not have a complete record of the writing, translation and editing of this book and documents can be tweaked to give them one appearance or another. There are about nineteen Persian loan words in the Aramaic text and three from Greek in chapter three¹⁸ and could have been added or glossed in by later editors or scribes who copied the document. After all, the entire book's story line gives the appearance it was all written while or shortly after Daniel's service to kings, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the 3rd year of Cyrus the Great. There could well have been an earlier story that others built on over the years.

We also have to consider the book's content and other makeup issues. Why a single early writer would have written in Hebrew and Aramaic is unclear and a common speculation is that almost the entire book was originally written in Aramaic. There is also good internal evidence that an editor, sometimes called a redactor, most probably added a block of text. In chapter one Daniel is well known to and was even tested by King Nebuchadnezzar. He and his three Jewish friends were deemed to be ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in his realm (**Dan. 1:17-21**). Suddenly in chapter two after the king had a disturbing dream Daniel's services were not even requested; rather he is frustrated by the failures of the Chaldeans. Later Arioch, the captain of the guard, tells the king there is one of the captives of Judah who can tell him his dream and its interpretation (**Dan 2:1-25**). Strangely he does not even mention Daniel or Belshazzar by name. It reads practically like an introduction to someone unknown to the king. It is this kind of double talk that points to a different story line that had later been grafted into a preexisting text. There is little doubt that this could have happened several times.

It is also mysterious that the picture of Daniel that we are given in the first six chapters shows one who confidently predicted the future in the courts of two kings, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. In the last six chapters we view a very different Daniel who is confused by his own visions and wondered about their meaning. Why the change in characterization of the protagonist in the stories? Also, if there weren't two main writers why is the meaning of the other kingdoms spoken of in chapter two only given in the second half of the book? Why the delay?

¹⁶ Hasel F. Gerhard, *"The Book of Daniel and Matters of Language: Evidences Relating to Names, Words, and the Aramaic Language."* Andrews University Seminary Studies, Autumn 1981, Vol. 19, No. 3, 211-225

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¹⁷ "Book of Daniel" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel

¹⁸ *ibid*

Also one of my additions to this discussion is the *theory of text rearrangement* in the last half of the book. Why does it appear that the Maccabean period timing clues in the text show the text is not in chronological order? It looks as if the second writer or an editor mixed it up and ended with chapter twelve's message of hope. After the second writer's timing clues are accounted for the overall text and message makes better sense for Jewish concerns in Maccabean times. Antiochus IV Epiphanes is commonly seen in the second half of the book but I think I am unusual in also citing Demetrius I Soter as another mystery figure alluded to in the Maccabean text. I also think that Judas Maccabeus clearly is the writer's "messiah" and "Prince of princes" who fought both of these Syrian kings. Since Judas died in 160 BC it makes sense to date chapter nine's *Seventy Weeks Prophecy* that alludes to his death to a time shortly after his demise. All of this strongly adds to the Maccabean thesis and trumps the linguistic concerns since the text could have been altered at many unknown points by editors/scribes.

In the second chapter Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is the King of kings apparently represented by the image's golden head. In other words he is king of the first kingdom but after him there shall arise a second, then a third and a fourth kingdom and each is successively inferior. This can easily be understood as a dynasty of four Babylonian kings and this may be the first writer's intended meaning. Finally there would be the fifth or eternal divine kingdom ([Dan. 2:36-45](#)).

Philip R. Davies (b. 1945) is a biblical scholar of the sort that is in ways opposite to Hasel and other conservatives. Davies has been called a minimalist, and this breed more strongly critiques the historicity and accuracy of the Bible. Minimalist scholars also do not make claims for biblical divine inspiration. Davies, in a paper published in 1976 entitled "*Daniel chapter two*" wrote that Daniel's second chapter is about a Babylonian dynasty i.e. Nebuchadnezzar as the first king followed by three Babylonians who ruled after him: Amelmarduk, Neriglissar, and Nabonidus. Of course the kingdom of God did not arrive but is depicted as breaking apart and consuming all four human kingdoms ([Dan. 2:44](#)). This of course also lends support that a Babylonian dynasty of kings is implied, as the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream falls as one entity. Also the Maccabean author who later twisted this to be successive empires i.e. Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Selucid cannot really show how they were progressively inferior. Davies strongly made these two points amongst others.¹⁹

Nabonidus was the last Babylonian king before Cyrus the Great conquered the Babylonian Empire. This means the content of chapter two, but really all of the first six chapters, could well have been written around the end of exilic period; as Cyrus' allowed the Jews and other captive peoples to return to their homelands shortly after he conquered Babylon. It could have all been inked during the reign of Nabonidus the last ruler of the Babylonian Empire, or perhaps shortly after.²⁰

The original story would have been a Jewish theme of hope to the captives held in the Babylonian Empire and perhaps one of deliverance and some victory to those who later returned to Judea. The Maccabean writer expressed the same theme of hope in chapter nine as Daniel prays to his God appealing for a reprieve from Jeremiah's prediction of seventy years in exile ([Jer. 25:11](#)). In any case it seems likely the earlier Babylonian writer's material was edited and added to by the

¹⁹ Davies, P. R. "Daniel chapter two." *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1976, 27(2), 392-401.
<http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Daniel%20Bibliography.pdf>

²⁰ Davies, P. R. "Daniel chapter two." *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1976, 27(2), 392-401.
<http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Daniel%20Bibliography.pdf>

Maccabean author for the issues of the people of his time i.e. 2nd century BC. Thus the original story of a Babylonian dynasty of four kings was molded into a story about four separate empires.

Christian Interpretations

As I also noted earlier, Christians in the earlier period read Christian themes into the text of Daniel and this has continued ever since. The Christian interpretations of Daniel have changed over the years. Some images have dropped off and new ones have been introduced in the wake of history. Russian, for example, was once suggested as the king of the North after it became a major player in world politics. At a later time the northern king was said to be the Soviet Union (USSR) but after it was dissolved it dropped off the interpretative map. Now some have even said the United States is the king of the North and Islam is the king of the South. On and on, it seems, go the constantly changing interpretations.

A few elements of Christian interpretation have held fast over time. One is the insistence that the messiah that is cut off refers to Jesus' death by crucifixion ([Dan. 9:26](#)). The problem is Jesus was not even alive when the daily sacrifice was interrupted and there wasn't an abomination of desolation set up in the temple in his lifetime or even afterwards. Recall that Judas Maccabeus, the real Maccabean period messiah, died some time after the temple had been cleansed and the sacrifices had resumed before his demise. As we have seen Antiochus IV Epiphanes instituted these evil acts against the Jews. Again it is worth recounting that Daniel 8:25 most probably refers to his end as it says: ²⁵ He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.

Antiochus did war against Judas Maccabeus and so he did "take his stand against the Prince of princes," another title alluding to Judas. Antiochus was apparently recruiting an army with the intent of destroying Judas and re-subjugating the nation of Judea but suddenly died of natural causes and therefore "not by human power." Another Christian interpretation that has largely held up is the mysterious end time anti-Christ is still seen in the later verses of Daniel 11 (i.e. [Dan. 11:40:45](#)). However, that block of text is completely written using old world language including the names of long defunct nations like Edom, Moab, Ammon and military terms like chariots and horsemen which have long passed off history's screen. These verses do not refer to any events in our modern world. It is even puzzling why that block of text includes the phrase "the prominent people of Ammon" since that nation had long since perished ([Dan. 11:41](#)).

Much of the interpretation of Daniel also depends on the identity of the fourth beast which I showed the writer implies is the Seleucid Empire. By about 200 BC it was a substantial empire and was fairly good bet that its borders could have expanded even more. It appears to have been



the guess of the Maccabean writer ([Dan. 7:7](#)). However, it turned out the Seleucid Empire started to lose ground and finally passed away (more about this later) and the kingdom of God did not arrive. Interpreters since have often claimed the fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire. One problem here is even that empire has passed away but then people got creative and claimed there were periodical revivals of the old Holy Roman Empire and a last one is either coming or is in the making. The modern European Union (EU) is often cited in the later case but it is far from a resurrection of the Roman Empire. This union currently consists of 27 member states and others are candidate countries. The EU shares a European Central bank and a common currency i.e. the euro but member states are still politically independent and therefore it is not fully a political union²¹ like the United States of America.

The problem for Christian interpreters of Daniel is that they usually say the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire has to consist of only ten kings (symbolically horns or toes) as per various statements (taken out of historical and symbolic context) in the book of Daniel ([Dan. 7:7](#)) and Revelation ([Rev. 17:12-14](#)). It is clear the ten kings theme was borrowed from Daniel by the writer of Revelation. There are numerous other modern interpretations. Some Protestant groups, for example, paint the Roman Catholic Church into the picture as the evil woman who sits on or rides the scarlet beast depicted in Revelation 17. None of these modern redoes make any sense to the context of the text in Daniel or Revelation. ([Download my essay "The Templegate Crisis & the Failed Second Coming"](#)).

Another problem with these modern interpretations is there are so many different takes. If a data set allows for numerous interpretations it cannot be thought of as saying too much about anything. These interpretations of the book of Daniel conclude the book speaks of modern nations. They also speak of Jesus Christ as if he is coming back to institute the kingdom of God in our time; only the time line keeps being pushed ahead. However all such modern interpretive attempts ignore the constraints within the text and invent long gaps of time between some of the events prophesied. In particular this goes to the *extreme gap* between the fourth kingdom and the supposed (and not even yet) arrival of the kingdom of God!

We have already seen how the fourth beast arose out of the third or Grecian Empire. Daniel 8 speaks of the Grecian Empire's four divisions i.e. four horns after the death of Alexander the Great. Then it says, "*in the latter time of their kingdom*" ... and it goes on to speak of a king who arises and fights "*the Prince of princes*" and then dies ([Dan. 8:22-27](#)). We just discussed this, and Antioch IV Epiphanes was in the writer's mind, an unnamed and supposedly end time Seleucid king. His reign was off the dynasty that grew out of the Grecian Empire. It simply cannot be referring to any modern nation or event.

Another textual constraint is given in Daniel 7. It is about the fourth beast with ten horns and an additional little horn arises and subdues three horns or kings and makes war with the saints. After a period of "*a time, times and half a time*" which is indicative of a short period of time, perhaps 3 plus a part of a year or 3½ years, the fifth kingdom was predicted to arrive. It was supposed to have been given to the long suffering saints of the Most High ([Dan. 7:19-28](#)). This expectation did not materialize but again these events were predicted and presented as being seamless over time. No long gap of time from the period of the 2nd century BC Maccabees up to our modern era is even hinted at.

The writer gave his readers enough clues to at least understand his meaning; that his fourth kingdom was the Seleucid Empire. History proves the fifth and divine kingdom did not arrive in the wake of the demise of that empire! By 100 BC, the once formidable Seleucid Empire

²¹ "European Union" http://europa.eu/index_en.htm

encompassed little more than Antioch and some Syrian cities. Their rulers continued to pay off foreign would be conquerors on a regular basis; and so survived for a time. There were also occasional interventions from Ptolemaic Egypt and other outside powers who aided them. The Seleucids in this period mainly continued to exist solely because surrounding nations did not wish to absorb them — thinking they were a useful buffer between them and their antagonistic neighbors.

Finally the Roman General Pompey in 63 BC had the power to remake the Hellenistic East. Some client nations like Armenia and Judea were allowed to continue but were ruled by puppet kings. Pompey deemed the then rival two Seleucid princes were too troublesome so he turned Syria into a Roman province.²² It was the final end to the once great Seleucid Empire. The Romans did not destroy the temple and much of Jerusalem until, after they put down the rebellion, in 70 AD. As a result, as I have already stated, both Daniel's and Jesus' prophecies cannot be fulfilled in our time as both sets of prophecies rely on events within it and/or shortly after the temple's demise. It is not about any new temple that might be built in the uncertain future.

To elaborate further, without doubt the most influential outcome of the book of Daniel resulted from its later impact on only one mind; Jesus of Nazareth's. I have already spoken to some of this but here it is again, only in more detail. Jesus obviously knew the temple in the Maccabean period was not destroyed and it in fact still stood in his day. In the book of Matthew Herod the Great is depicted as Jesus' childhood nemesis who had tried to kill him (Mt. 2:16-23). History shows Herod had built upon the temple's structure and some construction was allegedly still ongoing even while Jesus as an adult preached his message. Herod had died in 4 BC but over time the temple became to be referred to as the "*Temple of Herod the Great.*"

Since the temple still stood in Jesus' day, he obviously thought this was unfulfilled prophecy and therefore predicted that the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, would stand in the holy place or temple in his time (Mt. 24:15). Obviously this had to happen before the temple buildings were destroyed, which he had also predicted (Mt. 24: 1-2). He said this time would be so terrible that it would supersede any other time of trouble (Mt. 24:21) and this is also echoed in Daniel 12:1. Finally Jesus claimed he would soon after, come with clouds to institute the kingdom of God and this idea is reflected in Daniel's *Son of Man prophecy* (Dan. 7:13).

From Jesus' simple statement one can deduce that he thought Daniel's fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire of his day. He also thought the fifth and divine empire would rapidly come after his death and the destruction of the temple and terrible time in Jerusalem as suggested in Daniel's *Seventy Weeks prophecy* (Dan. 9:24-27). Jesus concluded it would all happen before the people of this time or generation all died (Mt. 24: 30-35) He was wrong; but had influenced the thinking of numerous generations of people since who refused to see the failures in both Daniel and Jesus' prophecies. Religious beliefs stick like glue but the details change like chameleons when needed.

The post-diction in the book of Daniel resulted from the writers recalling history and remade it to look like prediction. When the later writer attempted to foretell the future he failed miserably. Even so the stories in the book are entertaining and especially when combined with deceptive thinking, they still inspire hope in the minds of many people. Unfortunately the modern Christian clergy and writers alike keep the modern and changing interpretations going but are due to their short sightedness. Most of them are at least sincere, even if they are sincerely wrong.

²² "Seleucid Empire," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucid_Empire#Collapse_.28100.E2.80.9363_BC.29

History continues to change and I predict new interpretations of the book of Daniel will follow suit. It just does not matter what happens, its prophetic failure will continue to be denied by many true believers. Most people of faith rarely admit to any error and remain fettered. Most such people commonly ignore any evidence that is contrary to their belief. They are right because they believe it, period and end of discussion! The bottom line today is the kingdom of God has not arrived and humans continue to rule the nations of the world for the better or worse. I predict this will continue until the demise of humanity on earth!



Good luck on your human life adventure!

Ken Koskinen

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