

Daniel And History

Introduction. A lot of people know several facts about the Old Testament book Daniel. Very, few, however, know of the prophecies contained in the last half of his book. There are fantastically detailed prophecies about the time between the testaments, the Messiah, and the kingdom of God. These prophecies are very significant because a lot of people believe that they foretell events in our future -- events that the Bible does not support or teach.

Daniel describes a time of great turmoil for the Jews. The Grecian Empire, led by Alexander the Great, tried to force Grecian culture with all its immorality and disrespect for the laws of God upon them. They needed to know that all was not lost. They needed to know that they could be victorious over this future, dreaded enemy of righteousness.

I. *Daniel 8*

A. Daniel 8:1-8.

1. This vision (551 B.C.) follows the one recorded in chapter 7 by two years. In chapter 8 only two animals appear in the vision, suggesting a narrower scope than the four animals of chapter 7 (and the four kingdoms of chapter 2). Vss. 20-26, which is the interpretation of the vision, show that the two horns of the ram represent Media and Persia. The longer horn is Persia, which eclipsed Media in power and prestige.
2. The three directions correspond to the three ribs in the mouth of the bear (7:5). Vs. 4 summarizes the 200 years of Persia's world dominance (cf. Isaiah 41:2-3). The second animal, introduced in vs. 5 and identified in vs. 21, is Greece. The "notable horn" is the "first king," the founder of the empire, or Alexander the Great.
3. Coming from the west (Macedonia and Greece) in 334 B.C., Alexander launched an unprovoked invasion, and within three years had decisively routed the Persians. Alexander died of a sudden fever in Babylon in 323 B.C., at the age of 33.
4. In turn, four horns replaced the broken horn. Four kings took over the empire of Alexander the Great. Here, these four kings are passed over without comment. The four-headed beast in 7:6 is an obvious parallel to these four prominent horns.

B. Daniel 8:9-14.

1. The conflict between the ram and the goat is only a prelude to the real focus of chapter 8 -- the small horn of vs. 9, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:10; Josephus, Antiquities x. 276). This horn comes out of one of the four horns of vs. 8.
2. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was ruler of the Seleucid Empire from 175 B.C. to 163 B.C. His attempt to Hellenize Palestine led to the cessation of the sacrifices in the temple. The Maccabean revolt led to the rededication of the temple.
3. Daniel sees the horn grow so great in height that it is able to reach the stars with its hand, throw some of the stars to the ground, and trample upon them. On the earth, the sons of Israel form the host of God. As God, the King of

- Israel, has His throne in heaven, so there also Israel has their true home, and are in the eyes of God regarded as like the stars (Genesis 22:17; Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 1:10).
4. This horn also raised itself up against the “prince of the host,” or God Himself. Antiochus forbade the permanent practices of worship and desecrated the place of worship (1 Maccabees 1:45-46). The “transgression of desolation” of vs. 13 (cf. 11:31; 12:11) was an altar to Olympian Zeus erected on God’s altar of burnt offerings.
 5. Vs. 12 summarizes the two-pronged attack of Antiochus against God’s people and the temple. This attack is the consequence of Antiochus’s rebellion against God. “Truth,” the word of God, as far as it is embodied in proper worship, was thrown to the ground, just as was the host of heaven (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:56-57).
 6. The 2,300 days symbolize an incomplete period of persecution. Vs. 14 predicts the rededication of the temple by Judas the Maccabee on December 14th, 164 B.C. (1 Maccabees 4:36-61). The yearly celebration of this event is Hanukkah.

II. Daniel 11

A. Daniel 11:1-4.

1. The vision in chapters 10-12 (539 B.C.) more fully describe the vision in chapter 8 by a second vision on the same subject, just as the vision in chapter 7 explains more fully the one in chapter 2.
2. Chapter 10 is the prologue (it unfolds the spiritual world as the background of the historical world); the eleventh, the prophecy itself; and the twelfth, the epilogue.
3. The “three kings” were Persian (Cambyses, Gaumata, and Darius). The fourth was Xerxes (known as Ahasuerus in Esther). Eventually, Alexander the Great came to power, but after his untimely death, Alexander’s kingdom was split into four and ruled by his four leading generals (7:6; 8:8).

B. Daniel 11:5-35.

1. The kings of the North (Seleucids) and the kings of the South (Ptolemies) are descendants of Seleucus and Ptolemy. The Seleucids had their power base in Syria, while the Ptolemies had their base in Egypt. Judah was caught in the middle. The 31 verses of this section trace the political developments and intrigue between these two nations. There are more than 130 prophecies in the first 35 verses.
2. Vs. 21 begins recounting the career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was one of the most wicked men the Jews ever encountered. Vss. 33-34 suggest that God’s people would endure the sword (1 Maccabees 2:9, 31-38), fire (2 Maccabees 6:11; 7:1-41), captivity (1 Maccabees 3:41), and being plundered (1 Maccabees 1:31).
3. The persecution has its purpose in God’s plan, and He will bring it to its appointed end. Mattathias led a group of patriots in the struggle for independence against Antiochus IV and the Seleucid Empire (cf. Zechariah 9:13-14).

C. Daniel 11:36-45.

1. Many mistakenly believe this to be the “Antichrist,” the supposed seventh head of the seven-headed and ten-horned beast of Revelation 13:1-18, and the “beast” of Armageddon (Revelation 16:13, 16; 19:19).
2. Vss. 36-45 are a continuation of the description of Antiochus Epiphanes, with no indication whatsoever of a change of subject.
 - a) Vss. 36-39 evaluate Antiochus’ religious attitudes. His egotism was reflected in the title “Epiphanes” (“God made manifest”) his plundering of the temple, and suppression of religion (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:20-24).
 - b) Vss. 40-45 summarize the career of and depict the doom of Antiochus. At the moment of his triumph, Antiochus would be called away by disturbing reports (cf. 2 Kings 19:7). In a fury, he marched north and east and met his end in Persia.

III. Daniel 12

A. Daniel 12:1-4.

1. Daniel looks on ahead and speaks of another great time of trouble. “A time of trouble” implies heavy loss of life, both godly and ungodly, which Jesus described at the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:19). “The book” is the book of the living (Exodus 32:33; Revelation 20:12-15).
2. Daniel speaks of “many” who will awake (all will arise in the final resurrection). This is not a literal resurrection, but the resurrection of Israel (cf. Ezekiel 37:1-14; Galatians 6:16). This is the triumph of the Davidic kingdom over the nations which hate God (cf. Matthew 24:29-31; Hebrews 12:18-29). This occurred when the gospel was preached to the Jews beginning at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47).
3. The “wise” are those who give attention to the truth of God’s word (9:13). They also encourage others to faith (11:33). “Shut up” keeps the words safe until the time they are needed or fulfilled; “seal the book” preserves them intact.

B. Daniel 12:5-13.

1. The “time, times and half a time” is the same time that the woman spent in the wilderness (Revelation 12:14), and the 42 months of the beast out of the sea (Revelation 13:5). This was the Roman persecution (Revelation 10:5-7). The sounding of the seventh trumpet judged the Roman Empire and vindicated the indestructible kingdom of God (cf. Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Hebrews 12:28).
2. Both 1,290 and 1,335 days are symbolic of the time of difficulty and persecution through which Christians must endure. The extra 45 days completes the fall of the Roman Empire, and subsequently the limiting of Satan’s power (cf. Revelation 20:1-6). Revelation applied these times to the persecution of the Roman Empire, but they are applicable to any period in which children of God are being punished because of their loyalty to the Lord.
3. Those who are converted to the Lord (those who were awakened) were faithful, but many were not (vss. 2, 10). Daniel is told to “go thou thy way” (vss. 9, 13). In other words, “Keep on living and being faithful.” When living is done (“thou shalt rest”), then Daniel will “stand in thy lot at the end of

the days.” Daniel is assured that God would be in control no matter what His children face.

Conclusion. The test for a prophet’s accuracy was simple: if the prophecy came true, he was a prophet from God (Deuteronomy 18:20-22; cf. 1 John 4:1-6). Daniel’s prophecies encouraged them, but these prophecies would not mean anything if they were not accurate. However, numerous extrabiblical sources confirm the astonishing accuracy of Daniel. The significant part for us is that Daniel has important and useful prophecies for our time. The dependability of his prophecies regarding the time of upheaval between the testaments shows us that we need to listen to the ones which reference God’s scheme of redemption.