**The End Times**

Well, we are coming to the end of our study of the book of Daniel. This week and next week, we will study chapters 7-12 which focus on 4 visions of the future that God gave to Daniel. **<Arrow>**.

Now this is a little busy chart, but it gives a very good timeline of the Book of Daniel and each chapter plus who the ruler was at the time. It starts around 606 BC when Daniel and his friends are taken into captivity and serve under King Nebuchadnezzar who reigned 43 years.

As I mentioned, we are going to focus on Ch. 7-12.  **<Arrow>**  And I want to point out that the first two visions recorded in Ch. 7 & 8 occur in time before Ch. 5 The Feast of Belshazzar and the Writing on the Wall that Matthew talked about 2 weeks ago. And also Ch. 6 Daniel in the Lion’s den that we discussed last week.

Now, these 4 visions are prophecies of future events and we’ll come to those in a moment. But I want to point out that these are not the first or only prophecies in the Bible. In fact, we see a few other prophecies fulfilled on this same chart. **<Arrow>**

The first comes from Isaiah in 700 BC where he prophecies that it will be Babylon who takes the remaining Israelites in Judah into captivity. Remember, it was the Assyrians who were the super power at that time and in 700 BC, Babylon was a struggling kingdom under Assyrians rule. No one could imagine that they would replace Assyria as the new empire of the day. No one, but God, that is. **<Arrow>**

*Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the Lord Almighty: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”*

Isaiah’s prophecy from God did come true exactly as he said about 100 years later in 606 BC when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and captured Jerusalem. **<Arrow>**

Now, there are a couple other prophecies that came true as well. **<Arrow>** Jeremiah predicted that the captivity would last 70 years and he made that prophecy about 55 years before it would happen. **<Arrow>**Finally, Isaiah even prophesied the name of the King who would end their captivity, a man named Cyrus. This prophecy occurred 150 years before it happened. Only God could name the king who would do this. **<Arrow>**

*This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.*

This is the passage from Jeremiah and here is the one from Isaiah. **<Arrow>**

*“This is what the Lord says - your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’*

**<Arrow>** And here in Ezra we read the fulfillment of this in 538 BC.

**1** *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:* **2** *“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.* **3** *Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them* **<Arrow>**

You know sometimes prophesies can be somewhat vague and hard to decipher, but here are three very specific details: it would be the Babylonian empire, 70 years of captivity, and a decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple. Isn’t that amazing! I mean it sort of blows your mind that Bible made these specific revelations many, many years before they actually occurred. And this is God’s way of proving that He is God and the Bible is His prophetic word. **<Arrow>**

*Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come— yes, let them foretell what will come.* **8** *Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.”*

God is using these prophecies to show the world that you can trust Him and His word. You will not find these kinds of specific fulfilled prophecies made years before the event in the Quran or other holy books. You find generic prophecies without specific dates or names or time periods, but not like what we just read.

And today we read another fulfilled future prophecy from Daniel 7 which describes these four beasts, a Lion, a Bear, a Leopard, & a terrifying 4th beast with iron teeth. And we learn later in chapter 7 that these represented 4 kingdoms. Now this begins to sound a lot like the dream that Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar in ch2. **<Arrow>**

There was a statue with a head of Gold, chest of Silver, Thighs of Bronze, and Legs of Iron. And the interpretation was again 4 kingdoms with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians as the first kingdom with the head of Gold. **<Arrow>**

And we believe that the 2nd kingdom was Medo-Persia, the 3rd kingdom was Greece, and the 4th was Rome. **<Arrow>**Now, if we line up the same descriptions from ch 7, it is interesting to note that a number of Babylonian statues of Lions with eagle wings have been excavated.

The bear represents the Medo-Persian Empire which was initially led by Darius the Mede (Dan 11:1) and Cyrus the Persian (Dan. 6:28). The three ribs in the bear’s mouth are three kingdoms which the Medo-Persian Empire defeated: the Lydian Kingdom (546 B.C.), Chaldean Empire (539 B.C.) and the Egyptian Empire (525 B.C.).

The leopard represents the Greek Empire and it’s four wings describes the swiftness of Alexander the Great’s conquest of the civilized world in 4 years between 334-330 BC. The leopard had four heads which represent the four divisions of the Greek empire after Alexander’s death.

Chapter 8 and 11 are additional prophecies which mention Greece by name. **<Arrow>** Remember, this is over 200 years before Greece became an empire and at this time there was no single King, it was lords of small areas that eventually formed city-states.

*2 “Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will arise in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a mighty king will arise, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases. 4 After he has arisen, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others.*

The 4th Persian King could have been Xerxes I who attached Greece in 480 BC. The mighty king who arises is Alexander the Great and after his death, we know that his kingdom was divided into to 4 main blocks: (1) Egypt, (2) Babylon & Syria, (3) Asia Minor, & (4) Macedon & Greece. Later in chapter 11 there is a detailed description of battles over Palestine between Kings of the North and the South. These follow the history of the Ptolemies and Seleucids. We won’t read all this, but you understand that this was recorded many years before the events happened. **<Arrow>**

The last kingdom is Rome which became the greatest kingdom and lasted the longest. But there is some confusion about the ending of both of these prophecies.  **<Arrow>**

The feet mixed of Iron and Clay and the 10 horns of ch.7 may be talking about a future kingdom at the end of the age or the end of the world. And we get this picture of God’s great throne judgment at the end of human history here in Daniel ch.7 and also in John’s Revelation. The beast in Revelation also mentions 10 horns like Daniel. Here, we are talking about future prophecies, so these things have not happened yet and it isn’t so clear. Daniel received this explanation from someone in his vision. **<Arrow>**

*23 “He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. 24 The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.*

It’s not so clear, but both John in Revelation ch.13 and Paul in 2 Thessalonians (2:3-4) and Jesus in Matthew 24 all mention this world leader who will take power and who will persecute God’s people – this is the Anti-Christ. There’s a lot more to be said about this individual and next week, we will identify some signs of how to recognize the Anti-Christ & signs of the ‘End-Times’. We’ll finish with an open discussion trying to answer your questions and talking about ‘What does this mean for us now today?’, so come back.

This talk about the End of the World can be a little scary and don’t worry, I am not going to come back with some prediction of a date like so many people have done and have failed. I have had this view that the End-Times is further out there in time, but I am beginning to change my perspective on this and I will share that next week.

I do want to end with some comforting words from Daniel in this vision. **<Arrow>**

*“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

Daniel saw Christ coming again in power to reign. Brothers and sisters, know this, even if everything else in your life begins to get shaky and even if the foundations of the earth are shaky and even if your life is at stake, do not worry. Christ will establish His just and perfect Kingdom that we will enter and which will never end and nothing can take us from that. This is our eternal destiny. The Anti-Christ will have a very short reign on earth of a few years, but Jesus will reign forever. Amen.

Questions

Closing Prayer.

**Daniel 7:1-7**

*1In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.*

*2 Daniel said: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. 3 Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.*

*4 “The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.*

*5 “And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up and eat your fill of flesh!’*

*6 “After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.*

*7 “After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.*