

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

CHAPTERS 7-12 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The next chapters of the book of Daniel **require some introductory information**. We're going to take a look at the history behind these chapters, since they are at the heart of these books. Troubling visions, powerful symbolism, angels and spiritual forces, a concern with end times and global events—the presence of these in Daniel 7–12 indicate they are apocalyptic literature. They reveal certain mysteries about heaven and earth and things to come. **We must understand a little about world history to fully understand**. Let's take a quick review. *(These things are also important for understanding the book of Revelation, and how the book of Daniel complements Revelation.)*

TIMELINE (see PDF file containing Daniel timeline)

Daniel was receiving the visions in this book during the Babylonian and early Persian Empires. This is important to note because as we have mentioned before, liberal scholars have attempted to late date this book (anywhere from the 2nd century BC to 2nd century AD) because the **prophecies made here are so accurate** they cannot accept that they were written down about 550 BC, several years before the Medes and Persians, hundreds of years before Alexander the Great, more hundreds before the Roman Empire, over 500 years before Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and thousands of years before the timeline that will present itself at the very end of time – something we may be seeing today. Though there were civilizations in other areas besides the empires in question here, they were independent at the time, and not part of the world (Middle East) dominating governments of Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece and Rome. *(Remember, when it comes to world powers, the Bible is most definitely "Jerusalem-centric.")*

BEGINNING WORLD EMPIRES

This map is a very simple rendition of the earliest known civilizations. The little box in the corner shows some of the approximate dates for these cultures. All civilization began in the Garden, in the region known as Mesopotamia and spread outward after the flood.

Genesis 10 is known as the Table of Nations, giving us a record of the 3 sons of Noah as they populated the earth after the flood. From these three sons come all of our civilizations and cultures. The earliest known "empire" of sorts was called Sumeria.



EGYPT

When we speak of world empires, and dominating governments, Egypt is number one. Egypt was quite civilized and very advanced, more than we originally thought. We are still finding out things about Egypt that astound us. In the scripture, however, Egypt is used as a symbol and type for the WORLD – a world in opposition to God. But God used Egypt in an amazing way.

PHARAOHS

The Pharaohs believed they were gods incarnate. Their word and rule was absolute. Into this pagan but very civilized world God brought the fledgling nation of Israel – all 70 of them at the time. In the next 400 years he built them into a huge nation, and after delivering them with Moses, brought them into the Promised Land – their inheritance.



TOO MUCH EGYPT

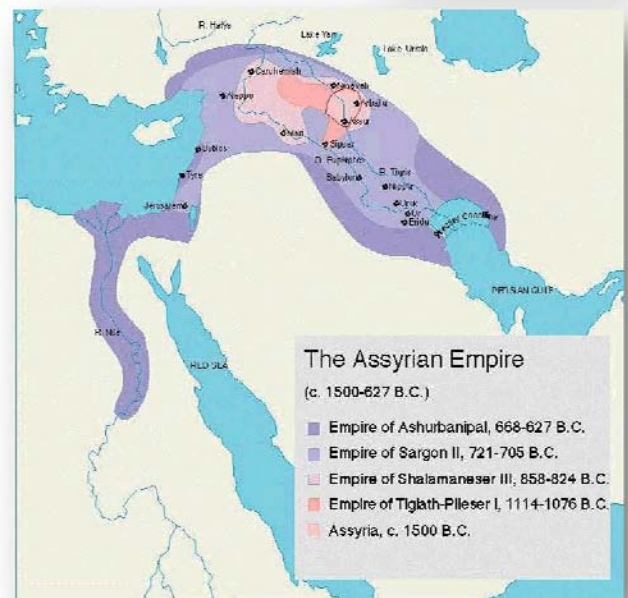
Apparently too much of Egypt rubbed off on the people – more likely it was merely their “stiff-necked” nature (as God called it!). For the next 800 years or so God allowed his nation Israel to prosper, even sometimes in spite of their idolatrous ways. He allowed the Temple to be built, the kingdoms of David and Solomon to be world renown, but He could not allow for the divided loyalties of Solomon (Solomon had 700 foreign wives who swayed him to worship those foreign gods – spiritual adultery in God’s eyes). The Kingdom of Israel was divided shortly after Solomon’s death into the Northern Kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (2 tribes). We then see a sad procession of evil kings, with a few good kings sprinkled in the southern kingdom. It was time for all of those prophets God had sent to be vindicated. Judgment was coming.



ASSYRIA: Tool for Judgment

The second major world kingdom was Assyria, whose capital was Nineveh. It is interesting to note that a man who was “in defiance of God,” Nimrod, built both Babylon and Nineveh – two cities which God used to bring judgment upon His people. God certainly works in mysterious ways! At any rate, God used Assyria to judge the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Around 722 BC they were invaded and taken into captivity in Assyria, from where they never returned. The remaining Jews were scattered, never to return to their homeland – until the end of time. In the meantime, things weren’t so much better off in the southern kingdom of Judah. Their time would come soon.

This is a map of the Assyrian Empire before the neo-Babylonian Empire arose (Remember neo means NEW, the old Chaldean Empire dates way back to 2000 BC.



Now it is time for **judgment of the southern kingdom**. In 606 BC Nebuchadnezzar took the first hostages to Babylon, thus beginning the 70-year prophesied time of captivity for Judah. The Temple and the City of Jerusalem were destroyed in 586 BC, 19 years later. **Babylon is now the reigning world empire.**

BABYLON

The city of Babylon, founded on the ruins of Bab-el, is referenced repeatedly in scripture and used in analogy as the city opposed to God. However, according to God, this was the first world empire that He himself recognized and delivered— He gave everything “under the sun” to Nebuchadnezzar who was called by God a servant of His. Like Assyria, Babylon was raised up by God as tool for judgment, only this time for the southern kingdom of Judah. This is an actual wall frieze from Babylon honoring one of their gods, Marduk.



BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

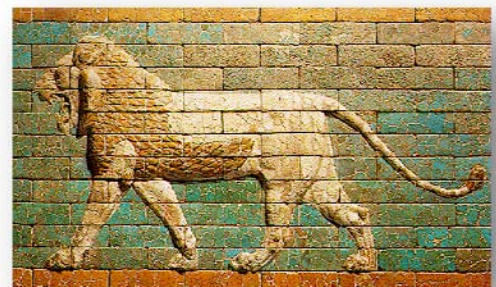
This map shows the approximate extent of the neo Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar. Notice the relative size compared to the map of Assyria. Not too much different. Notice also how “Jerusalem-centric” this empire is. The Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and even Greek Empires were somewhat central around Jerusalem and the Middle East.



The Roman Empire was not. This may have some bearing in the understanding of the last element of the statue in Daniel 2 (*regarding the so-called “Islamic Empire.”*)

THE LAND OF CAPTIVITY

Babylon was the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It was the place where God brought His people into captivity, taught them lessons, and showed some of them very strange and very important dreams. Although they were in captivity, God provided for them lovingly through the caretaker position of Daniel. Once again, this is an actual wall sculpture found in Babylon. Note the lion. The lion was a symbol for Babylon, and may be important later.



GOD MAPPED IT ALL IN ADVANCE

Throughout the Word we see that God is indeed Sovereign. He is above history. In order to convince His children that He is real, He has chosen to give us a glimpse of history (sometimes small or contained events, sometimes broad sweeping views of all history). We have an example of this in Daniel chapter 2, when Nebuchadnezzar had a very strange dream, and in chapters 7-12.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S VISION (Daniel 2)

God provided it so that all mankind would have a huge signpost about His intentions and how the world would shape up. This multi-metallic image was awesome, composed of a head of gold that represented Babylon, arms and chest of silver that represented the Medes and Persians, belly and thighs of brass (bronze) that represented the Greek Empire, and legs of iron (Roman Empire and/or possible Islamic Empire?) and feet of iron and clay which will represent some form of this 4th empire in the future. It is important to keep in mind that **there are only FOUR empires** represented here, from Babylon to the end – NOT 5. There is some confusion about that, and can color various thoughts on interpretations of subsequent dreams and visions in this book. The 4th kingdom seemingly does not end, but breaks down into iron and clay.



BABYLON IS JUDGED

After Nebuchadnezzar died, things went straight downhill in Babylon. After a series of weak and ineffectual kings, we find ourselves in the banquet hall in Babylon one fateful night during Chapter 5. We saw the handwriting on the wall, and watched as God once again used Daniel to interpret the writing, and then brought quick judgment against Babylon. Outside those supposedly impenetrable walls, Cyrus, Darius the Mede and the entire Persian army was working on an extremely brilliant plan. This is part of a wall sculpture of the Persian army. Cyrus had his troops divert the Euphrates River. By doing this, the entire Persian Army was able to march into the city of Babylon, under the massive city walls. Not a spear was thrown that night as Babylon fell to the Persians. This was 539 BC. The head of gold has now **given way to the arms and chest of silver, the Persian Empire.**

PERSIA

You can easily see that this “world empire” is considerably larger and more extensive than the Babylonian empire. Keep this in mind – the successive WORLD empires keep getting bigger and bigger.

God addressed Cyrus personally in a letter written to him 150 years before his birth, found in Isaiah chapter 45. This so impressed Cyrus that he indeed let the Jewish captives go home to Israel, and even helped fund their return and the rebuilding of the Temple. Remarkable how God works!



XERXES and others

As history marches on, we see the Persian Empire lasting a few hundred years, boasting some of history's greatest leaders. Xerxes is one we read of in the book of Esther. He was very important, but probably could not be considered "great" – at least not in God's book! History shows him to be somewhat of a madman – there is even a story of him lashing the sea 300 times as punishment for sinking his armada during a Greek battle. It is easy to understand why Esther was so afraid to seek out this king uninvited. Her head would have been on the line...literally.



AND ALONG COMES ALEXANDER

Now a young upstart comes quickly on the scene. Alexander the Great is 20 years old when he begins his stellar military career. He invented new and remarkable military techniques that had never been seen before. His battles were overwhelming victories. He was considered "lightning fast" in his campaigns and victories and swallowed up the world in no time. His military strategies are still studied at places like West Point and other military learning institutions.



ALEXANDER'S CONQUESTS

It is said that Alexander the Great flung himself upon his bed at the age of 29 in depression, lamenting that there were no more territories to conquer. He had taken the whole world at that time. His invasions were incredibly fast. He could mobilize an entire army and move them from one place to another with remarkable speed. This was unheard of, especially for the Persians who often took their entire families and holdings into the



war theater. They were like a "lumbering bear" in war. Finally, about 330 BC, the Persian Empire fell. The arms and chest of silver have disappeared and now we see **the belly and thighs of bronze – the next great world empire – Greece.** By the way, this is a mosaic, a very small portion, of the conquests of Alexander the Great. It was at one time covered over with stucco, and has been fairly recently recovered.

The Greek empire was somewhat larger than that of Persia. Although Alexander the Great is not mentioned by name in the Bible, his campaigns are prophesied in Daniel and Zechariah.

The effects of his empire made great impact on the New Testament. Greek became the language of business and ultimately the language that the New Testament was written in.

ALEXANDER DIES YOUNG

Alexander made his home in Babylon, but died about the age of 35. He was said to be an alcoholic and a user of drugs of the time. He probably would have given psychiatrists a great deal to study today. His life dream was world conquest and that is what he did. When it was over – he died. From that point on, the Greek empire went into decline, dividing into factions that were constantly at war.

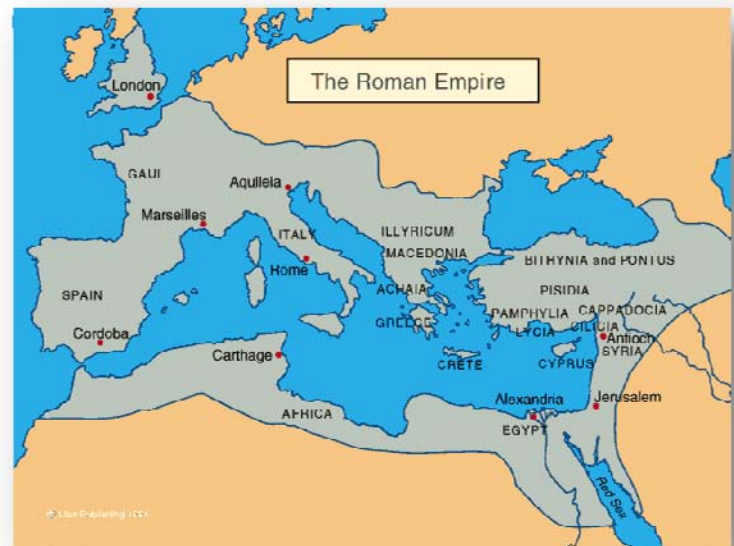
GIVE IT TO THE STRONG

As Alexander lay dying, he was asked “to whom should the kingdom go?” He did not have a “legitimate” heir. He replied, “Give it to the strong.” So the empire was divided among his **four chief generals**. Ptolemy took Egypt, Seleucus took Syria, Cassander took Macedonia, and Lysimachus took Asia Minor. From history, and also from scripture, we know more about the continuous **feuding between Ptolemy and Seleucus** until the Roman conquests than either of the others. From Syria and the Seleucids we get Antiochus Epiphanes, a madman who was the first historical fulfillment of an Antichrist – but a mere shadow of what was and still is to come. We’ll hear much more about him later.



ROME

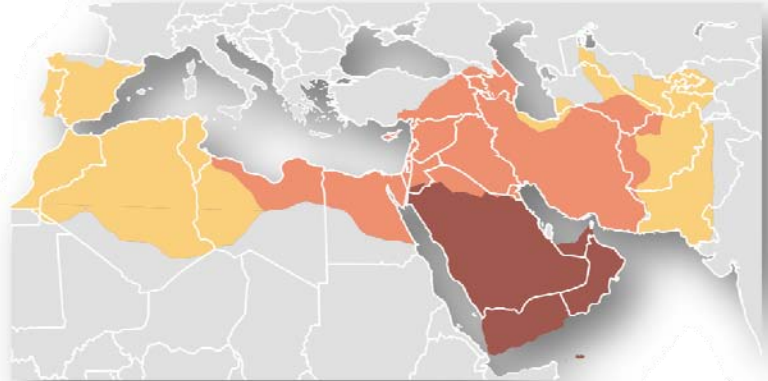
And finally, comes Rome. We can call her the empire that wouldn't die. In Daniel's dream, the iron is not replaced, but is MINGLED with clay. This indicates that this empire is not supplanted, but merely watered down. That is what is in place today. The Roman Empire was never truly defeated – it collapsed from within. From its ashes will rise the empire of the last days.



(Lately there has been some discussion about the identity of the legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue. For years the traditional identity has indeed been the Roman Empire. However, there is some interesting scriptural and historic evidence that it might be more than that, and perhaps the Islamic Empire may have some identity here as well. Notice that the Roman Empire is NOT "Jerusalem-centric," but the Islamic Empire was. It is possible that perhaps Rome AND the Islamic Empire both have roles here. For more information on this, see the lessons for Daniel 2.)

Obviously the Roman Empire is greater in size than any of the empires before it. However, it should also be noted that it is more western than the others, and not particularly “Jerusalem-centric.” Although Israel was ruled by Rome, it was considered one of the further outposts of the Roman Empire.

This is one of the reasons that the **Islamic Empire** is a consideration for the legs of iron in Daniel 2 (*two legs, maybe two empires?*). We don’t want to get sidetracked on this, but **we should also know that the Islamic Empire was extensive.** It had its beginnings with Muhammad in 622 AD, then the Caliphates of the early Middle ages (632 AD) continuing through various other Caliphates, Sultanates, Dynasties and Empires (including the Ottoman Empire from 1299 to 1923 AD) all the way through to the early 20th century.



Today the “Islamic Empire” is not really an empire, but a loosely collected group of nations that are

led by Islamic rule, or host the world’s majority of Muslims. As we said earlier, the Roman Empire was not overtaken by any other power, but collapsed from within. In some form or another, the Roman Empire is still in existence. There were no other major world conquests or world powers since Rome’s collapse in the 4th century AD. In some ways, the entire world could almost be divided between the remnants of the Roman Empire, and the remnants of the Islamic Empire. Two legs on the statue? We aren’t sure at this point. We do know however, that both the old Roman Empire (*the European Union currently*) and the old Islamic Empire (*the Arab theocratic states*) are trying for world dominion “comebacks.” Makes for a very interesting scenario! On a spiritual timeline, we are probably reaching the toes of clay and iron by now.

PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS 7 THROUGH 12

Daniel Chapter 7

This contains a vision given to Daniel during the first year of the reign of Belshazzar in Babylon. (*All of the prophecies contained in chapters 7-12 happened during the historical timeline of chapters 1-6, but God had Daniel record them in a separate section of this book.*) Daniel has a vision of four beasts, which are defined as four world kingdoms. We also see a vision of the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days, a sort of “courtroom” scene. We will also be given a lot of information about the 4th beast, the final world ruler and conditions on earth during that time.



Daniel Chapter 8

This vision occurs in the third year (most think it was his last, ended in Daniel chapter 5) of Belshazzar of Babylon. Daniel sees a ram with two horns, identified as the Median and Persian Empire. He then sees a male goat with a large horn, a horn which breaks off and becomes four horns. This is the Greek Empire, dominated first by Alexander the Great, then his four generals. This vision is about the history of two great world empires that followed Babylon. We are also given information about an “evil horn” which was fulfilled first by Antiochus Epiphanes, and also stands for the final world ruler (we call the Antichrist).



Daniel Chapter 9

This chapter is dominated by a long and amazing prayer by Daniel. However, toward the end of the chapter Daniel receives an angelic messenger with a startling message about end times. Daniel received this message at the end of the captivity, in the first year of Darius. The Babylonian Empire is over, Persia is in power at this time. But the prophecies contained here refer to the return and rebuilding of Jerusalem, providing a unique and traceable timeline, referred to as “Daniel’s 70 Weeks.” This timeline covers the return to the land, rebuilding the Temple and the city walls, the Messiah, and the end of time. These final six verses of this chapter contain some of the most important prophecies concerning God’s plan for Israel, the final world ruler, and the time we call the Tribulation.



Daniel Chapter 10

Daniel received this amazing vision in the third year of the reign of Cyrus of the Persian Empire. Daniel is apparently visited by some incredible heavenly beings (identities not given, but greatly speculated) whose purpose is to strengthen him and prepare him to receive more understanding about what is yet to come for his people. The end times will not be pleasant ones, so Daniel is weakened and upset at first, but later strengthened and encouraged to hear what will be given to him (in the rest of the book). We are also told there is great warfare being waged in the spiritual realm. This is a glimpse into spiritual warfare behind the human scenes.



Daniel Chapter 11

Chapter 11 is seen as a continuation of the vision in Chapter 10. In Chapter 10 Daniel is strengthened to receive what is coming here in Chapter 11. This is perhaps one of the most detailed, and most difficult to understand, prophetic pieces in all scripture. It details the transition of power from Persia to Greece, and eventually the end of the Greek Empire. Antiochus Epiphanes is seen, as well as the final world ruler, an evil king. Most of this chapter is concerning the “kings of the north” and the “kings of the south” which tell is remarkable details the constant clashes between the two generals of Alexander, Seleucus (north, old Syrian dynasty) and Ptolemy (south, Egypt). It is even thought that Cleopatra is mentioned in this chapter.

Daniel Chapter 12

This chapter concludes the amazing vision of chapter 11 (chapters 10-12 should be seen as one “unit” of prophecy). It deals with the end of time. Daniel is given final instructions about the book, and a few glimpses of what the world will be like when all human government comes to a close.



All of this information is important as we begin our study of these prophetic chapters of Daniel. God has authenticated Himself through prophecy, by revealing what WILL happen, BEFORE it happens, with great precision. We spoke earlier about how the book of Daniel is the most attacked in scripture. That is the reason why. There are more amazing prophecies about world empires and dominions, individual reigns, battles and worldly kingdoms than anywhere else. And so far, they have all been fulfilled perfectly. We have no reason to believe that the others, the ones that apply to end times, will not also be precisely fulfilled. Unless we know some of the history that has already happened, we cannot fully appreciate or understand this divinely inspired book. **In chapters 7-12 we will meet these world leaders and see them walk across the pages of history, well before their time.**

GOD INHABITS ETERNITY

The scriptures tell us that God inhabits eternity—but in eternity there are no ends or beginnings. That is completely beyond our comprehension, but we merely accept it on faith. God is above history, and outside of our linear timeline dimensions. He has seen all of history already. In fact, he lives in the midst of it all. Something we cannot comprehend. Through these remarkable books, He has chosen to share with us His plan, and is underscoring the plan, and His Authority, by giving us a look at history before it happens. Chapters 7 through 12 contain some of the most amazing and incredible prophecies in all scripture. We have the advantage of living on this side of most of their fulfillments, able to see how God has completely authenticated Himself as the Almighty, Sovereign God.

