

Daniel's History LESSON



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 7.*

Memory Text: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3, NKJV).

The vision in Daniel 7 (given about 553 B.C., the first year of Belshazzar's coregency with his father, Nabonidus) is largely parallel to the vision in chapter 2. Some reasons for this repetition may be:

1. Fifty years had gone by since Nebuchadnezzar had received his vision in Daniel 2.
2. To repeat important matters is a good principle of teaching.
3. Daniel 2 gave a general survey of the future from Nebuchadnezzar's days until the Second Advent. Daniel 7 enlarges on the time period between the fourth empire and Christ's return to earth.
4. Daniel 2 portrays the worldly empires from a political and military viewpoint. Daniel 7 includes the spiritual power that plays an important role in the great controversy. Whatever the reasons for the parallel to the earlier chapter, Daniel 7 is a powerful prophecy, one filled with important—and relevant—truth for our time.

The Week at a Glance: What is the essence of the vision in Daniel 7? What is the fourth beast? What is the little-horn power that arises out of, but is still part of, the fourth beast? How did the medieval church justify its persecution of heretics? What does the time prophecy in Daniel 7:25 represent?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 13.*

The Vision (*Dan. 7:1-8*).

In his vision Daniel sees the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea. As a result of it, four wild beasts emerge from the water.

What explanations can we glean from Scripture for most of the symbols appearing in this vision?

Winds (*Jer. 25:31-33*) _____

Water (*Isa. 57:20, Rev. 17:15*) _____

The four beasts (*Dan. 7:17*) _____

Lion (*Dan. 2:38*) _____

Bear (*Dan. 5:28, 8:20*) _____

Leopard (*Dan. 8:21, 11:2*) _____

Any history book about the ancient world will confirm that the great world powers following Babylon were Media-Persia and Greece. But what about the fourth power, the dreadful and terrible beast? Though not specifically named in Scripture, history confirms that the power that defeated Greece was Rome, the only sensible identification for the fourth beast.

What are the similarities between the expressions used to describe the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 and the fourth kingdom in Daniel 7? (*Compare Dan. 2:40 and Dan. 7:7, 23.*)

World power may be said to have passed from the Greeks to the Romans at the battle of Pydna, in 168 B.C., where the Romans won a complete victory over Macedonia, which was divided into four confederacies that eventually became a Roman province. Thus within another century of conquests, the world was united under Rome. History affirms, again, God's foreknowledge of world events.

The Little Horn (*Dan. 7:8, 23-25*).

The Roman Empire did not succumb to another world empire, as had the previous kingdoms; instead, it disintegrated. From A.D. 330 on, when Emperor Constantine moved the seat of government from Rome to Constantinople, a long decline began in the western half of the empire. Its authority slowly disappeared, its vitality evaporated, and its apparatus of government faded away. Into this void stepped the barbaric tribes from the north, who carved the empire up into many smaller pieces and in A.D. 476 deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last of the Western emperors.

What happens to the fourth beast, as depicted in *Daniel 7:19, 20, 24*?

The prophecy does not treat the horns independently of the beast; on the contrary, they are presented as a continuation of its activities. The horns correspond to the mingling of the iron with the earthenware in the feet and toes of the image of Daniel 2. As in Daniel 2, the fourth empire, as a single power, broke apart; this was depicted in Daniel 7 as the activity of the ten horns. They represent the European nations that emerged from the Roman Empire and, to a large extent, maintained her civilization.

What are the specific characteristics of the little horn, and what power does it represent? *Dan. 7:8, 24, 25*.

Historians tell us that “out of the ruins of political Rome, arose the great moral Empire in the ‘giant form’ of the Roman Church.” —Alexander Flick, *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church* (New York: B. Franklin, 1959), p. 150, quoted in *The SDA Bible Commentary Sourcebook*, vol. 9, article 1142. Indeed, when the western half of the Roman Empire fell to the Germanic tribes, the Bishop of Rome became an important figure in the West, and soon he exercised not only spiritual but also political power. “*The Roman Church in this way privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World Empire, of which it is the actual continuation; the empire has not perished, but has only undergone a transformation.*”—Adolf Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (quoted in *The SDA Bible Commentary Sourcebook*, vol. 9, p. 1359, author’s emphasis).

Again, don’t miss this point: The persecuting little-horn power arises out of the Roman Empire—it never ceases to be a Roman power. Why is this point especially important for us to remember, particularly in the context of last-day events, when all sorts of wild speculation is made about the identity of end-time players?

Changing Times and Laws (*Dan. 7:25*).

Compare Daniel 2:21 and Daniel 7:25. In what specific way does the little horn seek to take upon itself what belongs only to God? How does this action parallel with what is written in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4?

The word for “times” in this text is the same Aramaic word rendered “seasons” in Daniel 2:21. God as the Creator of the times can change them, but the little horn arrogantly claims this power for himself by the attempted change of the “time” of the Sabbath, the one commandment that points to the Lord in His role as Creator—the role that makes Him, and Him alone, God.

Read the following texts (*Gen. 2:1-4; Exod. 20:8; Isa. 40:28; 44:6-8; 45:5, 6*). Together, what message do they have for us, particularly in the context of today’s study?

As Adventists, we love to circulate all sorts of quotes from early Catholic sources mocking Protestants—who claim the Bible as their rule of faith—for keeping Sunday, a day not commanded in the Bible but, instead, was formally instituted by the authority of the Roman Church.

What was the reason for this change? Both external pressures and internal pressures on the church forced many Christians to break radically with the Jews. The conflict between the Jews and the empire caused many of these Christians to develop a new identity, one that helped them avoid the repressive measures applied to the Jews under Roman dominion. Meanwhile, the Judaeo-Christians who insisted on the literal observance of certain Mosaic regulations helped push many others to sever their ties with Judaism in every way possible.

Christians of the first four centuries never confused Sabbath with Sunday but for a time celebrated both, as indicated in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (pseudonymous work, c. A.D. 375). “Keep the Sabbath, and the Lord’s day festival; because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection.”—*The SDA Bible Student’s Source Book*, vol. 9, article 1414.

The change of the Sabbath didn’t happen overnight. Slowly but surely, with one small step at a time, the apostasy from God’s law began. But it can happen only as individuals, one by one, allow it to happen. Had the masses stayed faithful, the changes never would have come. What lessons are in here for us?

A Time Prophecy (*Dan 7:25*).

This time period of three and one half times, or three and one half years, is again mentioned in Daniel 12:7 and in various ways in the book of Revelation. Though space doesn't allow for us to show why, all the texts below are talking about the same time period.

Look up these texts and write down the time prophecies given in each one. What can we learn by comparing them with one another?

Dan. 7:25 _____

Dan. 12:7 _____

Rev. 11:2 _____

Rev. 11:3 _____

Rev. 12:6 _____

Rev. 12:14 _____

Rev. 13:5 _____

A comparison of these texts shows that a prophetic year has 360 days, and thus three and one half years is the same as 1,260 prophetic days, or 42 prophetic months. As Adventists, we have long believed, and rightly so, that these prophecies demand the day/year principle. Among the biblical reasons for the day/year principle are the following: (1) The visions are symbolic, hence the times indicated should also be symbolic. (2) As the visions extend over long time periods, the times specified, therefore, should also be seen as extending over long periods of time. (3) The peculiar way in which the time periods are expressed also indicates that they must apply symbolically; i.e., the fact that the word years is never used in any of the time expressions can be explained only on the basis of the year/day principle. (4) The pragmatic test of this principle in Daniel 9:24-27 indicates that, indeed, years are intended.

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 51–55.

Notice the parallel between Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. We can clearly see how the two chapters are dealing with the same events, though from different perspectives.

Daniel 2

Babylon

Media-Persia

Greece

Rome

Second Coming

Daniel 7

Babylon

Media-Persia

Greece

Rome

Second Coming

Discussion Question:

As mentioned earlier in the week, Adventists love to quote Roman Catholic sources that blatantly boast of Rome's authority in changing the Sabbath to Sunday. In most cases, however, those are older quotes. Rome, today, appears to be taking a different tack on this issue. The best example is the apostolic letter, issued by Pope John Paul II in 1998, called *Dies Domini* (the Lord's Day), in which the pope admonishes the flock to be more faithful in keeping Sunday. What's interesting, however, is that instead of boasting about the church's authority to change the Sabbath day, as apologists for Rome and Sunday so frequently did in the past, the letter in some places sounds like our defense of the seventh-day Sabbath. The pope even goes back to the Genesis Creation account as part of the reason for keeping Sunday, even quoting Genesis 2:2. Why do you think Rome has changed its approach to its defense of Sunday? How does this change fit with our understanding of last-day events?

Summary: God granted Daniel a preview of world history from the days of Babylon down to the time when the saints will receive the kingdom. After the four world powers (Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome) there was to come a religio-political power that would continue until the time of the end.

One Good Accident

Jin Long*

Brother Lee* is a Global Mission pioneer. He had been working in southern China for several months without any apparent success, in spite of his best efforts.

Then one day Brother Lee was involved in a serious accident that also involved another man. Both victims were sent to the hospital and placed in the same room. During their lengthy recuperation Brother Lee had plenty of time to become acquainted with his roommate. By the time the men were released from the hospital, the two men had become good friends, and Brother Lee had led his roommate to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. In fact, the two men decided to work together for God.

Brother Lee learned that his new friend's wife had been paralyzed by a stroke and was confined to their home. She could not walk or take care of herself. Brother Lee asked a kind Adventist woman to visit this man's wife. The Adventist woman gave her massage and other natural treatments. Before long the woman could stand and move slowly around using a cane.

This woman's healing created interest in knowing more about God, and before long several people were meeting in a small group with Brother Lee. They meet for worship in a small room that they have rented. The little group is growing.

Brother Lee is happy that the Lord has used an unfortunate situation to bring him in contact with someone whose heart was searching for a better life. Through this unfortunate incident God continues to work in the lives of this family. Even his friend's mother-in-law, a lifelong Buddhist, began warming to the gospel as she saw the power of God to heal her daughter.

The wife's healing continued through patient massage and natural treatments, and eventually she was able to throw away her cane and even resume working. Her mother has accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior and removed the idols from her home. A white sheet covers the wall where they once were encased, and today the little group of 11 believers meets in her home.

Recently Brother Lee informed church leaders that the local religious authorities have given his group of believers permission to build their own church. With permission to build a legal church, surely the group will continue to grow. Brother Lee thanks God for keeping His promise that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (*Rom. 8:28, NIV*).

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