

Part 3

3 more Studies in the Book of Daniel

Please Note the following:

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

Study 1 – God’s Forever King

Daniel 7:1-28

(Sermon on 15-September 2024)

Before we begin: We are walking into the ‘*apocalyptic*’ section of the book of Daniel. It seems so baffling that some readers simply drop out at this point. There’s a little game that sometimes gets played. Someone mentions “*apocalyptic*” and you instinctively know that you should wrinkle your brow, narrow your eyes and nod knowingly as if you’re understanding what the term means. So, how would you define ‘*apocalyptic*’?

Dictionary definition: Forecasting the ultimate destiny of the world.

A more comprehensive Biblical definition from Dale Ralph Davis: Roughly I would say that biblical apocalyptic is a sort of prophecy that seeks to enlighten and encourage people [Christians] despised and cut off by the world with a vision of the God who will come to impose His [everlasting] Kingdom on the wreckage and rebellion of human history – and it communicates this vision/message through the use of wild, scary, imaginative, bizarre and head-scratching imagery [like the beasts in Daniel 7].¹ This same type of imagery is found in the Book of Revelation also.

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE. *A type of Jewish and early Christian lit., the bulk of which stems from the years 200BC to 100AD, containing visions or revelations (hence the term “apocalyptic,” from the Gr. apokalypsis, meaning “a revelation” or “a disclosure”) from God concerning the imminent coming of the end of the present evil age and the final advent of God’s kingdom.*

Examples: Daniel 7-12; 1 & 2 Enoch, 2 Esdras(in the Apocrypha) and Revelation.

Read Daniel 7:1-8

1. Who’s the King at the time of Daniel’s vision? Remind yourself what happened to him in chapter 5.

Clearly Daniel 7 is not in chronological order as Belshazzar is King Nebuchadnezzar’s son, more likely his grandson, and in chapter 5, Belshazzar used God’s goblets from the temple in Jerusalem at his banquet. God sent a writing hand to write ‘mene mene tekel parsin’ on the wall as a judgment on Belshazzar and he met his demise!

¹ The Message of Daniel by Dale Ralph Davis on page 85.

2. Describe Daniel's vision. Draw a picture if you like!

*Daniel sees a vision of **the great sea** (possibly the Mediterranean) and it's churned up by the **four winds of heaven**. Note: the **sea** in apocalyptic literature is often a **symbol of chaos**.*

*In Daniel's vision **four beasts** come out of the sea.*

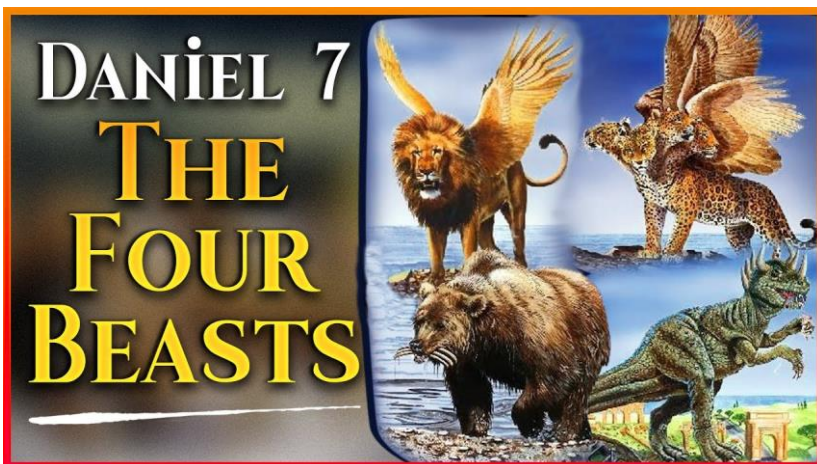
Note: "like" is another feature of apocalyptic literature. The things seen in the vision are often "like" something because there is no reference point for what is actually seen because they are bizarre and unique.

*1st beast is "like" a **lion** with wings of an eagle, but its wings were torn off and it was lifted off the ground and stood on two feet "like" a human.*

*2nd beast looked "like" a **bear** raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.*

*3rd beast is "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.*

*4th beast is 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**. It **also had another horn, a little one**, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had **eyes like the eyes of a human being** and a **mouth that spoke boastfully**.*





3. Which kingdoms might the four great beasts represent?

*Note: **we are not told which kingdoms are represented by the beasts.** Much ink, paper and keyboards have been used to **speculate** which kingdoms are in view. As the vision is similar to the Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 of the statue made of different metals representing kingdoms, some people speculate that the Kingdoms are: Lion = Babylon; Bear=Medo-Persia, Leopard=Greece (4 heads represent Greek Empire splitting into 4 after Alexander the Great); and fourth beast is Rome.*

*This interpretation is far from certain and it might be best to interpret the great beasts as a review of history from the time of Daniel to the end when Jesus comes in judgment, where **these beastly kingdoms represent all the beastly kingdoms throughout history, showing that there is a familiar pattern of what happens when rulers rule without a reference to God, and their power becomes corrupt and evil** – and they turn into beasts like: Nero, Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Augusto Pinochet, Kim Il Sung, Saddam Hussein, Robert Mugabe – to name a few.*

*The picture of the beasts also shows the **characteristics of evil earthly kingdoms.** The bear is **devouring victims; that's what evil regimes do.** Similarly, the last beast had large **iron teeth with which it crushed and devoured it's victims and trampled underfoot what was left.** The **horns represented kings and power!** And the little horn had eyes of a human being and **a mouth that spoke boastfully; there is an arrogance about evil regimes.***

4. **Ponder:** From God's perspective, what might it mean that the kingdoms are represented by beasts?

*The beasts represent evil and anti-God behaviour as opposed to the one true, good and perfect God. **If humans decline to beasts, they are deformed image of God.** What we have is a battle between good and evil – which is also the theme of the book of Revelation. Who is going to win this battle? It's no contest. See the following verses...*

Read Daniel 7:9-14

5. Who is the '**Ancient of Days**' and how is He and His Kingdom described in verses 9 and 10? Is it a problem that He is '**ancient**'?

'Ancient of Days' is a term used to describe God the Father; only used in Daniel 7:8, 13 and 22. The term 'Ancient' doesn't mean that God is too old to be useful or powerful; it means God has existed before days were created; i.e., from the beginning of time.

He is described as having 'clothing as white as snow' and 'hair as white as wool'; both symbols of His perfection and purity.

'His throne was flaming with fire' and a 'river of fire' – these are pictures of His fiery judgment on the world.

He has thousands upon thousands of angels attending Him and thousands upon thousands of people standing before God in judgment.

It's like they are in a court room and the court is seated and God's books are opened. The Bible mentions: The book of the living (Psalm 69:28); the book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16) and the book of life (Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27 and 22: 19).

6. **Ponder:** What comfort is there for us in the scene in verses 9 and 10?

The Kingdoms represented by these horrific beasts will not prevail, they are short-lived and they will one day, be judged by Almighty God Himself.

7. What's happening in verses 11 and 12 and who do you think is doing the slaying? (cf. verses 13 and 14)

The beast is slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire (Hell). See Revelation 19:20 - But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

The one doing the slaying is the “Son of Man” appointed by God to be judge, which is Jesus. Jesus used the title the “Son of Man” about Himself several times.

8. Who is the one like a ‘**son of man**’? (cf. Matthew 8:20; Revelation 1:12-13; 14:14)

The “son of man” is Jesus. He appeared before the “Ancient of Days” who is God the Father; and is given all authority over an everlasting kingdom that will never pass away in comparison to the earthly kingdoms mention by these scary beasts! Jesus is referred to as the “son of man” several times:

Matthew 8:20 - Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

Revelation 1:12-13 - ¹²I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

Revelation 14:14 - I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

See also Mark 13:26 and Acts 7:56.

Read Daniel 7:15-28

9. Why would Daniel be distressed in verse 15?

Apocalyptic literature is meant to be scary and these beasts as they are described ARE scary. No wonder, Daniel is distressed; there is much suffering ahead before the end.

10. According to verses 17 and 18, who are the four beasts from Daniel’s vision and what do God’s people come to possess?

According to these verses the four beasts are four kings who will rise up from the Earth. We are not told from what Kingdoms. Any identification is speculation. God’s people (the Holy people of the most High) will receive the Kingdom forever and ever.

11. What is Daniel curious about in verses 19, 20a and 20b?

Daniel wanted to know about the fourth beast which was different from the others and most terrifying. Daniel wanted to know about the ten horns and the other horn that came up. Daniel’s interest is because of what this beast is doing in verse 21, see next question.

12. What is the little horn doing in verse 21?

This little horn was waging war on God's holy people and defeating them. What we have here is a picture of persecution and suffering.

13. How long does this war go on in verse 22?

This persecution goes on until God [the Ancient of Days] came and pronounced judgment.

14. What interpretation is Daniel given of this fourth beast and its kingdom in verses 23 to 25?

The fourth beast is described as a kingdom different than the others because:

- a. It devours the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it*
- b. It has ten horns that represent ten kings from this kingdom*
- c. Then another king (the little horn) comes*
- d. This king speaks against God and oppresses God's holy people*
- e. God's holy people will be delivered (suffer) into the hands of this king for a period of time described as 'a time, times and half a time'*

Some identify this fourth beast as Rome and a continuation of a 'Rome type' kingdom.

15. The oppression and persecution described in verses 23 to 25, continue for 'a time, times and half a time', what does that mean? (cf. Mark 13:20 and Revelation 11:2)

The term 'a time, times and half a time' often defined as 3 ½ years.

Again, in apocalyptic literature we have to be careful of taking numbers literally. If God's number is 7 and 7 is a complete time, then 3 ½ is saying that God will cut short the suffering and persecution and it won't go on indefinitely; which is what Mark 13:20 says.

Mark 13:19-20 – ¹⁹because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equalled again. ²⁰"If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them

Revelation 11:2 -They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

42 months = 3 ½ years.

In Revelation 12:6, 1260 days is used – is 3 ½ years using a 360-day year calendar

In Revelation 13:5 - The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority **for forty-two months**.

16. What victory is described in verses 26 and 27? How is God's Kingdom described here?

Here is a picture of a court room scene where the last Kingdom is in court and stripped of its power and completely destroyed forever. Then all earthly kingdoms will be handed over to God's forever kingdom; and all rulers will worship and obey him.

17. Why would Daniel be deeply troubled (v28) by this vision and its interpretation?

Because of the vision of these ghastly beastly kingdoms and the ferocity of the attack to come against God's people, especially from this last conspicuous little horn.

Also, because Daniel knew the vision was/is true, he became deeply troubled when he thought about what lay ahead.

18. **Ponder:** What do you think the Israelites in exile in 500s BC would make of Daniel's vision?

Even if the Israelites are allowed freedom from exile and allowed to return to Jerusalem, that's not the end of suffering. There will always be beastly kingdoms and suffering. Suffering only ends when the son of man returns to judge the world.

19. **Ponder:** What does Daniel's vision mean to us living in 2024AD?

Whether we see these four kingdoms fulfilled in Babylon, Mede-Persia, Greece and Rome; we are still left with a picture of these beastly kingdoms and especially the little horn, still to come. The bottom line is God's people have to endure suffering throughout history because of beastly evil kingdoms and regimes. But we can draw comfort in knowing that God judges all evil in the end and we as God's people receive entry into His forever kingdom.

Read the following new Testament passages and explain how they relate to **Daniel 7:1-28...**

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

The Man of Lawlessness: In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Paul speaks of a "man of lawlessness" who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God. This figure, often identified with the Antichrist, echoes the "little horn" in Daniel 7, which represents a powerful, blasphemous ruler who persecutes the saints.

Persecution and Tribulation: Both passages describe a time of intense persecution and tribulation. In Daniel 7:25, the little horn opposes the saints and seeks to change times and laws, which aligns with the description in 2 Thessalonians of a period of deception and rebellion.

End Times Context: Both passages are situated in apocalyptic or end-times contexts, discussing events leading up to the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom. Daniel 7 details the rise and fall of empires leading to God's everlasting kingdom, while 2 Thessalonians 2 talks about events before the second coming of Christ who ushers in God's everlasting kingdom.

Matthew 26:57-68

Judgment and Trial: In Matthew 26:57-68, Jesus faces a trial before the Sanhedrin, where false witnesses testify against Him, and He is accused of blasphemy. This trial reflects the theme of judgment and confrontation with divine authority found in Daniel 7.

The Son of Man: In Daniel 7:13-14, the "Son of Man" approaches the Ancient of Days [God, the Father] and is given authority, glory, and sovereign power. Jesus, in Matthew 26:64, identifies Himself as the "Son of Man" who will come with the clouds of heaven, directly referencing Daniel 7. This connection highlights Jesus' claim to divine authority and His role in the fulfillment of prophetic visions.

Divine Authority: Both passages address issues of authority and divine judgment. Daniel 7 depicts the final judgment and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom, while Matthew 26:57-68 shows Jesus' claim to that divine authority and His role in the fulfillment of those end-time prophecies.

1 John 2:18 - Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.

1 John 2:18 warns about the coming of "antichrists," suggesting a spirit of deception and rebellion against Christ in the last days before the last antichrist comes. This connects to Daniel 7, where the "little horn" represents a powerful,

blasphemous [antichrist] figure who opposes the saints and tries to change times and laws.

Note: 1 John 2:18 fits in with the idea that we can completely identify the fourth kingdom, because there will be many antichrists (beastly evil kings) before the end.

Revelation 13:1-10

***The Beast and the Little Horn:** In Revelation 13:1-10, John describes a beast rising from the sea, which has ten horns and seven heads. This beast is a symbol of a powerful, oppressive ruler or empire that blasphemes God and persecutes the saints. This imagery parallels the fourth beast in Daniel 7, which also has ten horns and represents a tyrannical ruler who speaks against the Most High and persecutes the saints (Daniel 7:8, 25).*

***Blasphemy and Persecution:** Both passages describe a figure who blasphemes against God and persecutes His people. The beast in Revelation 13 is given authority to make war against the saints and to overcome them (Revelation 13:7). Similarly, the little horn in Daniel 7 speaks boastfully and oppresses the holy people of the Most High (Daniel 7:25).*

***Authority and Power:** In Daniel 7:23-24, the fourth beast (which is often associated with the little horn) has great power and authority, representing a dominant and oppressive kingdom. The beast in Revelation 13:2 is also granted authority and power by the dragon (Satan) and exercises this power to control and deceive.*

***End Times Context:** Both passages are situated within apocalyptic literature, discussing events and figures associated with the end times. They provide a vision of the final opposition to God's kingdom and the trials faced by believers.*

***Duration of Oppression:** Daniel 7:25 mentions that the little horn will oppress the saints for a time, times, and half a time [$3\frac{1}{2}$], which is often interpreted as a symbolic period of intense tribulation. Revelation 13:5-7 describes a similar period [42 months= $3\frac{1}{2}$ years] during which the beast has authority to act, symbolizing a time of persecution.*

Revelation 11:15 - The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Both passages proclaim the coming of God's eternal kingdom. Revelation 11:15 announces that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of Christ,

signaling the transition from worldly rule to divine reign. Daniel 7:13-14 describes the "Son of Man" receiving an everlasting dominion from the "Ancient of Days," establishing an eternal kingdom that will never be destroyed. Revelation 11:15 says the Kingdom belongs to our Lord and His Messiah. The "Son of Man" and the "Messiah" are synonymous. Both passages emphasize the ultimate triumph of God's reign over earthly powers.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Daniel 7:1-28?

All human kingdoms are beastly and temporary – God's Kingdom is good and forever!



If the Old Testament points to Jesus and ***Scripture is all about Him*** (Luke 24:27), in what ways **Daniel 7:1-28** point to Jesus?

- a. The mention of the "Son of Man" is a clear reference to Jesus; who refers to himself as the "Son of Man" as do other New Testament passages
- b. God's kingdom is an eternal kingdom and Jesus speaks in terms of His own eternal reign (e.g., Luke 1:32-33; Revelation 11:15)
- c. The Judgment scene links to Jesus as the appointed judge of the world (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:22)

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V14 - 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.

Finish in prayer: Thanking God that the kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever!

Study 2 – Forewarned is Forearmed

Daniel 8:1-27

(Sermon on 22-September 2024)

Before we begin: Remind yourself where God's people are and why they are there? Do you think they would be wondering if there is a future for them back in their own land? If so, what would they envisage it would look like? (cf. Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10-**11**)

God's people are in exile in Babylon. They are there because of their continual sin and rebellion against God. They have disobeyed God's commandments and they have worshipped false gods and idols. God warned them continually of this rebellion throughout many of the Kings of Judah's reigns. But finally, God had enough and allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to invade Jerusalem and cart many of the people of Judah off into exile.

But as time went by the Babylonian kings: Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar are gone and so is Babylon; first replaced by the King of the Medes, Darius, and then by the King of Persia, Cyrus!

The exiles would be wondering if they would ever be allowed freedom to return to Judah and to rebuild the Jerusalem and the Temple.

They might have imagined that if they could return, they would have a King again and return to the days of self-rule.

Jeremiah had some prophecies about their time in exile.

Jeremiah 25:11-12: ¹¹ This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the Lord, "and will make it desolate forever.

Jeremiah 29:10-11: ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

It seems like there may be an end to their exile; but what will it be like for them?

Read Daniel 8:1-8

1. Who's the King at the time of Daniel's vision? Remind yourself what happened to him in chapter 5.

Just like Daniel 7, Daniel 8, is not in chronological order as Belshazzar is King Nebuchadnezzar's son, more likely his grandson, and in chapter 5, Belshazzar used

God's goblets from the temple in Jerusalem at his banquet. God sent a writing hand to write 'mene mene tekel parsin' on the wall as a judgment on Belshazzar and he met his demise!

2. Where was Daniel when he had a vision?

In the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; and in his vision, Daniel is beside the Uлай Canal.



3. Describe the ram and its actions in verses 3 and 4. Who does the ram represent? (cf. verse 20)

The ram had two long horns and stood beside the canal. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later than the other. The ram charged towards the west, the north and the south. No other animal seems to be able to stand against the ram. No animal could rescue from its power and it did as it pleased and became great.

*Verse 20 tells us that the two-horned ram represents the kings of **Media and Persia**. Presumably the horn that grew up later would suggest that it was Persia which dominated Media.*

4. Describe the goat and its actions in verses 5 to 7. Who does the goat represent? (cf. verse 21)

A goat with a prominent horn came from the west and charged at the two-horned ram with great rage. It attacked the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering the two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against the goat. The goat knocked the ram to the ground and trampled on it. Nothing could rescue the ram!

According to verse 21, the goat represents the King of **Greece** and its large horn between its eyes is the first King of Greece.



5. Describe what happens to the goat's large horn and what it was replaced with in verse 8. What do the four prominent horns represent? (cf. verse 22)

The goat (aka King of Greece) became very great but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off and replaced with four prominent horns which grew up towards the four winds of heaven.

*According to verse 22, these four horns represent **four kingdoms (of Greece)** that will emerge from this nation but will not have the same power as the one big horn (first King of Greece)*

Read Daniel 8:9-14

6. How is this horn described? What does this horn do in verses 10 to 12?

This horn came out of the four horns. It grew until it reached the hosts of heaven and even threw down the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. The host and stars are symbols used in the Old Testament for angels, kings and leaders, or the people of God at large

This horn set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord – and it took away the daily sacrifice from the Lord; and the Lord's sanctuary (temple) was thrown down. The Lord's people and the sacrifices could not continue because of this horn. The horn prospered in everything it did and truth was forsaken. This was a systematic dismantling of Israel's religion, sacrificial system and worship of God.

7. Who might this horn represent? (cf. verses 23-26)

This King is a fierce looking King, a master of intrigue (v23). He is very strong but not by his power (but by Satan's power). This King will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in everything he does; even destroying the Lord's people (v24). He will cause deceit to prosper. He will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes (v25) but he will be destroyed, not by human power [but by God's hand]

8. What question do the holy ones ask in their conversation in verse 13?

The holy ones ask, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled – the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the sanctuary and the trampling under foot of the Lord's people?"

9. What answer is given? What might this number mean?

The answer given is 2300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.

Bible scholars debate whether this is 2300 days or 1150 days (2300 divided by 2 because there is an evening and a morning sacrifice).

10. **Ponder:** Is there an event in Israel's history that fits this vision of the horn in verses 9 to 14?

A review of History...

The Goat represents Greece.

The first horn was the King of Greece – Alexander the Great.

Alexander was tutored by Aristotle and was an extremely wise man and an amazing military tactician.

By the age of 30, he had created one of the largest empires in history, stretching from Greece to northwestern India. He was undefeated in battle and is widely considered to be one of history's greatest and most successful military commanders.

*After the death of Alexander the Great [323BC], his empire was divided among his generals into **four major kingdoms**:*

***Lysimachus** - who took Thrace and much of Asia Minor.*

***Cassander** - controlled Macedonia and Greece.*

***Ptolemy I** - ruled Egypt, Palestine, Cilicia, Petra, and Cyprus.*

***Seleucus I Nicator** - ruled the remainder of Asia and founded the Seleucid Empire which included Mesopotamia, the Levant, Persia, and part of India.*

Out of this Seleucid Kingdom, **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** emerged [175BC to 164BC]. Epiphanes means “God Manifest” or “The Illustrious One”. Others referred to him as Epimanes (“The madman”). He abolished the daily and morning sacrifices and committed blasphemy by sacrificing a pig on the altar in the Temple, later placing a statue of Zeus in the temple and making human sacrifices on the altar. He stopped circumcision and the Sabbath. He forced the Jews to sacrifice to pagan god and eat pork or be killed.

He wasn't just trying to Hellenize [make people adopt Greek culture, religion, language and identity] the Jews but to totally eliminate any traces of Jewish culture and religion.

The Jewish response was to take up arms and fight. In 167—166 BC, Judas Maccabeus [Maccabean revolt] led the Jews in a series of victories over the military forces of the Syrian-Greeks. After vanquishing Antiochus and the Seleucids, the Jews cleaned and restored and reconsecrated the temple in c. 165.

Daniel 8:14 mentions the time period covered, 2,300 evenings and mornings, which works out to be 6 1/3 years. It is likely this prophecy was fulfilled during the reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). Antiochus desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and severely persecuted the Jews from about September 171/170 BC to December 165/164 BC. When Antiochus died, the Jews purified and rededicated the temple, just as Daniel had predicted. These events are commemorated in the Jewish celebration of **Hanukkah**.

A detailed account of this conflict between the Judas Maccabeus/Jews and Antiochus IV can be found in the intertestamental books 1 and 2 Maccabees in the Apocrypha.

In Revelation 11 and 12, John mentions 1,260 days in two prophecies concerning another persecution of the Jews during the end times. Daniel 8 speaks of 2,300 days in a prophecy concerning a persecution of the Jewish people during the intertestamental period. The main differences between these two prophecies are 1) Daniel's has been fulfilled, and John's has not; and 2) Daniel predicts the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes, and John predicts those of the Antichrist.

It's like, the prophecy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes is foreshadowing the Antichrist!

Read Daniel 8:15-22

11. Summarise the interpretation of the vision given.

A man tells angel Gabriel to tell Daniel the meaning of the vision (v16)

The Two horned ram is the kings of Media and Persia.

The shaggy goat is the King of Greece – the horn is the first king (Alexander the Great)

The four horns emerging and the four kingdoms replacing Alexander when he dies, who don't quite have the same power!

Read Daniel 8:23-25

12. Summarise the interpretation of the vision given.

*From one of these four emerging horns comes a wicked fierce looking King (Antiochus IV Epiphanes). He will wage war with God's people. His power comes from Satan (v24 – not by his own power) and eventually He is destroyed by God (v25 not by human power). **What we have is a spiritual war (Satan versus God – Evil versus good). Similar to Pharaoh versus God in the Exodus Plagues; similar to Haman versus God's people in the book of Esther; and similar to Satan versus Jesus on the Cross!***

Read Daniel 8:26-27

13. Why was Daniel told to seal up the vision?

Even though the details of the vision are true; Daniel is told to seal it up because it concerns the distant (not the immediate) future. It's not going to happen for 200 plus years.

14. How was Daniel feeling after all of this?

Worn out and exhausted. He's just seen what will happen to Kingdoms he thought were untouchable (i.e., Mede-Persia) and he's just seen what will happen in his homeland and to his people and what will happen in Jerusalem and the Temple! He was appalled by the vision but went about the King's business.

15. **Ponder:** How might the question "how long?" of verse 13 relate to us?

The how long question of verse 13 is answered with a figure of 2300 evenings and mornings in verse 14. Whether that is 2300 days or 1150 days; it is a rather long period but the fact that it is calculated in days means it is a limited one.

*For us, it means just like the suffering of the Jews in the time of Antiochus IV, **our time of suffering is real but it is for a limited time and not forever!***

16. **Ponder:** What might the 'end' be in verse 17?

In the context of the passage, the end in verse 17, is the end of the persecution and devastation the king (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) emerging from the four horns. It will come to an end when he is destroyed at the end of verse 25 – but not by human power (but by God's hand)

This prophecy also foreshadows God's ultimate victory over Satan in the book of Revelation.

17. **Ponder:** If indeed the event referred to in verses 9 to 14 is the reign of terror of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), why are Daniel and the Israelites being told of this event? And what might that mean to us?

In reality Antiochus IV was no minor king. God's people had never before faced what they would meet from Antiochus: a systematic programme designed to completely eradicate completely every trace of Israel's faith, worship and life. This extreme situation justified Daniel's detailed prophecy/prediction. Is it not the kindness of the Lord to prepare His people for the extreme trouble they will have to endure? Forewarned is forearmed!

Similarly, we know from Jesus' teaching, that there is a cost of discipleship; that we will suffer for being His followers and we will have trouble in this world.

18. **Ponder:** Is this prophecy of the reign of terror of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) also pointing further forward beyond our time? (cf. Revelation 13:1-8 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) What do you think?

Just like the Jews had to face the reign of terror of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), we too are warned of what lies ahead in various New Testament passages.

Revelation 13:1-8

This passage speaks of a beast coming out of the sea, which seems to have attributes of the four beasts of Daniel chapter 7. And just like here in Daniel chapter 8, the beast has power and wages war on God's people for a limited time (42 months in this case). And again, it is a spiritual war – evil versus good – Satan versus God. But God's people will be preserved (all those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life).

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Paul speaks of a future time when the man of lawlessness, a figure like Antiochus IV, the antichrist, will come. He is doomed for destruction. But for a while he will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped (just like Antiochus IV did) and he will set himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Read the following new Testament passages and explain how they relate to Daniel 8:1-28...

John 15:18-16:4a

In this passage Jesus warns His disciples that they will be hated by the World. They will be mistreated the same way as Jesus, their Master, was treated.

Jesus goes on to say in 16:1 – that he warns them of this, so that they will not fall way! Forewarned is forearmed, just as in the Daniel 8 prophecy!

*Both passages deal with **the theme of persecution**. In John, Jesus prepares His disciples for the personal persecution they will endure for their faith. In Daniel, the vision foretells broader, more systemic persecution against the people of God by powerful earthly forces.*

*Both passages affirm that **despite the presence of opposition and suffering, God remains sovereign**. In John, Jesus assures His followers of the Spirit's guidance and the ultimate victory through Him. In Daniel, the vision ultimately points to the triumph of God's kingdom over earthly powers.*

*Both passages offer **a prophetic view of future events**, though in different ways. Jesus' discourse is a direct prediction of coming trials for His followers, whereas Daniel's vision is a symbolic representation of future historical events.*

Revelation 13:1-8

*Both passages use **symbolic imagery of beasts to represent powerful and oppressive political entities**. In Daniel 8, the "little horn" emerges from a goat, symbolizing a specific historical figure or power. In Revelation 13, the beast from the sea represents a broader, end-time entity or system characterized by blasphemy and persecution.*

Both passages describe **the persecution of God's people**. Daniel 8:10-12 describes the little horn's actions against the "holy people" and the desecration of the temple. Revelation 13:7-8 depicts the beast making war against the saints and overcoming them, signifying a period of intense tribulation for the faithful. Both passages show the **ultimate sovereignty of God and His judgment over these oppressive powers**. In Daniel 8, despite the apparent triumph of the little horn, the vision ends with the assurance that **the time of persecution will be limited**. Revelation 13, while depicting the beast's temporary dominance, fits within a broader narrative of divine judgment and eventual triumph of God's kingdom.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Both passages talk about desolation and desecration of God's sanctuary/temple. Both passages talk about direct opposition to God and His people. Although Daniel's prophecy is related to the time of Antiochus IV, it also points forward to end times, as does the prophecy in 2 Thessalonians 2. Both passages show that the persecution prophesied is for a limited time and that God is sovereign and will ultimately judge this rebellion.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Daniel 8:1-27?

God forewarns persecution and suffering for His people – but it is for a limited time – and the source of this persecution and suffering will be dealt with!

OR more simply

Forewarned is forearmed!



If the Old Testament points to Jesus and **Scripture is all about Him** (Luke 24:27), in what ways **Daniel 8:1-27** point to Jesus?

- a. The rise and fall of the Kings represented by the ram and the goat, show that earthly kingdoms are temporary in comparison to Jesus' forever Kingdom
- b. The rise and fall of the horn which represents Antiochus points to Jesus' second coming and judgment of all people.
- c. The vision in Daniel 8:14 concludes with the promise of restoration of the sanctuary/temple and divine justice. Similarly, the promise of Jesus' return offers the promise of complete restoration and all things made new.
- d. Daniel 8 foreshadows the spiritual battle between Satan and Jesus.

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Verse 14: He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."

Finish in prayer: Thanking God that His timing is perfect and that His Word gives us detailed warnings on what lies ahead.

Study 3 – A Prayer and a Prophecy

Daniel 9:1-27

(Sermon on 29-September 2024)

Before we begin: What's your prayer life like? What **types** of prayers do you tend to pray? Share with your group if you feel comfortable doing so.

I pray daily on my own; also, most days with Heather (either morning or night; mostly night); and I also pray 5 days out of 7 each morning (7:30am) with a friend. My prayers are generally thanking God for the day I have had or committing the day ahead to God.

Too often my prayers are more supplication (asking God for stuff) and not so much adoration, confession or thanks.

I've also felt convicted by Daniel's three times per day prayer life and his posture on his knees, submitting to God (Daniel 6:10)

Note: During the Sunday services, we have 2 prayers

*a. **A prayer of Adoration and Confession** – followed by the Lord's Prayer said corporately and note the Lord's Prayer starts with adoration too!*

*b. **A prayer of Thanksgiving and Supplication** (aka Pastoral Prayer).*

*The two prayers spell **ACTS** (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) which is a good reminder of the four types of prayers we should pray to our Lord God.*

Read Daniel 9:1-19

1. Who's the King now? What's significant about **this** King ruling?

The King is Darius, son of Xerxes (of Media). Darius was the King who took over the Babylonian Kingdom from Belshazzar (Daniel 5:31) after the "writing on the wall" episode!

2. What has Daniel been reading in verse 2 that prompted him to pray? (cf. Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10-11)

In the 1st year of Darius' reign, Daniel was reading the Scriptures and in particular from the prophet Jeremiah.

We mentioned these two passages in the last study

In Jeremiah 25:11-12, Jeremiah prophesied:

¹¹ *This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.* ¹² *“But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the Lord, “and will make it desolate forever.*

Jeremiah 29:10-11:

¹⁰ *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.”* ¹¹ *For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.*

*From his reading of Scripture, Daniel knows that the time of exile in Babylon for God’s people is limited to **70 years**, according to the prophet Jeremiah. This **70-year** time period is almost up, as Daniel reads this promise from God; and this prompts Daniel to pray.*

3. Ponder: How might being faithful in reading the Bible, prompt us to pray? Give an example how this works in your life?

It’s always a worthwhile exercise when reading the Bible, if we put ourselves in the midst of the passage. Ask ourselves what the original readers/listeners would have been feeling/thinking. And then ask ourselves, how it might lead us to pray today. So, for example, if we read Psalm 22, written by King David, it opens with David expressing how he feels like God has forsaken him – v1 “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”. As we read through the Psalm, we get amazing detail of how David feels about his enemies and how they surround him and treat him. This might prompt us to recall times in our lives or situations in our life right now, where we feel under attack. Like King David, we can ask for God’s help. As we read further, we see David come back to the realization that God’s is the one who will help him; God is his rescuer and God is worthy of praise for His faithfulness. This might then prompt us to come to that same realization and acknowledge and praise God’s faithfulness to us.

If we also, realize as we read Psalm 22, that the Psalm is not just about King David but also about King Jesus on the cross, who utters the same words as verse 1 (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). This might lead us to think about Jesus’ suffering and enormous sacrifice for our sins to be forgiven; and this in turn might lead us to a) confess our sins that were put on Him and b) to thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, as the once and for all sacrifice for sin!

That's how reading scripture can guide our prayer life!

4. What do we learn from the start of Daniel's prayer in **verses 3 & 4** about the **type** of prayer this is going to be? Is there a hint of more than one **type** of prayer in verse 4?

*In verse 3, we are told Daniel turns to God in prayer and **petition** [similar to supplication – asking for God's help] and Daniel's approach is in **fasting, sackcloth and ashes**.*

***Fasting** is usually used to help people take their eyes off worldly matters and focus on God and have a deeper fellowship with Him and draw close to Him – and not so we gain God's favour.*

***The use of sackcloth and ashes** – were the means used in Biblical times as a **symbol of mourning of sin and repentance**. Someone wanting to show their repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of their head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made from goat hair, making it uncomfortable to wear; just like feeling uncomfortable about sin. The ashes signified desolation and ruin. Sackcloth was also worn in times of grief or loss of a loved one.*

*From verse 3 (sackcloth and ashes) and from verse 4 (I prayed and confessed), we can expect that the prayer will mainly be a prayer of **confession**.*

*However, just like in the Lord's Prayer, Daniel begins his prayer, with **adoration**: "Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and keep His commandments". Here Daniel acknowledges how great our God is, before he continues his prayer; surely, we can learn from this too!*

5. Summarise the sad content of Daniel's prayer from verses 5 to 14? How would you sum up Daniel's focus in these verses? How do these verses explain the reasons why the Israelites were carried off to exile in Babylon?

Summary:

- a. The Israelites have sinned; they have been wicked and rebelled and turned away from God's commands and laws (vv5, 9, 10, 11 and 14)*
- b. They have not listened to God's prophets (vv6, 10)*
- c. They have been scattered (exiled) – not because God is being mean to them – but because of their unfaithfulness to God! (v7)*
- d. They have received the curses and sworn judgements written in the Law of Moses, which God promised them [Deuteronomy 28], if they sinned against*

*God; which included the desolation of Jerusalem, which was unprecedented.
(vv11, 12, 13)*

***Daniel's focus** is on the sin and rebellion against God of his people, the Israelites; and how God has acted with complete righteousness in all He has done in response to that rebellion.*

These verses explain in great detail the reasons why the Israelites were carried off to exile in Babylon; and why they have no excuse and no cause to complain to God!

6. **Ponder:** One of the primary marks of a Christian is that he or she continually mourns over his or her sins. Do you agree? Yes? No? Why? Why not?

Yes, I agree.

What distinguishes us from the world is not that we are less wicked but that by God's grace we have learned to see our wickedness for what it is and that we need to/must confess our sins. The church [the body of believers] is the only body on Earth that confesses sin. Where the confession of sin dies out, the church is no longer a church.

For example, the local RSL club, the local Sports club or Surf Club, the local Council, the Senate or the Parliament, do not engage in confessing sin; only the church (when it's really a church, does!)

7. What is the primary concern of Daniel's prayer in verses 15 to 19?

The primary concern is that God would turn away His wrath on His people (the Israelites) and turn his wrath away from His Holy City of Jerusalem; a wrath God sent because of the people's continual sin and rebellion against Him.

8. What specific phrases in Daniel's prayer in verses 15 to 19 impress you?

*V15 – the reminder that the Lord is the one '**who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name (holy name)**'*

*V16 – '**Lord, in keeping with your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill**'*

*V17 – '**For your sake, Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary**' – Daniel is concerned about the Lord's holy reputation.*

V18 – ‘We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, **but because of your great mercy**’ – Daniel gives us the right perspective when we ask for God’s help!

V19 – ‘**For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name**’ – again Daniel is concerned about God’s holy reputation.

9. **Ponder:** What do you think Daniel teaches us about prayer from verses 4 to 19?
Daniel’s prayer teaches us:

- a. **Our prayers can be motivated and shaped by what we read in Scripture;** and that can only happen, if we actually read God’s Word regularly and meditate on it and apply it to our lives (remember: The best book to read is the Bible!)
- b. **Our prayers should not be only supplication** (shopping list) but should include **adoration** (as in verse 4) and **confession**; as well as **thanksgiving**.
- c. Our prayers should be **sincere and heartfelt**, laying bear to God exactly **why** and **how** we fall short of His perfect standards.
- d. There should be a focus on God’s awesomeness, righteousness and His reputation as a Holy and merciful God.
- e. When we pray, we’re **not asking God to help/answer because of our righteousness or because we deserve it; but because of His great mercy** (which we see clearly in God sending His Son as our Lord and Saviour).

10. **Optional challenge:** Write a prayer of adoration and confession. Share it with your group. If you are willing, share it with your minister and it will be used as a prayer of adoration and confession in our church service in the future.

The prayer used last Sunday 22nd September:

Adoration

Heavenly Father, you are sovereign over all of human history.

You know the beginning from the end and every detail in between.

Your timing is perfect throughout history.

You know when to intervene and when to show restraint.

You have given us your Holy Word to learn from – and in your infinite kindness your Holy Word forewarns us of suffering and persecution to come – and yet at the same time, we know with confidence that you promise never to leave us, nor forsake us – and we know that you have victory over Satan, sin and death – through the death and resurrection of your precious Son, our Lord Jesus.

What an awesome God, you are!

Confession

We also examine our hearts this morning – and we acknowledge that we all fall short of your perfect standards.

Our thoughts are sometimes impure and not like yours

Our words are sometimes harsh and hurtful and unkind.

We sometimes get sucked in by the patterns and temptations of this world – so our behaviour is ungodly – because we follow the ways of the world – and not your ways.

We sometimes let opportunities to stand up for you, and your Son and your Word – go by, because we want to please human beings rather than You. We are ashamed of that Father!

Sometimes when we face suffering, we want to give up – forgetting your promises and forgetting that you are always with us.

And sometimes we neglect to pray and meditate on your word – and so our hearts and minds are not renewed and in step with you.

Please forgive us – and equips us – to be more like your Son Jesus who left us, which we can pray together...

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.*

Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us,

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;

for Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Read Daniel 9:20-23

11. What do we learn about prayer and God's response from verses 20 to 23?

*We learn that as Daniel prayed, confessing his sin and the sin of the Israelites; and making his request to restore God's holy hill in Jerusalem; **God was listening and Daniel's prayers were heard immediately.***

God sent the Angel Gabriel – the same angel who interpreted the vision in chapter 8 appeared again here about the time of the evening sacrifice.

The phrase **“about the time of the evening sacrifice”** is a great insight in to Daniel’s spiritual life. Even though there have been no sacrifices for over 50 years because Jerusalem and the temple lay in ruins and the Israelites are in exile; Daniel’s spiritual clock is still plugged in to the worship of God, the way it’s always been.

God sent Gabriel to give Daniel ‘insight and understanding’.

Gabriel tells Daniel that as soon as he prayed, a word went out [from God], to come and speak to Daniel. Why? Because Daniel is highly esteemed [see Luke 1:28 – a better translation would be ‘**deeply loved**’ or ‘**highly favoured**’.

From this, we can be assured, that God does hear our prayers and does listen and will answer, when we approach God, as Daniel did, with a humble and contrite heart, with concern for God’s holy reputation, and submit to His sovereign will and purpose in all things!

12. In what ways did Gabriel encourage Daniel in verses 21 to 23?

- *Gabriel came to Daniel in a swift flight and at a spiritual time for Daniel (the time of the evening sacrifice)*
- *Gabriel tells Daniel that he has come to give Daniel insight and understanding*
- *Gabriel tells Daniel as soon as he prayed, God sent word without any delay.*
- *Gabriel tells Daniel that he is highly esteemed (deeply loved or highly favoured)*

All this would have been of great encouragement to Daniel.

Read Daniel 9:24-27

13. Verses 24 to 27 are straight forward prophecy, said no-one ever! Before we look at the detail of the “seventy ‘sevens’”, what is the **six-fold purpose** of this “seventy ‘sevens’” prophecy in verse 24?

Verse 24 is saying that there will be a time period of “seventy ‘sevens’” when God’s six-fold purpose for Israel will be achieved:

- i) **To finish transgression** - This says that transgression itself will be finished. **It’s a time when there is an end of rebellion against God.** Taken literally, this means establishing an entirely new order on earth. This is something that can only happen at the time of the end!

- ii) **To put an end to sin** - Taking these words at face value, this means not only the end of the guilt of sin, but an end of sin itself. It means to “seal up” or to “restrain” sins. This looks to a new, redeemed world.
- iii) **To atone for wickedness** - humankind’s sinfulness must be paid for (atoned for); God’s wrath must be appeased and humankind must be reconciled to a just and holy God. This can only be done by God’s Son and the Cross. The “seventy ‘sevens’” can be seen as a demonstration of God’s wrath against His people, just as the seventy years in exile were! But both time periods have an end to God’s wrath.
- iv) **To bring everlasting righteousness** – Although in one sense, some individuals can be righteous; no human being is fully righteous. We can only be righteous (right with God and approved by God) by being attached to Jesus, the Messiah, who brings in His everlasting righteousness in His everlasting Kingdom. The time is coming when enduring righteousness will exist; when the first three of the six-fold purposes are achieved.
- v) **To seal up vision and prophecy** - This speaks of both the ending and fulfillment of visions and prophecies [they won’t be needed anymore], concluding the final stage of human history and culminating with the reign of the Son of God. The time will come when there will no longer be any need for intermediaries such as prophets or the visions they see, to intervene between God and His people. Hence the ‘sealing’ of vision and prophecy denotes the cessation of prophetic activity in the ultimate Kingdom of God.
- vi) **To anoint the Most Holy Place** – The Most Holy Place is of course the Temple – the Holy Presence of God! And points to the consecration of a new sanctuary at the end time.

The first three purposes are ‘negative’, having to do with sin.

The second three are ‘positive’, dealing more with fulfilment.

As we read through the whole prophecy of verses 24 to 27, we will find that the author speaks with considerable, and probably deliberate, ambiguity about the opening date of the approximately 500 years of which verse 24 describes the six-fold goal of this prophecy. This ambiguity means we can’t be certain of the starting point and so verse 24 can be linked to either what happened when the temple was cleansed and rededicated immediately following the fearful events of the persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes or can be linked to when Jesus Himself

died and rose again. The language of this prophecy seems more likely to fit that it's the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, that puts an end to sin and atones for iniquity rather than what happened in the Maccabean revolt to overturn Antiochus IV desolation of Jerusalem and the Temple.

14. What connection might there be between the number mentioned by Jeremiah in verse 2 and the number mentioned in verse 24?

When Daniel reads the prophecy of Jeremiah in verse 2, he discovers that the exile and desolation of Jerusalem (and the Temple) will be for seventy years only. This prompts Daniel to pray: confessing the sin and rebellion of Israel that brought the exile and desolation; and asking God, for the sake of His holy name and reputation, to put an end to His wrath, after 70 years, as He promised Jeremiah. The answer to Daniel's prayer comes via the Angel Gabriel, that there is indeed another "seventy" time period that is way more significant than Jeremiah's "seventy" time period. That is not to say, that Jeremiah's "seventy" won't also be fulfilled!

15. What does 'sevens' mean in verses 24, 25, 26 and 27? Is it literal or symbolic? (remember it's apocalyptic literature). Does seventy 'sevens' mean seventy weeks or seventy weeks of years (490 years)? (cf. Matthew 18:22)

The Hebrew word [shavua] used for "sevens" here in verses 24, 25, 26 and 27 can mean: a) seven; b) a period of seven days or seven years; c) a heptad [a group or set of seven]; or d) a week.

The same Hebrew word [shavua] is used in chapter 10, verses 2 and 3 but it is accompanied by the Hebrew word [Yom] which means day. So, it is translated as seven days; i.e., a week. Whereas here in chapter 9, there is no Yom for days, so it assumed that 'sevens' is being used differently here in chapter 9; arriving at the assumption that 'sevens' means a group of 'seven years'. So, seventy 'sevens' means seventy groups of seven years = 70×7 years = 490 years.

*The question remains is the "seventy 'sevens'" literally 490 years or is it approximate or is it symbolic? To confuse [or clarify] us further, in Matthew 18:22 – Jesus replies to Peter's question 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' by saying **"I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times [or seventy times seven times]!"**. Jesus is not being literal here and saying we must forgive 490 times and then on the*

491st time, not forgive; but instead saying seventy times seven means keep on forgiving indefinitely without keeping count.

Just like in the vision of four beasts in chapter 7, a great deal of ink, paper, books and keyboards have been used up to try and work out how these “seventy ‘sevens’” line up with events in human history.

If we try to work out how these “seventy ‘sevens’” line up; we can end up with seventy problems!

Here’s some of the questions that we have to deal with:

- *Is the ‘sevens’ mentioned - weeks or years?*
- *Are they literally 490 years or symbolic?*
- *How do we understand the phrase ‘finish transgression’ in verse 24? Is this fulfilled in Jesus’ first coming or do they point to the ultimate fulfilment when Jesus returns a second time?*
- *Who is giving the ‘word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem’? Is it Jeremiah’s word or is it King Cyrus’ decree of 538BC (Ezra 1:1-4)? Or is it King Artaxerxes I in 458BC (Ezra 7)? Or Artaxerxes I in 445BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8)?*
- *Is the Anointed One in verse 25a referring to the Messiah or some other leader?*
- *Are the sixty-two ‘sevens’ in verse 26b a distinct segment of time or are they combined with the preceding seven ‘sevens’?*
- *When verse 26a says ‘after the sixty-two ‘sevens’’, does it mean the rest of the verse describes what happens in the seventieth ‘seven’ (v27) or does it imply there is a gap between the sixty-two ‘sevens’ and the last ‘seven’?*
- *Who is the Anointed one put to death in verse 26? Is he identical to the Anointed One in verse 25?*
- *Who is the ruler who is coming in verse 26b?*
- *Does the end in verse 26c refer to the end of the city and sanctuary or should it be the end of the coming ruler?*
- *Who is the ‘he’ who confirms a covenant in verse 27? The Anointed One or the ruler coming? What sort of covenant is it, a beneficial one or detrimental one?*
- *Is it positive or negative when the sacrifices are put to an end?*

To quote Dale Ralph Davis – “If you’re driving home late at night and tune in to the ‘Prophecy Hour’ on the radio and hear the preacher refer to ‘what is perfectly clear in Daniel’s seventy sevens prophecy’; you know the preacher hasn’t read the passage very carefully!”

Verses 24 to 27 seem to say to Israel: The Kingdom of God will NOT immediately appear and you must prepare for ‘a long obedience in the same direction’. Perhaps a way forward if we DON’T take a literal view-point of these weeks/years is to say:

Seven ‘sevens’ (v25) = a relatively restricted time period

Sixty-two ‘sevens’ (v25) = a relatively extended time period

One ‘seven’ (v27) = a clearly climactic time period, resulting in the end

16. According to verses 25 to 27, the seventy ‘sevens’ are broken down into seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens’ and then a final ‘seven’ which adds up to seventy ‘sevens’. Therefore, what does the prophecy say happens:

a. After the first seven ‘sevens’? Has this happened?

The word goes out to restore the temple and rebuild the Jerusalem (most likely Jeremaih in 29:10-11; but could be Cyrus or Artaxerxes)

The anointed one in verse 25a can be Cyrus – as Cyrus is referred to as God’s anointed one in Isaiah 45:1. Cyrus permitted the exiles to return home.

Other possibilities of the anointed one are Zerubbabel, the princely descendant of the Davidic line (Zechariah 4:6; Ezra 2:2); or Joshua the high priest associated with Zerubbabel (Zechariah 3; 6:9).

Jerusalem and the temple are rebuilt in Ezra and Nehemiah’s time but it was in ‘times of trouble’ (v25).

All this has happened and has fulfilled Jeremiah’s prophecy of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple, as well as Daniel’s seven ‘sevens’ prophecy.

These seven ‘sevens’ are a time when hope returns. The word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem goes out. Whether the anointed one is Cyrus or someone else, the word of restoration would be an encouraging note for Daniel and his people in exile.

b. After the sixty-two 'sevens'? Has this happened?

After the sixty-two 'sevens', the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing (v26). This seems to refer to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus' death and it appears to the world that He no longer has any influence. In the wake of the Anointed One's death, the city [Jerusalem] and sanctuary [Temple] will be destroyed (v26). Daniel had prayed the city and sanctuary would be restored [in Daniel 9:16-18] and they would be (v25) – then reduced to ruins once more (v26).

Note: those who think these verses refer to a prophecy or description of the events that took place under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, usually do so because they don't like dating the book of Daniel to be written in Daniel's time but date the book as being written in 2nd century BC at the time of Antiochus IV. Therefore, they interpret the anointed one put to death as the murder of the high priest Onias (170BC) and the destruction of the city and sanctuary by the people of the ruler as being by mercenary troops in 168BC. And the covenant with many is made when Antiochus IV made many Jews apostate; and the cessation of the sacrifices and offerings was Antiochus' attempt to get rid of the religion of the Jews altogether. And this cessation of the sacrifices by Antiochus lasted 3 ½ years. This view can fit. But all the various suggested interpretations are fraught with problems when you try to make the 'sevens' literally fit times and dates in history.

These sixty-two 'sevens' are a time when life goes on. It is a time when restoration is accomplished. The city built again, even though in times of trouble but not a time of wreck and ruin. So, life progresses for an apparently extended period that seems to reflect an approximate answer to Daniel's prayer (9:16-19). Then the clouds gather (v26) after the sixty-two 'sevens' when the Messiah is put to death and the destruction of the city and sanctuary that had been restored, takes place. Some take this as referring to the Romans destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. All this leads to a continuing tumultuous time as v26 says 'war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed'

The mention of war to the end and desolations implies a continuing conflict between a powerful enemy of God fighting and resisting God's purposes until the end of the seventy 'sevens'.

c. Half-way through the final 'seven'? Has this happened?

Verse 27 – brings us to the seventieth 'seven'.

Who is the 'he' confirming the covenant with many and putting an end to sacrifice and offering?

Some say, the anointed One, the Messiah, Jesus, of verse 26. Those who see this as Jesus, point to the new covenant He makes and the fact that His once and for all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12-14) puts an end to needing sacrifice for sins.

Others say, that the 'he' is the more recently mentioned 'he' of verse 26b, the ruler who is coming. The support for taking this view is the Hebrew verb form suggests a coercive imposing of the covenant; and also when legitimate worship is stopped or taken away elsewhere in Daniel (8:11-12; 11:31), it is a hostile act by an ungodly ruler, so one would expect the same here.

On balance, verse 27 has not happened yet – and half way through this final 'seven', the enemy of God (Antichrist) will come and seek to impose idolatrous worship (abominations – just like Antiochus IV did and Titus in 70AD for that matter) and instigate idolatrous worship – right in the middle of the last 'seven' – a 3 ½ time period which represents a limited time

d. At the end of the final 'seven'? Has this happened?

As we said, V27 has not happened yet – and after the time that the covenant has been made and the sacrifices have been stopped for a time by this final enemy of God; the enemy of God then runs into the meatgrinder of God's decreed punishment to be poured out on him (v27c) when Jesus comes to judge and consummate His forever Kingdom.

Many scholars believe the end of Daniel's prophecy reveals some of the actions of the Antichrist, the "ruler who will come." Verse 27 says, "He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.'" However, "in the middle of the 'seven,' . . . he will set up an abomination that causes desolation" in the temple. Jesus warned of this event in Matthew 24:15. After the Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel, a time of "great tribulation" begins (Matthew 24:21). Daniel also predicts that the Antichrist will face judgment. He only rules "until the end that is decreed is poured out on him" (Daniel 9:27). God will only allow evil to go so far, and the judgment the Antichrist will face has already been planned out. (see 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13).

Just a note on foreshadowing of events to come

As we've seen already in Daniel chapter 7 and 8, future events are foreshadowed in earlier smaller events. For example, the desolation of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Daniel 8) foreshadows the Antichrist doing the same thing in the future (2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13).

So, when it comes to Daniel 9:24-27 the passage can have a double reference to both the actions of Antiochus and the actions of the Antichrist to come; and a double reference to Christ's first coming and His second coming.

This is nothing new in scripture – Psalm 22 describes David suffering and also the community suffering and also Christ suffering. See also the double meanings in Isaiah 53 and Genesis 22.

Commentator and author, Joyce Baldwin, says "a characteristic of apocalyptic literature is using past events to typify a supremely important future event".

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

17. How does this passage relate to Daniel 9 and does it offer you encouragement?

*2 Thessalonians 2 and Daniel 9 (especially verses 24-27) both deal with themes of **prophecy**, the **end times**, and the **rise of a figure often associated with opposition to God**.*

*In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul discusses the "**man of lawlessness**" who will exalt himself above all that is called God, leading to a period of deception before the return of Christ. This passage emphasizes the importance of discernment in the face of false teachings and the eventual triumph of God over evil.*

*In Daniel 9, particularly verses 24-27, the prophecy outlines a period of seventy 'sevens', culminating in the coming of an anointed one and the establishment of a covenant. Verse 27 mentions **a ruler who will make a covenant and then break it**, which many interpret as a reference to a **future antagonist – the Antichrist** – like the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2.*

The connection between the two passages lies in the themes of deception, the rise of a powerful figure opposed to God, and the end times. Both texts highlight the idea that God's ultimate plan will prevail despite periods of turmoil and opposition.

The encouragement is found in 2 Thes 2:8 – the Lord will overthrow the “man of lawlessness” with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendour of His coming. This is reiterated in Daniel 9:27 that there is an end decreed for the one who carries out an abomination that causes desolation.

And we as Christians are told in 2 Thes 2:13-14 – that we are chosen by God as His firstfruits to be saved and are called to this, through the Gospel, so that we might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus. Praise God!

In the meantime, we are to stand firm and hold fast to the teachings of our Lord Jesus (2 Thes 2:15).

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Daniel 9:1-27**?

Prayer and prophecy are a gift from God.

OR

God is faithful to His covenant promises and gives the assurance of redemption, even amidst extreme adversity.



If the Old Testament points to Jesus and **Scripture is all about Him** (Luke 24:27), in what ways **Daniel 9:1-27** point to Jesus?

- a. As the Anointed one – vv25-26*
- b. The seventy ‘sevens’ is a timeline pointing to Jesus’ ministry and salvation*
- c. The Anointed one who will be put to death = Jesus’ death on the cross*
- d. The restoration of the Temple – remember Jesus describes Himself as the Temple*
- e. The restoration of God’s people through the six-fold purposes of v24 all point to Jesus’ restoration through His death and resurrection and His second coming in judgment to establish His Kingdom forever.*

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

TOO MANY! Especially to do with the seventy ‘sevens’ prophecy.

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V18 - We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.

V24 - “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in

everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

Finish in prayer: Thanking God for the gift of prayer and the gift of prophecy.

Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke
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Resources:

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

The Message of Daniel (Dale Ralph Davis)

Daniel Study Commentary (Allan M. Harman)

The Big Picture of Daniel (M.A. Butler)

The Message of Daniel (Ronald S. Wallace)