

Identifying the Beast in Daniel's 70th Week

Tracing the Serpent from Eden to Rome

A Study Through Daniel, Revelation, and History

“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” — Revelation 17:9

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Introduction: One Spirit, Four Empires, One Ending

I want to identify the beast of Daniel's 70th Week — not by guessing at a single man, but by tracing the same spirit through four empires in Daniel chapter seven, watching it resurface across Revelation's chapters twelve, thirteen, and seventeen, and tracking it through real history from Rome's own emperors down to the modern era. Each empire in Daniel's vision devours the one before it, and the last is the fiercest of all. That last empire is Rome — and, in my own reading, did not vanish so much as transform, becoming the Holy Roman Empire under the German king Otto the Great in 962 AD. This study seeks to trace that transformation carefully, historically, and scripturally, from Eden's serpent to the final false prophet of Daniel's last week.

Part I. Four Beasts, One Spirit (Daniel 7:3-8)

Summary

Daniel sees four great beasts rise from the sea, one after another, each stranger and more terrible than the last — and I read all four as sharing a single spiritual root, a root that traces back to Eden's serpent and will surface one final time in Daniel's 70th Week.

Key Verses

“And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings... After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly... and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things” — Daniel 7:3-8

Four Empires, Named

The first beast, the lion with eagle's wings, is Babylon. The second, the bear raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth, is Media-Persia. The third, the four-headed leopard, is Greece. The fourth, dreadful and strong beyond description, with iron teeth and ten horns, is Rome — the empire this study spends the rest of its time tracing.

The Serpent Behind the Beasts

Something worth noting in the lion's own description: it “had eagle's wings.” Satan presents himself against mankind as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour — “your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Job meets that same picture when Satan tells YAHWEH he has been “going to and fro in the

earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7). Satan also presents himself as an angel of light — and I read the eagle's wings here as the same false-prophet pattern, a counterfeit of the true eagle's wings YAHWEH used to carry His own people out of Egypt: *"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Exodus 19:4)*, and the same wings given to the woman fleeing into the wilderness in Revelation 12:14. Every empire in Daniel's vision, in my own reading, carries this same lion-and-false-prophet spirit forward, cultivated across each successive kingdom until it reaches Rome and, through Rome, the church that took Rome's own name.

Where This Spirit Began

Let us read about Satan and how he works through the serpent's cunning. "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which YAHWEH Elohim had made" (Genesis 3:1), and after the fall, YAHWEH tells the serpent, *"because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life"* (Genesis 3:14). I read "beast" here as more than an animal — it is the same word this study will trace all the way to Revelation's own beast rising from the sea (Revelation 13:1). From Genesis to Revelation, one spirit works through humankind's empires, wearing a different face in every age but always the same nature underneath.

Part II. The Dragon and the Woman (Revelation 12, 13, 17)

Summary

Revelation names what Daniel only pictured: the dragon behind the beast is Satan himself, and the beast he empowers is ridden by a woman — Mystery Babylon — whose seven heads are both seven mountains and seven kings.

Key Verses

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" — Revelation 12:3, 9

The Dragon Named

"The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). I want to notice that last phrase plainly: he deceives the whole world, not merely one nation or one age. His color is red for the blood

he sheds as he works through these empires, first into pagan Rome and then, in my own reading, into the church that took Rome's own name and seat.

A Beast Rising From the Sea

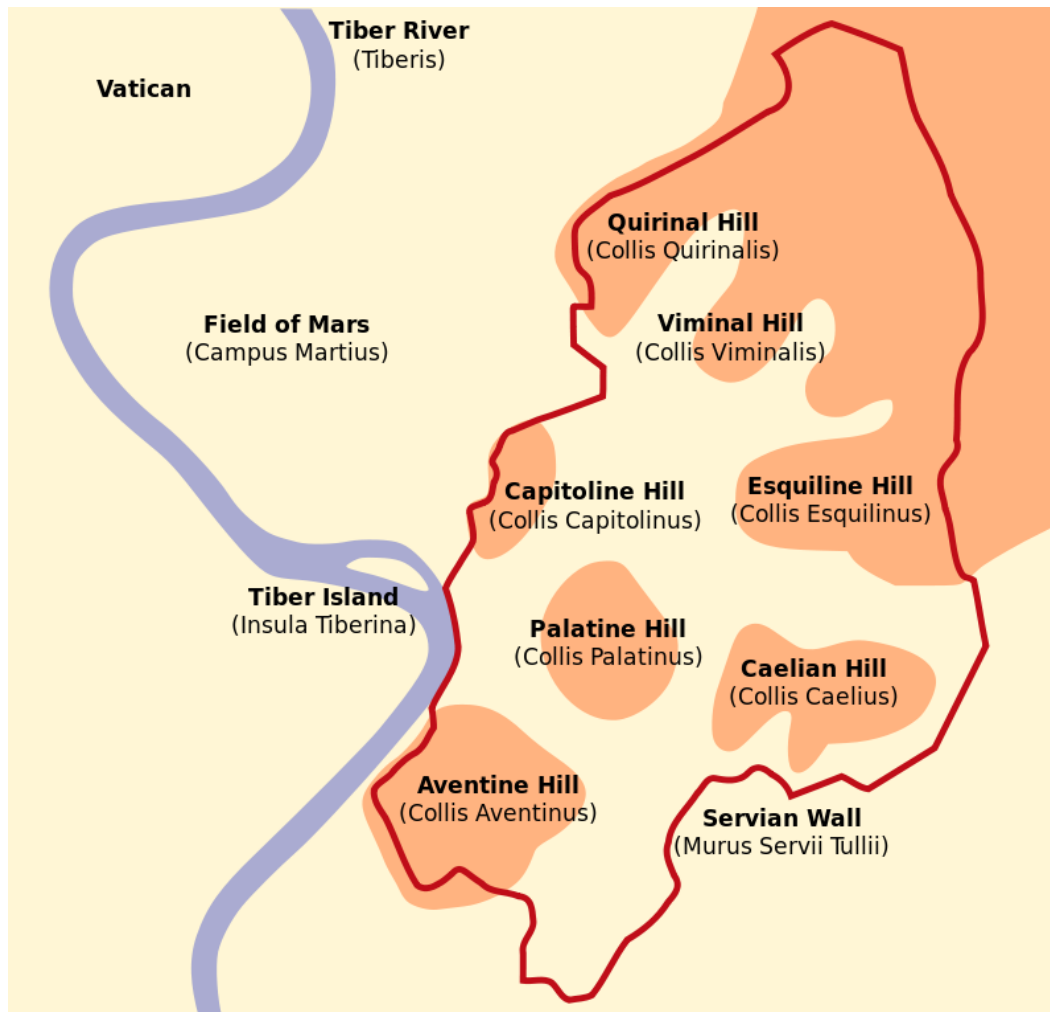
“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (Revelation 13:1). This is the same beast Daniel already showed us rising “from the sea” in Daniel 7:3 — the same Mediterranean world and empire, now returning for one final appearance in the 70th Week.

The Woman on the Beast

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3). “And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Revelation 17:5). I read this woman as the same ecumenical, counterfeit-worship spirit for which Israel herself was judged — “they feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen... and served idols... and they left all the commandments of YAHWEH their Elohim” (2 Kings 17:7-16), a spirit of idol worship reaching back to ancient Mesopotamia, where the goddess later known across the ancient world as Ishtar, Ashtoreth, and “the queen of heaven” was already being worshipped as heaven's own supreme deity. That same spirit, in my own reading, found its most powerful throne yet within the Holy Roman Empire — see this study's appendix, “The Ancient Roots: Sumer and the Worship of the Queen of Heaven,” for the fuller history.

Seven Mountains, Seven Kings

“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” (Revelation 17:9). The city of Rome was famously built on seven hills, while Vatican City sits on an eighth hill of its own, roughly two and a half miles away — the map below shows the layout.



"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (Revelation 17:10-11). I read these seven heads as seven successive seats of Roman power, five already fallen by John's day, a sixth reigning in John's time, and a seventh yet to come — and an eighth head, still future, that is somehow "of the seven," a revival of what came before rather than something wholly new. Determining exactly who these heads were historically is this study's next task.

Part III. Tracking the Beast Through History

Summary

Reading Revelation's seven heads against the actual record of Roman history, I count five emperors already fallen in John's own day, Constantine as the sixth, who married church

and state, and Charlemagne as the seventh, who began the papacy's long reign over kings — a reign later wounded, in my own reading, by Napoleon.

Five Fallen, One Reigning

Counting forward from Nero's death in 68 AD, five emperors are generally remembered as Rome's most capable rulers, and I take them as the first five: Nerva (96-98 AD), Trajan (98-117 AD), Hadrian (117-138 AD), Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD), and Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD).

The Sixth Head: Church Married to State

Constantine, commonly remembered as Rome's first Christian emperor, reigned from 306 to 337 AD. I read him as the sixth head — “one is,” as Revelation 17:10 puts it in John's present tense. This is the marriage of church and state that would shape everything that followed.

The Seventh Head: A Pope Crowns an Emperor

Charlemagne, who reigned from 742 to 814 AD, is the seventh head in my reading — the head that, in John's day, “*is not yet come*.” Pope Leo III crowned him Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, 800 AD. Though Charlemagne still regarded himself as the church's leading authority — he “even interfered in dogmatic questions” himself, in the words of the Catholic Encyclopedia's own account of his reign — the balance of power was already shifting. By the time a later German king, Otto the Great, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 962 AD, that balance had fully turned: only the pope, and no one else, could confer the imperial title. Europe took on a name reflecting this new order: Christendom. This same history is developed further in this study's appendix, “Germany and the Catholic Church.”

Three Kings, Plucked Up by the Roots

Daniel's own vision names three horns plucked up before the little horn — “before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots” (Daniel 7:8) — and I read these as three kings historically subdued by the papacy's growing authority over the empire's civil rulers. Henry IV, King of Germany, was excommunicated by Pope Gregory VII and forced to perform public penance at Canossa in 1076 AD. King John of England was excommunicated by Pope Innocent III in 1209 for his defiance of the church. The middle figure, Frederick Barbarossa, is often listed alongside these two, but the history is worth stating precisely: Barbarossa's submission to Pope Alexander III in 1177, at the Peace of Venice, was a forced political and military capitulation after years of open war between the

empire and the papacy — not a formal excommunication of the kind Henry IV and King John each suffered. The three still stand together as evidence of the papacy's rising power over civil kings, even though the exact nature of that power looked different in each case.

The Seventh Head Wounded

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast” (Revelation 13:3). The seventh head's long reign began to weaken during the Reformation, starting near 1530 AD with Martin Luther. I read its deepest wound as occurring in February 1798, when Napoleon's general Berthier entered Rome, proclaimed a Roman Republic, and had Pope Pius VI arrested and taken into captivity in France, where he died the following year. A second pope, Pius VII, was later arrested as well. This is the wound Revelation says would be healed — and I read that healing as still future, arriving with the eighth head that is “of the seven” in the 70th Week itself.

Part IV. A Shadow Cast Before (Antiochus Epiphanes)

Summary

Long before the 70th Week's own little horn appears, Antiochus IV Epiphanes already acted out a miniature preview of the same pattern — a persecuting king who set himself up as god and desecrated Elohim's own temple.

A Type, Not the Thing Itself

Antiochus IV Epiphanes is not, in my reading, the little horn of the 70th Week itself — he already fulfilled his role as a little horn in Daniel chapters 8 and 11, roughly 175 to 164 BC. This study's treatments of Daniel chapters 8 and 11 already work through that history in full detail, and I won't repeat it here. What is worth carrying forward is the pattern: Antiochus gave himself the surname Epiphanes, Greek for “God Manifest” — his own coins were struck with the words *theos epiphanes*, “God made manifest” — while his own Jewish subjects, unimpressed, punned his title into Epimanes, “the madman.” That same pattern of self-deification repeats, in my reading, in the little horn still to come.

The 2,300 Days

“And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14) — this count, already treated in this study's Daniel Chapter 8 study, measures out roughly the span of Antiochus's persecution of the Jews. The pattern of a daily sacrifice interrupted and a sanctuary desecrated repeats forward into the 70th

Week's unfulfilled prophecies: “he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Daniel 9:27); “they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate” (Daniel 11:31); “and from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days” (Daniel 12:11). Antiochus's history is the shadow; the 70th Week is the thing that cast it. This study's appendix, “Antiochus IV Epiphanes,” provides the fuller history for readers who want it.

Part V. A Beast That Speaks Great Things

Summary

Daniel's little horn has “a mouth speaking great things,” and history records real examples of popes across the centuries who claimed authority that, in my own reading, fits that description uncomfortably well.

Key Verse

“I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame” — Daniel 7:11

Words Great and Small

Pope Gregory VII, elected in 1073, is widely remembered by historians for holding one of the highest views of papal authority ever formally asserted — that all civil power, including the authority of kings and emperors, ultimately derived from the papacy itself, and that no future pope would need imperial confirmation of his election. Later popes and church councils, across several subsequent centuries, are documented by historians as having made comparably sweeping claims to supreme authority over kings, nations, and even the natural law itself — language that a number of Reformation-era and later Protestant writers cited directly as evidence linking the papacy to Daniel's own “mouth speaking great things.” I've chosen not to reproduce those specific quotations at length here, since several of the most widely circulated ones trace to disputed or unverifiable sources rather than to confirmed official teaching; readers wanting to research this history further can find it well documented in Reformation-era polemical writing and in modern historical treatments of papal claims to temporal authority.

Judgment on the Great Words

Daniel 7:11 gives this little horn's own ending in two parts: first, the blasphemy itself, and then judgment on the beast whose body gave that voice its power — a judgment this study reads alongside Revelation 14:8, 16:9, and 18:2-21.

Part VI. The Mark of the Beast

Summary

Revelation's mark of the beast becomes, in my own reading, a real and practical tool for locating and controlling those who refuse to worship the beast's image — and modern technology already points toward how that tool might finally be built.

Key Verses

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” — Revelation 13:16-17

A Woman Fleeing, a Beast Hunting

Revelation describes a woman — Israel — fleeing the beast system into the wilderness, given “two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent” (Revelation 12:14). In my reading, those who cannot reach such a haven face a beast that requires a practical way to find and control them across many nations at once — exactly what Revelation 13:16-17 describes: no buying, no selling, without the mark.

A Contemporary Application

I consider this my own application, not a settled claim about exactly how the mark will be implemented: current identification-chip technology already points to how such a system could function. Sweden has reported that thousands of workers have voluntarily received implanted microchips in place of cash cards and ID passes, and Elon Musk's company Neuralink has pursued implantable brain-computer interface technology since 2016 — both real, documented technological developments, though neither is itself the mark of the beast. I read these as signs of the kind of infrastructure such a system would need, arriving well ahead of the 70th Week's midpoint rather than overnight.

A Sober Warning

“The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of Elohim, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:10). I don't read this as saying anyone is predestined to that fate before they ever have a choice — rather, Elohim's foreknowledge simply sees in advance who will refuse to repent and who will come to salvation.

Part VII. Spiritual Warfare in High Places

Summary

I want to think out loud for a moment about how the four horsemen of Revelation 6 relate to the four living creatures before Elohim's own throne — Satan riding and the Comforter answering, seal by seal, era by era.

A Working Thought, Offered Openly

Here is how I've come to understand the seals: each seal opens first, and the beast's own voice says “come and see” — and only then does the corresponding horse and rider appear. I read this as Satan's own horse riders being loosed era by era, matched every time by Yahshua our high priest countering through the Comforter's own work in that same era, per John 14:26's promise that the Comforter would be sent to teach the Word. There is no difference in the seal's own purpose from one era to the next — each seal is redemption by the Word — only a difference in how that same Word gets worked out within its own dispensation.

The Red Horse and the Calf

Take the red horse's own rider — persecution unto death, the blood of saints — matched, in my own reading, against the calf-faced living creature of Revelation 4:7. Rome began executing Christians as early as the third century; by the fourth century, church and state together were persecuting those who wouldn't conform; and from roughly 400 AD to Martin Luther's own Reformation near 1530 AD, the same spirit riding the beast in Revelation 17:6 is credited by later historians with tens of millions of deaths across Europe, though I hold that specific figure loosely — population estimates for medieval Europe make numbers anywhere near that scale mathematically difficult to sustain, whatever the true scale of the persecution actually was.

The Pale Horse, to the End

I read the pale horse of Revelation 6:8 as beginning its riding in the 7th church era, Laodicea, all the way to the 70th Week's end — a mixture of the first three horses' natures, namely deception, persecution, and a gospel sold rather than freely given. If that horse rides to the very end, then the fourth living creature — the eagle-faced one of Revelation 4:7, which I read as a picture of prophetic ministry — must continue countering it the whole way, culminating, in my own reading, in the two prophets of Revelation 12:14's eagle's wings. This is offered here as an open thought, not a finished argument, for anyone wanting to think it through further alongside “Seven Stars of Daniel” and this study's treatment of the seventh seal in “This Generation and the 70th Week of Daniel.”

Brother Brian Neill

Practical Applications for Today

Principle	Application
The same spirit worked through four successive empires, wearing a different face each time (Daniel 7:3-8)	Discernment matters more than familiarity — a pattern doesn't announce itself the same way twice
Antiochus Epiphanes acted out the little horn's pattern centuries before the 70th Week arrives	History gives real, checkable previews of what Scripture describes happening in full later — worth studying rather than skipping past
Barbarossa's own submission wasn't the same kind of event as Henry IV's or King John's excommunication	Getting the history right strengthens an argument; getting it wrong for the sake of a tidier pattern weakens it
The pale horse rides to the very end, matched the whole way by the Comforter's own countering work	Whatever era we're living through, the Word is still being worked out in it — not absent, not defeated

Appendix

The Ancient Roots: Sumer and the Worship of the Queen of Heaven

The Sumerian civilization is widely regarded as among the oldest known civilizations, with roots reaching back before 3000 BC in Mesopotamia. As Akkad, Babylon, Assyria, and later Chaldean Babylon and Persia each rose in turn across that same region, each successive civilization absorbed much of Sumerian religious practice rather than replacing it outright. Chief among Sumer's own deities was Inanna, worshipped as “queen of heaven” and goddess of love and war — ancient inscriptions from the region address her directly as without rival among the gods. Under different names in different languages, this same goddess-figure was worshipped across the ancient Near East for well over a thousand years: as Ishtar in Babylon, and later as Ashtoreth among Israel's own Canaanite neighbors, a name Scripture itself records repeatedly in describing Israel's own repeated failures to keep herself from this worship (Judges 2:13, 10:6; 1 Samuel 7:3-4; 1 Kings 11:5, 33; 2 Kings 23:13).

Israel is condemned many times across the Old Testament for exactly this — 2 Kings 17:7-17 traces the Northern Kingdom's own fall directly to this pattern of idol worship, walking after gods other than YAHWEH. I read this same Baal-worship spirit as never having fully left the world stage, resurfacing one final time, per Revelation 17's own vision, in Daniel's 70th Week.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, 164 BC

Antiochus IV Epiphanes ruled the Seleucid kingdom, one of the four kingdoms that split off from Alexander's empire, from 175 to 164 BC. His campaign against the Jews and his desecration of the Jerusalem Temple are recorded in detail in Daniel 11:21-35, and in the two historical books of 1 and 2 Maccabees, which — while not part of the biblical canon — are generally regarded by historians as reliable accounts of the period.

Around December 167 BC, Antiochus erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple and had a pig sacrificed on it, the act of desecration most commentators identify as the “abomination of desolation” referenced elsewhere in Daniel. The outrage helped spark the Maccabean revolt, which succeeded in retaking Jerusalem and rededicating the Temple in 164 BC — the origin of the festival of Hanukkah, whose name means “dedication.” Older commentators including Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown both connect Daniel 8's 2,300 evenings-and-mornings to roughly this same span, arriving independently at approximately six years from the start of the desecration to the Temple's cleansing.

(Sources: 1 Maccabees 1; 2 Maccabees 4-6; Josephus; Matthew Henry's Commentary; the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary.)

Germany and the Catholic Church

For roughly eight centuries after Rome's fall, Christianity became the dominant religion across Germanic-controlled Europe, spread by missionaries and by military-religious orders such as the Teutonic Knights. With no central civil authority strong enough to keep order on its own, the Church increasingly stepped into roles we'd now call governmental: enforcing contracts, settling inheritance disputes, and overseeing marriage law, simply because no one else reliably could.

The clearest turning point was Charlemagne's coronation as Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day, 800 AD — the Catholic Encyclopedia calls it plainly, “Real German history begins with Charlemagne.” Charlemagne saw his empire as a Christian one and did not hesitate to weigh in on doctrinal questions himself, but the balance of power shifted further with time. By 962 AD, when Otto the Great was crowned Holy Roman Emperor, it was firmly established that only the pope could confer the imperial title. Europe's civil rulers now depended on the Church for their own legitimacy, and the continent took on a name that reflected it: Christendom.

(Sources: The Catholic Encyclopedia; general histories of the medieval Church and the Holy Roman Empire.)

Discussion Questions

- 1. This study traces one spirit through four empires, from Babylon to Rome. Where else in Scripture do you see the same pattern — evil wearing a new face while keeping the same nature underneath?
- 2. Barbarossa's submission at Venice wasn't the same kind of event as Henry IV's or King John's excommunication, even though all three get grouped together as “plucked up.” Why does getting details like this right matter for a study like this one?
- 3. The pale horse of Revelation 6:8 is read here as riding all the way to the 70th Week's own end, matched the whole way by the Comforter's own work. What does that suggest about how you should read the era you're living in right now?
- 4. Antiochus Epiphanes acted out, in miniature and centuries early, a pattern Scripture says will be fulfilled in full during the 70th Week. What other historical “previews” of end-time patterns have you noticed in your own reading?