

Daniel 7 – The Dream of Four Great Beasts

Aramaic¹ – Modified Translations of NAS95

Dan. 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed. Then, he wrote the dream down and related this summary of it.²

Nebuchadnezzar ³	605-563 B.C.
Evil-Merodach (Man of Marduk), Neb.'s son	563-561 B.C.
General Neriglissar (E-M's brother-in-law)	561-556 B.C.
Labashi-Marduk, Neriglissar's son	556 B.C.
Nabonidus, leader of revolt against L-M	556-539 B.C.
Belshazzar, Son of Nabonidus	549-539 B.C.

Dan. 7:2 Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision at night, and behold, the four winds of

¹ **Daniel 1:1-2:4** is written in **Hebrew**, along with **8:1-12:13**. The rest of **Daniel, 2:5-7:28**, is written in **Aramaic**.

² The first year of Belshazzar would be 549 B.C., when his father Nabonidus presented the authority of ruling Babylon to him while the father resided in Teima, an important Edomite city (see footnote below). Therefore, this dream that comes to Daniel occurs approximately 55 years after Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue in chapter 2 when Daniel may be seventy years old or so.

A slight modification of David Crabtree's notes on Daniel 7 and the role of empires in the world –

1. Daniel is a book about the human proclivity toward empire building.
 - a) It describes the struggle of God's people (the nation of Israel, the Jews) under the thumb of an aggressive and hubristic Empire (Babylon).
 - b) The spirit of empire building is the tendency we all have of ordering everything around us to our liking.
 - (1) To accomplish this, we "trample" God's laws, God's creation, and God's people for our own selfish ends.
 - (a) Nothing that God would call sacred is sacred to the one who wants only to satisfy his own selfish desires.
 - (2) Empire, establishment of power and authority over others, is the ultimate expression of this tendency.
 - (a) All (or as much as possible) of mankind is pressed into the service of the emperor.
2. Empires on the earth take on "God-like" powers.
 - a) Empires become increasingly powerful, oppressive, and frightening.
 - (1) This culminates in an empire where the leaders want to stand out and be different from others.
 - (a) The empire is particularly powerful and destructive force in people's lives.
 - (b) Indeed, there is nothing that Daniel can think of to liken it to.
 - (2) The empire of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 sprouts a particularly arrogant and mouthy leader.
 - (a) He rails against God.
 - (b) He thinks he can change the times and the laws of the universe to suit his fancy.
 - (3) This empire and this leader are destroyed.
3. The fourth and final empire is replaced by the kingdom of God.
 - a) God gives the Messiah authority over the kingdom.
 - (1) Authority over all peoples of the earth
 - (2) This kingdom is into perpetuity on the earth, i.e., for as long as God wants it to exist.

³ **Babylonian Persian (Mede) Greek Syrian Greek Egyptian Greek Roman Middle East Messianic**
 The Expositor's Bible Commentary says, "Nebuchadnezzar died in 563 B.C. and was succeeded by his son, Evil-Merodach ("Man of Marduk") (cf. 2 Kings 25). He was assassinated by his brother-in-law, General Neriglissar, two years later in 561 B.C. Neriglissar died five years later in 556 B.C. and was succeeded by his son, Labashi-Marduk, who was murdered nine months later in 556 B.C. The revolt's leader, Nabonidus, who was not related to the royal family but married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, took over in 556 B.C. and ruled Babylon until its fall to the Persians in 539 B.C. However, during the last ten years of his life, he spent most of his time in Teima, an important Edomite city, and left the central control of the empire to his son, Belshazzar. The Persians, under Commander Ugbaru, diverted the waters of the Euphrates River in order to reduce its level flowing into Babylon and snuck into the city at night in September of 539 B.C., taking it by surprise. Belshazzar must have died that night."

heaven were stirring up the great sea.⁴

Dan. 7:3 “And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.”⁵

Dan. 7:4 “The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man. In addition, a human mind was given to it.”⁶

The Babylonian Empire, centered in Nebuchadnezzar 605-539 B.C.

Dan. 7:5 “Then, behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear, and it was raised up on one side. There were also three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. Thus, they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’⁷

The Medo-Persian Empire, centered in Cyrus the Great 539-331 B.C.

⁴ With this being a vision and a dream that Daniel is seeing, it is best to interpret the statement in this verse symbolically. The “four winds of heaven” are probably the movements of God as the author of this story of the history of the universe and the history of mankind as He brings all created reality into existence, including the empires depicted in Daniel’s dream. The “great sea” (ܐܝܢ ܐܝܢܐ) (εις την θάλασσαν την μεγάλην) is probably the collection of human beings and specifically what is happening among them at the time of these empires centered in the Middle East. The Septuagint uses the verb ἐπίπτω (=fall into) to translate the Aramaic ܦܢܐ, indicating that the sense may be that these kingdoms fall upon the “great sea” (of the people of the Middle East) and subjugate them.

It also makes more sense to see the book of Daniel as centered in and confined to the Middle East. Thus, all the rulers, kingdoms, and peoples spoken of in the dreams of the book of Daniel center not only in the Middle East, but also at or near the city of Babylon on the Euphrates River in the Mesopotamian Valley in what would be modern-day Iraq. In other words, it is the Babylonian Empire and subsequent empires centered in and around Babylon that is the geographical, political, and religious center of the book, while the goal or telos of Daniel is the Kingdom of Israel ruled by the Messiah, Jesus, and centered in Jerusalem when he returns. This is because the Jews and their land promised to them by God in Genesis 12-21 play the most significant role in the rule of the Messiah on the earth from the capital of his kingdom, Jerusalem.

⁵ These four great beasts are four powerful empires or kingdoms, which probably correspond to the first five kingdoms of the statue of Daniel 2, with the fourth kingdom of Daniel 7 comprising the combination of the fourth and fifth kingdoms of Daniel 2.

Are these beasts/kingdoms rising out the sea at the same time or in succession? Probably the latter to signify that they follow the preceding ones in time.

And the difference in each of these kingdoms is the ethnic/religious origin of their rulers—Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Islamic respectively.

⁶ As we find out later in the chapter and in the explanation of the dream, each beast is a kingdom that is ruled by a king. Thus, each kingdom is representative of man’s sinful tendency to build an empire for his own selfish purpose of gaining and exercising power and authority over others. This is his tendency to rebel against God and culminates in the greatest example of this, the fourth and most oppressive beast.

Based upon the interpretation later in 7:15-27 and the great likelihood that this dream corresponds to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue in Daniel 2, the first beast here in Daniel 7 is the Babylonian Empire from 605-539 B.C. with Nebuchadnezzar as its first and representative ruler. It is strong (but not absolutely invincible) like a lion, but still very “human” and thoughtful (“mind”), albeit sinfully so, pursuing goals and actions contrary to biblical morality.

⁷ In line with the interpretation of the first beast, this second one is most likely the Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great (559-529 B.C.) and his son Cambyses (529-523 B.C.). The kingdom is in some way lopsided (“raised up on one side”), but it eventually conquers the Lydian Kingdom in Asia Minor (Turkey) in 546 B.C., the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C., and the Egyptian Empire in 525 B.C. These would be the three ribs in the beast’s mouth.

The “they” who speak to this Persian Empire are the “four winds in heaven” of v. 2, the sovereign authoring of God who is commanding this empire to expand as much as possible, which it does even into Greece.

Darius the Mede⁸

539-530 B.C.

Dan. 7:6 “After this, I kept looking, and behold, another beast, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. This beast also had four heads, and a sovereign government was given to it.”⁹

The Greek Empire

331-63 B.C.

Alexander the Great

Successors to Alexander the Great

Dan. 7:7 “After this, I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, there was a fourth beast, dreadful, terrifying, and extremely strong. Also, it had large iron teeth, with which it devoured and grinded. Whatever was left, it trampled with its feet, so that it was different from all the beasts that were before it. Plus, it had ten horns.”¹⁰

⁸ This is not the same as Darius the Great, i.e., Darius Hystaspis, who ruled Persia from 522-485 B.C. Apparently, there is no explicit evidence outside the Bible for this man, but he is most likely a “king” of Median descent, who was appointed ruler of the Babylonian region by Cyrus the Great, much like Herod the Great and his sons who were appointed by the Roman Senate and Emperors as rulers of the area of Israel and granted the title “king.” The word *dara* means king in Avestan Persian, allowing us to conclude that Darius was an honorific title much like even the Hebrew Messiah.

⁹ Eventually, when Alexander the Great marches east from Greece, the Greek Empire not only takes over the Middle East, but Alexander even continues ruling it there in the midst of leading his army farther and farther away from home and all the way to India. Indeed, Alexander never saw Greece again and died in Babylon in 323 B.C. Therefore, this Greek Empire is definitely Middle Eastern centric, even though its leader is Greek. After Alexander’s death, his kingdom ended up with “four heads,” i.e., four separate kingdoms, two of which, the Seleucid/Syrian and the Ptolemaic/Egyptian, play a prominent role in the Middle East and in Israel’s history as these two kingdoms constantly fight for control of it. Thus, by extension, Alexander acquires a “sovereign government” even over the land of Israel until it comes under the authority of the Roman Empire around 63 B.C. This will be the subject of chapter 11 of Daniel.

¹⁰ This fourth beast has no animal label. It is simply “dreadful, terrifying, and extremely strong”—the last place anyone with a sense of decency and propriety would want to live.

Some commentators interpret the ten horns as a confederation of ten states, e.g., the European Union. Another possibility is ten ruthless rulers during the time of the Roman Empire (27 B.C. – A.D. 395). In line with the first, second, and third beasts as Babylonian, Persian, and Greek respectively, and in the light of interpreting the fourth and fifth kingdoms of the statue of Daniel 2 as the Islamic Caliphate, it makes more sense to see this fourth beast with ten horns as referring also to the Islamic Caliphate. The statue of Daniel 2 featured the division of this Islamic government into strong and weak countries who are unable to unite in their efforts to rule the Middle East (and the world), while Daniel’s dream here in chapter 7 features ten nations/kingdoms and leaders from whom eventually an eleventh ruler/king arises and dominates them.

Nevertheless, this beast, like the fourth and fifth kingdoms of the Daniel 2 statue, has as part of its description the metal iron—“large iron teeth.” With its iron teeth, this beast grinds up its opponents as a result of its incalculable intolerance of differing views, particularly religious views. In this way, this beast of the Islamic Caliphate is different from the previous three beasts/kingdoms and terrifying towards those over whom it rules. It tramples down its enemies rather than extending any kind of tolerance or mercy so as to allow them to retain their culture, religion, and language.

Like the fifth kingdom of Daniel 2, this beast or kingdom eventually has “ten” divisions, i.e., ten horns, either geographically or chronologically, and probably the former. However, an eleventh king will arise in v. 8. The ten divisions could be the ten existing Islamic, or at least Islamic leaning, governments in the Middle East—Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Qatar. Jordan is not counted because of its relative neutrality. In addition, the list could differ by including Turkey instead of one of the above. Or the “ten” refers to many without this being the exact number of countries with its individual rulers.

It should be noted as was the case in Daniel 2 that this fourth beast does not necessarily have to be the Islamic Caliphate, if this fourth kingdom/government exists much farther in the future, when and if, perhaps, Islam and its influences are eliminated in the Middle East by some other ideology. However, the description of this beast does fit well the history of Islam since its inception in the 7th century A.D.

Dan. 7:8 “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it. Behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.¹¹

Islamic Caliphate – a Middle East Kingdom
Culminating in the Man of Lawlessness

A.D. 622-in the future

Dan. 7:9 “I kept looking until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took His seat.
His clothing was like white snow,
And the hair of His head was like pure wool.
His throne was ablaze with flames,
Its wheels were a burning fire.¹²

Dan. 7:10 “A river of fire was flowing
And coming out from before Him.¹³
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him.¹⁴

Also, similar to the argument in the notes of Daniel 2, this beast cannot represent Rome and the Roman Empire, which was comparatively tolerant and was not Middle Eastern centric in its rule.

¹¹ Like the description of the first beast in v. 4 that was made to stand on two feet like a man and a human mind was given to it, this horn’s possessing eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts is intended to indicate that this horn is a man and a very apt representative of sinful mankind. But in this case the sin is an intolerant, Islamic ideology and religion and tramples people’s biblical and individual rights and freedoms.

The description of the little horn is much like that of Daniel 11:36ff. where one last ruthless and anti-God ruler of the Middle East will dominate it. Thus, this is the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2 and the individuation of the Beast of Revelation 13. Apparently, he destroys the power and influence of three of the confederation of Islamic governments that comprise this beast in its last days, probably because they are Sunnis and oppose and seek to overthrow him. He also utters great boasts, probably referring to his pretending to be the twelfth Iman, who is considered by the Shiites to possess the same attributes as God and to perform the same actions as God—like the Jewish Messiah of Yahweh. As a result, his claim is that the God of the Muslims is greater than the God of the Jews, making him also greater than the God of the Jews.

[2 Thessalonians 2:4](#) who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

[Revelation 13:6](#) And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

¹² This particular vision in Daniel 7, like Revelation 4ff., highlights the transcendent God’s thoughts and actions with respect to all of mankind, and especially with respect to the last and final Middle Eastern government of the Islamic Caliphate ruled by the Man of Lawlessness when God will also fulfill His eternal purposes of establishing His proxy, the Messiah and King of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, as the ruler of the final Middle Eastern government with its capital in Jerusalem. God’s kingdom does not arise out of the “great sea” of sinful humanity in the Middle East, but from Himself.

The fire in this throne scene is a reference to God’s purpose to judge humanity, thus finding some who not only deserve His condemnation but also who will receive it, while finding others who will experience His mercy because of their genuine, biblical belief in the midst of the advocacy of the Messiah as high priest on their behalf (cf. Hebrews).

¹³ The statements about fire in these two verses is a reference to the intention of God’s sitting in His court. It is to exercise justice and even condemnation over all human beings where necessary.

¹⁴ The multitudes refer to every human being because each one will stand before God and receive His just decision regarding their inwardness and whether or not they receive His eternal condemnation or His eternal mercy.

Or these could be angelic beings who are in the vision in such huge numbers to highlight God’s majesty and the fact that He deserves to be worshiped by even an infinite number of created beings, which is to say as many as God may choose to create. Or these could be a combination of angelic beings “attending” and human beings “standing.”

The court sat, and the books were opened.¹⁵

Dan. 7:11 “Then, I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words, which the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire.¹⁶

Dan. 7:12 “As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.¹⁷

The “**Babylonian**”, “**Persian**”, and “**Greek**” influences future to us

Dan. 7:13 “I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven,
One like a son of man was coming.¹⁸

And he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.

Dan. 7:14 “To him was given a sovereign government, glory, and a kingdom,
So that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language may serve him.

¹⁵ This scene represents the final judgment of mankind, which becomes the basis for the return of the Messiah, the destruction of the Man of Lawlessness with his government, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Cf. Revelation 19-20.

¹⁶ In verses 9-10, the vision set the stage with God’s judgment scene for what now follows, the destruction of the Man of Lawlessness and his government with all its officials who have joined in his plans to crush all others and annihilate the Jews. Thus, the eleventh horn is the last person and episode of the fourth beast/kingdom, the Islamic Caliphate, which is destroyed by God. Here, it is also referred to as directly connected to the fourth beast (cf. Revelation 11:7ff.; 13:1ff.; 14:9ff.; 17:7ff.; 19:19ff.). Thus, the kingdoms are viewed as beasts, and their rulers are of the same evil mindset. They generally treat people poorly to say the least, and the fourth in particular manifests the worst of man’s sinfulness and rebellion against God.

Cf. Tacitus’ words, “Dominandi cupido cunctis affectibus flagrantior est” (the lust of ruling is more powerful than all other desires).

And this beast/kingdom is destroyed completely by God and wiped off the face of the earth.

¹⁷ The people of other cultures, religions, and languages, who live in the area of the other beasts, the Middle East, are permitted to continue existing until a future time (until the end of the millennium?), in spite of the fact that the previous governments (“dominions”), the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire, and the Greek Empire, no longer exist *per se*. God is not completely intolerant of them as the Islamic Caliphate had been. But they will face His judgment.

¹⁸ Commentators attempt to associate Jesus’ use of the title Son of Man for himself in the gospels with this verse. However, it makes more sense that he is referring to Psalm 8, where David identifies the Son of God, i.e., the Davidic king, and most specifically Solomon his son, as a mere human being who gains the authority to rule over the entire creation as God’s proxy. Thus, he is a *bona fide* man and human being.

Commentators also interpret this man’s approach to God “with the clouds of heaven” as a reference to his heavenly origin that requires the conclusion that he has divine essence along with human essence, i.e., that he is both God and man. But does this mean that the “clouds” also have divine essence because they are of the realm of God too? No. Then why does the phrase “clouds of heaven” have to refer to divine origin?

[Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Nothing could be clearer than that Jesus himself regarded Daniel 7:13 as predictive of himself and that the two elements “like a son of man” and “with the clouds of heaven” combined to constitute a messianic title.] Yes, “messianic title” makes sense, but by defining the Messiah as the Anointed One of the Davidic Covenant who is the king of Israel, as David, Solomon, Rehoboam, et al. were. But in this case, Jesus receives the role of being the eternal king.

Therefore, an interpretation that makes more sense of the whole data regarding reality is that in this vision, where the transcendent Creator is made to appear in a theophany, there is a person who is very much “like” an ordinary human being, because he is an ordinary human being, who is provided a grand entrance in order to highlight his importance in the story of God. And this person is granted the role of the final Davidic king who rules over the creation as God’s proxy.

His sovereign government is an everlasting one, which will not pass away.¹⁹
 And his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.²⁰

The Messianic Kingdom of Jesus of Nazareth

future to us

Dan. 7:15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

Dan. 7:16 “I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things,

Dan. 7:17 ‘These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings, who will arise from the earth.’²¹

Dan. 7:18 ‘However, the set apart ones of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’²²

The Babylonian Empire, specifically Nebuchadnezzar 553-539 B.C.

The Medo-Persian Empire, specifically Cyrus 539-331 B.C.

The Greek Empire, specifically Alexander the Great 331-63 B.C.

The Islamic Caliphate, specifically the Beast of Revelation A.D. 624-the future

The Messianic Kingdom of Jesus of Nazareth In the future into eternity

Dan. 7:19 “Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, grinded, and trampled down with its feet whatever was

¹⁹ This man, whose kingdom does enter into the same “great sea” of v. 2, is given an eternal kingdom which will begin with his ruling over the whole earth during the Millennial Kingdom of Revelation 20 and continues forever on the new earth of Revelation 21.

²⁰ The appearance of the transcendent Creator in this vision grants the human being Jesus the right to rule over the creation as His proxy and for all eternity according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2, and Psalm 8.

²¹ Interesting that “earth” is the origin of these kings when the same word as in the Septuagint is used in Revelation to symbolize the land of Israel and the Jews. Here, clearly the meaning is different. These kings are from the sinful human beings of the Middle East centered in the area of Iraq.

²² Here is a summary of the whole dream at the beginning of the chapter, and, indeed, of all of human history as it pertains to the Jewish Messiah and his kingdom. Many other kingdoms will exist on earth, and four in particular that directly affect the Middle East and the land of Israel. However, these are only temporary and will relate to the people of God, the Jews, in two ways, either granting them the right to exist and live on the land of Israel, like ancient Persia which allowed them to return from the Babylonian captivity and even rebuild the temple, or seeking to do away with them, especially those who genuinely embrace the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, like the eleventh horn of the Islamic Caliphate. Nevertheless, in the end, the Messianic Kingdom will win out over all other kingdoms, and the people of God, believing Jews in Israel and believing Gentiles everywhere else will acquire citizenship in this final and eternal kingdom (“for all ages to come” (אֲנִי־וְעַלְמָאֵלָם לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד) (καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων)).

Individual rulers in the dream represent whole groups of people, and whole groups of people represent individual rulers. The “Highest One” (אֱלֹהֵי־הַמְּלָכִים) (ὁψίστου) in this context is the greatest king of all the kings that arise to rule over the people of the ANE, whether Babylonian, Persian, Greek, or Islamic. The term “Highest One” is drawing attention to his being God’s proxy, who rules over the creation with a level of authority that is “a little lower than God,” i.e., a little lower than the transcendent Creator Himself (cf. Psalm 8:5). This king’s “saints/set apart ones” (אֲנִי־וְעַלְמָאֵלָם) (ἄγιοι) are those who have been separated from the rest of humanity by God, thus being ultimately loyal to their king, the Messiah. In this context, they are Jews as authentic believers among God’s earthly chosen people.

It is interesting that this dream focuses not so much on the Messiah himself, even though obviously he plays a vital role and is granted his kingdom by the transcendent Creator, but on the Messiah’s followers, especially Jewish followers living on the land of Israel. They are the “set apart ones.”

left.

Dan. 7:20 I also wanted to know the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell—namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates.

Dan. 7:21 “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the set apart ones and overpowering them,²³

Dan. 7:22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the set apart ones of the Highest One, so that the time arrived when the set apart ones took possession of the kingdom.²⁴

Dan. 7:23 “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth, tread it down, and crush it.’²⁵

Islamic Caliphate – a Middle East Kingdom

A.D. 622-1924

Dan. 7:24 ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise. Then, another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.’²⁶

Dan. 7:25 ‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the set apart ones of the Highest One. Also, he will intend to make alterations in times and in law. Plus, they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.’²⁷

²³ For a while, the last ruthless ruler of the Islamic governments of the Middle East, the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2 and probably claiming to be the twelfth imam with the same attributes and actions of God, will heavily subjugate, oppress, and persecute God’s “set apart ones,” Jews living on the land of Israel, including authentic believers in the Jewish Messiah, the final king of the created reality.

²⁴ Before the last ruthless ruler and Man of Lawlessness has an opportunity to annihilate the Jews (and Jewish believers) in Israel, God will intervene according to His “judgment” and destroy him and his government. The “Highest One” is the highest ruler of human history, the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Cf. vs. 25 & 27. The “set apart ones” are the Jews, the chosen people of God, although some of them will probably be authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. And the Jews will take “possession of the kingdom,” i.e., the Kingdom of God of which Revelation 20 speaks and that we can call the millennial kingdom, over which Jesus will rule from Jerusalem.

²⁵ As in other places in Daniel, “whole earth” refers to the Middle East centered in Iraq, keeping this dream just as Middle Eastern centric as the statue of Daniel 2. The Islamic Caliphate will crush all other cultures, religions, and languages in the Middle East, even seeking to do so to the Jews on the land of Israel. This kingdom will want to destroy especially those who will eventually embrace the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, but God will protect them, the 144,000 of Revelation.

²⁶ “Ten” (many, i.e., all) Middle Eastern rulers/governments will be dominated by the Man of Lawlessness. Indeed, three of them will lose their power and influence because of his dominance (cf. v. 8).

²⁷ The dominant ruler of the Islamic governments will speak against the God of the Jews (שׂוֹנֵאֵי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (τὸν ὑψίστου) and thereby claim greatness greater than God’s greatness—by saying that he is the twelfth imam of the Shiites (?). In keeping with Islamic ideology, he will seek to crush and “wear down the set apart ones of the Highest One” (שׂוֹנֵאֵי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (τοῦ ὑψίστου), the Jews (and especially believers) who will soon become the subjects of their Messiah.

This Man of Lawlessness will also try to “make alterations in times and law” (וְיַעֲלֶה וְיַחַדֵּן) (καιροὺς καὶ νόμον), in God’s plans for how history turns out with His Messiah ruling over His kingdom, as well as in God’s political legislation for the Jews which includes their becoming the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-2, worshiping at the temple in Jerusalem, and following the Mosaic Covenant by which they demonstrate their association with God as His chosen people on earth.

And the Jews “will be given into his hand” (וְיִתְּנֵם בְּיַד הַיָּדוֹן) (καὶ παραδοθήσεται πάντα εἰς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ) so that they will live under the oppressive authority of the Man of Lawlessness.

Dan. 7:26 ‘However, the court will sit for judgment, and his authority will be taken away, annihilated, and destroyed forever.’²⁸

Other Islamic governments in the Middle East
Culminating in the Man of Lawlessness

present and future to us

Dan. 7:27 ‘Then, the sovereignty, the government, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the set apart ones of the Highest One. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the governments will serve and obey him.’²⁹

The Messianic Kingdom of Jesus of Nazareth

future to us

And for a period of “a time, times, and half a time” (עַד-עֵת וְשְׁנַיִם וְרֵבֵעִת וְחֵמֶשֶׁת יָמִים) (ἕως καιροῦ καὶ καιρῶν καὶ ἕως ἡμίσεως καιροῦ), which is the same terminology in Daniel 12:7 and Revelation 12:14 and seems best to interpret as symbolic of God’s patience towards the Jews (cf. Daniel 9:27 – “the middle of the week” = the middle of seven years, i.e., 3½ years), the Man of Lawlessness will attempt to do away with all that the Jews should be doing on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis in their obeying God according to the Mosaic Covenant.

There are two other places in the Bible where this phrase “for a time, times, and half a time” is used—Daniel 12:7 and Revelation 12:14. In Daniel 12:7, the “man in linen” indicates that this will be the length of time that between the time of Daniel and the demise of the “king of the North” of Daniel 11:36-45 along with the resurrection of the dead. See notes regarding Daniel 12:7. In Revelation 12:14 the same phrase is used to where the “woman,” believing Jews, are spirited away on eagle’s wings to be fed in the wilderness away from the serpent.

But an actual 3½ years (“the middle of the week” (the 70th “week”) = the middle of seven years, i.e., 3½ years) is referred to in Daniel 9:27 as the period of time that God gives the Jews after the death of the Messiah to repent. I think that “3½ years” becomes symbolic in Revelation 12:14 of God’s protective patience of the Jews during the Great Tribulation between Jesus’ first and second appearances and as a long period of time which He is giving them to repent and embrace Jesus as their Messiah. However, God’s patience eventually runs out, and the final events of the last beast of this Daniel 7, the Islamic Caliphate, take place and the culmination of this beast, the Man of Lawlessness (the “beast” of Revelation 13), almost destroys them. Therefore, he will exercise power and authority over the Jews on the land of Israel for a period of time during which God will continue to be patient with them and urge them to repent.

²⁸ God will judge the Man of Lawlessness before the final judgment and destroy his kingdom and him before he is allowed to do so much damage to the Jews and authentic believers in the land of Israel that he annihilates them.

Cf. Daniel 11:45, which indicates that he camps with his army on the land of Israel and then is destroyed (by Jesus the Messiah) with no one attempting to help him and escape God’s judgment and destruction on the land of Israel.

²⁹ As in Daniel 7:22 and 25, the “Highest One” (עֶלְיוֹן הַגָּדוֹל) (τοῦ ὑψίστου) refers to the highest king, the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. It is his government that will destroy the Islamic governments and continue until the end of the present realm. In other words, “everlasting kingdom” (מְלֻכּוּת עוֹלָמִית) (βασιλείαν αἰώνιον) here refers to the end of the creation as we now know it, before God destroys this creation and brings a new one into existence (cf. 2 Peter 3:5-10 and Revelation 21). Notice also that “all the governments will serve and obey him,” meaning that, while Jesus rules the Messianic Kingdom of Israel from Jerusalem, his government will be the primary one on the whole earth. And no one will be able to overthrow it during the millennium. Indeed, all other governments will submit to him, because it will be clear that he tolerates no dissension. However, his requirement that all peoples of the earth submit to him will be out of love and moral perfection in contrast to the sin and corruption of the Islamic Caliphate and the Man of Lawlessness.

This is because only Jesus is God’s morally perfect and eternal proxy and representative on earth, just as David, Solomon, Rehoboam, et al. could have required the submission of all other peoples in their similar roles as Sons of God according to the Davidic Covenant.

In addition, the Jews as authentic believers (“set apart ones” of the Messiah) will rule with Jesus over the world.

Dan. 7:28 “At this point, the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me, and my face grew pale. Nevertheless, I kept the matter to myself.”³⁰

³⁰ David finds himself greatly disturbed by the whole dream and its interpretation, probably because it involves great suffering for his people, the Jews (as well as all authentic believers), at the end of this age. And he keeps this information secret until he composes the book of Daniel and makes it public a little later in his life.