

God's Timeline For The Future

Our study comes from 2 Thessalonians 2. I want to start by reading verses one and two of the chapter and then draw your attention to two important terms. Then I want to provide some important background information in this study that is necessary to correctly understand these two terms. Then in the next study I hope to clearly explain the meaning of the two terms. So listen closely and remember what you read for the next study. Our study tonight is from 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. The apostle Paul is writing and he says,

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (NASB)

The first important term in these two verses is “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.” The second term is the “Day of

the Lord.” Since these are not terms we read every day in our Bibles, I want to explain them. But in order to do that, I need to explain God’s plan for the future. Once I do that, then in the next study I can explain the second term, “The Day of the Lord,” and then the first term, “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.”

GOD’S FUTURE PLANS — DREAM OF DANIEL 2. So, I will start by explaining God’s plan of the future and

Daniel 2:31-35 is where we will begin. In this passage, the prophet Daniel describes a dream that God had given to King Nebuchadnezzar. The king was the ruler over the Babylonian Empire. He was a godless king, and yet God gave him an incredible dream about the future of this world. Now ask yourself, “Why did God reveal the future to an unbelieving king and not to King David, King Solomon, or to a prophet or priest?” The answer becomes obvious in Daniel 2:28 when the prophet Daniel tells King Nebuchadnezzar that the God of heaven wanted the king to know the future. Another reason may be that God used this dream to eventually cause the king to believe in the God of heaven!

Dream of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. If you recall, Daniel 2 says the king had a dream that he did not under-

stand. Since the king did not trust his magicians, conjurers and sorcerers (v. 2), who were also called wise men, to truthfully tell the meaning of the dream, the king demanded they reveal the dream to him and then interpret the dream.

The king knew

that if the wise men could tell him the dream, then most likely they could accurately tell him the meaning. It is not a surprise that the wise men complained and said that it was not possible to interpret the dream without the king revealing it. So, the king threatened to kill the wise men if they did not reveal the dream and give its meaning. When Daniel heard about the threat, he offered to reveal the dream and give the interpretation.



After Daniel left the king, we are told that he asked God to reveal the dream and its meaning. God did that. Daniel 2:31-35 records Daniel's description of the dream. Here is the dream that God gave to King Nebuchadnezzar.

You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.

The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Daniel 2:31-35 (NASB)

mountain is often symbolic of a kingdom or an empire (Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2). So, the stone symbolizes a kingdom. The second thing that happened was that the stone filled the entire earth. That was the dream the king did not understand.

Daniel Explains the Dream. Then Daniel gave the meaning of the dream, as revealed by God. The meaning is recorded in Daniel 2:36-45. Here is Daniel's explanation,

This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. Daniel 2:36-38 (NASB)

Notice that Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that he was the head of gold. He was

the first king. Then in Daniel 2:39, Daniel explained that the chest and arms of silver represented a second kingdom, and Daniel 5:25-31 tells us this kingdom was the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel 2:39 also refers to a third kingdom, and Daniel 8:20-21 reveals that this kingdom is the kingdom of Greece.

Next, Daniel 2:40 explains the fourth kingdom. History tells us the next kingdom or empire that controlled the land of Palestine was the Roman Empire. It is important to know that the kingdoms in this dream are kingdoms that controlled

The Great Statue

Daniel 2:36-45



Stone Made
Without Hands
Dan 2:45

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Notice that Daniel tells the king that he saw a statue made of gold, silver, bronze, and iron and then iron and clay mixed together. Then a stone smashed the statue. The statue became dust and immediately two things happened. First, the stone became a great mountain. In the major and minor prophets, a

the land of Palestine. The dream is not about all the kingdoms of the world.

Daniel 2:41-43 describes a future version of this kingdom and adds that it will have ten toes composed of clay and iron. We are told the clay and iron reveals that part of the kingdom will be strong and part would be weak. That is all that we are given in Daniel 2, but we will learn more about this kingdom in Daniel 7. But before we go there, we need to learn what Daniel said about a fifth kingdom.

The fifth and last kingdom is described in Daniel 2:44-45. As I read this passage, please notice that we are told how the God of heaven will set up His kingdom.

In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so, the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy. Daniel 2:44-45 (NASB)

So, Daniel said, “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which can never be destroyed.” Then he added this kingdom will crush all of “these kingdoms.” That means God would destroy the Babylonian empire, Medo-Persian empire, the empire of Greece, the Roman empire and a future version of the fourth empire. Next, Daniel said the stone “was cut out of the mountain without hands.” Once again, we are told God will do this, and verses 31-35 say God’s kingdom will cover the entire world. So, God’s kingdom will crush “all of these kingdoms” that have occupied the land God gave to Israel. God’s kingdom is the last or final kingdom.

It is important to know that the first four kingdoms and the feet of iron and clay represent all the Gentile nations that occupied the land of Palestine until today. Jesus refers to this period of time as the “Times of the Gentiles” in Luke 21:24. This means we are living in the “Times of the Gentiles” and it will continue until the second coming of Christ.

GOD’S FUTURE PLANS — THE DREAM OF DANIEL 7.

Now we must ask a question. What is the meaning of the ten toes of the statue? The answer is not given in Daniel 2, but it is given in Daniel 7. Daniel 7:1-7 is where we need to start. In this passage the four metals are not mentioned. Instead, the symbolism is four different beasts.

Daniel Learns About Four Beasts. The first symbol is found in verse 4. It is a lion, which represents the Babylonian Empire. The verse says,

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; a human mind also was given to it. Daniel 7:4 (NASB)

The information given in this verse helps connect the winged lions to the Babylonian Empire. Why? The answer is that the ruins of Babylon have lions all over the walls, and ancient writers have stated that images of lions were everywhere in the city of Babylon. So this beast symbolizes the Babylonian empire.

The second beast is given in verse 5. It is a bear, with one side of its body raised up.

And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus, they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’ Daniel 7:5 (NASB)

Why does the bear with one side lifted up symbolize the Medo-Persian Empire? The answer is that Cyrus was the greater of the two leaders of the empire. Cyrus was a Persian (Daniel 6:28) and Darius was a Mede (Daniel 11:1). They conquered the Babylonian empire together, but Darius died early. As a result, Cyrus continued as the only ruler.

Verse 6 states that the third beast was a leopard. This symbolizes the empire of Greece.

After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. Daniel 7:6 (NASB)

It is well-known that Alexander the Great was the most

famous general of the Empire of Greece. History tells us that Alexander conquered a massive amount of territory extremely fast. Therefore, a leopard was a great symbol for Greece. After Alexander the Great's death, his empire was split between four generals. Notice that this empire is at times represented by four heads as well as by a leopard.

Verse 7 describes the fourth beast. The only thing that is said about this beast is that it was dreadful, terrifying, and extremely strong. It is the Roman Empire, and it is described as having ten horns.

After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. Daniel 7:7 (NASB)

Notice the ten horns again. Remember that in Daniel 2, the fourth metal or fourth kingdom had ten toes. But here we read the fourth kingdom had ten horns. The horns and toes refer to the same future version of the fourth kingdom. We need to understand that "horn" in the Old Testament was often a symbol of authority or a king. Therefore, the ten horns represent ten kings, kingdoms, or ten nations.

The next verse gives us more information about an additional horn, a little horn. Verse 8 says,

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; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

Daniel 7:8 (NASB)

We are told this little horn would subdue three other horns. Now what do these horns symbolize? The answer is given in verse 19.

Daniel Wants to Understand the Ten Horns. Let's read verses 19-22 and begin to learn the meaning of the fourth beast with ten horns, and especially the little horn. Here are verses 19-22.



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, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its

feet, and 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. I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Daniel 7:19-22 (NASB)

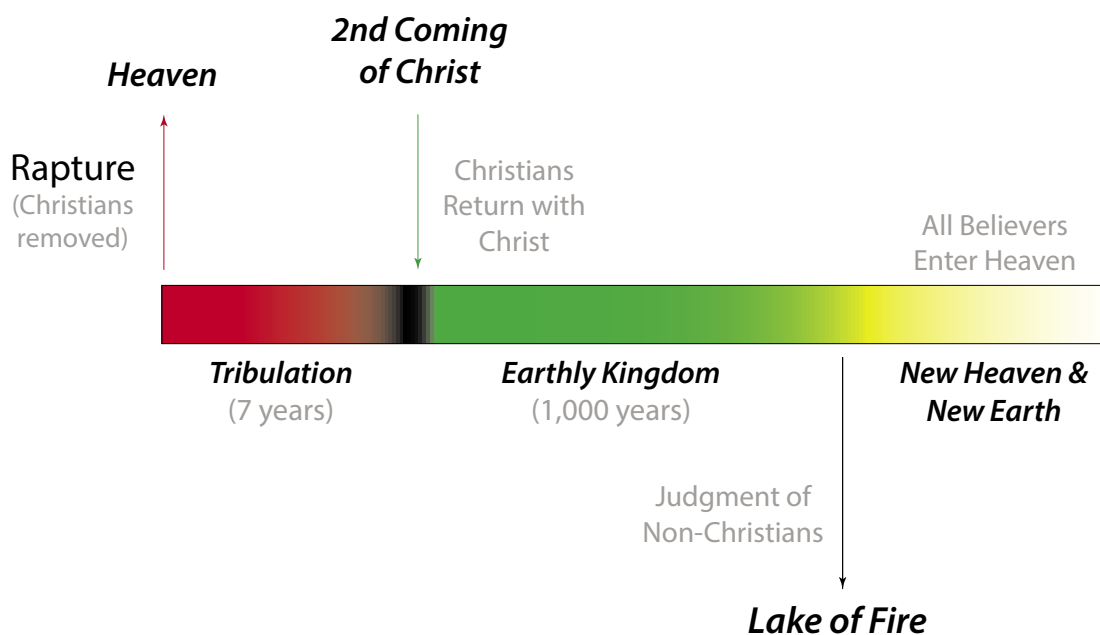
Now we are given some very important information. Notice the ten horns are on the beast's head.

Verse 23—24 now reveals the fourth beast is a kingdom on the earth and the ten horns are ten kings of ten nations.

Thus, he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.’ Daniel 7:23-24 (NASB)

He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him. Daniel 7:25-27 (NASB)

Timeline of The Future



Verse 16 tells us that an angel was speaking to Daniel. So, the “he said” refers to the angel. Notice the little horn takes control of three nations. This little horn is the antichrist and this will become clearer as we continue our study. But for now, remember he is the future antichrist.

Verses 25-27 reveal another amazing fact about this little horn or antichrist. These verses say,

This is an incredible passage. First, notice the antichrist will change laws. Now remember this when we get to Daniel 9. Second, we are told “they will be given into his hand.” The message is the antichrist will be allowed to make war with the saints. This agrees with Revelation 13:1-7 which also describes the antichrist. Third, don’t miss that verses 26-27 say the antichrist will be defeated. The alliance of eight nations that he leads along with all of the other nations of the world will be

defeated too! Then the millennial kingdom will be established.

GOD'S FUTURE PLANS — ANGEL'S MESSAGE IN DANIEL 9. At this point we have learned that the same timeline of the future is given in both Daniel 2 and 7. The symbolism is different, but the timelines are identical. Both timelines start with the Babylonian Empire, then the Medo-Persian empire, the empire of Greece, the Roman empire and finally a kingdom referred to as the ten toes or ten horns. The future version of the fourth empire is weak because it is an alliance of ten nations. A stronger power would be one nation.

Now if you were Daniel, what would you expect would happen after the Roman Empire was defeated? I am sure that Daniel understood some form of the Roman Empire would come into power. Then God's kingdom, which will rule over the entire world, will come into existence. So, let me ask, "What nation is ruling over the entire world today?" Obviously, no nation has that power today! Our world has 195 independent nations today. We do not have one nation controlling the world. Nor is the kingdom of God controlling the world, and the Roman Empire no longer exists as a power.

So, how should we understand the prophetic timeline given in Daniel 2 and 7? The answer is given in Daniel 9:24-27. In Daniel 9:24, the angel tells the prophet Daniel that there are seventy weeks until the end of sin and then everlasting righteousness. The angel said,

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness . . .
Daniel 9:24 (NASB)

Now I do not have time to explain all of the detail about the seventy weeks. Let me simply say that each week actually refers to seven years. That means the angel was referring to seventy weeks, which is seventy times seven years, or 490 years. These are biblical years and not the years in our calendar. The calendar we use today around the world is the Gregorian calendar which has 365.24 days. But a biblical year has only 360 days. It is shorter.

Then in verses 25-26, the angel said that there would be sixty-nine years from the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem

to the day of the Messiah's death, which occurred on Nisan 1, 445 B.C. If we do all the math correctly, we discover that the date of the Messiah's death was prophesied to occur after March 24, A.D. 33. Then if we accept the statements in the Gospels that Jesus died on a Friday on Passover, we arrive at the date of April 1, A.D. 33, which occurs after March 24, A.D. 33. This means, this prophecy is extremely accurate.

That means we can trust verse 26 which says "the people of the prince who is to come" will destroy Jerusalem. We know that occurred in A.D. 70. So, now two prophecies were accurately fulfilled and in the correct order. Jesus died first, and Jerusalem was destroyed later.

So, when we come to verse 27, we can trust this prophecy too! The verse says,

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate. Daniel 9:27 (NASB)

Notice that the "he" in this verse is "the prince who is to come" in verse 26. This is the future antichrist. He is the little horn in Daniel 7 because the rest of the verse says he will stop the sacrifices and offerings. He will change the laws. That agrees with Daniel 7:26 which said the antichrist will change laws.

I have two more important points. First, the angel said, "He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week." The covenant is a peace treaty that was supposed to last for one week. We have already learned that means seven years. We call this seven year period the tribulation. Since we are told the peace treaty will be broken in the middle of the week, that means the treaty will only last 3.5 years. My second and final point is that a peace treaty with Israel was not possible until Israel returned to the land of Palestine, which occurred in 1948. Israel was not in the land between A.D. 70 and 1948. A peace treaty has not been possible. Remember that this peace treaty was prophesied to occur after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. So, we had been waiting until Israel was back in the land. Now we are waiting for the peace treaty to occur.

CONCLUSION. We have learned that we are in the “Times of the Gentiles” and are waiting for the peace treaty to occur in the Middle East. When it happens, the seven year period called the tribulation will start. When the tribulation starts, the “Day of the Lord” will begin. That is part of the explanation of the second term in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. I will have more to say about this term in the next study.

Right now, I hope you understand why we study the book of Daniel.

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (NASB)

Before I conclude, remember that God wanted an unbelieving king to know about the future. Paul wanted the Christians in Thessalonica to know about the future in order to encourage them. God plans to judge this evil world and then Jesus is coming to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. When He comes He will rule this world in righteousness.

So, do not miss our next study. You will learn more about the Day of the Lord. We will also talk about the rapture and when it will occur.