

## Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Seven III

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This week at our house we've been doing some much needed painting. After 21 years, the walls are "talking." They tell stories like the time our dog Sebastian came in from being outside when it had been raining and chose to shake his body, like dogs do, in the hallway. What we didn't realize was that he had been rolling in the backyard, so it wasn't just water that he shook off. Many other stories have been splattered or etched on the walls, but now it's time that we have clean ones again.

It's amazing to me how quickly one pass of a well-soaked roller of Glidden's latex can wipe away years of accumulated marks and indiscretions. Whoosh! They're all gone! Such is the gracious forgiveness of our God. When we're covered by His righteousness, all our sins are hidden. Then He helps us get started again on the pathway to Heaven. Is there anyone here who doesn't want that?

The Good News that God forgives and heals is so precious to us. Satan hates it! Throughout history he has tried to corrupt or conceal the Good News and peddle his own agenda. This Book is the story of the conflict between Christ and Satan. It tells us that this war began in heaven and was transferred to this earth. When the devil realized that he was lost forever, he turned his hatred of God against the human family. Today our study in Daniel concerns how prophecy portrayed the attack of Satan.

Satan is the enemy. But the devil very cleverly uses human agents to do his work. Listen very carefully to the question I am now going to ask you. Are you ready? I want you to tell me the sum and substance of what Lucifer, the serpent in the Garden of Eden, said to Adam. He didn't say anything to Adam, did he! He didn't have to; he was successful in tempting Eve, and then he used her to tempt Adam.

Did Eve know what she was doing when she did this? Did she really understand she was doing the work of the devil? No, the Scripture says she was deceived. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." I Timothy 2:14. Does that mean that she was excused in what she did? No! She could have known.

So, in the first chapters of Genesis, the story of humanity begins with the "woman," being deceived, and being used by the devil to do his work. Don't miss this point; it's a model we'll see repeated. Here's another important consideration: How did God look on the "woman" who had been deceived and used by the devil? He looked on her *in pity and in love*. These three questions we're going to review several times today: Did she know what she was doing? Was ignorance an excuse? How did God look upon her?

Many times in the Bible a "woman" is used to represent a church. Did the "woman," the Church of Jesus' day, play a part in His crucifixion? Yes, a major part! Satan confused and deceived the Church of Jesus' day into demanding the death of the Son of God. Did they know what they were doing when they were induced by the devil to do this? No, they did not. Paul wrote, "Had they (the Jewish leaders) known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." I Corinthians 2:8. Peter preached, "Brethren, I know that you did it (crucified Christ) in ignorance." Acts 3:17. Peter said these words with heartfelt sympathy. How could he feel otherwise? He had denied the Lord himself. He was no better; he was a sinner in need of forgiveness. But now it was time to repent and move forward.

Because they were ignorant and deceived, were they innocent? No. They could have known. They did not need to be deceived. Nevertheless, how did God look upon the Church that was thus deceived, ignorant, and used by the devil to accomplish Satan's will? In pity and in love. How do we know that? What was Jesus' dying prayer? "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Luke 23:34. Remember your answer to the

question, "How did God look upon the Church that was deceived and used by Satan?" We'll come back to it later.

In a parable Jesus told, a farmer came back and saw weeds in his garden. "How did this happen?" He was asked. "An enemy did this," was the reply. The enemy is Satan. He hates God, and he tries to get people, yes, the "woman," "God's people," the Church to accomplish his goals.

Satan's aspirations from the beginning have been to be above God, to receive the worship that is due Him alone, and to undermine His government and throne. That's what he did up in heaven; that's what he's been doing down here. Daniel's prophecy reveals Satan's tactics under the symbol of a horn that arose on the fourth beast. The symbol of a "horn" is often used in prophecy, because it's by their horns that animals exercise their power.

"I was considering the (ten) horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words." Daniel 7:8. This horn, although "little" at first, subsequently wielded great power. His "appearance was greater than his fellows." Daniel 7:20. Daniel said, "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them." Daniel 7:21. The angel companion added, "(He) shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time." Daniel 7:25.

How many verses are in chapter seven? There are 28. Notice that only four verses are dedicated to the four world empires; verse 4 tells us about Babylon; verse 5 about Medo-Persia, verse 6 about Greece and verse 7 about civil Rome. From verse 8 and onward, the rest of the chapter is a discussion of the horn power and the Judgment. The activities of the horn power certainly occupied a great deal of Daniel's interest.

There are four pictures given in Scripture of this entity. The Lord was pleased to tell the story of Jesus in four Gospels. They tell the same story, but they don't have exactly the same information in them. One emphasizes one aspect of Christ's life, another gives a different perspective. Together they tell the story of how God, by His great love, left His throne and became man. He took all seven steps of humility outlined in Philippians two in order to bring salvation. It's the story of the power of love. We can't completely comprehend it; it's a mystery!

In Scripture, one of those "3:16" texts, this story is called the "mystery of godliness." Paul tells us, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory." I Timothy 3:16.

The Scriptures reveal another story, also told in four pictures. It is the story of Satan who desired to plant his throne above God's. It is the story of pride, not humility. It is the story of the love of power, not the power of love. It is called the "mystery of iniquity." We'll study the passage where that term is found next week.

No one can explain how Lucifer came to the way of thinking that led him to rebel against his Creator. It's a mystery. How he could ever think that he was deserving of the worship that belonged to God alone is something no one will ever be able to fully comprehend. But he did.

The four pictures of Satan's attacks are found in Daniel 7 under the symbol of the horn power; in I John 2 under the term "antichrist"; in II Thessalonians 2 under the title "man of sin;" and in Revelation 13 as a beast that is leopard-like. We'll take a look at the horn power in Daniel 7 this week, and undertake a study of the other three next week. I will propose to you that

these four pictures tell the same story, the story of how Satan has gone about to accomplish his designs.

I will also propose to you that he did this through a well-meaning but deceived entity, a "woman," the Church of the Middle Ages. Remember, how did the Lord look upon the "woman" who was deceived and used by Satan? In pity and love. What did He ask His Father when His hands were nailed to the cross? "Father forgive them, they don't know what they do." Keep that thought in mind as we study this important topic.

Why do I propose that the horn power represents the Church of the Middle Ages? Let's look at the list of prophetic clues. From the specifications in Daniel 7, we'll take a look at five identifying markers.

(1) When and where did it appear? The horn power is one which would emerge about the time of civil Rome's collapse. What I share with you can be found in nearly every history book or encyclopedia. Rome had been a center of Christianity practically from its inception. There had been five main centers of Christianity in the early centuries; Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus and Rome. Pastors of the churches in these larger centers naturally acquired stronger positions of leadership.

And because it was at the capital of the Empire, the Christian Church at Rome and the bishop of Rome assumed pre-eminence over the other centers of Christianity. Then, into the vacuum that was left by weak Caesars and the removal of the capital from Rome to Constantinople stepped the bishop of Rome. History records the "replacement" of the Caesars by the popes. Eventually the bishop of Rome claimed leadership over the entire Christian Church.

We saw how the fourth beast, the kingdom of Rome, came to her end by the invasion of tribes from the north, like the Suevi, Visigoths, Vandals, Anglo-Saxons, Heruli, Bergundians, Ostrogoths, Franks, Lombards, Alamanni, and so on. These

tribes, the "ten horns" on the fourth beast, for the most part were the forerunners of the nations of modern Europe.

The horn power which occupied so much of Daniel's interest through the remainder of the chapter was one which "*came up among them,*" (verse 8) both *chronologically and geographically*. It was at the time and in the place of the crumbling Roman Empire that this entity surfaced. Don't look for this horn power somewhere else in time or place; you'll be misled. It came up "among" the ten horns that represented the Germanic tribes which swept down from northern Europe and brought an end to the Roman Empire. Of that the prophecy is unmistakably clear. And don't forget that the locus of the fourth beast is Rome, and the horn power would "grow out of" the fourth beast. The fact that we're talking about the Church of Rome, the very location of the fourth beast, is significant.

The growth of the Church was steady in the early centuries of Christianity, but she lacked legal support for her claims. Then in the sixth century, Emperor Justinian published a law which recognized the bishop of Rome as the "head of all the holy churches." But there was a problem. There were three of those tribes, three of the ten horns that were violently opposed to the Church. They differed in doctrine, believing in the teaching of Arianism, which held that Christ was a created Being.

However, these three were effectively removed by Belisarius, a top general sent by Justinian. By the year 538, the way was essentially cleared for the Church to operate without opposition. These three Arian tribes, the Heruli, the Vandals (from which we get the word "vandalism") and the Ostrogoths, were the three horns that were "plucked up" and removed. The Church of the Middle Ages fits this specification.

(2) This entity would be very proud and boastful, speaking pompous words. "And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words." Daniel 7:8. Verse 25 says that these pompous words were directed "against

the Most High." In his effort to be equal with God and obtain worship, Satan led men to assume titles that rightfully belong only to the Lord. "We hold upon earth the place of God Almighty," claimed Pope Leo XIII. Speaking of the pope the statement is made, "Thou art another God on earth."

Sometimes you hear the pope being called the "Pontiff," or you might hear the verb "pontificate" used to describe the giving of official statements coming from the Vatican. That's because from long ago popes assumed the title "Pontifex Maximus," meaning "The Greatest Bridge Maker," a title originally employed by the priests of Babylon to convey the idea that through their priesthood a "bridge" was made to the afterlife. However, the Bible reveals that Jesus is the Link that connects Heaven and earth. He is the "ladder" of Jacob's dream; He is the Mediator between God and man; He is the "Daysman" of Job's quest. The Church of the Middle Ages clearly meets the specification of "pompous words."

(3) This horn would tolerate no dissent, but would "wear out" or persecute the saints. Daniel 7:25. History records that somewhere between 50 and 60 million martyrs sealed their testimony with their blood at the hands of the Church of Rome. It is a sad chapter in history that confirms this specification. The massacre of those who refused to bow to the Papacy during the Middle Ages is a forgotten holocaust. The tortures of its Inquisition would defy imagination. Jesus told His followers, "The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service." John 16:2. It was the "Church" that killed Jesus; it was the Church that persecuted His followers.

(4) It would seek to "change times and law." Daniel 7:25. For a kingdom or power to change earthly laws would not be a subject of prophecy, for that would be expected when one kingdom replaced another. This must be referring to an attempted change in the Law of God, the Ten Commandments written in stone by God's own finger.

Does the Church of Rome meet this prophetic clue? Let me share with you this quote from an official Catholic catechism. "Q. Which is the Sabbath day? A. Saturday is the Sabbath day. Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." Peter Geiermann, The Converts Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957 edition, p. 50.

Another Catholic author writes, "You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that the Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! but by whom? Who has authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day, who shall dare to say, Nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day; but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead? This is a most important question, which I know not how you can answer. You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only; and yet in so important a matter as the observance of one day in seven as a holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that day which the Bible has commanded. The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the Ten Commandments; you believe that the other nine are still binding; who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principles, if you really follow the Bible and the Bible only, you ought to be able to produce some portion of the New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered." Library of Christian Doctrine: Why Don't You Keep Holy the Sabbath-Day? London: Burns and Oates, Ltd., pp. 3, 4.

Besides attempting to change the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday, she would also remove the second Commandment which forbids the worship of graven images and split the tenth into two commandments, so that the number of commandments would be preserved as being ten. Satan's attack has been against God's government, His throne and His Law. In

the Middle Ages he successfully deceived men to do his will by altering the Ten Commandments, which are as sacred and eternal as God Himself.

Remember the "three questions." Did they know what they were doing? Perhaps not. They might have thought that by changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday they were making it easier for those who were coming to Christianity from pagan backgrounds where they were used to worshipping on the "day of the sun." Does their ignorance or misguided intention provide an excuse for what they did? No. How does God look upon those whom the devil deceives and uses? In pity and love. The war is between Satan and God, but the earth is the battlefield.

(5) The horn would continue in uninterrupted power for "a time, times and half a time." Verse 25. The same word "time" is found four times in Daniel 4 describing the seven "times" of Nebuchadnezzar's furlough, with general agreement among Bible students and scholars that "year" is the best understanding of the word. Scholars are also in general consensus that the word "times" in Daniel 7:25 is to be understood in the "dual" form, meaning "two." So the period described is (one) year, two years and half a year, making a total of three and half years.

Additionally, when we discuss the picture in Revelation 13, we'll see that there is a strong reason to look at the time period this way, because we'll see in Revelation 11-13 parallel periods of 1260 days, 42 months, and 3 ½ years. By comparing Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 we can easily see that the "time, times and half a time" is intended to be equal to "1260 days," which are "42 months," which are "3 ½ years." This is the most frequently repeated time prophecy in the Bible, appearing a total of seven times.

The next question is, Would we understand these to be literal or symbolic "years"? There are six reasons why I'm going to suggest that we look at this time as being expressed in a

symbolic way. First of all, we realize that these prophecies are filled with symbols. Beasts are kingdoms; wings are speed, horns are powers, waters are people, and so on. If the other components are expressed by symbols, why not express time in a symbolic way too, for the sake of consistency?

Secondly, we're going to see that, although this power had its beginning at the downfall of Rome, the scope of its activities is such that realistically, more than three and a half literal years would be needed to accomplish all that it did, especially when we compare the other three pictures in Scripture. If four verses in Daniel 7 told the story of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, whose kingdoms stretched across about 1,000 years, would it be reasonable to think that the 21 verses which discuss the horn power would be fulfilled in 3 ½ literal years?

Thirdly, from the descriptions given in this chapter, the life-span of this power brings it down to the last period of earth's history. If it "came up among" the horns which brought about the end of the ancient Roman Empire, and if we're going to count time in a literal way, then we have a problem. Time understood in a literal way doesn't fit the prophetic scheme. Remember, the term "king" is used synonymously with "kingdom." (Compare verses 17 and 23.) It wasn't limited to the reign of a single monarch. It's not talking about a single individual, but a system.

Fourthly, Scripture has given us a yardstick by which to understand time in symbolic prophecy, and that is "a day for a year." Ezekiel was asked to "act out" in a symbolic way the periods of Israel's and Judah's rebellion by lying on his side, 391 days for the number of years of Israel's iniquity, 40 days for Judah's 40 years. Ezekiel 4:4-6. One day of his symbolic portrayal would be equal to one literal year. We're familiar with Israel's wanderings being one year for every day the spies were in the land, for a total of 40 years. Numbers 14:34.

Fifthly, there's "mercy" in the day-for-a-year principle. By this means God could accurately disclose extended time periods,

stretching over millennia, without discouraging His people with the thought that this earth will last so long. The saints back then weren't burdened with the knowledge of "how long" this will last, while the saints of today can have confidence that God has always known the end from the beginning.

Finally, there's a practical reason for using this method of calculation. It works! So confident in adopting this way of measuring time in prophecy were the commentators of Daniel 9 that they inserted the words "of years" when it talks about the "seventy weeks," making the text read "seventy weeks of years."

With these things in mind, what do we find? We discover in history that the Church gained power during the early centuries, but a significant event took place in 538 A.D. when military forces led by Belisarius removed those who were opposed to the Church, and at that time she could exercise her power without resistance.

Through the middle ages her power continued to rise, till she ruled over all the political empires. Kings bowed to her will. Those who dared to defy her were persecuted or martyred.

At last the voice of protest was raised against the abuses of the Church. France, a long-time victim of the Church's authority, turned against her. Napoleon sent his general Berthier, whose mission it was to overthrow the Papacy. His instructions were, "There is one thing even more essential to the attainment of the end desired, and that is to destroy, if possible, the centre of unity of the Roman Church." Pius VI was taken captive by Napoleon in 1798, and many thought the Papacy was finished. From the year 538 A. D. to the year 1798 A.D. is 1260 years, which meets the prophetic specifications.

We'll see many of these same specifications when we study the other three pictures given in prophecy. We're also going to see that the basic understandings we've looked at today are by

no means original, but were embraced centuries ago by the leaders who championed the Protestant Reformation.

When I was in India, I would look out the window while riding a train and see kids or grownups on a field playing a game. I couldn't tell you too much about the game they were playing. I wouldn't be able to tell you what was a "good play" or a "bad play," because I don't know too much about cricket. You have to understand what the purpose of the game is in order to appreciate what's going on. A foreigner to our country might say the same thing about one of our sports.

Likewise, it is essential that we understand the overall "construct" of the battle between Christ and Satan in order to understand and appreciate the issues that affected God's people in the past and the issues that affect His people today. The battle is between Satan and Christ. Satan attacked God's authority to rule, His throne and His law. Everything must be seen through the lens of that construct in order to fully grasp "what's going on" in this earth's existence. The difference is that we're not spectators on a "train traveling by." We're on the field. We're required to pick a side, choose a team. The battle is between Christ and Satan, but the battlefield is on earth.

What if you find yourself or a friend in a theology that is not backed by Scripture, what should you do? What if I find myself in a system that has been accomplishing Satan's goal of fighting against His government? Remember the "three questions." Eve was tricked and didn't know what she was doing, but that didn't make it right. And God had love and pity toward her. What would have been the right approach to Eve? To deny that she had been deceived? To refuse to believe that Satan had used her? Would you say, "I don't want to talk to Eve about this because it might hurt her feelings?" How did God approach Eve? With pity and love He told her the truth! He brought to her attention the fact that she had been misled, but offered forgiveness and restoration.

That was the approach Peter used when told the truth to the Jewish Church. It was painful to hear, but they needed to hear it. He told them they had been misled and had done it ignorantly but now it was time to repent and place themselves on God's side. Listen to the sermon by Peter in Acts 3 and hear His Spirit speaking to you. Paul said, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." Acts 17:30.

The end of all things is at hand. We want to be entirely surrendered to God and His will. We want to be His soldiers and not be found working for the devil. The battle is between Satan and Christ, but we are involved and must decide for or against Him. A decision for Christ is one which will result in life eternal. "Choose you this day whom you will serve."