

Chapter 7 - The Mighty Beasts

Vision of the Four Beasts

7 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

As established in Chapter 5, the “*first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon*” is a very difficult date to pin down. Daniel explicitly states here that Belshazzar was crowned King, something, as stated, that is still debated by historians. The debate about this is, frankly, irrelevant to the story but for the purposes of the timeline, we will put the date at 552BC, during the period when Nabonidus was in his self-imposed exile.

The text here states that this is a dream or vision that Daniel is attempting to relay to his readers. He is not trying to imply, at all, that these events are literally true but, like Nebuchadnezzar in earlier chapters, he is instead saying that he too has been given special messages by God. He is intending to give a clear understanding of what the vision is and just state “*the main facts.*”

2 Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. 4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.

5 “And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’

6 “After this I looked, and there was another, 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.

The first thing we can review is that this mirrors the dream of Daniel 2 which Nebuchadnezzar experienced. As we know from verse 17, “*Those great beasts, which*

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are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth”, we can translate the two visions and consider if they match up.

Both visions follow the same pattern; four great powers rise before God himself steps in and replaces them with his own kingdom. What makes this part of the story much more interesting is the level of detail Daniel puts into this version.

Daniel first witnesses “*the four winds of heaven ... stirring up the Great Sea.*” It is from this verse that the identification of ‘sea’ relates to large groups of people, often identified with Europe although not exclusively. These beasts; kingdoms of people, rise from the sea as people group themselves together with common purpose and culture. The winds of heave, those great winds of strife that happen as a natural mechanism of our planet’s history, stir people up to form themselves into kingdoms and associations as time moves forward.

The four beats can be easily identified with the 4 great powers that arose prior to Christ’s incarnation that interacted closely with, or more accurately dominated, the Israelites. These were the same powers discussed in Chapter 2, but in this version we have much more detail in their revelation.

Babylon was the great power at the time that Daniel was writing, and it is natural that the first beast be identified with that empire.

“*The first was like a lion*” Lions are the kings of the jungle, dominant of everything they see and survey but are also the moral and societal leaders of the animal kingdom. The Lion here represents Babylon’s dominance of both the world as it knew it but also the moral dominance over God’s people. They had sinned, betrayed God and Babylon became the tool He used to punish them.

“*and had eagle’s wings*” The wings of swiftness demonstrate how Babylon was able to conquer and consume everything. Babylon was able to move its armies swiftly along well known track routes and attack the enemy as and when they wished early in the empire.

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“I watched till its wings were plucked off” But as time went on, Babylon’s civil infrastructure made moving large bodies of conquering troops difficult. The multiplicity of languages and competing allegiances made managing the empire very difficult and the army became stale and stagnant.

“and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.” As we understand the history, the unified government in Babylon made defending itself difficult. Nebuchadnezzar was supposed to be a strong delegator – hence the story of his insanity being very believable, but subsequent monarchs centralised the government around themselves. As discussed in Chapter 4, that is probably the situation before the fall of Babylon and explains why their loss was so complete; nobody would question the king and therefore also not give any advice they thought he would not be happy with.

“5 “And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear.” The second beast arises *“suddenly”* indicating that, as we saw in Chapter 4, the fall of Babylon would be exceptionally quick. This Bear is the Medo-Persian Empire, often referred to as the Achaemenid Empire in modern scholarship but more colloquially simply as Persia.

“It was raised up on one side,” This jointed crown, similar to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in recent memory, was a merging of cultures combining the style and governance of both. As discussed in the last two chapters. This has caused some confusion amongst scholars when certain people are referred to. What is clear, as the historic record shows, was that the Persians were the dominant power over the Medians, hence this bear has one shoulder raised higher than the other. Again, similar to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Medo-Persia was a melting pot of different cultures who, while subjugated, were generally respected.

“and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.” The three ribs represent the three primary nations that Medo-Persia conquered: Lidia, Babylon and Egypt. Modern historians also include Elam, but this is disputed. It is more likely that Elam was a client kingdom of either Media or Babylon, or both, at the time it was absorbed into the Medo-Persian Empire.

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“And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’” The three named above were the primary nations conquered by Media and Persia but not the only forces. Babylon and Egypt had many client kingdoms which were absorbed into the Empire, and their resources devoted to world conquest.

“6 “After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard,” Leopards are cunning and intelligent but also know how to stalk their prey. They are extremely swift and powerful in their own right and while they are not ‘king of the Jungle’ per se, they are not to be trifled with.

“which had on its back four wings of a bird.” In addition to the natural Leopard swiftness, this also has a set of wings that can be used to access anywhere it wants to.

“The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.” The repeated number four can represent a couple of different things. Alexander had four senior generals throughout his campaign; Attalus, Hephaestion, Perdiccas and Seleucus, the last of which would succeed him as the head of the Seleucid Empire after Alexander's death. He also pioneered four types of military forces through his campaign; heavy and light infantry and cavalry. There were also four generals who succeeded him; Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus and Ptolemy. Alexander also attempted to dominate every land in four primary ways; militarily, economically, politically through language and writing and culturally, which was rather distinct from his predecessors. Any or all of these four could easily related to the four. I would argue that the four wings refer to the four types of fighting style, the four heads to his four senior generals and the dominion to the four ways he dominated all lands he conquered.

7 “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 I was considering the 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.

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This fourth beast obviously is much more dangerous than the first ones and relates to the Rome. Where “*dominion was given to*” the third beast, this one takes whatever it wants. It is described as being “*dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong... different from all the beasts that were before it*” These qualities are difficult to translate. We can say that it being “*dreadful and terrible*” relates to the execution of those who stand against it, but Rome’s execution methods and dominance styles was little different from those that came before. Rome was, however, clearly “*exceedingly strong*” with superior weapons and tactics that saw them rule the world for more than five hundred years. The “*iron teeth*” probably relate to the short-swords and Pila that the Romans put to very good use, defeating everything that opposed it. Such empires were “*devour[ed], br[oken] in pieces, and traml[ed]*” into dust until their culture was destroyed. Rome had a strong tolerance for conquered people’s traditions but no respect for any opposition. In this way “*[i]t was different from all the beasts that were before it*”. It was also a constitutional monarchy and later a republic at its rise and the senate was retained during the Empire. This form of government was different to all the other ‘beasts’ that Daniel saw, being a various style of absolute monarchy.

The “*ten horns*” are interesting as they are attached to the beast yet are also growing from it. The fact that there are ten of them would indicate that they have some independence, yet they are also united. Understanding that these horns represent individual kings, kingdoms or principalities is much better explained when we look at the opening of Chapter 8:

“3 Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.

5 And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.”

As is clear to the avid reader, although we will explore this in much more detail in the next chapter, these two animals represent Medo-Persia and Greece respectively. The ram with two horns standing by a river represents the Medo-Persians who had

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conquered Babylon. The smaller horn being the earlier indicates Media rise before Persia yet Persia had dominance over Media through their history.

“7 And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns.”

The male Goat represents Alexander the Great of Macedon who united Greece and then conquered the world. When alexander attacked the Persian Empire, he defeated both Media and Persia in quick succession, destroying both those powers for centuries.

“8 Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.”

As is remembered to history, at the height of his power, Alexander the Great died in Babylon after conquering the know world. The subsequent squabbling over the breakup of his empire is referred to as the Wars of the Diadochi or Wars of Alexander's Successors. As many as 10 generals fought various engagements until four were left standing; Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus and Ptolemy. What would become the Seleucid Empire would ultimately swallow up Lysimachus' and Cassander's territories leaving two but both of these areas; Greece and Asia Minor, would exert various levels of independence and influence over both the Egyptians and Syrians until Rome conquered them all.

In this way we can come to the conclusion that, in scripture, a 'horn' can refer to either a king of the nation or a king of the nation that followed on from it. In other words, the 10 'kings' can refer to either Roman leaders themselves or leaders of the states that resulted from the brake up of the Roman Empire, and such we can apply this rule to the 10 here.

Rome began as a small monarchy on the Tiber in central Italy, expanding quickly into a republic that conquered Italy and, ultimately, the known world. At its height it stretched from Spain to India and from England to Nubia. Augustus' Empire was manageable but the bureaucracy that continued to flourish made managing it difficult by the 3rd Century. In 293 AD, Diocletian's reforms added a second Emperor and a pair

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of junior emperors known as the Tetrarchy, rule of four that lasted until the 4th Century when Constantine reunified Rome, at least theoretically. Gothic and Gallic attacks and a shift toward Constantinople meant that the Western half of the empire could not be defended, and 4 September 476AD is typically given as the date that Western half of the Roman Empire fell. This was the day that Odoacer, a Gothic King, deposed the Emperor of Western Roman, Romulus Augustulus who was around 2 years old at the time, and became the ruler of Italy.

The Eastern half of the Roman Empire, referred to by historians as the Byzantine Empire, would last until 1453 but the west fractured into a variety of states. Numbering these down to 9 is generally very difficult as the Gallic and Gothic tribes are very interconnected. Typically, lists include the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Franks, Saxons and Angles. The other 3 are much more difficult to pin down as they are client kings and sub kingdoms of those primary tribes. The Heruli and Lombards, for example, both included in most classical lists are today generally considered sub tribes of the Ostrogoths. The Burgundians are often included in lists of Celtic tribes but can be included in their own right.

To this end, identifying exactly who the ten horns refers to is difficult, and makes the next section about the 'little horn' complicated. Daniel says that while he was *“considering the horns... there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots.”* This 'little horn' is obviously not one of the ten states that came from Rome but rather it is a new power that eliminated 3 of the other states to make room for itself. If we take the 476AD date as the fall of the Western Roman Empire, we need to discover a new power that arises in its ashes that removes three states to make itself a home. Only one state fits this description; the Vatican state more commonly referred to as the Papacy.

Around 310AD, the Bishop of Rome was given the Lateran Palace which is still the main papal palace in Southeast Rome. Constantine's encouragement of Christianity was teamed with a political independence as the Church was recognised to be a religious, and not governmental or military, institution. Christianity therefore moved broadly around the world ignoring political borders.

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When Western Rome broke up, the papacy came under the strong influence of the Gothic tribes, which roused longstanding divisions amongst the Goths and, ultimately, brought the wrath of the Byzantine Empire. The Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths all believers in the Arian heresy, rejecting the trinitarian theology that God was three persons in one.

The Vandals were plagued by unrest from their Trinitarian citizens and various persecutions failed to achieve much of importance. Byzantine Emperor Justinian I declared war in 533 and by April of the next year had conquered and absorbed the Vandals into the Byzantine Empire.

The Heruli are a historic anomaly, referenced in many writings of other nations but few artefacts relating to them directly exist. Forging a kingdom in central Italy, tension with the other tribes and with the Byzantine Christians were constant. Justinian I attempted to convert them to Chalcedonian Christianity as a response to reports that they were Arian heretics. During the Lombard conquest of Italy in the early 6th Century, all records of the Heruli in the historic record ceases.

The Ostrogoths were the broader power that the Vandals and Heruli are often folded into. Since the conquest of Rome, these were the Goths that had primary influence over the Papacy and, while allowing them to remain politically neutral, were still able to push the power to its particular will. Over the century the amount of influence waxed and waned but typically the Papacy remained a politically independent entity. The rise of Arian influences in the Gothic states caused Byzantium to become uncomfortable and various schisms in the Church were resolved as a part of growing ties with the East. The Arian Goths attempted to isolate the Chalcedonian aristocracy and subjugate them which only alienated them and forced them to turn to Byzantium.

Justinian sent Belisarius to recover the North African provinces held by the Vandals in 535 to resolve a dynastic dispute. A further dynastic complication saw Byzantine troops move into Sicily and Dalmatia and the invasion of Italy followed swiftly thereafter. By the end of 536, Rome had been captured and the Goths pushed back. They rallied and attempted to siege Rome but were repelled despite the Goths outnumbering the Romans 3:1. Although the goths would rally and it would take more

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time for the war to be complete, by 538 Rome was securely in Byzantine hands and the Papacy could again take up its seat in that city.

To secure their holdings and defeat the Arian heresy, Pope Silverius was deposed and replaced with Pope Vigilius, but this appeal to the general Christian population for support took much longer than expected to work. Nevertheless, the papacy had now been transferred to the Byzantine.

The Papacy did not immediately take control of the lands that were conquered, rather it spent time as an independent entity and often came into conflict with the Byzantine powers. But the text of Daniel here does not, necessarily, mean that it would have a personal dominion that it ruled itself. The Papal States would be the personal fief of the Pope and today the Holy See exists as an independent nation with the pope the last absolute dictator; but the text here only requires that “*three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots*” so that the “*little one*” could “*com[e] up among them*”. Indeed this does not violate our rule interpreting horns as kings and kingdoms as in Chapter 8, the “*ram which had two horns*” did not have 2 kings. Media and Persia were a combined empire with a single king serving 2 powers with 2 names as we have discussed previously. In the case of the “*little one*” the Papal authority to give instructions to earthly kings certainly makes it a powerful character regardless of what land it personally manages. In fact we can go further to examine the remainder of the verse and find that “*there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.*” This horn is clearly identified to be a single individual which could be interpreted as an absolute monarch or as a political individual that has influence over others. The “*pompous words*” are words of self importance, dominating others and promoting themselves over others.

No other historic character at all fits this bill at any point in history. The Papacy is the only absolute monarch who is or was in a position to give instructions and have personal influence over both citizens and monarch outside of their realm.

The question of when the Papacy rose to this level of prominence is an important one for later chapters and timed prophecies. Several elements all came together in 538 AD which secured Papal dominion for more than a millennium.

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First, Pope Vigilius opened the Third Council of Orléans under his own authority; that of the supreme of the five heads of the Christian church. This authority had been sanctioned by Emperor Justinian I's decree given in 533 that the Bishop of Rome was to have a position of full control over the other patriarchs of the Church and was empowered to give spiritual instructions to earthly monarchs. Although issued in 533, this was the first time that the decree was enacted formally. This authority was reinforced in the Quinisext Council in Constantinople of 692.

Second, the title of Pontifex Maximus, which had become part of the Roman Emperor's titles in 133AD, was conveyed to the Bishops of Rome. This title had been passed through the Babylonians to the kings of Pergamum and finally to Rome, and means 'Great Bridge'; seen as a fitting title.

Third, this was the year that the Papacy was able to return to Rome and take up its position in that city.

For these reasons, 538AD is considered the date when the Papacy began its political dominion and why the 'little horn' is identified as the Roman Papacy.

Vision of the Ancient of Days

*9 "I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment was white as snow,
And the hair of His head was like pure wool.
His throne was a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;
10 A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.
The court was seated,
And the books were opened.*

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“[T]he Ancient of Days” can only be God the Father, about to sit in judgement over the earth. As we discussed, this follows the same pattern of Daniel 2, and after the ten horns were separated in that story, the judgement of God was laid down on the earth. This is why *“thrones were put in place”* for the *“court”* of heaven to assemble; as described in Revelation 4 and 5. This is the preparation for the judgement of earth as *“the books were opened”* ready for evaluation.

The physical description of God here, the clothes and hair of white, a fiery chariot and thousands ministering before him is to demonstrate the power of God who is sitting in judgement over this planet. He has the authority over all things and these who are with and around him bear witness of his power position and authority. They take orders from Him and will dispense the judgments He declares.

11 “I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.”

What is made very clear is, in contrast to Chapter 2, Judgement here is taking place while the Fourth beast is still alive. The Beast is not slain when *“the Ancient of Days”* begins his process. In Chapter 2, the Kingdom is setup while here a Judgement is taking place. Daniel watches this beast *“because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking”*. The fact that the beast is not dead when this speaking is happening would indicate that it was under its control or power. However, the beast is then *“slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.”* For him, nothing is left, yet the other beasts, despite having *“their dominion taken away”* were still permitted to survive *“for a season and a time”*.

As stated, the Papacy was given a title of the Empire, Pontifex Maximus, and was supported closely by the Byzantine Empire. It was able to speak in its own right but was protected by the authority of the titles it held and by the military might of the most powerful nation on the planet for a long period of time. When that finally fell, in 1453, nothing of the Roman Empire except the papacy remained. This is a distinct contrast

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to Persia, Babylon and Greece that were able to retain much of their lifestyle and culture under their conquerors. Persian culture adopted many Babylonian traditions which evolved into the Arabic culture we see today. While many elements of Roman history are still important to us today, the majority of cultural elements have been lost to history. When both East and West Rome fell, they were completely “*destroyed and given to the burning flame.*”

*13 “I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.
14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.*

Daniel recognises Jesus’ Second Coming and, clearly, identifies him as separate from God the Father. As “*One like the Son of Man*” then comes “*to the Ancient of Days,*” they must be two, separate, people. It is after this glorious return that he is “*given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.*” This, again mirrors Chapter 2 where the Kingdom is setup after the rock smashes at the feet of the statue. Here, the four beasts stretch forth over the earth and then all are judged. This judgement starts around the time that the little horn is speaking great things but probably a bit after. Following his blasphemy, the Judgement begins.

The Kingdom of Christ is said to be: “*an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed*”, clearly and unequivocally distinct from the previous four which have fallen and ceased to be.

The fact that Daniel recognises Jesus’ Second Coming and that Jesus is a distinct and separate character from the Father is important. It rejects the idea that Jesus was not

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known before his incarnation and that Jews were entirely monotheistic. They were, at this time at least, able to accept a divine structure with more than one being involved and with each having distinct roles. Yet, here, the way that he is “*given dominion and glory*” can be interpreted as either being ‘awarded’ it as a result of the Judgement; that the judgement comes down in His favour, or that he takes the “*dominion and glory*” by the authority of his Second Coming. This is a fine point that is not tremendously important but is interesting to consider and that has long-reaching consequences. For the sake of this interpretation, we will leave it an open question as later chapters and Revelation hold clear answers.

Daniel's Visions Interpreted

15 “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 17 ‘Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.’

Daniel was clearly freak out by these visions, and who wouldn't be! They are devastating monsters tearing the world apart and doing what they like. It is extremely natural to be concerned by what they mean, so Daniel does what any man who has a question should do; he asks. Who he asks is an interesting question. Daniel is told it is “*one of those who stood by*” but this is an open phrase. It could refer to one of the people who was with him while he slept. That may seem unusual to us but in this time, people of high station were often surrounded by attendants and such. It could also refer to one of the people who sat on thrones or one of the “*thousand thousands*” who “*ministered to Him*”, we just don't know. What we do know is, whoever this was, they were able to give Daniel an answer.

Daniel wanted to know what the truth of all this sort of thing is. He was obviously trying to understand and whoever this attendant was, they obliged. He explained that, as explained above, the four beasts are four great kingdoms that arise and then “*the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever,*

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even forever and ever.” This, again, mirrors what was demonstrated in Daniel 2 and the reality of history.

What's more, Daniel would have remembered the revelations he gave to Nebuchadnezzar of these kings and now realised that the time was near. He recognised that the time was shortly to come for the change of the kingdom; and that must have concerned him. Would he be able to continue in a position to advocate for his people or would he and they be persecuted. What is their, and his, future?

19 “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; 20 and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.

This beast is the one that caught Daniel's eye and he was, naturally, concerned with its meaning. It was so different from all of the others and so dramatic that he needed to rationalise what he was seeing. As he said it was “*different from all the others*” and “*exceedingly dreadful*” meaning that, while he understood the other nations, he was concerned about what this particular one would be doing. Its differences were such that he had to ask about it.

But more concerning for him were the horns. He saw the “*other horn*” rise and push three out and as he started to focus on it, he listened to what it was saying. This horn was obviously different from the others itself, having “*eyes and a mouth*” and speaking “*pompous words*”. Interestingly, in contrast to other references, Danile here sates that his “*appearance was greater than his fellows*” while later this power will be referred to as a ‘little horn’. Daniel's point here is to position this power as superior to the others, able to bully other powers and bend them to his will with his words.

21 “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

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The fact that this power tries to “*mak[e] war against the saints*” indicates its arrogance and the superiority that it considers itself to have. This power is willing to attack the people of God as they were; those who stood as God’s own people and continue this “*until the Ancient of Days came*”. God alone was able to stop them and the persecution would continue until the “*judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.*”

What would have worried Daniel was not that God would win, but that the horn power would “*prevailing against them*”. By the time that this is being written, Jerusalem certainly no longer exists and his people are captive but he has been able to advocate for them. What is being revealed here is that there will come a time when his people, and those who succeed them, will be actively persecuted by a power that will be in a position to strike with impunity before God’s Judgement is laid out.

23 “Thus he said:

*‘The fourth beast shall be
A fourth kingdom on earth,
Which shall be different from all other kingdoms,
And shall devour the whole earth,
Trample it and break it in pieces.*

*24 The ten horns are ten kings
Who shall arise from this kingdom.
And another shall rise after them;
He shall be different from the first ones,
And shall subdue three kings.*

The explainer says what is explained above. The fourth kingdom is a great power that will be replaced by ten minor kings. Another will then arise and uproot 3 other kings to make a place for himself.

*25 He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.*

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Now this messenger adds that he will not just “*speak pompous words*” but will speak them “*against the Most High*”! He will blaspheme God and “*persecute the saints*”! This power is revealed as a grave threat to God’s people.

The list of blasphemies by the Papacy are extensive and I will write a separate essay going into them. For the purpose of this passage, the three that are considered the most grave are the intercession by a Priest between the sinner and God, the worship of Mary and the idea of Papal Supremacy on earth and in heaven. More will be discussed on this in future passages.

Persecution of the Saints also has easy historical examples in the form of the numerous crusades against Christians. As to if the Cathar heretics were or were not saints is really immaterial, but the fact that the Albigensian Crusade aka the Cathar Crusade was called by Innocent III against Christians was a clear persecution. The 1487 bull, ‘Id Nostri Cordis’ issued by Pope Innocent VIII called for the extermination of the Waldenses, promising a reduction of time in purgatory for all those who took the mission. Albert Cattaneo led the crusade in the Pope’s name and came close to exterminating the Waldenses.

The Waldenses were a group who tried to keep the law and truth of the Bible as close as they could which included one key element: the Sabbath. This was, arguably, the primary division between them and the church of Rome.

On March 7, 321, Emperor Constantine issued a decree changing the day of worship from the Jewish Saturday to Sunday to attract converts to the Christian message. This was reenforced at the Third Council of Orléans in 538 which set very clear and specific penalties for working on Sunday and not worshipping; a sin called 'recusancy'. Around the same time, Justinian wrote his ‘Code’ of laws which clearly calls Sunday a “Holy Day” and further expands on the penalties for violating it. There was no authority for the Papacy to “*change times and law*” in this way, and it is a glaring example of their arrogance. Furthermore, by attempting to change the day on which God rested, they are clearly blaspheming his authority as the Creator God, for that was the important reason that we were to ‘remember’ the Sabbath.

Chapter 7 - The Mighty Beasts The Time, Times and Half a Time

The commandment explicitly states “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. **Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.**” Exodus 20. The Catholic Church moving the holy day, and consequently the end of the week, to Sunday over Saturday is an attack on God’s “times and law” and his position as Creator.

The Time, Times and Half a Time

*Then the saints shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.*

The amount of time that “*the saints*” will be “*given into his hand*” or subject for persecution is given in cryptic language. The amount given is “*a time and times and half a time*”. If we accept that “*times*” must refer to a multiple of “*time*”, the natural question in our language is to ask how many. To an ancient mind, using the plural without a number almost exclusively indicated 2 of anything. When more than two were being referred to, they were then numbered. Today we refer to one person as an individual but two people as a ‘couple’. More than two and we refer to a number of people. In this verse, therefore, “*times*” must refer to 2 units of “*time*”. In total, therefore, the saints will be persecuted for 3.5 periods of “*time*”.

We can use the references in the text to calculate when this time period starts by using the other references. There are 3 key points:

- First, this happens after the little horn has “*subdue[d] three kings*”. The power pushes itself up, and uproots 3 other powers to establish itself.
- Second, it is after it “*speak[s] pompous words against the Most High*” and “*intend[s] to change times and law.*”

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- Finally, it is when “*the saints shall be given into his hand*” meaning it starts to actively persecute those who remain true to the word of God, and, by inference, to the “*times and law*” established by God.

As we have already established that this relates direct to the Papacy, we need to search for a time when these three conditions have been met. Through time several options have been presented but let us examine the conditions and find when they were met before we can lock down a start-date.

As discussed above, the “*three kings*” that were “*subdue[d]*” refer to the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths, eliminated because of their heretical views during the early 500s AD, in April of 533 AD and early 538 AD respectively. By mid 538 AD the Papacy had established itself by removing these three states.

Also as discussed, the Papacy sought to change the Sabbath as early as Constantine’s decree of March 7, 321 and through various codifications of law, especially Justinian’s. But this was not formal church doctrine until the Third Council of Orléans in 538 which clearly made the Sunday Sabbath an article of Faith in the Roman Church. There are a great many other examples of the Papacy “*speaking pompous words against the Most High*” but this is the one that counts as both changing time, in form of the structure of the week by placing Sunday as the last day of the week, and law by trying to alter the 4th Commandment.

The saying that “*the saints shall be given into his hand*” can have several meanings ranging from simple dominance through to persecution. The first time that the doctrine that there is no salvation outside of the Church, a doctrine called ‘extra Ecclesiam nulla salus’ was a letter by Cyprian of Carthage who died in 258 AD where he wrote ‘Salus extra ecclesiam non est’ meaning ‘there is no salvation outside the Church’. The doctrine, ‘extra Ecclesiam nulla salus’, ‘outside the Church [there is] no salvation’ or ‘no salvation outside the Church’ was generally accepted by the early church fathers and features heavily in their letters and writings, although it is not explicit in the reports of Councils and Synods. It was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that it was considered necessary to enunciate it in their doctrine, that “There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside which no one at all is saved”.

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Prior to this it was considered simply an accepted fact and therefore putting a date on this doctrine is practically impossible.

With this claimed dominance, the Papacy claimed authority over all Christians and introduced doctrines, like the Sunday Sabbath, that opposed God's law. The Saints, those who wanted to attempt to remain faithful to God, were taught false teachings and had to commit to practices that opposed God's law, at the risk of their lives. As many as 10 crusades were called against Christian communities including 4 against the Wycliffites and Hussites. The lack of freedom to choose how they wished to worship their God clearly shows that "[the saints](#)" were under the Papacy's thumb for a long period of time.

When we take these elements into account, we can easily conclude that "[a time and times and half a time](#)" cannot start before 538 AD. However, from this text alone we have no ability to calculate what this 3.5 periods of "[time](#)" refer to and, therefore, how to determine when it ends. There are only 2 clues given; first that this time period refers to the time that the Saints are under the dominion of the Papacy and second that after this period, as the next verses say, the Judgement begins. As far as Daniel goes, this is not exactly enough to work from without making some strong speculations. For Daniel, this mystery was entirely unsolvable.

However, we are the other side of Daniel and the other side of this prophecy, so we can take advantage of the 'increase of knowledge' of Daniel 12:4. We have the book of Revelation which we can draw upon, specifically Chapter 12. In Revelation 12 the story is told of a woman who gives birth to a male child while a "[red dragon having seven heads and ten horns](#)" attempts to destroy her. She flees "[into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.](#)" As will be better explained in that chapter, a Woman represents a church and this woman is oppressed by this monstrous dragon; a symbol used to represent Satan or any power that he chooses to use. She is rushed into a place where she can be protected and kept holy, for a period of time referred to in verse 14 as "[for a time and times and half a time](#)".

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In connecting these two sets of symbols, we can simply examine the references to this oppression. In Daniel 7, the “*saints [are] given into his hand For a time and times and half a time*” while in Revelation 12, the woman “*is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.*” The Serpent is still there in Chapter 12 and the Dragon attempts to destroy her, but she is protected, while here in Daniel 7, the saints are held in the ‘Little Horn’s hand for a period of time. Both are clear that the protected will not be exterminated; they will be secure in a form. It is not a stretch to say that these two are referring to the same power.

If we have this as a conclusion, we need to understand how 1,260 days can equal 3.5 periods of time. So, let’s try and simply divide one into the other; $1260 / 3.5 = 360$, the length of a Jewish Administrative year, and a prophetic year as explained in the ‘day-year principle’. This 3.5 ‘times’ can, therefore, be also said to be 3.5 prophetic ‘years’ and, as stated in the ‘day-year principle’, we can conclude that the timeframe is 1,260 literal years.

Now that we have the timeframe, we can start to calculate when the start and end date and see if it fits our mould. We need at timeframe that starts around 538 and when the time period ends, so does its ability to persecute. As it happens, $538 + 1,260$ gives us 1798, an auspicious year for the Roman Papacy. It was in this year that Napoléon and his general Louis-Alexandre Berthier brought their Italian invasion to an head with their conquest of the Pope and his Papal States. After moving into Northern Italy, Napoléon’s elder brother, Joseph, the ambassador to the Holy See at the time, and a poet named Mathurin-Léonard Duphot attempted to incite a Republican revolt in Rome. A Republican festival was held at Joseph's palace which evolved into a riot during which Duphot was fatally shot by Papal troops on December 28, 1797. This was enough of a pretext for Napoléon to go to war and Berthier led 9,000 troops into Rome on 10 February 1798. Pope Pius VI refused to abdicate his temporal authority and was taken back to France where he died on 29 August 1799. The Papal states were abolished, and a Roman Republic was declared to replace it. Notably, these events took place at a time when Papal influence was at its lowest, and few powers even bothered to record protests, let alone pledge troops.

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At that time, Malta was under the command of the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, better known as the Hospitallers, the only other military force that the Pope had under his direct instruction. Napoléon himself and 30,000 troops sailed from Toulon on 19 May 1798 arriving off Valletta, Malta's capital on 9 June. The 71st Grand Master, Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim, claimed Malta was now neutral with the destruction of the Papal States and only 2 of Napoléon's sizeable fleet of ships could enter the port at any one time. Bonepart took this as an insult and opened bombardment immediately, and on 11 June General Louis Baraguey d'Hilliers began landing troops supported by local insurrectionists. As the rules of the Order prohibited fighting against fellow Christians, and many of the French members of the Order did not want to fight against the French forces, Hompesch surrendered and handed the Island to Napoléon the next day, effectively ending the Knights' sovereignty. The order fractured and today five chivalric orders claim descentance from the Hospitallers known as the 'Mutually Recognised Orders of Saint John'.

1798, therefore, was the year in which the Pope's sovereign power, martial power and influence in political matters, ended. It's dominance that began in 538 when the Popes returned to Rome after their sojourn in the wilderness ended exactly 1,260 years later when the atheistic republican French defeated the Pope's armies and institutions. Napoléon would enjoy using taunting the papacy which he reinstated for purely political reasons. Famously, Napoléon would crown himself the Emperor of the French and would crown his wife, Joséphine, denying the honour to Pope Pius VII who was present. In Jacques-Louis David's famous painting, the pope is seen giving his blessing while looking personally insulted which broadly matches the reported experience. Pius VII's relationship with Napoleon would be fraught as the Papal States, reestablished in 1801, would be invaded again in 1809 and the pope was still French a prisoner when Napoleon abdicated in 1814. The Papal States would not have any strong martial force and would be reduced to the small state of Latium after the Battle of Castelfidardo on 18 September 1860. On 20 September 1870, Rome itself would fall during the unification wars in Italy, and the papal states would cease to exist. Between then and the signing of the Lateran Treaty on 11 February 1929, temporal authority of the papacy would be in debate and most certainly limited to select buildings in central Rome. The popes would consider themselves as 'Prisoners in the Vatican'. With the Lateran Treaty, that the state currently known as the Holy See was established giving

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the Pope temporal authority again, albeit limited to a similarly small area in Rome, but nevertheless sovereign. To date, the Holy See's military force, the roughly 135 strong Pontifical Swiss Guard are entirely drawn from Switzerland while the police force, the Gendarmerie Corps of Vatican City State, is similarly sized. Although it is not true to say the Pope has no martial power, the force it commands is infinitesimally small.

The "*time and times and half a time*" therefore lies between 538 AD when Rome was returned to the Papacy and 1798 when its martial power was exterminated by Napoleon and his atheistic revolutionary French.

*26 'But the court shall be seated,
And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy it forever.
27 Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'*

28 "This is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart."

We can make a literary inflection here that this explainer does not want to dwell on this because he quickly moves on to the Judgement of "*the Most High*" and consequent salvation of the saints. He introduces Daniel to the idea that there will be persecution for a period of time, but after that "*they shall take away his dominion, [t]o consume and destroy it forever.*" We can inflect that Daniel is being told not to worry himself about these matters, but that was not successful. "*my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed*".

The promise given here is, nevertheless, an important one, and in the way that Daniel and Revelation match up together, a lot is left unspoken. The 'horn' power persecutes the saints before his kingdom is stripped from him and all kingdoms are "*given to the*

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people, the saints of the Most High.” This new kingdom is “*an everlasting kingdom,*” never to fail or be replaced like the others that Daniel has seen.

This introduction is important but there is much more detail on this same story in the next chapter. Daniel 7 was given at the very start of this king Belshazzar while Daniel 8 was 2 years later at the very end of his reign. These two pieces explain why Daniel was so calm and relaxed in the writing-on-the-wall story and why Daniel was comfortable with everything that was going on. He had nothing to worry about, he was doing the work of the same God that had commanded empires to destruction before they were even created. This overview is also important because, if the timeline is correct, it demonstrates that, years apart, Daniel was given the same story in different forms and all true.