

ANCIENT OF DAYS

March 30, 2014

I. Introduction:

A. BACKGROUND

During Nebuchadnezzar's first raid on Jerusalem in 605 B.C., he took several of its foremost citizens captive to Babylon. Among these was a teenager named Daniel (1:1-6; see 2 Kings 24:1). Soon after he arrived in Babylon, Daniel was selected for service in the royal court. He excelled in that role and soon rose to a position second only to the king (2:48). Such was Daniel's reputation and influence that, when Babylon fell to Medo-Persia in 539, Daniel occupied the number two position under the new rulers as well (6:1-3).

While distinguishing himself in the governmental affairs of Babylonia and Persia, Daniel remained unwaveringly faithful to the God of Israel. His book records the effects of his life and prophecies on Babylonian and Persian royalty (1-7), and his prophecies concerning Israel's place in world events down through the ages (8-12). Daniel recorded most of 1-7 (specifically, 2:4-7:28) in Aramaic, the trade language of the Babylonian Empire. The prophecies of 8-12, however, are in the Hebrew of their target audience.

Daniel's amazing prophecies, with their specifically stated applications, have been called the key to understanding all of biblical prophecy.

Daniel's early ministry overlapped that of the older Ezekiel, who was taken captive to Babylon in 597 and lived about 50 miles south of Babylon. Though there is no record of the two men ever having met, Ezekiel had apparently heard of this famous young Hebrew (see Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3).

Daniel's final prophecies (10-12) came after the first group of Jewish exiles returned to Judah in 538. There is no record of Daniel himself having ever returned. Many Jews remained in Persia well beyond the time of Daniel. The Jewish queen Esther may have been inspired by Daniel's life and prophecies as she rescued the Jews of Persia from extermination in about 473. Still later, in 457 and 445, two more groups of exiles would return to Judea, under Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Book of Daniel is very much like the New Testament book, the Revelation to John, both in its style and in its type of literature. The primary aim of each of these two books is to strengthen faith and to encourage believers in all times, regardless of what trials and persecutions they may face. They are the writings of a kind of nonviolent resistance movement.

B. Daniel's name means:

"God has judged" or "God is my Judge".

C. Ancient of Days is found: Dan 7:9, 13, 22

This name is used three times in the vision of Daniel 7; first as a description (9), and then as a title (13, 22), of God; let's look at the context of each.

9-11 "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire. 10 "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened. 11 "Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire.

13-14 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

21-22 "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 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.

D. Definition

Ancient of days literally means "one advanced in (of) days" and may possibly mean "one who forwards time or rules over it."

It is not intended to suggest that God ages. Instead, it conveys the qualities of wisdom and venerability which one who is 'advanced in days' would possess

"Ancient of Days" suggests age, antiquity, dignity, endurance, judgment, wisdom, "the father of years."

(See also Job 36:26; Ps 29:10; 55:19; 90:2; 102:24-27; Isa 41:4, 6; Hab 1:12; Joel 3:2)

II. A Closer Look:

A. Dan 7:9-10

"I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

1. **The "Ancient of Days"** - the phrase is a symbol of God's eternal nature.

The eternal, sovereign God (Father); He takes His seat upon the throne and exercises control over men and nations as the great Judge (or Chief Justice) of the universe. (see Isa. 43:13; 57:15a)

2. **His white clothing and hair speak of His holiness**

white and pure are symbols of God's holiness (see Isa 1:18; Rev 1:14-15)

3. **His throne** was "ablaze with flames," (lit., "flames of fire"), and the "**wheels** were a burning fire" (lit., "its wheels were blazing fire").

"**Throne**" speaks of authority

"**Wheels**" - It was common in the ancient Near East for thrones of kings and gods to have wheels.

Its wheels refers to the chariot in which God rides to battle to exercise His sovereignty and to appear as Judge (Ezk 1:15-21; 10:1-22).

Wheels on a throne may seem strange, but the image of God sitting on a chariot-throne with wheels is in other passages, (see Ezek 1:4-28)

"**Fire**" is commonly a symbol of judgment,

God's throne being engulfed in flames signifies the wrath of God that is here being poured out upon the wicked.

4. The “river of fire” coming from the throne

describes God’s judgment as being poured out upon the wicked, particularly upon the kingdom of the little horn and the beast.

The destruction by fire of the fourth beast (in chap. 7) corresponds to the demolition of the lowest part of the statue (its feet and toes) by the great rock in chap. 2.

Whitcomb points out, “In both cases, the end comes suddenly, supernaturally, and spectacularly.”

5. There are **those "attending Him"** and "standing before Him" are "thousands upon thousands" and "myriads upon myriads".

This is a description of the innumerable angelic hosts who stand in the presence of God ready to do his bidding.

The phrase “ten thousand times ten thousand” was “the square of the highest number for which ancient peoples had a word.” (see also Rev 5:11)

6. The court sat, and the books were opened.

This is a picture of the courtroom in heaven.

“the books” are symbolic of God’s memory of the deeds, words, and thoughts of every person who has ever lived (see Ex 32:32; Dan 12:1; Lk 10:20; Rev 20:12).

In this context “the books” specifically contain the account of the wicked deeds of the Antichrist and his evil empire, for when the books are opened, the beast is judged. When the records were consulted, it was found that the beast deserved judgment.

B. Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2) and Daniel's vision (7)

Daniel outlined centuries of world history between his own day and the coming of Jesus.

Isa 42:9 See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.

Daniel sees in vision (Dan 7-8) the same events that Nebuchadnezzar saw in dream (Dan 2):

| | Babylon (605–538 B.C.) | Medo-Persia (538–331 B.C.) | Greece (331–146 B.C.) | Rome (146 B.C.-A.D. 476) |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Dan 2:31-45 Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (603 B.C.) | Head of gold (2:32, 37-38) | Breast, arms of silver (2:32, 39) | Belly, thighs of brass (2:32, 39) | Legs of iron, feet of iron and clay (2:33, 40-41) |
| Dan 7 Vision of 4 Beasts (553 B.C.) | Lion (7:4) | Bear (7:5) | Leopard (7:6) | Strong Beast (7:7, 11, 19, 23) |
| Dan 8 Vision of Ram and goat (551 B.C.) | | Ram (8:3–4, 20) | Goat with one horn (5-8, 21) Four horns (8:8, 22) Little Horn (8:9-14) | |

C. Comparison - Daniel to Revelation

There are so many parallels between Daniel and Revelation that seminaries often include them in the same course:

Both mention an earthly kingdom becoming God’s everlasting kingdom (2:44; Rev 11:15).

Both use the word times for units of years (7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14).

Both mention the ministry of the angel Michael (10:13, 21; Rev 12:7).

Both speak of a book containing the names of the righteous (12:1; Rev 20:12).

Both speak of 10 kingdoms (2:41; 7:24; Rev 17:12).

Dan. 7:9 the Ancient of Days is described similar to Jesus in Rev 1:14

- a. His head and hair
Ancient of Days = like pure wool
Son of Man = white like white wool, like snow
- b. Clothing
The Ancient of Days = was like white snow
Son of Man = white as snow (Mt 28:3)
- c. Eyes
The Ancient of Days = are like flaming torches (Dan 10:6)
Son of Man (God) = are like a flame of fire (Rev 2:18; 19:12)
- d. Throne
The Ancient of Days = one throne (Dan 7:9)
Son of Man = there are other thrones - on which saints will sit (Rev 20:4)

D. The term "Son of Man" Dan 7:13-14

"I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

a. Daniel saw the Son of Man approaching the **Ancient of Days**; dominion, glory and a kingdom was given to Him which is eternal, and will never pass away or be destroyed.

This is fulfilled in Jesus Christ; He has been given all glory, power, and authority.
(see Isa 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Ezek 34:23-24; Mat 28:18; Phil 2:9-11; Rev 19:1; 20:4-6)

He will reign over all things as the regent of Almighty God
(see 1 Cor 15:27, 28; Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11; Rev 17:14; 19:16).

b. This is the only place where the term "Son of Man" is used in the Old Testament as a **Messianic prophecy**. From this prophecy Jesus took the title "Son of Man."

c. "Son of Man" is used 82 times in the N.T.; each referring to Jesus.
(Mt 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:11; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 24, 45; Mk 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21, 21, 41; Lk 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 9:22, 26, 44, 56, 58; 11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:22, 24, 26, 30; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:36; 22:22, 48; 24:7; Jn 1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34, 34; 13:31; Ac 7:56; Heb 2:6; Rev 1:13; 14:14)

d. "Son of man" is especially common in **eschatological** passages (see Mt 16:27, 28; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; Jn 12:34), and the phrase "a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven" is an allusion to the second coming of Christ, as Mt 24:30 makes clear.

e. Jesus claims to be the Son of Man at His trial. Jesus' use of this title for Himself is one of the strongest evidences that He claimed to be the Messiah.

- 1) Many gave false testimony about Jesus and He is challenged by the high priest;
Mk 14:60-61 The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

- 2) Jesus claims to be the Messiah (Christ) quoting Dan 7:13-14
Mk 14:62 And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

the phrase "coming in clouds" is understood in Matt 24:30 as a reference to the return of Christ.

- 3) The high priest's charges Jesus with blasphemy
Mk 14:63-64 Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? "You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

E. Second coming of Jesus

When the Son of Man was brought into the presence of the Ancient of Days, all the authority, glory, and sovereign power that had been exercised by rulers in the four kingdoms over all peoples, nations, and men of every language (Dan 3:4-7; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25) was conferred on Him and those peoples worshiped Him.

This is in keeping with the Father's promise to the Son in Ps 2:6-9, and will be fulfilled at Christ's Second coming (Mt 24:30; 25:31; Rev 11:15).

The Son of Man will establish an everlasting dominion or kingdom (Dan 4:34; 7:27).
(See 2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 9:7; Isa 9:6; Lk 1:32-33; Rev 11:15)

That kingdom will never be conquered by another (6:26).

His reign will be established on earth (Rev 20:1-6).

At the expiration of the 1,000 years of the Lord's millennial reign, He will surrender the kingdom to God the Father, after which Christ will be appointed as Ruler over God's eternal kingdom forever (1 Cor 15:24-28).

The following References were used in this study:

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