



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 14.2 – The Doctrine of the Antichrist

The Prophet Daniel's Prophecies of the Antichrist

The prophet Daniel lived during the time when Babylon was the great world power and Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler in Babylon. Daniel had been taken captive from the kingdom of Judah when he was very young and brought up to serve in the king's palace, along with other young Jews. Early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign he had a troubling dream that none of his wise men could tell him or explain to him. But God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel. Daniel said to the king: **"There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days"** (Daniel 2:28). The meaning of the king's dream was that there would be four world kingdoms, of which Babylon was the first. During the time of the fourth kingdom God would establish His own kingdom.

The history that took place after that time reveals to us what these kingdoms were. The first was Babylon. The second was the kingdom of the Medes and Persians that defeated Babylon. The third was the kingdom of Alexander the Great, who defeated the Persian Empire. Alexander's empire was succeeded by the mighty Roman empire, the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It was during the days of the Roman Empire that God established His kingdom through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of this kingdom Daniel said: **"In the days of these kings (the Romans) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever"** (Daniel 2:44). The kingdom of Christ cannot ever be overthrown, and it will last forever.

Many years later Daniel himself had a dream that pictured these same four world kingdoms. In his dream these four kingdoms were represented by beasts. **"The first (Babylon) was like a lion, and had eagle's wings"** (Daniel 7:4). The second (Persia) was **"like a bear"** (Daniel 7:5). The third (Alexander's kingdom) was **"like a leopard"** (Daniel 7:6). The fourth (Rome) was **"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"** (Daniel 7:7).

At this point Daniel saw something that had not been foretold previously. He reported: **"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"** (Daniel 7:8).

Thus, in the days of the Roman Empire God would establish the everlasting kingdom of the Christ. But at the same time there would arise from the Roman Empire someone with **"a mouth speaking pompous words"**. This one was not the Christ, but one with a mouth that acted as if he were the Christ, **"speaking pompous words"**.

Daniel wanted to know the meaning of his dream, and God sent a messenger to explain it to him: **"Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever"** (Daniel 7:17-18). In other words, what Daniel saw in his dream was the same that King Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream that Daniel had explained to him. Four world kingdoms, and then the kingdom of the Christ and His people, the saints.

But Daniel wanted to know more. He said: **"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; 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"** (Daniel 7:19-20).

As Daniel was watching, this is what he saw: **"The same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, 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"** (Daniel 7:21-22). Thus Daniel saw that some kind of kingdom or power would come out of the Roman Empire that would oppose Christ and His people and even prevail against them until God Himself would appear as Judge and rule in favor of Christ and against this enemy of His. Based on its description, this enemy is the Antichrist, for God's messenger explained once more that the little horn **"shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and 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. But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever"** (Daniel 7:25-26).

Besides this prophecy of the great Antichrist whose power shall come to an end only on Judgment Day, Daniel was given a prophecy of a similar person who is sometimes called the Old Testament Antichrist. Two years after the vision of Daniel 7, Daniel saw another vision which featured a war between the second kingdom (Persia) and the third kingdom (Alexander's Greek kingdom). Persia was pictured as a ram with two horns, and Greece was pictured as a male goat. After the male goat demolished the ram, **"the male goat grew very strong; 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. And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down"** (Daniel 8:8-11).

This prophecy was fulfilled in history. Alexander's empire split up into four parts after his death. One of them was the kingdom of Syria. Out of this kingdom emerged this little horn, King Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who acted against the Glorious Land (the promised land of Palestine) and even put a stop to the daily sacrifices in the temple at Jerusalem. Notice that this **"little horn ... exalted himself"** just like the little horn that emerged later on out of the Roman Empire just like the Antichrist which the apostle Paul described in 2 Thessalonians 2. This Old Testament Antichrist, Antiochus IV, is further described in Daniel 8:23-25 and Daniel 11:21-32.

Questions

1. Why was Daniel able to reveal Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning?
2. Which five kingdoms were pictured in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
3. How were the first three kingdoms pictured in Daniel's dream?
4. How is the fourth kingdom described?
5. What would emerge from this fourth kingdom and take some of its power?
6. In what ways does this power match the Antichrist of 2 Thessalonians 2?
7. When will this power be completely destroyed?
8. From which kingdom will the Old Testament Antichrist emerge?
9. How is this Old Testament Antichrist described?