

• *The King and his people receive the kingdom*

The fourth animal

• *A fourth savage empire – Rome*

• *Continues in various later forms*

• *A persecutor reorganising society to fit his own wickedness*

• *A short and sharp period of persecution*

• *As in the time of Antiochus*

Daniel is amazed and troubled by the visions he has received^{□1}. In his vision there is an angel and Daniel asks him the true meaning of all that he had seen^{□2}. The angel explains: the four animals are four kingdoms that will arise from the earth^{□3}. But God's kingdom will arise, and ¹⁸*'the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it for ever.'* This interpretation confirms my point that in the Book of Daniel the 'son of man' is a symbol not a title. The symbol stands for the King **and** his kingdom, the Messiah **and** the people of God together in one kingdom. The King receives the kingdom; the people of the King also receive the kingdom.

Daniel especially wants to know the true meaning of the fourth animal^{□1}, the ten horns and ²⁰*'the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell.'* He had seen in the vision that this power was an enemy against the people of God. It had a certain amount of success in opposing them^{□2}. But finally the judgement of God overrules, ²²*'and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.'* So the angel responds to Daniel's request. The fourth animal is a fourth kingdom. Daniel does not even know its name; it turned out to be the Roman empire and its successors. This empire will be more savage than any previous ones^{□3}. After it there will come various kingdoms which are a continuation of the fourth animal's power – a continuation of the Roman empire in later form^{□4}. Then will come the enemy of God and of God's people. ²⁴*'After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.'* Three times we are told this enemy will 'subdue three kings'. The enemy of God will have an effect upon the world such that nations will be uprooted by his influence. More than that we do not know.

Daniel 7:25 mentions the religious side of the 'little horn's' wickedness. *'He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.'* The 'little horn' will be a persecutor. His trying to change the set times and the laws is a way of saying that he tries to reorganize society to fit his own wickedness. Nations generally have special national days and national customs. The enemy of the people of God who comes at some time before the final victory of God's kingdom will try to make the nations of the world conform to his own thinking and his own wishes. It will be a period of persecution for God's people for 'a time, times and a time'. This phrase is apparently a way of saying three-and-a-half years. Certainly that is how it is taken in Revelation 13:5 where it is also said to be forty-two (3 ½ x 12) months or 1,260 (42 x 30) days. Where does the expression come from and what does it mean? It clearly means a short and sharp time of severe persecution. I believe it comes from the period of persecution in the days of Elijah. One remembers that there was a very severe period when Ahab persecuted the people of God. Since the period of 1 Kings 17:1 refers to three years the total period of opposition from Jezebel and the false prophets must have been somewhat longer, about three-and-a-half years. It very probably was from this period that 'three-and-a-half years' came to be an expression for a short but severe persecution. If the height of the persecution of Antiochus was **also** about three-and-a-half years, it would have made the phrase even more significant in the future history of Israel.

□1 7:15

□2 7:16

□3 7:17

□1 7:19

□2 7:21

□3 7:23

□4 7:24a

• *The judgement of God will prevail – God’s people emerge victorious*

• *Daniel keeps his troubled thoughts to himself*

A sweeping overview of the progress of the kingdom of God

• *Wickedness will intensify and yet the Kingdom of God will triumph despite fierce opposition*

• *No need for God’s people to fear*

• *Finally – all rulers will worship and obey God’s King*

However, over against the entire Roman empire and everything that arises from it, the judgement of God will prevail. The court will sit, and the power of the ‘little horn’ will be taken away and he will be destroyed for ever¹. The outcome will be that God’s people will emerge as a victorious people². All rulers will worship and obey God’s King.

At this point, Daniel’s vision comes to an end: ²⁸*This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.* The thoughts he has about centuries of pagan power and many sufferings for Israel trouble him. He has few people with whom he can discuss such matters. He keeps them to himself and ponders them before God.

What then is the point of this vision? It has given Daniel and through him it has given us a sweeping overview of the progress of the kingdom of God. Daniel came to know that the kingdom of God would come only as Israel endured centuries of pagan domination. Then the kingdom would begin. Yet alongside the kingdom of God that would be set up at the time of a fourth empire, the successors of the fourth empire would continue. Evil would be present in the world in addition to the kingdom of God. The two would be side-by-side. Earthly kingdoms would move from one to another. The final one – the fourth – would have its successors throughout the days of many kings and rulers. Yet alongside one part of the vision was another part. God was ruling the world in righteous judgement. He decrees that wicked empires will come to an end, and his kingdom will prevail. Israel would need this overall perspective as the centuries went on. And we need it too. The overall prophetic perspective of Daniel and the Bible generally is intended to let us know that wickedness will intensify and yet the kingdom of God will still triumph regardless of the opposition it might face. If Daniel could survive in his pagan world we can survive in our pagan world. If Daniel could win freedom for the worship of Yahweh in ancient Persia, we can win freedom for the worship of Yahweh in our world also. Wicked kingdoms may arise again and again. The horns coming out of the Roman empire are still around. One fiercely evil opponent will yet come. Yet there need be no fear. The kingdom of God will triumph through our Daniel- like steadfastness and through the loyalty of God to his people and his purposes. We have Daniel’s promise. The court will sit. The power of the wicked will be taken away. God’s people will emerge as a victorious people. All rulers will worship and obey God’s King.

1 7:26
2 7:27

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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