

Dr. Wendy Widder, Daniel, Session 12, Views on the Four Kingdoms (Dan. 2, 7-8) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Widder, Daniel, Session 1, Introduction to Daniel, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture explores interpretations of the four empires depicted in the book of Daniel, specifically chapters 2, 7, and 8. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the intertestamental period to properly interpret Daniel's visions and the New Testament. **The lecture reviews Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue and Daniel's vision of beasts, then outlines three primary views:** the "Greek view," the "Roman view" (traditional), and a second "Greek view." **These views differ on which empires the statue's components and the beasts represent.** She also looks at the little horns in Daniel's visions of the four beasts and the ram and the goat. **Ultimately, she recommends viewing these prophecies as patterns that show the relationship between those who defied God, and the people of God.**

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Widder, Daniel, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).



Widder_Daniel_Session12.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Widder, Daniel, Session 1, Introduction to Daniel

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. Widder's lecture on Daniel 2, 7, and 8:

Briefing Document: Dr. Wendy Widder on Daniel 2, 7, and 8 – Views Concerning the Four Empires

Introduction:

Dr. Widder's lecture explores the complex issue of identifying the four empires described in the Book of Daniel. She focuses on three primary passages: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue in Daniel 2, Daniel's vision of four beasts in Daniel 7, and Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat in Daniel 8. A key element is the consideration of the historical context of the intertestamental period to correctly interpret these passages.

Key Themes and Concepts:

1. Importance of Intertestamental History:

- Dr. Widder stresses that understanding the 400-year period between the Old and New Testaments (often called the "400 silent years") is crucial for correctly interpreting both the Book of Daniel and the New Testament.
- This period saw a shift in world empires from Persia to Greece and then to Rome. During this time, Israel was not an independent nation but a province controlled by these successive empires.
- The conflict between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires for control of Palestine heavily influenced Jewish history.
- The desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BC and its subsequent rededication in 164 BC under the Maccabees are critical events within this period.
- "We have a tendency to get to the end of Malachi and turn the page to Matthew. We just assume we've moved from the end of those events, and now we're ready to start the next one. But there's about 400 years of history in that page that gets turned."

1. Parallel Visions in Daniel 2 and 7:

- Dr. Widder notes that Daniel 2 (Nebuchadnezzar's statue dream) and Daniel 7 (Daniel's vision of beasts) both depict four earthly kingdoms, followed by a fifth eternal kingdom (the Kingdom of God).
- Most scholars agree that the four kingdoms in both visions are the same, representing a progression of empires.
- The lecture focuses on how these parallel visions are interpreted and understood historically.
- "Most commentators think that the kingdoms represented in Daniel 2 are the same ones represented in Daniel 7. So, there's agreement that they're talking about the same kingdoms, for the most part."

1. Three Primary Interpretive Views of the Four Kingdoms:

- **Greek View 1 (Critical Scholarship):** Identifies the four kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. This view emphasizes the historical context and sees the fourth kingdom as unequivocally Greece. The lion and the head of gold are Babylon, the bear is Media, the leopard is Persia and the fourth kingdom is Greece.
- The interpretation of the lion imagery (wings being plucked and then standing like a man) draws connections to Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience in Daniel 4.
- "This is called the Greek view for its identification of the fourth kingdom... The fourth kingdom, one, two, three, four, is Greece. And then from there, we work our way backwards."
- **Roman View (Traditional/Evangelical):** Identifies the four kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia (a combined empire), Greece, and Rome. This view has a long history and is often found in study Bibles. The identification of the kingdoms corresponds to Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
- Often interprets the three ribs in the bear's mouth as representing Medo-Persia's conquests.
- The four heads and four wings of the leopard are interpreted as representing Alexander's four generals who divided his empire.
- Some variations of this view believe the vision is fulfilled with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, others see it as having a future fulfillment.

- Future fulfillment includes the concept of a restored or revived Roman Empire with a ten-leader coalition and the little horn as the Antichrist.
- “The Roman view will say, well, first, let me give a qualifier here. All the views that I describe have issues, okay? None of them is airtight.”
- **Greek View 2 (Evangelical Variation):** This view interprets the kingdoms as Babylon (specifically Nebuchadnezzar), Media (contemporaneous with Nebuchadnezzar), Persia, and Greece. This perspective highlights the specific historical figures and the immediate impact on the people of that era. The four kingdoms are interpreted as Nebuchadnezzar, Media (contemporaneous with Nebuchadnezzar), Persia, and Greece.
- Interprets the ten horns as ten sovereign states that arose from Alexander’s empire by the 2nd century BC.
- The little horn in this view is Antiochus IV, aligning with the little horn in Daniel 8.

1. **The Little Horn and Antiochus IV:**

- The little horn is a key figure in both Daniel 7 and 8, causing confusion in interpretations of the four empires.
- In Daniel 8, the angel explicitly identifies the ram as Medo-Persia and the goat as Greece. The little horn in this vision is Antiochus IV.
- The Roman view sees the little horn in Daniel 7 as the Antichrist, whereas Greek views see it as Antiochus IV. Dr. Widder finds the Greek view more convincing as it maintains the same referent for the little horn in both visions.
- “If you hold the Greek view, your little horn is Antiochus the fourth... In chapter 8, everybody agrees that the little horn is Antiochus the fourth.”

1. **Significance of Belshazzar:**

- Dr. Widder draws attention to Belshazzar in Daniel 5 as a prototype of a defiant, arrogant, blasphemous king. This is a recurring pattern that is manifested in figures like Antiochus IV.
- This pattern shows a historical progression of tyrannical rulers who oppose God, culminating in the New Testament’s “man of lawlessness” and leading up to God’s final victory.

- “I think he helps us see this pattern. He reminds us that chapter 5 gave us this prototype for this defiant king. It's only going to get worse.”

1. **Prophecy and Pattern:**

- Dr. Widder emphasizes that the fulfillment of prophecy does not exclude further significance and application.
- She compares biblical prophecy to viewing mountain ranges from a distance: some events may appear close together but, when examined closely, are separated by time.
- Prophetic events often serve as patterns for the ongoing struggle of God's people throughout history, culminating in God's final and victorious conclusion.
- “I think what we can say, or what commentators and I agree with, is just because something has fulfilled doesn't mean it can't have future significance. So, this can serve as a pattern for events that would continue to happen for God's people.”

Dr. Widder's Preferred View:

- Dr. Widder indicates a preference for the second Greek view, seeing the little horn as a consistent reference to Antiochus IV. She views the symbolism of the vision as a pattern that continues throughout history.
- She does not dismiss the possibility of future significance, viewing the repeated pattern of tyrannical rulers as indicative of things getting worse before God's final victory.
- She finds the Greek View more convincing due to literary and textual considerations and the unifying of the referent for the little horn.

Recommended Resource:

- Dr. Widder recommends *Judaism Before Jesus: The Events and Ideas That Shaped the New Testament World* by Anthony Tomasino, a book that helps to understand the historical background for the book of Daniel.
- She also recommends the Zondervan charts of the Old Testament.

Conclusion:

Dr. Widder's lecture provides a detailed analysis of the different views concerning the interpretation of the four empires in Daniel 2, 7, and 8. She highlights the importance of understanding the intertestamental history, particularly the Seleucid and Ptolemaic conflicts. Ultimately she finds the second Greek view, with its focus on Antiochus IV, more textually and literarily sound. Dr. Widder believes understanding these passages is essential for contextualizing and interpreting the entire book of Daniel and also for understanding the New Testament.

4. Study Guide: Widder, Daniel, Session 1, Introduction to Daniel

Daniel's Visions of Empires: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the three periods of world empires that occurred during the intertestamental period?
2. What is the significance of the Maccabean revolt in the context of the second temple period?
3. What is the commonality between the visions in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 regarding the earthly kingdoms?
4. Describe the four beasts that Daniel sees in his vision in Daniel 7.
5. According to the "Greek 1" view, which empire does the fourth beast in Daniel 7 represent?
6. How does the traditional "Roman view" interpret the four beasts in Daniel 7?
7. What are two ways in which the "Roman view" explains the fulfillment of the fourth beast and its horns?
8. In the "Greek 2" view, who is represented by the head of gold and the lion in Daniel 2 and 7 respectively?
9. What are the key differences between the interpretations of the "little horn" in the Roman and the Greek views?
10. What is the pattern of defiant kings presented in the book of Daniel and how does it relate to the New Testament?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The three periods of world empires during the intertestamental period are the Persian Empire, the Hellenistic period under Greece, and the Roman Empire. During all of these, the nation of Israel was restored to their land but always under the authority of another world power.

2. The Maccabean revolt was a Jewish uprising against the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who had desecrated the temple. The Maccabees successfully reclaimed and rededicated the temple, marking a pivotal moment in the second temple period.
3. Both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 present visions of four earthly kingdoms that are ultimately superseded by a fifth, eternal kingdom. Most commentators believe that these visions refer to the same series of empires.
4. Daniel's vision in Daniel 7 includes a lion with eagle's wings, a bear with three ribs in its mouth, a leopard with four heads and four wings, and an unnamed terrifying fourth beast with ten horns, out of which a little horn arises.
5. According to the "Greek 1" view, the fourth kingdom in Daniel 7 is Greece. This view then interprets the preceding beasts as Persia, Media, and Babylon in that order.
6. The traditional "Roman view" identifies the four beasts in Daniel 7 as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, in that order. This view has long been held and is found in some Bibles' subheadings.
7. The "Roman view" often interprets the vision as either historically fulfilled (past fulfillment) by 70 AD, or that the fourth kingdom has a future fulfillment through an extended or revived Roman Empire with the little horn representing the Antichrist.
8. In the "Greek 2" view, the head of gold and the lion both represent Nebuchadnezzar himself rather than simply the Babylonian empire, highlighting a focus on the individual ruler.
9. In the Roman view, the little horn in Daniel 7 is the Antichrist, while the little horn in Daniel 8 is Antiochus IV. In both Greek views, both little horns represent Antiochus IV, with a secondary application to future rulers.
10. The book of Daniel presents a pattern of defiant, arrogant kings, starting with Belshazzar, and progressing to Antiochus IV, and beyond to other tyrants. The New Testament picks up this pattern, suggesting that such rulers will continue to rise until the end.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the "Greek 1," "Greek 2," and "Roman" views regarding the interpretation of the four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each view, and why might a scholar favor one over the others?
2. Discuss the significance of the intertestamental period for understanding the book of Daniel, and explain how the events and political landscape of that era provide context for the visions presented in the book.
3. Analyze the different interpretations of the "little horn" in Daniel 7 and 8. Why is the interpretation of the little horn a point of contention? What are the implications of each interpretation for understanding the overall message of the book?
4. Explore how the book of Daniel utilizes symbolism and apocalyptic language to communicate its message about the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms and the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom.
5. Examine the concept of "telescoping" in biblical prophecy. How does this concept help to interpret the prophecies in Daniel, and how might a single historical fulfillment be a pattern for future events?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Intertestamental Period:** The approximately 400-year period between the Old Testament and the New Testament, characterized by significant historical and political changes, especially in the Levant.
- **Second Temple Period:** A historical era in Jewish history from 516 BCE to 70 CE, during which the Second Temple in Jerusalem stood after its rebuilding.
- **Seleucids:** A Hellenistic dynasty that controlled a large territory in the Middle East, including parts of Syria, from the 3rd to 1st centuries BCE.
- **Ptolemies:** A Hellenistic dynasty that ruled Egypt and surrounding areas from the 3rd to 1st centuries BCE.
- **Maccabees:** A group of Jewish rebels who led a revolt against the Seleucid Empire in the 2nd century BCE, successfully rededicating the temple and establishing a period of Jewish independence.
- **Antiochus IV Epiphanes:** A Seleucid king known for his attempt to Hellenize Jewish culture and his desecration of the temple in Jerusalem.
- **Aramaic Chiasm:** A literary structure in the book of Daniel where the Aramaic sections (chapters 2-7) are arranged in a chiastic or mirror-image pattern.
- **Medo-Persia:** The combined empire of the Medes and Persians, that came to dominate the ancient world in the 6th through 4th centuries BCE.
- **Little Horn:** A symbolic figure in Daniel's visions (specifically in chapters 7 and 8) often interpreted either as Antiochus IV or as a future Antichrist figure.
- **Telescoping:** A phenomenon in prophecy where events that may be separated in time are collapsed and presented together, emphasizing thematic connections, though the prophetic scope may be more expansive than the initial fulfillment.

5. FAQs on Widder, Daniel, Session 1, Introduction to Daniel, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Four Empires in Daniel

1. **Why is understanding the intertestamental period crucial for interpreting the Book of Daniel and the New Testament?** The intertestamental period, roughly the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments, is crucial because it provides the historical context for Daniel's visions and for understanding the New Testament. During this time, Israel was under the control of various empires—Persia, Greece, and Rome—which significantly shaped their experiences and expectations. This period is not a "silent" period, but a time of significant political and social upheaval that directly impacts the prophecies in Daniel and the world into which Jesus was born. The struggles of the Jewish people under these foreign powers help us understand their longing for restoration and the context of their suffering.
2. **What are the main similarities and differences between the visions in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 concerning the four kingdoms?** Both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 depict a sequence of four earthly kingdoms that are eventually superseded by an eternal kingdom of God. Daniel 2 uses the image of a statue made of different metals (gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay), while Daniel 7 uses four beasts (a lion with eagle's wings, a bear, a leopard with four heads and four wings, and a terrifying unnamed beast with ten horns). While they use different imagery, commentators generally agree that they represent the same succession of empires.
3. **What are the three main views on the identification of the four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7, and what are their key differences?** The three main views are:
 - **The Greek View (Greek 1):** This view, largely held by critical scholars, interprets the four kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece, with the fourth kingdom being explicitly Greece. The lion with wings is Babylon, the bear is Media, the leopard is Persia and the terrifying fourth beast is Greece.
 - **The Roman View:** This is the traditional and commonly held view, especially among evangelical scholars. It identifies the kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia (combined), Greece, and Rome. It often sees a future fulfillment connected to a revived Roman Empire.

- **The Greek View (Greek 2):** A more recent development, also held by some evangelical scholars, this view interprets the kingdoms as Babylon (specifically Nebuchadnezzar), Media (contemporary rulers to Nebuchadnezzar), Persia, and Greece. The key difference is that it focuses on the person of Nebuchadnezzar as the first kingdom and media as contemporaneous with him, while not combining Persia and Media into one kingdom.
1. **How does the concept of the "little horn" differ between the Roman and Greek views in Daniel 7, and how does it relate to the little horn in Daniel 8?**
 - **Roman View:** The Roman view sees the little horn in Daniel 7 as the Antichrist, a future figure arising from a restored Roman Empire. The little horn in Daniel 8 is identified as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Seleucid ruler, which it agrees with all views. Therefore, they see two different little horns.
 - **Greek Views:** Both Greek views see the little horn in Daniel 7 as Antiochus IV, the same figure as the little horn in Daniel 8. The angel in Daniel 8 explicitly identifies the little horn in that chapter as Antiochus IV. Thus, they see one consistent little horn referent.
 1. **What are some challenges or "hand-waving" points that each interpretive view has to address?** Each view has its challenges. The Greek view needs to explain the lack of a major Roman element in the symbolism. The Roman view has to explain how to deal with the gaps in chronology between the ancient Roman Empire and any contemporary revived empire. It also has to account for two different little horns. The newer Greek view has to explain the details of the ten horns and the precise significance of the three ribs. All of the views have to deal with the complexity of apocalyptic literature, symbolism, and specific historical details.
 2. **Why might the symbolic language of the four beasts and the "little horn" be seen as not just historical, but also applicable to future events?** The idea of "telescoping" in biblical prophecy helps explain this. The prophecies may have an initial historical fulfillment, but they can also serve as a pattern or foreshadowing of future events and rulers. The characteristics of rulers like Belshazzar and Antiochus IV, and the themes of oppression and defiance against God, can be seen recurring throughout history. These themes are seen as culminating in a figure the New Testament shows us before God ultimately brings about His victory. Therefore, these prophecies might have both immediate historical and future implications.

3. **How does the identification of the ram and goat in Daniel 8 influence the interpretations of the four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7?** In Daniel 8, the ram is explicitly identified as Medo-Persia, and the goat as Greece. This explicit identification supports the Greek view of Daniel 7, which separates Media and Persia and uses Greece as the last kingdom. It makes the Roman view more challenging because the little horn in chapter 8 is clearly historical (Antiochus IV), while the little horn of chapter 7 (in the Roman view) is future, making two different figures, while the Greek views make it one.
4. **What does the character of Belshazzar in Daniel 5 have to do with the visions of the kingdoms and the little horn in Daniel 7 and 8?** Belshazzar acts as a prototype for the wicked and defiant rulers that appear in Daniel's visions. His arrogant and blasphemous behavior sets a pattern for the other rulers and the little horn figures. The depiction of Belshazzar provides a framework for understanding the nature of those who oppose God, emphasizing the progressive nature of evil. It shows that while Belshazzar was bad, the figures that come after him become even worse, and will continue to do so until the end. This understanding links the specific historical figures to a broader theological theme of opposition to God and His people.