

Clarifying the ‘End Times’ from Daniel & Revelation: Studies in Eschatology

by David Orton

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First, the meaning of the term ‘end times’ must be clarified. Chilton comments,

... what is often missed is the fact that the expression ‘the last days’, and similar terms, are used in the Bible to refer, not to the end of the physical world, but to the last days of the nation of Israel, the ‘last days’ which ended with the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.[\[1\]](#)

This may be a novel view for some, and it can be more than legitimately asked, to what biblical basis it lays claim. Without question, NT authors use ‘end time’ language in describing contemporaneous events, many of which were written prior to the fall of Jerusalem:

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know it is the last hour (1 Jn 2:18).

From this it is clear that it was the “last hour” in the time of John’s writing, and that Antichrist was manifested in the Apostolic church. Jude also, in reference to the false teachers and heretics of his day, says,

But you beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, ‘In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own lusts.’ These are the ones who cause division, worldly minded, devoid of the Spirit (vs.17-19).

Perhaps the most fundamental reason for viewing the period between the birth of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem as the ‘end times’ is the correct interpretation of Matthew 24:34: “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” This discourse of Jesus’, on the Mount of Olives, was in answer to the disciples’ question, “... what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Mat 24:2). It is often understood that this refers to Christ’s Second Advent, however, verse 34 provides the time element, which is during the life of “this generation”. It is, therefore, contended that the “end of the age” is the close of the old dispensation of Levitical sacrifices, which was consummated in the death of Christ and the destruction of the temple, predicted by Jesus in verse 1 of Matthew 24:

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another, everyone will be thrown down.’

He then proceeds with a prophecy predicting the imminent events surrounding his coming in judgement against apostate Jerusalem.[\[2\]](#) To counter this interpretation it is argued that “generation” does not mean generation, but ‘race’. Jesus was therefore saying that the Jewish race would not die out until all these things had come to pass. Unfortunately for this argument, every reference for “generation” (Greek, *genea*) can never, in the light of context, be understood to mean ‘race’. As Chilton points out, “...all [references] use the word in its normal sense of ‘the sum total of those living at the same time’”. He continues, categorically stating, “It always refers to ‘contemporaries’”.[\[3\]](#) For the purpose of this article, it is, then, understood that the ‘end time’ is the period immediately prior to Jerusalem’s fall in AD 70.

The major congruence between Daniel and Revelation is found in Daniel’s dream of the four beasts (Dan 7) and John’s vision of the beast from the sea (Rev 13:1-10). John’s beast is a composite of Daniel’s four beasts (lion, leopard, bear, 10 horns). It

needs to be established from the outset that “beasts” have symbolic reference to “the mighty and terrible world powers” that exercise a godless dominion over the earth.[\[4\]](#)

Most commentators agree that Daniel’s four beasts represent, in order: The Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman empires.[\[5\]](#) These four world empires also match those of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the metal image in Daniel 2. The attention here, however, is focused on Daniel’s fourth nondescript beast about which Calvin states, “I have no doubt that in this vision the prophet was shown the figure of the Roman Empire . . .”[\[6\]](#) It is significant that both these prophetic revelations to Daniel (chaps 2 & 7) culminate in the coming of the kingdom of God:

In the time of those kings [Roman Empire], the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever (Dan 2:44);

In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (Dan 7:13, 14).

Pusey states that “the KINGDOM is the word of Daniel”.[\[7\]](#) The metal image, representing a human form, demonstrates in its gradually inferior metals the degenerating and weakening expression of humanistic world-power until the kingdom of God (the stone carved without human hands) falls in destruction on the metal and clay feet of the image (the Roman Empire) and gradually fills the whole earth. The kingdom of God crushes the humanistic system and its pretension to deity. Again, it is at the point of Daniel’s fourth beast (the Roman Empire) that the “son of man” ascends to the “Ancient of Days” and is given authority and dominion over the kingdoms of this world. Commenting on these verses Calvin teaches,

This, in my judgement, ought to be explained of Christ’s ascension; for he then commenced his reign . . . He now arrives at the Ancient of Days, that is, when he ascends to heaven, because his divine majesty was then revealed. And hence he says, ‘It is expedient for you, for me to go to the Father, because the Father is greater than I’ (Jn 14:28). . . . after Christ had passed through the period of his self-abasement, according to Paul (Phil 2:7), he ascended into heaven and a dominion was bestowed upon him. . . . This passage, then, without the slightest doubt, ought to be received of Christ’s ascension...

He then continues to explain the purpose of the ascension,

... For although Christ truly ascended into heaven (Matt 28:18), yet we ought clearly to weigh the purpose of his doing so. It was to acquire the supreme power in heaven and in earth, as he himself says. And Paul also mentions this purpose in the first and second chapters of the Ephesians (1:21; 2:7).

Christ left the world and ascended to the Father; first to subdue all powers to himself and to render angels obedient; next to restrain the devil, and to protect and preserve the Church by his help, as well as all the elect of God the Father.[\[8\]](#)

The prophetic focus of Scripture is thus the First Advent and not the second as many would suggest. As Cox states,

The world has never realised a greater event than that which Christians know as the incarnation or first advent of our Lord. If we might paraphrase a statement of Tennyson, more things were accomplished by our Lord’s earthly sojourn than this world ever dreamed, and yet, no event in history has been so misunderstood or so lacking in appreciation. Much of this misunderstanding has grown out of the tendency to minimize the first advent in order to relegate everything of any importance to the end of time. This grows out of the failure to realise that the ‘last days’ have already begun.[\[9\]](#)

Daniel, then, sets forth the demise of humanistic world-power – in the time of the Roman Empire – through the inauguration of

Christ's kingdom at his ascension.

It may well be then asked: What of the despotic and godless powers that dominate history and seemingly direct the present world-stage? Has Christ's kingdom, in reality, come to this world? Calvin addresses this issue:

... the events which the Prophet here narrates are not yet complete; but this ought to be familiar to all the pious, for whenever the kingdom of Christ is treated of, his glory is magnificently extolled, as if it were now absolutely complete in all its parts. It is not surprising, if, according to the frequent and perpetual usage of scripture, the prophet should say 'power was given' to Christ, to subdue all people, nations and languages to himself, as it is said in Ps 110:1 – 'Jehovah said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy enemies the footstool of thy feet.' We see, then, how Christ was raised to his own empire to govern his church in the name and with the power of his Father, while at the same time, many enemies rise up against him. Still, the obstinacy of the devil and of all impious men continues, although Christ governs heaven and earth, and is the supreme king before whom every knee is bent. We also know how marked the difference is between the beginning of his kingdom and its final completion.[\[10\]](#)

It can be said that the kingdom of Christ 'has come' *definitively*, 'is coming' *progressively*, and 'will come' *consummatively*. As Paul declares: "The end will come when he [Christ] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:24, 25). Christ's reign, inaugurated in the ascension, must continue progressively through the agency of the church and its preaching of the Gospel, 'until' all his enemies are subdued, and the kingdoms of this world become those of our Lord and his Christ (Rev 11:15). Keil expresses an identical sentiment in his discussion of the stone (Dan 2):

The destruction of the world-kingdoms can, in reality, proceed only gradually along with the growth of the stone and thus also the kingdom of God can destroy the world-kingdoms only by its gradual extension over the earth. The destruction of the world-power in all its component parts began with the foundation of the kingdom of heaven at the appearance of Christ upon earth or with the establishment of the church of Christ and only reaches its completion at the second coming of our Lord at the final judgement.[\[11\]](#)

Coming now to John's vision of the beast from the sea (Rev 13); it must be said, if Revelation is interpreted preteristically (and in the light of Daniel), this also represents the Roman Empire.[\[12\]](#) Rushdoony comments on Revelation 13, "The beast, symbol of human government and empire, of anti-Christian states and cultures, generally represented the Roman Empire of St John's day, and all other anti-Christian orders."[\[13\]](#) John is addressing churches that are confronted with the messianic claims of the Roman state and are under intense duress to pay homage to Caesar as saviour and lord. However, as Keil comments, "... the difference between the representation of Daniel and that of the Apocalypse reduces itself to this, that Daniel designates the world-power simply only in opposition to the kingdom of God; the Apocalypse, on the contrary, designates it according to its concealed spiritual background and in its anti-Christian form."[\[14\]](#) The beast of Revelation is merely the organ of the dragon, that old serpent, the Devil: "The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan ... The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority" (Rev 12:9; 13:2). The claims, then, of the Roman power-state – and all other anti-Christian orders – to total sovereignty are inspired and animated by Satan and, therefore, the attack of Rome on the Christians was an issue of demonic power versus the power of Christ's kingdom. The ten horns with ten crowns (13:1) demonstrate that the authority of the state (crowns) is found in raw power (horns)—hence, "might is right". Rushdoony comments,

The fact that the horns rather than the heads are crowned signifies that in this world power is the source of authority and sovereignty and men give obedience, not to legitimate leadership, but to power as such. ... The names of blasphemy indicate that human governments arrogate to themselves the authority and sovereignty which properly belongs to God.[\[15\]](#)

The church, then became the focus of attack and precipitated the Revelation of Christ to St John and his writing to the seven churches. John's burden in communicating with the churches was to demonstrate the defeat of every Satanic machination towards world power through the extension of Christ's dominion over every nation and culture.

The defeat of the beast and, yet, its seeming continuance, attracts much attention: “One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast” (v. 3). Moses had promised that the head of the serpent would be crushed by the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), but here the serpent is alive and manifested in the state—“the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived” (v. 14). According to the prophecy of Moses, the serpent had been crushed in the head by the incarnation and through the church’s preaching of the Gospel (the sword), hence the Roman state (the agent of the serpent) is wounded to death. But it recovers and through persecution of the Christians and the inroads of heresy, there is a great falling away as the NT had warned (1 Tim 1:3-7, 19-20; 4:1-3; 6:20-21; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 3:1-9, 13; 4:10, 14-16; Tit 1:10-16; 1 Jn 2:18-19). As Chilton points out, “The Beast had received the head-wound, the wound unto death – yet it still lived. The reality, of course was that Christ ‘had’ defeated the Dragon and the Beast; but the implication of his victory still had to be worked out; the saints had yet to overcome and take possession (cf. Dan 7:21-22; Rev 12:11).”^[16] The definitive death of the beast is shown by John in vs. 19-20 of chapter 19: “Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured and with him the false prophet … The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur.” The attack against Christ and his church is defeated in irrevocable judgement which is progressively displayed throughout history and, more particularly, in the demise of the Roman Empire and the ascendancy of Christianity. Grounded in the definitive defeat of Satan at the cross, Paul pronounces the progressive victory of Christ through the church over the Roman power-state when he declares to the believers in Rome: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20). With the advantage of history, Paul’s words are proven true in the victory of the Gospel over the Roman Empire and its Christianization, providing the foundations for Western culture.

What Pusey says of Daniel’s prophecy could equally apply to John’s:

Daniel foretold, not a kingdom in Israel only, not a conversion of the heathen only, but that He who sat above, in a form like a son of man, should be worshipped by all peoples, nations and languages and that this, His kingdom, should not pass away. And to whom have peoples, nations and languages throughout the world, millions on millions and hundred millions on hundred millions in successive generations, looked to and worshipped as their King … who came in the form of a servant, like a son of man …^[17]

Both Daniel and Revelation show forth the incarnate ascended Christ as the King of all kings who governs in the world, despite the death-throes of the slain dragon whose contortions are manifested in the self-conscious claims of the state to deity. More specifically, the two prophecies show the ascension of Christ, in the time of the Roman Empire – that is, in the ‘end time’ – and the extension of Christ’s kingdom through the church. In Revelation, it is the “sword” of the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16), preached by the church, that fatally wounds the beast (13:14; 19:15, 21); and then, in Daniel, “the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven” are handed over to the saints (7:27). Christ and his church are, thus, victorious in history, not only over Satan but also the humanistic power-state.

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References

[1] D. Chilton, “The Great Tribulation”, (Ft Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 37

[2] For a detailed treatment of this passage refer to: P. Mauro, “The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation”, (Swengel, Pa: Reiner Pub), Chaps 12-14; M. Kik, “An Eschatology of Victory”, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1971), pp. 53-166

[3] Chilton, *op. cit.*, p. 3

[4] D. Chilton, “The Days of Vengeance – An Exposition of the Book of Revelation”, (Ft Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987) p 306

[5] C.F. Keil, “Commentary on the OT”, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), Vol 9, Ezk & Dan, p. 265; E.B. Pusey, “Daniel the Prophet”, (Minneapolis, Ma: Klock & Klock, 1885, 1978) p 115-142; J. Calvin, “A Commentary on Daniel”, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1561, 1986), pp. 13-25

[\[6\]](#)Calvin, *ibid*, p. 21

[\[7\]](#)Pusey, *op. cit.*, p. 45

[\[8\]](#)Calvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 42 - 44

[\[9\]](#)W.E. Cox, “Biblical Studies in Final Things”, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 1966), p. 15

[\[10\]](#)Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. 45

[\[11\]](#)Keil, *op. cit.*, p. 271

[\[12\]](#)Chilton, *op. cit.*, p. 325

[\[13\]](#)R.J. Rushdoony, “Thy Kingdom Come – Studies in Daniel and Revelation”, (Fairfax, Va: Thoburn Press, 1978), p. 173

[\[14\]](#)Keil, *op. cit.*, p. 282

[\[15\]](#)Rushdoony, *op. cit.*, p. 172

[\[16\]](#)Chilton, *op. cit.*, p. 331

[\[17\]](#)Pusey, *op. cit.*, p. 133

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