

SIGNS *of the Times*

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?

Do you see what I see? Pt. 1

The Bible doesn't shrink from pointing out the flaws in its greatest figures of faith. King David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), but he also had an affair with Bathsheba and had her husband killed. (2 Samuel 11) Abraham lied (Genesis 20:1-3), and Peter denied Jesus with cursing. (Mark 14:66-71) These, and others like them, repented and found forgiveness. Their stories encourage us that no matter what sins we may have committed, we can be forgiven, too.

What is true of individual Christians is also true of the whole body of Christ—His church. The Bible is honest enough to predict that a great "falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) would take place within Christianity itself. A time would come when the Christian church would fall into error and sin. Our worst problems do not come from outside; they come from within!

History confirms that during the Dark Ages, the church became more concerned with maintaining its authority and worldly power than with remaining faithful to Jesus. The prophecies of Daniel 7 outline the details.

PARALLEL PROPHECIES FORETELL THE FUTURE

1. In vision, what did the Apostle John see rising out of the sea?
(**Revelation 13:1, 2**)

This strange animal was part lion, part bear, and part leopard, with seven heads. It rose out of the sea. What does this mean? The key is found in Daniel 7, where the prophet saw four animals—not one—coming up out of the sea. The animal John saw was made up of parts of the four animals in Daniel's vision.

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation often share symbols. They build upon each other, repeating broad outlines and adding new details.

2. What four animals (beasts) did Daniel see rising from the sea, and what do they represent? (Daniel 7:2-7, 17)



These four animals represent four kings—or kingdoms—that would rise to rule the earth. We have seen this sequence before.

DANIEL 2	DANIEL 7	
Head of gold	Lion with eagle's wings	BABYLON 605 - 539 BC
Chest & arms of silver	Bear raised up on one side	MEDO-PERSIA 539 - 331 BC
Stomach & thighs of bronze	Leopard with four wings & four heads	GREECE 331 - 168 BC
Legs of iron	Dreadful animal with iron teeth	ROME 168 BC - AD 476

THE LITTLE HORN POWER AND THE “FALLING AWAY”

3. How many horns does the fourth animal have in Daniel’s vision?
(Daniel 7:7)
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The statue in Daniel 2 has 10 toes, and the fourth animal in Daniel 7 has 10 horns. These represent the 10 “barbarian” tribes of Western Europe following the end of the Roman Empire.

4. What arises among these 10 horns? (Daniel 7:8)
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An additional power—the “little horn”—appears among the 10 tribes that followed the Roman Empire, uprooting three of them. It is the successor of all the kingdoms that have gone before it. Likewise, the animal John sees in Revelation 13:1, 2, is a composite of all the animals of Daniel 7. This “little horn” is the same power as the animal of Revelation 13:1, 2. It is the link between the two prophecies.

5. What are some characteristics of this “little horn” power that can help us identify what it represents? (Daniel 7:24, 25)

It will arise after the _____ horns (kings or kingdoms).

It will subdue _____ kings.

It will speak _____ words against the Most High.

It will persecute _____ of the Most High.

It will intend to _____ times and law.

It will hold power over God’s people for a _____ and _____ and half a time. (NKJV)

The sad truth is that this description points to a Christian church itself. Hebrews 4:12 warns that the truth sometimes hurts. The Bible is honest enough to point out that Christianity would lose its way significantly during the Dark Ages. This little horn is not some political tyrant or anti-religious power. It is a church! Each identifying mark given in the prophecy fits it accurately.

The prophecy says that a church would persecute those who remained faithful to God for “a time and times and half a time.” (Daniel 7:25)

A “time” is a year. (Daniel 4:16) “Times” is two years. A “half a time” is six months. Together, this time period equals 3 ½ years or 42 months. A “day” in Bible prophecy equals a year of real-time. (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34) So 42 months—30 days per month in the Jewish calendar of the biblical era—equals 1,260 literal years.

History records that the established Christian church did rule for this period of time during the Dark Ages, and it did persecute faithful Christians. As many as 100 million people were put to death for **matters of conscience**.

The church rose to power following the collapse of the Roman Empire. In doing so, it subdued three of the 10 tribes (horns) just as the prophecy predicted—the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths. It exercised political power as well as religious authority. It made presumptuous unscriptural claims for itself. The church attempted to change God’s law, especially the Sabbath commandment regarding holy time.

All these things confirm the great “falling away” within the church that the New Testament predicted. (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

GOD CALLS FOR A DECISION

6. What appeal does God make to those who have fallen away from following Him? (**Ezekiel 33:11**)

The story of the Bible is the story of God’s people—both when they are in a saving relationship with Him and in moments of rebellion. A God of love warns us that we have a choice to make. Will we stand on the Word of God and be faithful to Him? Or will we follow the human traditions of those—even within the church—who have lost their spiritual compass?

MY DECISION

- Father, I choose to stand with You and Your faithful people. I ask You to guide me each day to make the right decisions for eternity.

MY PRAYER

Father, thank You for the assurance that You are always there for me. Come into my heart anew and live daily in me. I pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

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