

## **Essay on the Daniel 7 Prophecy**

**By Dan Jensen (2024)**

(In order to fully benefit from this essay, I recommend reading through my “works for beginners” first. They can be found on my website.)

The prophecy from Daniel 7:9-14 that has been plainly fulfilled by Christ is a major focus in any sound Christian apologetic. Naturally, the enemies of the faith have to twist themselves into a pretzel to try to explain it away. I recently watched an episode on MythVision (an Atheist YT channel), where Derek (the host of the channel) had on two of his regular Old Testament scholars to discuss this very thing. Their approach, and the approach of most Atheist apologists, is to cast doubt upon the Book of Daniel itself. The idea is that if the book itself can be shown to be clearly inaccurate from a historical perspective, this shows that it could not have possibly made an accurate prediction in advance. Let us examine this now.

First of all, it is important to note that it isn't just the prophecy from Daniel that is in play here. Yes, it forms the foundation for this overarching apologetic point, but it is not the case that we are only saying that Daniel makes the prophecy and Jesus obviously fulfilled it. Don't get me wrong. We are indeed saying that, but we are saying much more than that as well. It is also the prophecy from Jesus Himself. Jesus is crystal clear that He will fulfill the role of this Son of Man spoken of in this prophecy. His repeated use of the title makes it abundantly clear that He was saying that one of the primary long term signs people should look for as proof of His claims was that He would fulfill the words of Daniel 7. This is further made clear when Jesus talked about how He would fulfill the sign of Jonah. Jesus makes it plain that this fulfillment would not merely pertain to His resurrection. We must remember that Jonah was brought out of the death from the great fish so as to successfully preach to a community of Gentiles. Jesus was saying

that His resurrection would lead to the successful worldwide preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. And that is exactly what we have seen take place.

None of this is circular reasoning either. Even going by the most skeptical of standards, along the lines advocated by the Jesus Seminar, there is no question that Jesus used the *Son of Man* title for Himself more than any other. While we may not be able to make as strong a case for Jesus' words in connection with Jonah, there is little reason to doubt them from a purely historical vantage point once His usage of the Son of Man title has been established. Further, there is no question, even when going by the above hyper-skeptical standards, that Jesus often talked about He came to bring and advance God's kingdom. Given His constant usage of the Son of Man title, there is little doubt that His understanding of His role in bringing about God's kingdom was as the fulfillment of Daniel 7. Hence, there can be no doubt that Jesus was practically screaming to people "Pay attention to Daniel 7!" The fact that Jesus did this and through His Spirit and people has fulfilled Daniel 7 to the letter cannot be dismissed simply because of some of the historical problems associated with the composition of Daniel.

If "Jesus" were no more than an ordinary man who got carried away in "his" self-perception, how could "he" have possibly been so convinced that "he" would fulfill Daniel 7? Lots of Jewish men had claimed to be the Messiah prior to Jesus. They all failed miserably. It would have been one thing for Jesus to claim to be the Messiah. At the time, expectations of this would have been that He would overthrow the Romans and would be primarily a Jewish figure. Even if "Jesus" thought this was a longshot, "he" could have thought it possible. Why not "him?" The fact that Jesus made zero attempt to lead a revolution against the Romans and instead pointed people to the salvation of the Gentiles makes no sense in His cultural context. At the time, it almost seemed like Jesus was trying to fail. So, again, how could He have possibly known that the Gentiles would accept Him worldwide? There was no Jewish precedent at the time for making such a claim.

Many skeptics object that the title *Son of Man* was not a common Messianic title that was used at the time of Jesus. That is precisely the point! Jesus' highly unique usage of the title makes it clear that while, yes, He was indeed claiming to be the Messiah, His understanding of what that meant was very different than the traditions that had developed around this doctrine during the Intertestamental Period. The idea that Second Temple Judaism is dogmatic orthodoxy is ridiculous. The entire thrust of Jesus' ministry is that multiple heresies had sprouted and festered from this timeframe. Second Temple Judaism is not our authority as Conservative Evangelical Christians. I'm not saying that the study of this period is not useful. It absolutely is. But, the idea that it speaks with unquestioned authority on what the Messiah must be is erroneous in the extreme.

With that objection dispelled, let us now look at the historical problems with Daniel. I do not deny that they exist. They are very real. But, apologetic problems are not the issue as I've said so many times in my writings and years of teaching. Apologetic fatalities are the issue. The moral argument is fatal to all iterations of Atheism. Period. End of story. Please see my essay on that subject. It can be found on my website. No apologetic fatalities exist with Biblical Christianity. Yes, countless apologetic problems exist. But, this is true for every single worldview on the planet and throughout history. No one is ever going to find a worldview where he or she does not have to deal with very real and very serious apologetic problems. As I have shown in my essay on apologetics for beginners (it can be found on my website), there have been multiple examples in the past where skeptical biblical scholars have been proven woefully wrong. This is precisely why it is so dangerous to put too much stock in the empirical data. The data is constantly changing. Hence, we can simply say that with time, the Book of Daniel will be vindicated.

And it is hardly like this is such a stretch even when it comes to the Book of Daniel itself. Belshazzar was long thought to be the stuff of myth by Old Testament scholars. Had we not discovered what we have regarding him, there is no doubt that folks like Derek would gleefully point to this evidence. There is no doubt that folks like him would mock

us for not going with the historical “facts.” After all, such psychologically troubled people as orthodox Christians just can’t be helped sometimes. Eye-roll.... So, again, with time we can be confident that the same will be discovered regarding Darius the Mede, as just one example.

Now, many may object here that my argument regarding the Daniel 7 prophecy is itself empirical in nature. I agree. I am not saying that it alone definitively proves Biblical Christianity. I am merely saying that it is an extremely strong piece of evidence in favor of Biblical Christianity. I have never said anything so silly as the idea that Biblical Christianity can be proven empirically. I have always said that worldview debates are philosophical debates. Thus, philosophical arguments must always be paramount. And when the philosophical arguments are taken into account, Biblical Christianity is the only consistent worldview on the market. Once that has been established, we should see a lot of empirical evidence in its favor. This does not mean that all of it must be in its favor. Such would be a ridiculous burden to impose on any worldview. Nor does it even mean that most of the empirical data has to be in its favor. All it means is that we should see a very strong dose of the empirical data supporting the faith. And that is precisely what we do see. The Daniel 7 prophecy is one of the strongest aspects of this overall dose.

Derek and his ilk, even some of the best scholars he routinely has on his show, simply don’t understand this. They can only ever argue as Empiricists because it does not even register with them that any other approach could possibly be valid. It is like trying to get a computer to do something it is not programmed to do. It just isn’t going to happen. They just incessantly assume Empiricism without any justification whatsoever and then just argue in a circle from there. Over and over, and OVER again. Not only do they fail to present any positive philosophical justification for their Empiricism, they make no effort to defend it against the very real challenges that have been presented against it for centuries. Despite all of their talk against presuppositionalism, they are far, far more presuppositional than the most strident Evangelical presuppositionalist that I’ve ever seen. For more on this point, please see my essay on faith and reason. It can be found on my website.