

Prophetic Evolution – In the Book of Daniel

Introduction

God's people were in declining numbers. Most were located in the provincial area of Judea where Jerusalem was located. The prophetic warnings from Jeremiah (25:11, 27:6) that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would attack, under divine command, finally came true. Daniel and his three companions were among those taken captive into Babylon in 605 B.C. during the first of three sieges.

Through God's intervention, those four young men were taken into the palace service of this powerful king. ***God had weighty plans to use these men.***

It was early in this king's reign that an amazing story began. Nebuchadnezzar received a startling heaven-sent dream. That signaled an important prophetic story:



“In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep” (Daniel 2:1 – NIV).

- The king, however, couldn't remember his dream, let alone its meaning.
- The king's wise men were called in, but they had no clue what the king's dream was or meant. The next verse says:

“This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:12 – NIV).

Daniel wasn't present when this happened, but he had been previously identified as one of those men of wisdom!

From this verse alone we conclude that God permitted the king to anxiously sense the importance of this dream. In his anger, he was willing to kill his whole “advisory council.”

- God worked out events for Daniel to convince the king for a temporary stay of the execution. Daniel and his companions then prayed for divine insight.
- *“During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven” (Daniel 2:19 – NIV).*

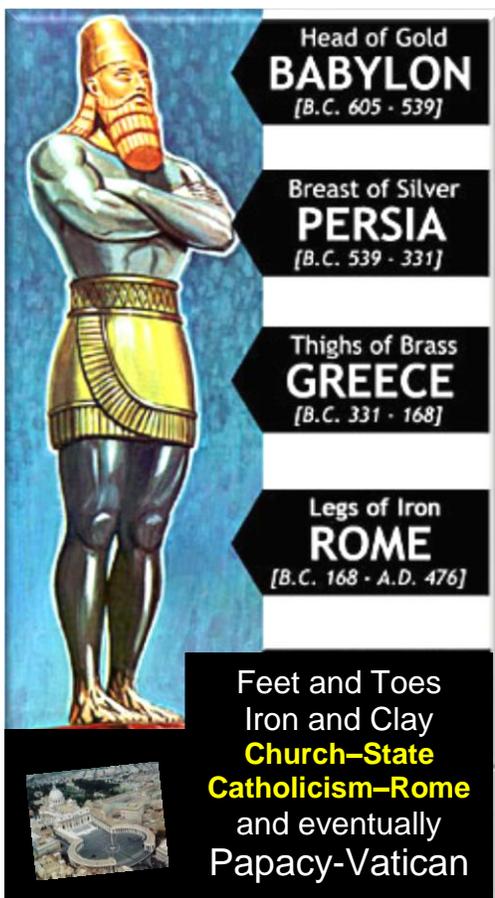
Daniel was ushered into the king's presence. The dream was not only described but interpreted. ***This became God's special way to introduce a unique end-time prophecy through Daniel!***



- Note: God had previously called this pagan king “*My servant*” (Jeremiah 27:6-7, 43:10)!
- This, now, is how God begins to unfold this king’s distinctive experience in predictive messages!

Recall that before this Babylonian Empire existed there were many nations and kingdoms. The immediate “ruling realm” was the great Assyrian Empire, with Nineveh as its capital. It was during its late history when the story of Jonah likely occurred (~750 B.C.) and the northern ten tribes of Israel were decimated!

A very important concept is now introduced: **God chose to begin the story of “future history” with the Babylonian Empire!** That initiates many prophecies that go right up to the end of time. The king had seen a giant metallic image.



What Daniel Told Nebuchadnezzar:

The Omniscient One revealed the rise and fall of many future empires through that metallic image. As he began the story, Daniel said to the king:

*“Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he [God] has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. **You are that head of gold** (Daniel 2:37-38 – NIV). That’s how future history began.*

The dream didn’t finish there! The king finally saw:

- A stone cut out of a mountain without hands, hurling through the air, striking the feet and toes. **The whole image crumbled to the earth.**
- That stone then grew to fill the whole earth. That world kingdom symbolically represents God’s eternal kingdom – God’s last kingdom.

Daniel noted: *“In the time of those kings, 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” (Daniel 2:44 – NIV).*



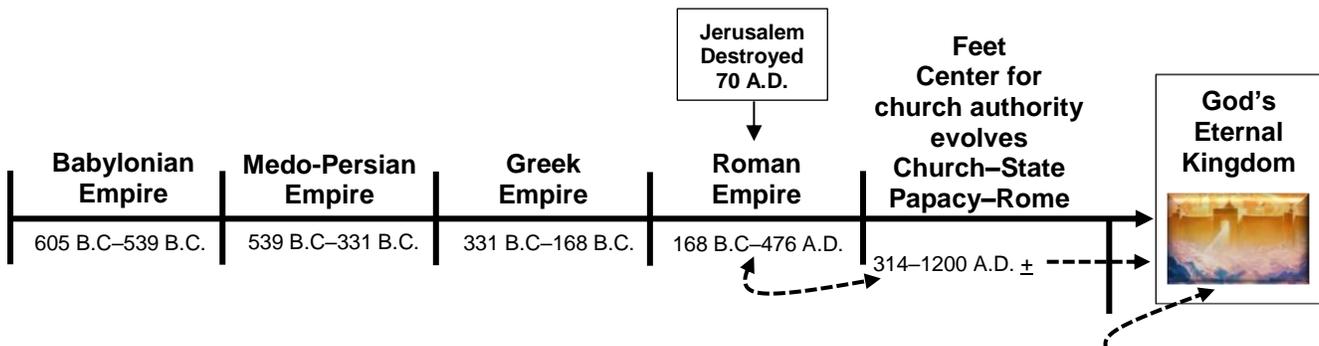
Now we know that this prophecy goes from the time of Daniel and Babylon (~ 605 B.C.) to the very end of time when only God’s kingdom is left.

BUT – there is something very interesting about what Daniel just revealed!

- Those kingdoms came and went historically.
- But the stone knocks down **the entire image, representing all those kingdoms, all at once** at the very end (Daniel 2:35, 45)!
“In the time of these kings.”
- There has to be another end-time meaning for those nations!!!

And there is, as we will see.

This is the wonder of studying prophecy. Those nations historically did come and go. But the “*time of the end*” especially relates to the iron and clay feet **and whatever they are supporting at that time!**



This is the **history** that God was interested to convey. It goes right up to the very end of earth’s extremity – then all things are new. **This was a “story” that Nebuchadnezzar needed to see. God wins in the end – eternally.** What that “end of time” means for these kingdoms will be looked at shortly.

John was privileged to observe this time in vision: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Revelation 21:1 – NIV).

God Recycles those Kingdoms in another Prophecy (Daniel 7:1-14)

The picture now moves from that secular story to a new kingdom prophecy, adding profound religious warning intimations! This time **Daniel is given dreams** while on his bed at night. He saw a great wind blowing on the Mediterranean Sea (a time of strife). Then four beasts came up **sequentially out of the sea:**

Beast One:

“The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it” (Daniel 7:4 –NIV).

A lion with eagle’s wings represents Babylon as a powerful empire that was swift to accomplish its desires. After it loses its wings, it finally stands on two feet, exhibiting a man’s mind/heart. This symbolizes Nebuchadnezzar’s might, then it loses power and, finally, its restoration of kingdom authority.



Beast Two:

“And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up and eat your fill of flesh!’” (Daniel 7:5 – NIV).

This typified the Medo-Persian Empire. The higher side was Persia, the stronger kingdom in this coalition. The three ribs symbolized three nations that King Cyrus had conquered: Lydia in 546 B.C., Babylon in 539 B.C. and Egypt in 525 B.C. *“Eat your fill of flesh”* represents divine permission to **assume wide authority over territory to prepare for its future deliverance mission.**



Beast Three:

“After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule” (Daniel 7:6 – NIV).

This “leopard” represented the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great. Alexander wanted to become *like the god Ammon-Re*, the ram sun god of Egypt. Later, this becomes symbolically important. He is a leader who wanted to be *like “God.”* The four wings are seen as the four generals under him to swiftly conquer and expand his domain.



He died in 323 B.C. His four generals eventually divided that Empire into four divisions after the Battle of Ipsus, 301 B.C. **Seleucus** held Mesopotamia and Syria, **Cassander** held Macedonia, **Ptolemy** held Egypt and southern Syria and **Lysimachus** controlled Asia Minor – thus the four heads.

Now is when the history becomes more detailed and focused!

Beast Four:

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast – terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:7 – NIV).

Daniel sees this grotesque creature with iron teeth, brass claws and feet that *“stomped”* on something, breaking it into pieces. It had ten horns. In the previous metallic image there were ten toes (assumed). Here we have ten horns specifically numbered. This represents the combined power of Rome (iron legs above) and, later, a Roman Church–State coalition (iron and clay of the feet and toes).



God is saying: “I have something of hideous magnitude to introduce. The meaning of those iron legs and iron/clay feet must be studied deeper. Beyond simply nations or empires, there is something that is so antireligious, I want you to see it as grotesque and repulsive!”

The teeth represent its lethal ability to destroy. The claws suggest that it is capable to tenaciously hold its victim. Nothing can escape its grasp. The feet suggest its power to “crush” and destroy is unlimited. Later, Daniel is told that its ten horns represent ten “kings” or kingdoms (Daniel 7:24). Horns represent “powers” that aid the beast they are on.

There are varying opinions as to what those ten kingdoms are/were. Because of the timing of this beast’s appearance and its sequence in history, most understand them to be the major regions that would later become the European nations we know today. Historically, they are referred to as powerful “tribes.”

The imagery implies persecution and death, to God’s people. There is an element of hatred toward God that will unfold shortly.

Did the Roman Empire beast persecute Christians?



The Roman Empire began in earnest to victimize and kill Christians under Emperor Nero (54–68 A.D.) Tens of thousands were slaughtered up through the time of Diocletian (284–305 A.D.). This was the onset of the true horrors of that fourth Roman “beast.” It all began shortly after Christ had been here on planet earth!!! Those horrors ceased in 313 A.D. with Constantines’s *Edict of Milan*.

Daniel now introduces something new and dramatic!

“While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully” (Daniel 7:8 – NIV).

The Little Horn

This is the first great prophecy of the antichrist. **At a time** when the focus of the world is on Rome and its Empire of ten divisions, this “*little horn*” rises in power.

- When Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., the center for Judaism and Christianity was destroyed.



- Competition as to “where” the Christian center would be followed. The final competition was between Rome, Alexandria and Constantinople. Apparently, of all the disciples and the apostles, only John was still alive after Jerusalem fell. Even Paul had been martyred around 67 A.D.

Rome gradually became an important center. When Constantine became emperor, he moved the headquarters to Constantinople – but deeply respected the religious influence in Rome.

When, then, did the Roman Church rise in influence as a little horn? Many will claim at the time of Sylvester I when a bishop in Rome. The year before his tenure began, Roman Emperor Constantine had outlawed Christian persecution (313 A.D.) During that “new era” the great Council of Nicaea (now Iznik, Turkey) convened. (325 A.D.).

However, when the last powerful Roman emperor, Theodosius I, outlawed paganism in 380 A.D., the Roman Church began adopting their pagan practices and rites, including assuming control of many of their temples. This table gives some insight to this anti-Christian evolution:

Doctrine	Date
Sunday Sabbath	321-364 AD Council of Laodicea
Relic Worship	337 AD
Rosary	366 AD
Mass	394 AD
Eternal Torment	590 AD
Indulgences	799 AD
Mary Worship	850 AD
Confessional	1198 AD
Bible Forbidden	1299 AD
Infant Baptism	1311 AD
Tradition above Scripture	1563 AD

The western half of the Empire fell in 476 A.D. The eastern half would continue for several hundred years.

Roman Emperor Justinian I (527–565) of the eastern Empire was sympathetic to the Roman Church. He wrote in the *Codex Justinianus* (1:5:12) that “everyone who is not devoted to the Catholic Church and to our Orthodox holy Faith” is a heretic.¹

His religious influence was in competition with his wife’s, Theodora, who viewed Christianity differently than his. History shows that she neutralized much of his Roman influence and had a powerful sway on the evolving Roman “Christian” church.

“Gregory the Great” later assumed the position as “Bishop of Rome” 590 to 604 A.D. He had had major previous civic responsibilities. His organizational skills began to solidify the religious authority of that area. He was a powerful church–state leader!

Brilliant “Christian” leaders later arose who were remarkably evil, yet revered. One was **Thomas Aquinas** (1225–1278) who wrote extensively. Today, most of his works are considered dogma of Roman Catholicism! One of his many volume works is called *Summa Theologica*. In it he states:

¹ Michael, Robert (2011). *A History of Catholic Antisemitism : The Dark Side of the Church* (1st Palgrave Macmillan pbk. ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 219. ISBN 978-0230111318. Retrieved 9 February 2015. Quoted in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heresy#cite_note-

“Lay people are not permitted to possess the books of the Old and New Testament.”
(That was later reversed.)²

“With regard to heretics ... as soon as they are convicted of heresy, to be not only excommunicated but even put to death.”³

A heretic is one who opposes the Roman Catholic Church's authority and teachings. That “*little horn*” mouth that spoke boastfully means that it blasphemed. God was being defied. Then we saw the inclusion of human tradition and pagan rites. But what about those “*iron teeth*,” “*brass claws*” and persecution? Even before Aquinas' evil declaration against heretics, we can observe the evolving “power” of this Roman Church:

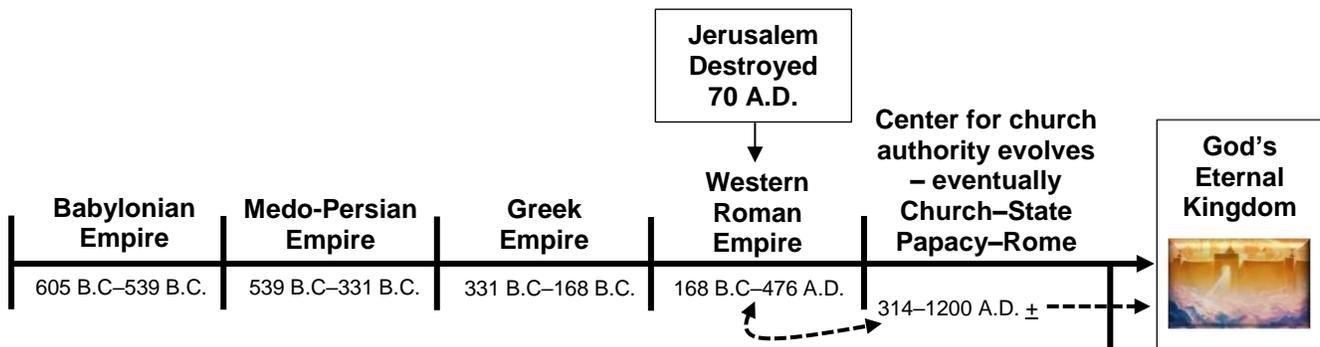
- The Inquisition was created through the papal bull, *Ad Abolendam*, issued at the end of the twelfth century by Pope Lucius III (1181–1185) as a way to combat the Albigensian “heresy” in southern France. They were a loyal group of Christians to the early Christian faith.
- This gave birth to the Spanish Inquisition and, later, the Roman Inquisition where 100,000+ Apostolic Christians were murdered. The Albigenses of France represented one of those saintly groups.

The Roman Church by then had morphed into being the moral conscience of individuals by defining what a heretic was and what should be done with them!

It is difficult to say *when* the major fulfillment of Daniel's beast/little horn prophecy occurred. Was it when Justinian made his decree in support of Catholicism? His wife seemed to have neutralized that focus. By 1198 to 1216 Pope Innocent III's murderous Inquisition work had become tyrannical. Certainly by then that little horn was mature, powerful and an antichrist.

² <http://www.scrollpublishing.com/store/Aquinas-Heretics.html>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thought_of_Thomas_Aquinas



The fourth “beast” begins its work of persecution during the time of Nero. After the Roman Empire’s western demise, the Roman Church, with the help of eastern Roman leaders, rises with Church–State power! That “little horn” becomes the major power of that terrible beast. It intensified its antichrist work. Later in the chapter it says: He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws (Daniel 7:25 – NIV). By 1200 A.D. the Roman Catholic Church’s murderous work is nearly unlimited. Now we can see why that fourth beast is so hideous!



God isn’t done with this story. Long after the debut of this little horn power (the papacy) comes another important part of this prophecy (still in Daniel 7).

History calls much of this time *The Holy Roman Empire*.

God now steps into history!

“As I looked, ‘thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. “A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened” (Daniel 7:9-10 – NIV).



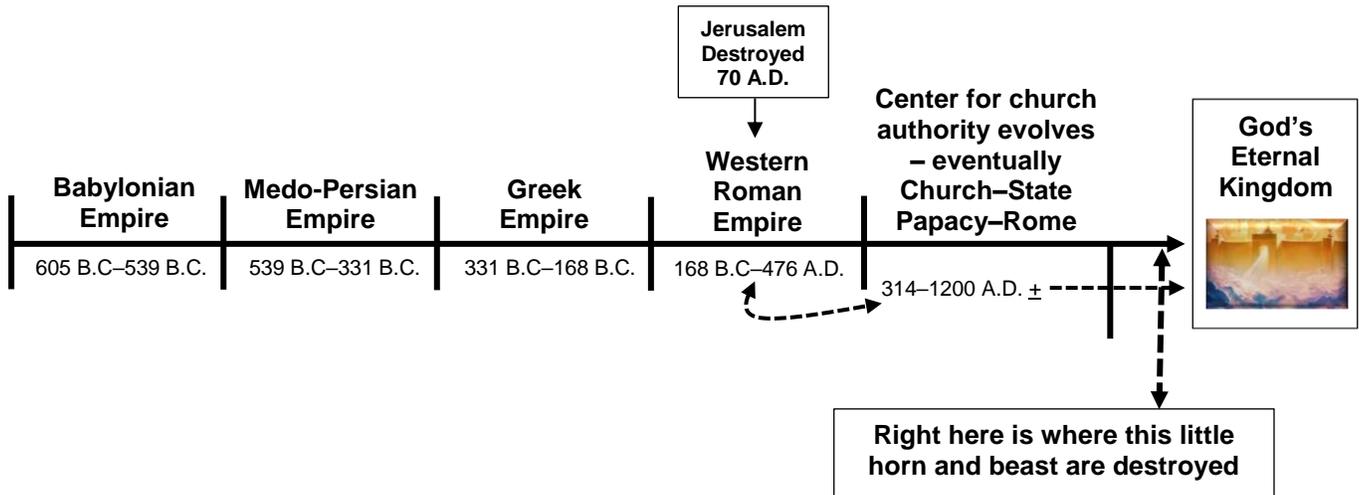
This picture shows the four living creatures that immediately surround the throne and the surrounding courtiers and witnesses.

Sometime **after** the “little horn papacy” is wielding its strong evil influence, God reveals that He convenes a heavenly courtroom. The Aramaic suggests that it is being set up for the first time. It does not tell us when – but, contextually, it occurs sometime during the power of this “*little horn*.”

The Ancient of Days is God the Father. He is the presiding judge. **The “flaming fire” and the “river of fire” refer to justice or judgment.**

This picture tells us that we are going to see something happen because of this divine court! And we do!!!

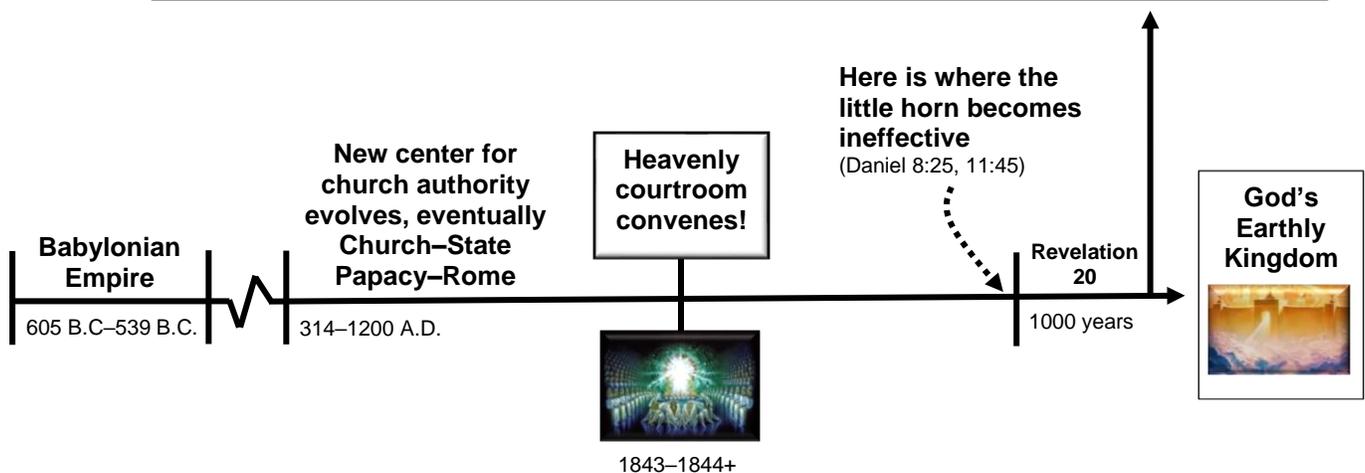
“Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire” (Daniel 7:11 – NIV).



God steps into the picture and begins that judicial scene somewhere between the onset of the church–state (beast/little horn) “authority” and when it is destroyed!!! Later, prophecies in Daniel and Revelation note two “ends”: (1) an end of its power and (2) an end of its existence – noted here.

This story explodes when we link with prophecies in Revelation where the “*little horn*” is called a “*beast*.”

*“Now the beast was seized, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs on his behalf– signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. **Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with sulfur**” (Revelation 19:20 – NET). **Here is where/when the little horn and all its followers are destroyed.***



Note what Daniel now observes!

“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 nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13, 14 – NIV)

This is profound. Judgment has been made against the beast and little horn, which actually represent the wicked (they follow the beast and even worship him – Revelation 13). But now, **what is left are the saints**, the ones who will make up God’s eternal kingdom!!!

The judgment scene is finished and Christ – the “*Son of man*” comes to obtain that kingdom! The above prophecy begins with the “legal reception” of that kingdom by Jesus. It is as though God is saying: “Okay, those who now remain are all yours.”



This picture shows that symbolic reception of His kingdom. There has been a weeding out of those who have defied God. **But** – this **is** symbolic. So, when does Jesus receive those saints in reality? Very soon after this judgment! First, He is married to His church (Luke 12:36), then Jesus **receives** the saved at His Second Coming and invites them to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

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