

Daniel: The Beast and The Beauty

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[0 : 00] Chapter 7, which I think is on page 892. If you miss any of the talks, you can get them online, the church website, www.carigolinebaptist.org.

There's not just sermons there, but there's also other bits of information. So, Daniel chapter 7, page 892.

And Kirsty is going to come and read for us. So, chapter 7, verses 1 to 15.

In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

Daniel said, In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

[1 : 19] 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 man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

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. 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. After that, 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.

[2 : 26] 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 man and a mouse that spoke boastfully. 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. 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. The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.

[3 : 29] 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.

I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Kirsty.

Well, let's pray and ask for God's help. Thank you. Thank you. Our Father God, we thank you for your word.

[4 : 34] We thank you for this book of Daniel. And as we read through it, we perhaps read things that are hard and difficult to understand.

And therefore, we ask for the help of your Holy Spirit to open up our minds that we may understand intellectually.

But also, we ask that you would, by your Spirit, open up our hearts so that we may see how this applies to us today.

Father, we pray that none of us will leave this morning without being clear about our God, who rules and reigns for all eternity.

Father, we pray that we may be clear about our God, who rules and reigns for all eternity. Father, we pray that we may be clear about our God, who rules and reigns for all eternity. We pray that this would cause us to trust you all the more, to find our security and to find our hope in you.

[6 : 12] Amen. Amen. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, apocalypse now.

It seems like Daniel has been eating too much cheese again. His dreams are becoming rather bizarre. We might even think that he's been on the magic mushrooms, because what Daniel sees in his vision is right up there with the weird and the wonderful.

But don't worry. Daniel is not partial to the odd joint. Chapter 7 through to chapter 12 is what scholars call apocalyptic literature.

Now, I don't want that to put you off in any way, and it might sound strange, and maybe you've heard about it before, and you're a little worried about it and a little scared by it.

But really, it's a form or a type of writing that uses all kinds of imagery and language to tell us what is happening and what will happen.

[7 : 26] Apocalypse simply means revelation. It reveals things to us. So these visions that we have from chapter 7 to chapter 12 reveal something to us.

They tell us something. They tell us two things. First, what is going on in the world? First, what is going on in the world?

He's living in a time where there is great opposition to God and great persecution of God's people. So these visions that he gets right the way through to the end of the book are there to provide encouragement for him and for us to say to us that when it's hard to be a Christian, when we face opposition, God has not abandoned the world.

God has all things in control now and in the future. So what does this vision reveal to us?

Well, we're going to look at two big ideas. The first is this. The vision reveals to us the beast. What is going on in the world?

[9 : 08] Let's read verse 2. Daniel said, Now, the scene here is wild and scary and it's meant to be.

As it says in verse 15, if it disturbed Daniel, it's meant to disturb us. Well, what does he see?

Verse 4. The first beast, he says, was like a lion and it had the wings of an eagle. So this is a ferocious beast.

And with its wings on its back, it seems to be able to go wherever it wills, doing as it pleases. But with all its might, its power is quickly removed.

We're told its wings are torn off and he is given the heart of a man. He is stripped of all his power. Why? Well, because another beast has come to take its place.

[10 : 23] Verse 5. And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides.

So we could imagine it standing up on its hind legs with its paws or its claws coming out before him. And it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.

This beast is also ferocious. But it's devouring and eating all that is around and it is not content. Look at the end of verse 5.

It was told, get up and eat your fill of flesh. This beast is not satisfied until all he sees has been destroyed and consumed.

But as great as that beast is, he too meets his match. Another beast has come to take its place.

[11 : 21] Verse 6. 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.

So this beast moves more quickly than the others. And it acts unexpectedly with great speed. End of verse 6. This beast had four heads.

And it was given authority to rule. Its four heads meaning that it can look in every direction. Looking for its next prey. Ruling over everything that it can see.

And if all that is not wild and scary enough. Look at verse 7. After that in my vision at night I looked and there before me was a fourth beast.

Terrifying and frightening and very powerful. Did you notice as we went through that each of the beasts becomes more terrifying and more powerful than the one before.

[12 : 32] And this last beast is not like anything. You can't compare it to any kind of wild animal. It stands in a class of its own. Look at the rest of verse 7.

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. What was it all about?

Well Daniel tells us. Look at verse 16. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things.

The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. Now most scholars agree that these beasts represent the four great kingdoms or four great empires of the past.

[13 : 44] The lion represented the Babylonian empire. The bear, the Persian empire. So we've met those two great empires already through the book of Daniel.

The leopard was the next great empire which was the Greek empire. And the last beast which we read in verse 7 was the Roman empire.

But each empire as we move through time becomes bigger and stronger and more powerful than the one before. They are, as the beasts are described, they were there devouring whatever was before them.

Expanding their borders with a terrible ruthlessness. Trampling on the nations around them and incorporating them in to their own empires.

Daniel, of course, has already met the full weight of the Babylonian empire. So as he receives this vision, if he thinks it's bad under Babylon, then it's going to be nothing compared to what lies in the future with the empires that are to come.

[14 : 57] Things are going to get a whole lot worse before they get any better. Now what Daniel sees in these visions is really just a pattern that is repeated continually throughout history right up to the present day.

We continually have one empire or one kingdom or one nation becoming greater and bigger than all the rest. Nations and rulers are still set on conquest, on conflict and control.

So just think for a minute about the last 100 years of our history. As the great Ottoman Empire, modern day Turkey, as it came to an end and to a decline of its vastness, it came with great cruelty.

One historian notes that on the 24th of April 1915, 600,000 Armenians were brutally killed in one day.

Some with their heads placed in vices and squeezed until their heads collapsed. As Japan sought to expand its territory, it massacred thousands of innocent people.

[16 : 24] On what became known as Black Friday, Japanese troops went through Alexandra Hospital in Singapore and bayoneted all the patients, all the doctors and all the nurses and then tied hundreds of Chinese hand to hand and massacred them on the beaches.

Stalin's Russia sought to flex her muscles in attempts to provide food for all the troops and enough resources for all of his people.

And to squash any kind of rebellion, he ordered the Ukrainian peasants to provide more food that they could grow. And because of his ruthless control, almost 7 million Ukrainians starved to death.

Hitler and his Nazi Germany trampled across the continent of Europe, exterminating 6 million Jews and 5 million other so-called undesirables, stripped, beaten, forced into the gas chambers because shooting them was too slow and it took too long.

In later years, we've seen the terror of beastly figures like Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Robert Mugabe, who literally and physically smashed and clubbed their own people to death, cutting off their limbs and letting them bleed out.

[17 : 51] Or Saddam Hussein, who on the 16th of March 1988 dropped chemical bombs, killing 5,000 Kurds, letting them burn and blister before they died.

But that's all in the past, isn't it? These sort of crimes and wars don't happen anymore, do they? Well, today we turn on the news and we see the rise of an even uglier beast in the form of ISIS.

With an army of 40,000 strong, they are massacring hundreds, raping at will, cutting off heads, sticking them on railings to spread fear and terror.

You see, the beast that Daniel saw is what we continue to see in our generation. Kingdoms replace kingdoms.

The next one that arises is always more terrifying and frightening. Kings replace kings, crushing and devouring and trampling their victims underfoot.

[19 : 01] With all that man says about how mankind is developing and becoming more mature and more sophisticated, let's not pretend that our world is good and beautiful.

The world we live in is ugly, nasty, brutal and beastly. This is what is going on in our world all the time.

But as Daniel looks in his vision, it becomes more specific. Because it seems these three beasts that we read in Daniel chapter 7 are especially opposed to God's people.

Look at verse 23. He gave me this explanation. The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth.

It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. In this context, this fourth beast was the Roman Empire.

[20 : 15] One of the largest empires the world has ever seen as it did go and crush its enemies. And what did it do?

Well, look at verse 25. He, that is, the leaders, the kings of this, or the emperors of this empire, will speak against the Most High, that is, God, and oppress his saints, God's people, and try to change the set times, that is, do away with times of worship and change the laws.

The saints, God's people, will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. So for a set period of time, they will be under this terrible oppression.

To be a Christian and live in the Roman Empire was dangerous for 250 years.

You were lucky to survive and live if you were a Christian in the Roman Empire. Rulers such as Nero, one of the first great empires to arrive on the scene, hated Christians.

[21 : 28] He's the one to blame for the great fire of Rome on the Christians. There was a great fire and he said the Christians had done it and he killed them. He was also notorious for his crucifixions and burning Christians as torches for his garden parties.

And the ten kings that we read about, or the ten horns that we read about in this passage, if you look at the Roman Empire, there were ten great periods of persecution. You can look that up and find it out for yourself.

But every empire, one ruler after another, created great opposition and persecution to God's people. This is what happened.

But this is what continues to happen all across the world. Kings and kingdoms speak against God and oppose his people. Nations ban the worship of God.

They say they're not allowed to meet together like we are today. rulers make having a Bible illegal. Laws are put in place to deliberately discriminate against God's people.

[22 : 36] Everywhere throughout the world, God's people, the saints, are opposed and oppressed. The vision of Daniel is crystal clear.

The world we live in is a beastly place to live. And it's especially beastly if you are a Christian. So that's the first thing Daniel sees.

What is going on in the world. The second thing Daniel sees is the beauty. What God will do in the world.

Look back to verse 8. 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 man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

[23 : 43] And as I looked, thrones were set in place. And the Ancient of Days took his seat. You see, before we even have a chance to figure out who or what this little horn is all about, the vision changes tact.

All of a sudden, the focus moves from the beast to the beauty. From the terrifying and frightening to majesty and glory.

Look at verse 9. The Ancient of Days takes his seat. The Ancient of Days is the God who created the universe, who exists from before time began.

And here he arrives and he takes centre stage as he sits on his throne. What will he do?

What's going to happen? Well, first, he will bring universal judgement. Look at verse 9. We're told that his clothing was white as snow.

[25 : 00] The hair of his head was white like wool. A sign of his absolute purity. No fault can be found in him. No charge is levelled against him.

And his purity is matched by his awesome power. Look at the rest of verse 9. His throne was flaming with fire. And its wheels were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. The rivers of fire around the throne dispel any thought of frailty or inability.

There is no weakness here. This is absolute raw power. Thousands upon thousands attended him.

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. This infinite number of people who are gathered around the throne, who attend him, display his supreme control, that he rules over all things.

[26 : 02] No one dares speak. All are transfixed on this pure and powerful one who is sitting on the throne. And what happens?

Look at the end of verse 10. The court was seated. And the books were opened. Universal judgement is about to take place.

All that has ever been done is accounted for. Every act has been seen. Every word has been heard.

Everything in history has been written down in the book and it has been recorded. Everyone who has ever lived must listen.

All has been weighed. And now judgement is about to begin. What else will happen?

[27 : 08] There will be eternal punishment. Look at verse 11. Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking to one of the great kings of this empire.

And you could imagine like, well, God may judge but you're not going to judge me. I'm the one who rules over this great empire. Nobody's going to take over me.

I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. The other beasts had been stripped of their authority but they were allowed to live for a period of time.

But their end would come also. There is no appeal here. There is no chance of reprieve. It's final and it's eternal.

The beasts who have wrecked havoc, destroyed nations, trampled their victims underfoot, are punished once and for all, destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire, completely destroyed, never to rise again.

[28 : 23] Justice is done. So what will take place or what will take the place of these terrible beasts and their terrifying rule?

Well, he goes on to tell us that there will be a king and a kingdom in their place. Verse 13. In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man.

Not beastly but like a human. One like a son of man. Coming with the clouds of heaven which symbolise that he comes with divine status.

So we might call him a God man. And he approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence not to be judged, not to be punished but, verse 14, to be given authority, glory and sovereign power.

This God man has absolute power and supreme authority. He rules and he controls all things. Here is an eternal universal king whose strength and wisdom is infinite.

[29 : 52] And all peoples, verse 14, nations and men of every language worshipped him. Instead of running in fear from the beast they now stop and bow and worship the one with amazing beauty.

Why? Look at the end of verse 14 because his dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

In place of those beastly rulers comes a king who rules with power and authority. In place of those cruel nations comes a kingdom that is marked by peace and justice.

A kingdom that is never to be destroyed. A kingdom that is eternal and one that is universal. But what about God's people in the midst of all of this?

What will happen to them? Well Daniel's vision is given we are given a deeper insight. Look at verse 26.

[31 : 11] What happens to God's people at this time? We're told the court will sit and his power that is the beast's power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.

Then the sovereignty power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints the people of the most high.

What a beautiful picture we have there. The saints God's people who have been opposed and tortured and persecuted throughout history who have been imprisoned who have been separated from loved ones who have been broken who have been destroyed who have been inflicted all the saints throughout history will become rulers with the most high.

The power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints the people of the most high.

His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all the rulers will worship and obey him. This king will not abandon his people despite everything they have been through he is going to take them to his kingdom to be with him forever and forever.

[32 : 47] That's what God is going to do. But let's ask the question how do we know this will happen?

How do we know this is going to happen? How do we know God is going to do all of this that he's going to bring his kingdom in? Well 2000 years ago a man walked on this earth who did the kinds of things that only God could do.

He began to heal people. He began to raise the dead. He controlled nature with just a word. A man who did what only God could do.

His name we know is Jesus and yet he repeatedly referred to himself as the son of man. Jesus knew the vision of Daniel 7 and he knew that he was verse 13 the one like a son of man who was given authority and glory and sovereign power.

In fact when Jesus faced his own beastly execution and trial under the Roman Empire we read this keep your finger in Daniel 7 but just flick forward to Mark chapter 14.

[34 : 26] So Jesus knew what it was to be under the beast of the Roman Empire and their terrible persecution and opposition. Mark 14 verse 61.

So here's Jesus just before his execution his trial has begun. The end of verse 61 he's asked the question are you the Christ the son of the blessed one?

Are you are you God? Do you say your God? I am said Jesus and you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of the mighty one and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Today Jesus is saying to them you judge me me. But a day will come when I will judge you.

One day you will stand before my throne because I am the son of man with all power and all authority and you along with all creation will be silent and listen to me.

[35 : 49] Jesus' words were not just empty. He proved what he said as he rose from the grave. With absolute power and supreme authority Jesus defeated and destroyed his enemy and he reigns and he rules and one day he is going to come again on the clouds of heaven.

And one day we too will face this son of man. One day we will all be gathered and we will stand before his throne and judgment will take place.

But for the saints for those who love him for those who worship him for those who follow him and entrust their lives to the son of man Jesus Christ the one with all power and all authority they will not face the eternal punishment instead Daniel chapter 7 verse 18 the saints of the most high will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever yes forever and forever this is what God will do this is what will happen the beauty with all his glory and all his power will come again and destroy once and for all the terrifying and frightening beast let's pray father we see an amazing vision in your words something that terrifies us as we look out on the world and see the wars the violence the aggression of one nation towards another the rise of rulers and the things that they do to people but yet we also see in this vision the beauty and the glory of a mighty king one who did not stay immune to the suffering but one that entered in we thank you that one day the risen

Lord Jesus will come again on the clouds of heaven with all power and authority and glory and every eye will see him and everyone will know that he has come universal judgment will happen and those who have been against him will be punished eternally but those who trust him will live forever in his kingdom and will rule over the nations and the kingdoms of this earth forever and forever we praise you and thank you that you are a great God we bow and we worship you and trust you with all of our lives amen we're going to sing in response to what we've been you you you you you you you you you