

Daniel 7

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- [0 : 00] In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.
- Daniel declared, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And the four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.
- The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. Then as I looked, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man.
- And the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, and it was told, arise, devour much flesh.
- After this, I looked, and behold, another like a leopard with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.
- [1 : 03] After this, I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet.
- It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots.
- And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.
- His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames. Its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him, and a thousand thousand served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
- The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. I looked then, because the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.
- [2 : 20] As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man.
- And he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.
- His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me.
- I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.

But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever. Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet.

[3 : 37] And about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up, and before which three of them fell. The horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, that seemed greater than its companions.

And as I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High. And the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

Thus he said, As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms. And it shall devour the wholer, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them. He shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.

He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law. And they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

[4 : 42] But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.

And their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominion shall serve and obey them. Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed.

But I kept the matter in my heart. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Good morning to you.

It's good to be in God's house with God's people, to be able to worship before him, to be able to open God's word in preparation, as well as in proclamation.

Let me pray, and we'll hear God's word together. Bless the Lord, O my soul, all that's within me. Bless your holy name.

[5 : 52] Forget none of your benefits. Forgives and heals and satisfies. We bless you this morning. Thank you for the saints gathered. Be glorified in our midst in Christ's name.

Amen. Daniel, chapters one through six are now behind us. In the rearview mirror, if you will, we encountered that, that God of heaven rules from his throne above, over the kingdoms of men on earth.

The stories demonstrated, though the long, dark captivity had been the lot of God's people, God was still in charge.

While it would be easy in Daniel to stop with chapters one through six, there's six more chapters to cover. And going from Daniel six to Daniel seven, it's like going downhill.

Now we're going to begin to travel uphill a little bit. Why's that? Because we come to a different form of biblical literature.

[7 : 13] It's like going up a steep hill. Huh? We find ourselves here and not so familiar territory. Huh? The visions of God that predict God's ultimate rule of what we'll find in the chapters that are before us.

Huh? It will show God will step in, though things get bad. The world's powers are going to be conquering the people of God, suffering in the process.

But God steps in. Huh? He will guide things to their appointed end. And we'll get a chance to look at that. Huh? Uh, why is it so difficult when we come to literature like we have today?

Why is it so confusing? Huh? The literature indeed is strange. Huh? This is not the stories. This is not the gospels. This is not the letters.

This is not casual reading. The student of scripture has to labor a little harder. Has to turn the pages of scripture a little bit more. Uh, to find out, well, what's exactly going on here?

[8 : 26] The kind of literature that we come to in chapters 7 through 12, it's the literature that includes dreams and visions. Did you see that? Even in verse 1, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay on his bed.

It includes numbers. You see that in verse 2? Uh, I saw in my vision and behold the four winds of heaven. It includes that, huh? Four beasts.

One beast with four heads. Verse 6. Ten horns. Verse 7. Other numbers come up in the rest of the chapters that we'll encounter. Dreams, visions, numbers, animals, and other things that are symbols for something else.

that's why we're a little challenged, uh, when we come to this particular kind of literature. The kind of literature that includes the things that I've mentioned and other things that I will highlight a little bit.

This is known as apocalyptic literature. It's literature with hidden messages that are really meant to be revealed. As a matter of fact, apocalypses means unveiling or revelation.

[9 : 34] They're found in scripture and, uh, books like Zechariah, revelation, and even this kind of literature is found outside of the Bible itself. As we use the word in a modern sense, apocalyptic has the idea of some impending doom.

Feelings that exist that the end may come at any time, huh? As we look at the literature, other features include emphasis on the disclosure of divine mystery, but not only divine mystery, but divine majesty comes before us.

This kind of literature is written during times of oppression and deals with the end of the age kind of truth about God. It's stirs the emotions of the readers.

It uses its visionary and uses first person accounts like we'll see here. Uh, the interpretation of visions is often by angels as we'll see in verses 16 and 17 of today's text.

It features history ending, uh, triumph of good over evil. Huh? Huh? It's literally, it's, it's generally a literature of encouragement for the people of God during times of suffering.

[10 : 53] What's behind us one through six. What's before us seven through 12. What's ahead of us four to two through 12. What's before us today is chapter seven versus one through 28.

Huh? There are ways in which Daniel two mirrors Daniel seven. You remember back there, we saw the kingdoms that were depicted by a metallic kind of statue.

And matter of fact, chapter two and chapter seven are bookends of the Aramaic section where we have not Hebrew that it begins with, but the Aramaic section includes chapters, uh, two through two, four through the end of chapter seven.

And in both of these on both bookends, you have these visions of worldly kingdoms that are defeated by the God of heaven. who eventually sets up his kingdom, his eternal kingdom.

We see that in chapter two, verses 44 and 45, and we see it in our text today in several places, particularly chapter seven, verses 22, six and 27.

[12 : 11] And chapter two, the kingdoms are depicted by the statue of mixed metals. And according to verse 17, the beast in our text are in fact, four Kings.

Huh? So again, as we look at the lay of the land, the kind of literature that we're dealing with, but the good thing about it is the kind of literature that you and I can, in fact, make sense.

And I would dare say good sense out of what we had before us in chapter seven, certainly has prophetic significance, but it also, in a greater sense, I believe it has pastoral significance.

It had pastoral significance for Daniel's audience. And I believe that it has pastoral significance for us today. In spite of the in your face kind of realities that Daniel's audience had, and some of us are facing the life crushing realities that they face.

There were reasons that they had not to faint and not to lose hope. Huh? What I see in verses one through eight, these are these, the verses there really do not inspire hope.

[13 : 23] Huh? There are actually reasons in verses one through eight for faint heartedness, reasons to in fact lose heart. You say, well, Pastor Jay, what are you talking about? The beastly rule of man on earth.

Huh? Is a reason for faint heartedness. Ask the people of Syria today are in other troubled spots of the world where you have an oppressive kind of ruler or government, and they will tell you, huh?

Yeah. Reasons to lose heart when you've got the wrong kind of ruler in place. So verse one introduces the vision, doesn't it? It's Belshazzar's first year.

We've learned earlier that Belshazzar was a co-regent or a viceroy under his father, Nabonidus, who was actually the king in absentia.

And Belshazzar was the one who was on the throne, if you will, in Babylon. So the year is about 555 B.C., plus or minus a year or two.

[14 : 34] Daniel had a vision in the night. He recorded what he saw. Look particularly at the verses, verse two. Daniel declared, I saw in my night vision by night, and behold, the full winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea, and four great beasts came out of the sea different from one another.

Huh? Looking closely at these verses, it's like an NFL team that's looking at the schedule. The opponents included lions, bears, and jaguars, and an unnamed team.

Huh? No one wanted to face this last one. Huh? That's what you have there. They don't look for, you know, some opponents you really look forward to getting them.

I mean, they are pushover. Not these here. These are not pushover kind of beasts. They're wild. And with the exception of the bear, they are hybrid animals.

You've got this beastly four-legged creature, but then they've got wings on them too. Huh? So in verse seven, the fourth beast appears, and it's not associated with any known familiar animal.

[15 : 48] It is exceedingly fierce. Terrifying. Super strong. Destructive. Ten horns, and an eleventh one even comes up, and displaces three of the original horns.

Wow. Look at what we have. What do we have here? Lion-like beast with wings. Swift. And strong. A bear-like beast with ribs in his mouth.

Huh? Huh? Strong in destruction. You want a little barbecue sauce to go with those? Huh? A lion-like beast with four wings to add to its swiftness and its four heads.

Wow. Huh? Reasons to lose heart. Reasons to faint. Reasons to be discouraged. Beast-like earthly kings.

That's what Daniel tells us. They are. The angel tells us that they are in verse 17. We don't have to guess as far as what's going on. There were four, and the number four symbolized universality, or completeness.

[16 : 52] According to verse 2, the four winds, that's winds that come from every direction of heaven, stirred up the great sea. And generally speaking, in apocalyptic literature, the sea symbolizes a chaotic, disorderly world.

That's the picture that we see. Reasons to lose heart. Reasons to faint. Huh?

Lions, bears, leopards, and a multi-horned beast spelled terror for the people of God.

Now, because of Daniel's audience, it's likely that the vision had near significance for God's covenant people, near future significance for them. That being the case, these beasts pictured the superpowers of the region who would dominate, they would dominate God's people.

History records these ruthless rulers and their dominance of the near eastern world. Some identify these with Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

[18 : 02] Some would take it to be Greece. But again, the vision that we see here compares what we see on the front end of the Merit-Mex section in Daniel chapter 2.

It is repeated. It's reprised. It's bookend in chapter 7. So while we can look at these as specific kingdoms that successfully ruled during and after Daniel's day, friends, we can also see these as broadly representative of the rule of man on earth.

The rule of man in a trans-historical way throughout the ages. Whether contemporary or depicting man's rule in general more broadly, Daniel's readers would get the message and so should we.

The rule of man is beast-like. It's cruel. It can be ruthless. And ultimately, it is temporary.

That's what he's showing. Men over man kind of cruelty is not new. It's not new in Scripture. Egyptian rule over Israel of old represented.

[19 : 18] It was oppressive kind of rule. We see that in Exodus chapter 1. In Amos chapter 1, the Lord rebuked the eastern, near eastern nations for their cruelty to one another, their cruelty in war, violations of common decency.

Habakkuk noted that the Chaldeans were bitter and hasty and dreaded and fearsome. The rule of man. And have we not seen people-on-people crimes of slavery and the Holocaust and other kinds of inhumane treatment?

In our world, in more recent history? And guess what, friends? God's people, and thank you, Jill, for the prayers and praying for our brothers and sisters, some of whom are undergoing oppressive kinds of things even today.

They need our prayers. The first part of the vision highlighted trouble on earth.

The winds were blowing. The beasts were raging. That was the case at the time of the dream and from what the vision depicted, it would continue.

[20 : 35] Huh? Seemed like rather than Daniel calling this a dream, it seemed like it was more of a nightmare. Huh? But guess what?

This is not all that we see here. Thank God. There is another scene that we go to. Oh, it's a wonderful scene. The unveiling, friends, of another reality.

Huh? It is, in our view now, it is an unseen reality, but it is just as real as what was going on in the visible earth realm.

throne room. And though the text does not particularly say that this is a heavenly scene, it likely was, it is for certain a throne room scene, a throne room.

We remember, you see the throne in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. And everything is centered around the throne. Even in that particular time, a time of oppression of God's people in the later first century there.

[21 : 42] And God shows himself. He's on the throne. Things are going from the throne and to the throne. And again, the throne room seems similar to what we have here. Reasons for hope or reasons for faith.

The one who sits on the throne. This gives us hope in the midst of what could be otherwise despair. The beast like rule of man is the cause for fainting.

The rule of the righteous rule of God is a reason for faith and a reason for hope. Why was there reason to hope?

Because of the one who was ultimately in charge. You see him there? Look at verse 9. I look, the thrones replaced. The ancient of days took his seat.

His clothing was quite as snow and the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames. Its wheels were burning fire.

[22 : 44] The throne here, friends, is central. Everything is centered around him. He's in charge. He's running things. Notice how he's described.

Don't you just love that term? We've sung about it this morning. Ancient of Days. A lot of names. What a title. It's unique.

It fits only one being. It's sort of rather hard for us in our finite minds really to grasp what's here. But think of him as ageless and think of him as timeless.

He is God from eternity. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is God. And think of the honor. The regality that goes with this particular distinction.

This grand and glorious being. He embodies purity. His clothing makes that statement. Clothing as white as snow.

[23 : 47] His hair speaks of his wisdom. His fiery throne speaks of his justice. This is not your black robe jurist here. The one in charge of this court is holy, righteous, wise God and one would not even think of slipping something under the table trying to dissuade him.

Not this God. Not this judge. You notice his attendance there? Innumerable attendance carry out his righteous judgments.

Oh, there's a number for you. Thousands and thousands serve him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him innumerable. The court sat in judgment and the books were open.

Hey, why don't you lose hope? Why is it that you don't lose hope in a very chaotic world? Because of the one who occupies the throne.

According to verse 10 at the end of it, he's looking and he's booking, folks. He's prepared to execute the worst of enemies as far as what we see in verses 11 and 12.

[25 : 02] He has the power to depose and to handcuff. And folks, you know what? This gives us hope. But there's another reason for faith as we look in verses 13 and 14.

because of God's appointed ruler, not only the one who is ultimately in charge, but in view of God's appointed ruler, whose rule contrasts with the beastly rulers of the earth.

See that there? I saw in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man, and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him, and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. Notice the contrast in verse 12, the dominion of the beast, was taken away, until the one called the son of man, the dominion was given in verse 14.

Daniel's night vision included one referred to as a son of man. The title, the name identifies him as a human figure.

[26 : 39] But we also take note that he comes with the clouds of heaven. That's language that otherwise in scripture defined, it describes a divine means of transportation.

In some passages like Psalm 104 and 3, where the clouds are his chariots. Revelation, speaking of Jesus, Revelation chapter 1 verse 7 says, behold, he's coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see him.

While there are some who would equate him with a God-empowered person or God-empowered people, looking maybe forward to the 2nd century B.C. to bring about deliverance for people, what we see here from a New Testament vantage point, this speaks of, Jesus saw this as pointing to himself or referring to himself.

Matter of fact, turn with me to Mark chapter 14 and verse 61. Jesus saw this as referring to him.

He was that person, and then other people, those who were around him, understood, and we noticed that they understood what he was saying by their reaction to him.

[27 : 58] Verse 61, but he remained silent, and this was at the court, the religious court. He remained silent and made no answer at the end of the Gospels where Jesus was on trial.

Again, the high priest asked him, are you Christ the son of the blessed of the blessed? And Jesus said, I am, and you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power, and here it is, coming with the clouds of heaven.

Uh-oh. And the high priest tore his garments and said, what further witness do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. He has crossed the lines.

He has crossed into territory that's not his to embrace or to assume. What's your decision? And they condemned him as deserving death.

The title, son of man, was one that Jesus most often used to himself. Jesus took on the nature of man in order to save man.

[29 : 04] man in God's image, not beastly, not inhumane, but Jesus is man as man should be.

He is the perfect Adam, if you will. Indeed, Jesus is the son of man to whom has been presented to the ancient of days.

look at verse 14. The sovereign God, the ancient of days, gives this divine human son of man dominion, and that is both universal and eternal in scope.

All people forever. All people forever. Also, his kingdom is indestructible. Again, what we see here accords with what we see in here of Jesus in the New Testament.

Listen to Gabriel's words. You need to turn to it in Luke chapter 1. He will be great, speaking about Mary's baby, and he will be called the son of the most high, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom there will be no end.

[30 : 19] Jesus. Jesus is the one to whom dominion has been given on the basis of his crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension. His eternal rule has indeed been inaugurated.

The full manifestation of his rule awaits the end of this age as we know it. Peter spoke about that as he was preaching in Acts 2. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses, being therefore here it is, exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit.

He then executes the prerogative of God. He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And David did not ascend into the heaven, but he himself says, the Lord said unto my Lord, sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.

That was Peter's preaching Christ from the Old Testament. Well, what we see in the remainder of the chapters is an interpretation, the angels' interpretation.

We've already made a few comments about them, but more are in order. On the one hand, the Son of Man is given dominion, verse 14. On the other hand, the saints of the Most High receive it and possess it forever.

[31 : 38] You see that in verse 18? But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom, and I love this, forever, forever, forever, and ever.

Because Daniel saw in the vision that things, this is what he sees, things are going to go on this earth from bad to worse. So he then, he pressed the angelic messenger and interpreter, he pressed him for more detail.

He wanted to know about this hideous beast, this fourth beast. Things were going to get bad. Earthly rulers were going to arrogantly defy the God of heaven.

Verse 25, they were going to wear the saints out. As a matter of fact, let me read that. It says that he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change times and seasons in the law, and they shall be given into his hands for a time, times, and half a times.

That probably symbolizes something that is a short time, an abbreviated time, that will be given over to these beastly powers. Again, the trans-historical nature of what we see here is confirmed in John, because there John really borrows heavily from Daniel, and we see a beast, or several beasts, and Revelation chapter 13 speaks of the beasts rising and warring and oppressing and defeating God's people, and eventually they are going to be defeated.

[33 : 17] They would be given, the rule would be given to the saints because of their allegiance to the Son of Man. So here's the headline.

Here's the headline for all eternity. Here's the headline that we see, and here it is. It's not in New Orleans, but here's the headline.

The saints win. Huh? That's what we see here. The saints win. I don't know if that's where they got the name for the T, but the saints.

The saints went over beasts. The saints went over lions. The saints went over bears. The saints went over latfords and lions. Not only in the seen realm, but in the unseen realm.

we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but in principalities and powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Hey, and guess what folks? The saints win.

[34 : 23] Against the beast of the ages. How is that so? Not in themselves, but his victory is their victory. The people of God follow a different kind of king with a different kind of agenda.

kingdom. His coming, and we see this so clearly in the gospels, his coming is not for destruction. When Jesus said that the kingdom of God is at hand, and it was, ah, he came speaking.

His words were the words of God. His works were the works of God. When he came on the scene, oh, Mark speaks about it. God, he comes not for destruction, but he comes for salvation.

The son of man came not to be served or ministered unto, but to serve. And guess what he comes to do? He comes to give his life. He comes to give the nature of God's kingdom.

He comes to give his life as a ransom for many. Luke put it this way. For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which is love. He's a different kind of king with a different kind of agenda.

[35 : 40] And those who follow him, they follow a kingdom that is characterized by righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, according to Romans chapter 14.

The saints win because of the one who rules from the heavens, because of the ministry and of the son of man who has been given dominion and we share in his dominion.

The Lord in that day had a word for his post captivity people. Here he gives them a glimpse of what the future held for them. Both the bad, the suffering at the hands of the beast and the eventual glory of reigning with the son of man.

Their present or near future plight was not in fact terminal. There was a brighter day ahead for them and because of that, in spite of what was going on around them, think about it.

They were able to see through this vision beyond that. They saw a God who ruled in the heavens. They saw us all wise, sovereign, all powerful God.

[36 : 57] And I wonder on this morning, even as we've sung about him and we have sung to him. My prayer today is that you would get a clearer vision of that. And yours might not be the beastly powers of this world, but you've got some things that might be baring their teeth at you, in your life, and in your world.

Don't know what it looks like. And sometimes we are so blinded by the present that we cannot see beyond that. Oh, this helps us to see that. It helps us to see the vision, of the one who reigns on high.

It's a brighter day ahead. And here we learn the lessons. Just because the Lord doesn't act, doesn't mean that he is unable to act.

In this time, the beast of this world will be judged. There's more to see, friends, than what we see. While what we see, while we look not on the things that are seen, but the things which are unseen for the things that are seen are what?

What did Paul say? Temporal. Huh? But the things which are not seen, huh, are eternal. We get a glimpse of both in this passage, don't we? It's more to be seen than what we see with our naked eyes.

[38 : 19] May God help us to see on this morning the one who is invisible. evil. Oh, but there's a way that we can see him. We can see him through the high faith and he has made himself known in the person and the work of his son.

And guess what? That which has been given to Jesus, he shares. His reign eventually will be our reign. His kingdom is in fact our kingdom.

His kingdom comes personally when we embrace the king. we become a part of his kingdom, one that is in contrast with this world. Jesus himself said, my kingdom is not of this world.

And I encourage you today, regardless of where you are in your relationship or on your journey, I encourage you this morning, listen, listen, and hear what we're going to sing about.

Hear the call. Hear the call of the kingdom. Hear, a call to this kind of king. The one to whom our ultimate allegiance should be.

[39 : 29] If you listen closely, you can hear him. And when you hear him, may we follow. Let's pray on this morning. Heavenly Father, thank you for this grand text that's before us that gives us a glimpse of things that are more true and more real than that which we can behold with our naked eyes.

Thank you that the saints win. We win because of the one who sits on the throne. We win because of the son of man who in fact is the son of God to whom has been given dominion.

And may we embrace him with all that's within us on this morning. And may our embrace of him, may our vision of him be such that our faith is renewed, our courage is freshened even as we live in this world below.

These are our prayers in Christ's name. Amen.