

A Vision of Hope

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Take, for example, this book, right? You would see this and you would know right away this is a children's story, right? It's a fictional story about a bowl of mush or whatever, right?

[2 : 45] So, but if I showed you this, you would be like, oh, that's Shakespeare. That's poetry.

There's probably going to be a lot of metaphor and simile and things like that in poetry.

If I showed you this, you'd be like, oh, well, that's a cookbook. Clearly, that's something that you would follow step by step by step. If I showed you this, you'd be like, oh, that's a handwritten letter. Some of you might look at that and say like, I've never seen one of those, right? It's not electronic, right? But no, it's a letter. Is everybody with me? Like you would see those things and you would not treat all of them exactly the same way, would you?

Of course not. You would recognize that each of them is their own different type of genre. For example, would you take a cookbook literally? Yes, right?

You wouldn't say like, I know these cookies call for a teaspoon of sugar, but I think what it really means is salt. Like those would be some really nasty cookies, right?

[3 : 52] Unless you like salted cookies. But the point is, is you're like, of course, if you want this to turn out right, you need to follow this literally. But would you take that same approach with poetry?

Of course not. You would recognize that poetry comes with metaphors. Everybody with me so far? What I tell people all the time is the same thing with the Bible.

The Bible has several different types of genre. It's got law or rules like a cookbook. Those are meant to be followed literally. If you want things to go well, then you follow that law.

You follow those rules. Then there's poetry and there's fictional stories. Like for example, the prodigal son, Jesus would often speak in parables.

And then there's letters, like the Apostle Paul writes several letters to churches. And then there's a kind of genre known as apocalyptic. And apocalyptic is very, very symbolic.

[4 : 51] Very symbolic. It loves wild and crazy images. And this is basic biblical interpretation. Now listen to me. And this is why most people get the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation wrong.

It's because they think they're reading a cookbook when actually they're reading apocalyptic genre. And they begin to come up with all kinds of wild and crazy ideas and crazy interpretations that's not at all what the text is actually trying to do.

Is everybody with me? But if you'll just take your time. If you'll read things like this in context. What you're going to find. I hope you discover this tonight.

It's really not that difficult. And so I'm going to ask you to put your presuppositions aside. And what your preacher when you were 15 taught you.

Or what the prophecy guy on the radio is saying. And just focus on the text. And let the text in its context interpret itself. Is everybody with me?

[6 : 01] And for those of you that are Bible nerds. You're going to love tonight. Okay. Part of preaching through the Bible is I don't get to just jump the texts that are hard. And that means you have to preach things like this.

Daniel 7 verse 1. If you would stand with me if you're able to do so. As we honor the reading of God's word. Daniel chapter 7 verse 1. In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon.

So right away you see that we're going. This isn't chronological. Now we're back under the reign of Babylon. And Daniel had a dream and visions in his head as he lay in his bed.

And then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. And Daniel declared I saw in my vision by night. And behold from the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

And four great beasts came up out of the sea different from one another. The first was like a lion and it had eagle's wings. And then as I look at the wings they were plucked off.

[6 : 57] 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.

And it raised up on one side and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And it was told arise and devour much flesh. After this I looked and behold another.

It was like a leper with four wings of a bird in its back. And the beast had four heads and dominion was given to it. And after this in the night visions and behold a fourth beast.

It was terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. And it had great iron teeth. And it devoured and broke into 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. Behold there came up from among them another horn. A little one before the three of the first horns were plucked by its roots.

[8 : 00] And behold in its horn were eyes. Like the eyes of a man. And a mouth speaking great things. Let's stop right there.

How are we okay? Was that worse than your dream last night? Probably so. Probably so. Just breathe. Just breathe. I'm telling you it's not that hard.

You believe me. Alright so let's pray. Father thank you for all of your word. Lord even the ones even the passages that we read and just feel like this is really weird.

I have no idea how it could possibly relate to my life. And so come Holy Spirit help me teach your word faithfully. And I pray Spirit that you would apply and convict the truth of Daniel 7 to our lives this evening.

And I pray it in Jesus name and God's people said amen. Amen. You can be seated. On January the 29th 1982 Steve Callahan was sailing alone across the Atlantic Ocean.

[9 : 05] Now Steve was not some like random adventurer. He was actually a naval architect and a very very experienced sailor.

One day he decided that he wanted to test his skill and set sail across the transatlantic on his own. To prepare for this he even built his own boat.

The boat was named the Napoleon Solo. And it was designed specifically for long distance sailing. January 1982 he departed from the Canary Islands and he headed west towards the Caribbean.

Now during his journey he hit something. He believes it was likely a whale. And it caused the hull of his ship to split and water started pouring in.

He scrambled to his raft. He only had enough time to grab a few supplies before his boat sunk beneath the water.

[10 : 09] I mean literally in a matter of seconds Steve had gone from sailing across the ocean to now adrift at sea. Hundreds of miles away from land.

He rationed what little food he had and the water that he had to do the best that he could to stay alive. At first he was convinced.

He told himself someone's going to be here soon. Someone's going to be here soon. He believed that he would be rescued quickly. But days turned into weeks.

Each day doing whatever he could do to survive. Sharks. Severe sunburn. Major dehydration.

And think about this. All he could see every day was the same horizon. Day after day after day.

[11 : 11] Nothing ever changed. No ships. No land. No end in sight. And this went on for 76 days. Two and a half months.

Adrift at sea. And finally. A group of fishermen found Steve on April the 14th, 1982. Reflecting on this whole experience of being lost at sea for two and a half months.

Steve said something that I found extremely interesting. And I believe that you will relate to it as well. He said quote. The greatest struggle I faced wasn't physical.

It wasn't the hunger. It wasn't the exposure to the sun. It was the lingering question.

Will this ever end? Is anyone out there looking for me? In other words, faith family.

[12 : 19] Steve's greatest challenge wasn't hunger. It was hope. Are you with me? And I have a feeling that there are many of us tonight that can relate to this.

We know this to be true. What I mean is it's one thing to deal with suffering in life. It's another thing to deal with the mental weight of will it ever stop?

When all you do is see the same horizon day after day and you wonder, is it ever going to change? Will rescue ever come? Do you know what I'm talking about? Like it's one thing to be single. It is another thing to ask the question, will I ever find someone?

It is one thing to fight the disease. It's another to ask, will I ever actually be healed? It's one thing to live paycheck to paycheck, but another to ask, will I ever get back on my financial feet again?

[13:23] All of us have had times in our life where we have faced the same horizon day after day, wondering if rescue will ever come.

Amen? Are you with me? Listen, but it is one thing to be adrift for 76 days. It is another to be adrift for almost 70 years.

And that's Daniel's life, is it not? For almost 70 years. All he has known is a Babylonian horizon. He wants to be home.

He wants to be in Jerusalem. He wants to be back with the people of God, worshiping God in the temple of God. And in those moments when you feel like you're just lost in exile, adrift at sea, you begin to ask, is rescue ever going to come?

Is there any hope for my future? And what you need in those moments is a fresh vision of hope.

[14:31] Amen? And that is exactly what God gives Daniel here in Daniel chapter 7. As I mentioned, Daniel 7 changes genre. It's a vision.

It's apocalyptic. And for many of you, many of us, when we read it, you're like, this is weird. Like, I don't have any idea what all of this stuff means. It's all these beasts with horns and eyes and the horn and ribs.

It's like, what in the world? It's crazy. And what's even crazier is most people's interpretations of text like this. That will use Daniel 7 to say things that Daniel 7 is not trying to say at all.

But if you will keep this in context, it's not hard. And one of the big clues right out of the gate that helps us understand what Daniel 7 is about is the literary structure.

Now, don't check out on me. The literary structure. And this is not something that the normal or casual reader of Daniel is probably going to pick up on. Now, let me explain what I mean by literary structure.

[15:39] In ancient literature, often writers will structure things in such a way or they'll use design patterns that will make the point in addition to the actual words.

Is everybody with me? Say yes. Now, I don't expect you to remember this, but you might remember back in our Christmas series, I talked about how in Matthew chapter 1, Matthew structures the genealogy of Jesus in three sets of 14.

And that does not mean that was all the generations. Matthew structures it in a way to make a point. And what was the point? Do you remember? 14 is the numerical value of David, King David's name. And so, Matthew is structuring these in sets of 14 to point you back to David. Is everybody with me? Say yes. Meaning the literary structure by the author was making the point the author was intending you to get.

And the same thing happens here. Daniel chapter 1 is written in Hebrew. Daniel's chapter 2 through 7 is written in Aramaic, which is like a cousin language to the Hebrew language.

[16:57] And in Daniel 1, Daniel 1 introduces us to the story. It's all about Daniel and them being brought out of Jerusalem and made exiles in Babylon.

Okay? Everybody's still good. Again, Bible nerds, are you loving this? Now, tell me if you can see a design pattern of the chapters that are written in Aramaic.

Chapters 2 through 7. I'm going to walk you through this and I want you to be looking for any type of pattern that might be a clue. What was Daniel chapter 2 about?

Daniel chapter 2 was about a dream with four parts, right? You remember this. Nebuchadnezzar has a really bad dream and he's freaking out. And he brings all the wise people in and says, tell me what it means.

And even tell me what the dream was. And the dream gets interpreted by Daniel and it was the image. Do you remember the image of four different metals? The gold, the silver, the bronze, and the iron mixed with clay.

[17:58] And what did that image represent? Four different nations that would come one after another. And the point of the dream was Nebuchadnezzar Babylon is a temporary kingdom.

All human kingdoms are temporary kingdoms. But then there is going to come a stone. And on that stone, God will establish an eternal kingdom.

Everybody with me? Say yes. That was chapter 2. Chapter 3. Chapter 3 was about God rescuing the faithful. Remember the story. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will not bow to the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar sets up.

And they get thrown into the fiery furnace. And what happens? God rescues the faithful and he does it with an angelic being. You know the story, right?

What happens in chapter 4? In chapter 4, you have a prideful king that gets humbled.

Nebuchadnezzar has another dream. This big tall tree that represents him and his greatness and his majesty.

[19 : 01] And what happens to the tree? It's going to get cut down. Nebuchadnezzar is going to be driven out into the field. And he's going to be humbled. And his hair is going to grow long.

And his nails are going to grow long. In other words, he becomes Gary Busey. So, just for a moment. But he's humbled, right? This king is brought low.

And then what happens in chapter 5? Sorry, Gary. A prideful king gets humbled. It's Belshazzar. And the handwriting on the wall.

And your days are numbered. And Babylon and Belshazzar are brought low as the Medo-Persians come that very night and conquer the Babylonians.

Is everybody with me? Are you having as much fun as I am? No chance, right? Well, then what comes next? Chapter 6. And it's God rescuing the faithful.

[19 : 53] It's Daniel this time who refuses to follow the order. And he prays to God anyway. And they throw him in a lion's den. And he is miraculously delivered.

Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was from the fiery furnace. And he is miraculously delivered by an angelic being who shuts the mouths of the lions. Now stop right here.

Prideful king gets humbled. Prideful king gets humbled. God rescuing the faithful. God rescuing the faithful.

What might you guess before you ever read one verse of chapter 7? What chapter 7 might be about?

You are so smart. Give yourself a hand, faith family. That was awesome. Yeah. What is chapter 7 about? A dream with four parts.

[20 : 51] This time it's Daniel, not Nebuchadnezzar, who has a dream. And he's freaking out. And he's upset. And it's a story or it's a dream about four beasts.

In other words, I take all that time, first of all, because I want you to understand how the Bible works. But before you even read a verse, you already know what the chapter is going to be about. Although probably be a few different details and some of the imagery may change. But the main point is still there. And what was Daniel chapter 2 about?

It was about the temporary nature of human kingdoms and the coming of an eternal kingdom. Is everybody, if you've zoned out, what do you do?

All right. Are you with me? Any questions? Just kidding. All right. So what is chapter 7 about? Look at verse 3. Look at verse 3. And four great beasts come from the sea, different from one another.

[21 : 52] The first is like a lion and it's got eagle's wings. And I looked and the wings were plucked off. And it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man.

And then verse 5. There's another beast, a second one like a bear, raised up on one side. It's got ribs in its mouth. Verse 6. And then I looked and behold, there was another one like a leper with four wings of a bird.

It was a bird on its back and the beast had four heads and dominion was given to it. And then verse 7. I saw in these dreams a fourth beast and it was terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong.

And then look at verse 8. It had these horns that I considered and coming up from these ten horns was another horn, a little horn. And before which three of the first horns were plucked by its roots.

And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things. Now, this is a vision of human kingdoms.

[22 : 52] And let's just break this down. Again, you're going to discover, I think, that this is really not that difficult. Okay? What's the dream about? The dream is about four creatures. Are you with me?

Four beasts. Four creatures. And this is very, very, very symbolic. I told you apocalyptic genre is very symbolic. These are not...

In fact, Daniel doesn't even say it was a lion, it was a bear, it was a leper, whatever. He says it was like. He's describing it. It's simile. It's symbolism.

So, he's trying to describe in symbolic way what he's seeing in the dream. Now, again, this is why most people will get this wrong, and it's why they get revelation wrong all the time.

Notice this on the screen. If you take this literally, you do not understand literature. In fact, you show your ignorance of the Bible if you start taking this literally, because you have to understand the genre that you're dealing with.

[23 : 56] Now, you might be weirded out by all this symbolism, but there's a reason for that. And the reason why some of you are weirded out by this, and I do not mean this as an insult to you, but the reason why you're weirded out or you don't really know what to make of all this is simply because you don't understand or you're not as familiar with your Old Testament as Daniel and his readers were.

Let me illustrate it this way. If I came in tonight, and if I said, hey, y'all, I had a really weird dream last night. I mean, this was weird. It was weird. Let me tell you about my dream. You want to hear about my dream?

Okay. You want to hear about it? Okay. Here's my dream. There was like this big giant elephant, and it was red. Big red elephant, and it just was gnarly, and it was fighting against this big blue donkey.

And man, they were like going at it and fighting each other all the time, and it was just constant war and chaos. And then all of a sudden, what happened next in my dream is this big orange elephant walked on the scene, and it had like this red hat with these letters that were written on it.

It was M-A-G-A, and it chased the blue donkey off the scene into the wilderness. Now, it wouldn't take you five seconds to know what my dream was about, right?

[25 : 27] You'd be like, duh. It's about the Republicans and Democrats fighting, and then Trump comes in and scares them all. You're with me, right? You're so familiar with that imagery that it doesn't weird you out.

It's the same thing with Daniel's readers when they read Daniel 7. Listen, they're so used to this kind of imagery that they're not weirded out by this at all.

And here's why. Daniel's readers, their minds were not polluted by Facebook and TikTok. Do you know what their social media of the day was?

But the Psalms and the prophets and their minds were immersed in the Old Testament.

And so for them, they know very well that in the Old Testament, violent, oppressive kingdoms are often imaged as wild animals.

[26 : 30] I could literally take the rest of the night, but I won't for the sake of time to give you so many examples, but I'll just give you one. Look here at Isaiah chapter 5, verse 26.

And he will raise a signal for, say it, nations. What are we talking about? We're talking about nations. Far away and whistle for them from the ends of the earth, and behold, quickly and speedily they come.

And then he says, their roaring is, huh, where have I heard that before? Their roaring is like a lion, like young lions.

They roar and growl and seize their prey and carry it off and none can rescue. And they will growl over it on that day and the growling of the sea, Daniel 7.

And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress and the light is darkened by the clouds. In other words, right here, right here, Isaiah is describing symbolically the coming of Babylon.

[27 : 36] And how is it symbolically described? Like a pack of lions dragging them off into exile. Are you with me? Is that hard? It's not, is that still going to yell, I'm trying, I'm trying up here, right?

No, you're like, okay, that makes sense. And it's the same with the horns. Same with the horns. Look at Psalm 75, verse 9. But I will declare it forever.

I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up. Horns are usually symbolic of power and authority.

And they're often used to describe that of a king or some type of leader of a nation. Now, I could give you so many more. I really, really could.

I just, again, for time, I'm just trying to ask this question. What's the dream about? To the original readers, what is this dream about? Now, stop me if you've heard this one before.

[28 : 37] Remember, it's about human kingdoms who bring violence in the world, particularly towards the people of God.

Can you think of a book where that has been the major theme? More like Daniel, right? We'll go with Exodus, right?

It's every single... That's the danger of answering out loud, right? It's every single chapter in the book of Daniel. Have we not talked about it every week? Every single chapter is about human kingdoms that are bringing violence in the world, particularly towards the faithful of God.

And this is Daniel's reality. This is what he has been living in for years. And when you live in this kind of situation for very long, you begin to ask the question, will I ever be rescued?

Will my horizon ever change? Will life always be like this? Have you ever asked that as a Christian?

[29 : 53] Have you ever prayed the prayer of Habakkuk? How long, O Lord? How long, O Lord? Will rescue from suffering ever come?

And that's exactly what this dream is answering. So what does Daniel see next? Well, what would you expect, given that I've shown you the literary structure, and this is a parallel to chapter 2, what would you expect would happen next?

Well, what happened in chapter 2? Look at chapter 2, verse 45. Just as you saw that a stone cut from the mountain by no human hand, and that it did what? It broke.

It broke in pieces. What did it break in pieces? Say it with me. The iron, and the bronze, and the clay, and the silver, and the gold. In other words, this kingdom comes in, and it shatters all the other kingdoms.

So what would you expect to find in chapter 7? Look at verse 9. As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

[31 : 03] His clothing was white as snow. His hair, the hair of his head was 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 thousands, thousands were served him.

Ten thousand times, ten thousand stood before him. And the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. So the next thing that Daniel sees in the vision, after seeing a vision of human kingdoms, he sees a vision of God who rules over the world.

Who rules over human kingdoms. And God comes in all his glory. Again, this is symbolism. His clothes are white like snow. His hair is white like wool.

His throne is of a flaming fire. And there's thousands and thousands, and multitudes and multitudes gathered around. And everybody's seated, and the books are opened.

Right here, faith family. What's he describing? The court is now in session. Court is now in session.

[32 : 19] That is, God has come. And he's over these kingdoms. And what is going to happen to these beasts? What's going to happen to these nations that do violence in the world?

They're judged. Verse 11. I looked then, because of 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. So again, this is not strange. This is not...

If you have been tracking in the book of Daniel, this should not be puzzling to you. What is the whole book about? God bringing judgment on prideful human kingdoms.

Are you with me? It's what you're seeing. The first part is a vision of human kingdoms that bring violence in the world. The second section is about God rules over this.

[33 : 19] He is the one that is in ultimate charge over all human kingdoms. And he will ultimately bring judgment. Now what happens next? Again, what would you expect given the parallel vision of Daniel chapter 2?

Look at verse 44 of chapter 2. And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people.

It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end. Say this with me. And it, that is this kingdom, shall stand how long?

Forever. Forever. So what would you expect if chapter 2 was about God bringing judgment on human kingdoms and establishing an eternal kingdom? What would you expect to see in chapter 7?

Verse 13. I saw in the night visions, behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man. And he came to the ancient of days and presented before him.

[34 : 20] And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is a everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.

And his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed. And so, same dream as chapter 2, just different images.

That the stone of chapter 2 is the son of man of chapter 7 to whom is given this eternal kingdom. Are you still with me? So, come on, come on, come on. This is not hard. God's vision of human kingdoms. God's authority and judgment over the world. And then an eternal kingdom that is given to something like a son of man.

Well, who's the son of man? I knew you were going to say that. Jesus. Well, you're right. All right, you're right.

[35 : 26] You're right. You're not wrong. In fact, here's a little bit of Bible trivia. Are y'all still having fun? This is so much fun. This is so much fun. A little Bible trivia. The title that Jesus uses to refer to himself more than any title is the son of man.

Where does he get that from? Daniel 7. So, you're right. Listen, you're right. You've just, because you've been taught so well, right?

Just play along. You're right, but you're jumping ahead of the story. You're jumping ahead. Because if you look at the text, look at what the text says to whom this kingdom is given.

Chapter 7, verse 17. These four beasts, or four kings, and by now you're like, I already knew that. I already figured this out because of the literary structure.

Who shall arise out of the earth, but the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever and ever and ever.

[36 : 30] And then look later on in the chapter, in verse 21. 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 a time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

And then again in verse 27. The kingdom and the dominion, the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole earth of heaven, shall be given to the people. To the people of the saints of the Most High.

His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey. So here's the question. Who gets the eternal kingdom? The people of God.

Is it the Son of Man? Or the people of God? Yes. I'll explain. Just put that back in your mind, and I'll explain that in a moment.

But we should stop here for just a moment and ask this question. Why in the world would this vision matter? Alright? Think with me. Daniel has a dream.

[37 : 35] Think, faith family. Daniel has a dream about God's people persecuted by a beast. And just when you think the persecution's never going to end, God judges the beast and gives His people hope for their future.

Can you think of a book in the Bible where God's people are under a beastly empire, and they're being persecuted?

I don't know, like thrown into fiery furnaces. That's right. It's the book of Daniel. Here's what I'm trying to tell you, faith family. Daniel is living this.

This is his world. This is his reality. This is one of the things that frustrates me. It frustrates me about Bible teachers, about Daniel 7, is they think that all of this is somehow thousands and thousands and thousands of years off in the future about somebody else.

This is about Daniel too. Daniel is living in a world of beasts, being persecuted by the beast, and he's wondering, is rescue ever going to come?

[38 : 44] And what God is saying to Daniel and his faithful people in exile is this. He is saying rescue is coming. Rescue is coming.

Your suffering will not last forever. It is a vision of hope in the midst of suffering in exile.

Are you with me? And so this, as scary of a dream as this was, it was meant to give Daniel hope in the midst of persecution, in the midst of his suffering in Babylon.

And so how does then the vision conclude? Well, Daniel seeks more information about this fourth beast. Pick it up in verse 23. You still with me?

Okay. Bible nerds, you're like, let's go another hour. Others of you are like, I've got to eat soon. So verse 23, verse 23. Thus he said, as for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which shall be different from the other kingdoms.

[39 : 54] It shall devour the whole earth and trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise. Another shall arise from them.

And he shall be different from the former ones and shall put down the 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 in the law.

And they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. In verse 26, But the court shall sit in judgment. His dominion shall be taken away and be consumed and destroyed to the end.

Okay. What's the fourth beast about? This is, you can't leave yet. Because this is where it gets really interesting. As you can imagine, there are lots of views about this fourth beast.

And I'm very well aware of the challenge I face standing before you tonight. And the challenge I face is that you have been predisposed to theological systems.

[41 : 05] To where, unfortunately, you may not even be willing to hear me out. And I would plead with you. I really would ask you, as your pastor and hopefully friend, that you would put your presuppositions aside and let the Bible tell you what this means.

Not your favorite prophecy guy or what your mama told you. Like, let the Bible tell you what this means.

And to kind of set this up, I'm going to give you two of the primary views of what this fourth beast is about. And then I'll tell you my view. The first view is seen as the, that this is fulfillment in a future Antichrist.

And my guess is that most of you have been predisposed to this view. What this view holds is that the fourth beast is the final Antichrist in the end times.

That these events of Daniel 7 happen in Jerusalem around the time of the second coming or just before. This mega beast or the Antichrist takes over the world.

[42 : 16] And then Jesus returns and wipes out the Antichrist. You heard this view? Yeah. Right? It's the view of the Left Behind series. And pretty much every movie Kirk Cameron's in.

This is by far the most popular view today. But I'll tell you, even if you don't like me for it, this is the most unlikely view. I don't think at all that that's what this is about.

In fact, I'm trying to be sensitive, but I think it's mostly nonsense. I don't think in my careful study of God's Word, and you can certainly disagree with me, that this view is actually the most seriously flawed view.

And unfortunately, it's the most popular one today. And the reason for that is it does not fit with chapter 2 at all. It wasn't present in church history until yesterday.

The focus clearly is on kingdoms, and it's not the view Jesus holds. Other than that, it's fine.

[43 : 22] Here's the second view. The second, and I would argue more likely view, is that this is fulfilled by the Roman Empire.

This view would state that this vision parallels the vision of chapter 2. And I hope I've made that rather clear tonight, that it does that.

And do you remember what the vision of chapter 2 was? It was about the four kingdoms, Babylon, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and then the Romans. And so, in the same way, you have a vision that parallels that of these four beasts, and what do these four beasts represent?

Babylon, the Medo-Persians, Greece, and then Rome. Make sense? And so, those that would take more of a historical view would say, this is parallel to chapter 2, and it fits very well with a historical view that leads to the Roman Empire.

And they would say, as it refers to the little horn that emerges, that this is Antiochus, if you know your history. Antiochus, roughly about 160 years before Jesus, brings enormous persecution on the Jewish people.

[44 : 37] He conquers Jerusalem, makes it illegal to practice Judaism, clears out the temple, tortures and murders the Jewish people.

It was the greatest persecution they'd had up to that point. Now, the reason why I think this view is definitely more likely than the other view is, it is far and away the most historical view in the history of the church.

It fits with chapter 2, and so on and so forth. And so, here's where I stand. I agree with that view except about Antiochus.

I agree that this is fulfilled during the time of the Roman Empire, that it fits perfectly with chapter 2, and it takes you to something that happens under Rome.

You still with me? How could you possibly want to leave right now, right? So, here's the question I'm going to ask. Put your presuppositions aside.

[45 : 40] Put everything else that you brought to the tape, set it aside for just a moment. Here's my question. I don't really care what prophecy people say about Daniel 7. I don't really care about what historical nerds say about Daniel 7.

Here's my question. How does Jesus view Daniel 7? Are you with me? How does Jesus view what's happening here in Daniel 7?

Has Jesus, or did Jesus, ever reference specifically Daniel chapter 7? He most certainly did.

Matthew chapter 26. Now, the chief priest and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might say it, put him to death.

But they found none. Though many false witnesses came forward, and at least two came forward and said, this man said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.

[46 : 47] The high priest stood up and said, have you no answer? What is it that these men testify against you? And Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God.

Tell us, are you the Christ, the Son of God? And Jesus said to him, you've said so. But I tell you, I tell you, from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.

What did he just quote? Daniel 7 directly. And what was their response?

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, he's uttered blasphemy. What further witness do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.

And what is your judgment, faith family? Listen, what is your judgment? And they answered, he deserves death. Now what's going on here?

[48 : 07] What's going on here? You have all these religious leaders gathered together. You've got the high priest. You've got the elders. You've got the Sanhedrin. And what are they trying to do?

What they're trying to do is find grounds on which to murder the faithful of God. The faithful one of God. They want to murder Jesus.

You have leaders here of a nation seeking to do violence and persecute and kill God's faithful one. And in that context, what does Jesus quote?

Of anything he could have quoted in the Old Testament, he quotes Daniel 7. And what is their response to his direct quote of Daniel 7?

They lose their minds. They tear their clothes and they lose it. And why do they lose their minds?

[49 : 04] Because they know exactly what Jesus just said. Let me illustrate it. If I went, you might want to picture this.

If I went to a Star Wars convention, wouldn't that be fun? If I went to a Star Wars convention wearing a black helmet, dressed completely in black, carrying a red lightsaber, and I went walking around to that convention saying, I am your father.

Everybody in that room knows what I'm saying, right? I don't need to explain it to them. In other words, listen, by my quoting that direct line, I'm implying something that is obvious.

What am I implying? I am Darth Vader and you are Luke Skywalker. Jesus is in a room of Old Testament scholars.

When he says to them, the moment that you put me to death, the moment that you murder me, is the very moment the Son of Man will be vindicated from the beast and exalted at the right hand of God.

[50 : 16] What is Jesus saying? I am the Son of Man of Daniel 7. And what else is he saying?

You are the beast. And they lost their minds. Because it's clear what Jesus is saying here.

Jesus is saying this. Notice it on the screen. Jerusalem has become Babylon. Babylon. You're the beast.

Trampling the faithful one of God. And the moment you do, you will see the Son of Man riding on the clouds of heaven.

It is just obvious that this is how Jesus views Daniel 7. So according to Jesus, I don't give a rip about your favorite prophecy person or a book that you read from Barnes & Noble.
[51 : 33] According to Jesus, Daniel 7 is not about some future Antichrist. It is about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

It is about from the Roman Empire, a horn emerges known as Jerusalem. And these horns, these religious leaders, trample the Son of Man.

And what did Jesus receive as a result of being trampled by the beast? He received an eternal kingdom.

And He is now seated at the right hand of the Father where the New Testament says He rules and reigns forever.

ever. And that's Daniel chapter 7. That's the vision. That's the vision of Daniel chapter 7.

[52 : 37] And so I close with, what does this mean for us? With all these beasts and visions and whatever, like, man, pastor, I'm adrift in life.

And all I see is the same horizon every day. Like, what is this vision telling me about my faithfulness in exile?

Two things, and they'll be quick. One is, you need to look inward. You need to look inward. In Jesus' mind, Daniel 7, it's like a set of clothes that every human being wears.

And we've seen this throughout the book of Daniel. That this beast imagery, it's a way of talking about the human condition. That we live and we're driven by our own desires.

That all of us, in our own way, have rejected God's authority and we have become like beasts. Are you with me? That all of us have a Nebuchadnezzar complex.

[53 : 46] And what this shows is what Jesus came to do. It's that Jesus came to destroy the beast in us.

So, Jesus was killed so that the beast would be killed in you. Let me say that again. Jesus was killed by the beast so that the beast would be killed in you.

Jesus became like us so that we would become like Him. Do you see this? Like, you ask me, where's the gospel here? Here's the gospel. Jesus was trampled by the beast so that by His Holy Spirit we could trample the beast in us.

Are you with me? So, so, so look inward. Like, what are those those beastly tendencies that exist in me? This is not just about world leaders.

It's about my own heart. Second, is look forward. Look forward. Daniel 7, as I hope I have proven tonight, is meant to foster hope for the people of God.

[54 : 59] It is good news. It is good news that our suffering won't last forever. It won't last forever. That there really is hope on the horizon.

So, so remain faithful, Daniel. Keep being faithful. Persevere in exile. Looking forward to the hope that you have in Jesus Christ.

So, faith family, if you're here today and you're like Steve Callahan, you just kind of feel adrift in life. Staring at the same horizon day after day after day wondering, is it ever going to end?

Well, Daniel 7 to you says, take heart and have hope. Knowing that in Jesus, rescue is not only coming one day, it's here today.

in a king and in a kingdom that will stand forever. And all God's people said, Amen.

[56 : 08] Let's pray. Lord, thank you for the opportunity tonight to study your word and once again in the book of Daniel to focus on your eternal kingdom.

the world is beastly. We see it on the news every day. We can even see it in our own hearts.

And so, we're able to look through the symbolism of Daniel 7 and see what this means in the world and how you reign over all of it. You are sovereign.

And Jesus came and was, he laid his life down. He let the beast trample him on the cross only to be victorious on the third day as he walked out of the grave.

And both to him and as a result but by faith to us an eternal kingdom has been given. And we have to set our minds on that. Or we will really feel lost in this world.

[57 : 28] As we come now to the cross in reflection through communion, Lord, I pray that we would think about what you have done for us in entering into this world becoming like us that we would become like you.

And I pray, Lord, this will be a beautiful time of worship now. In Jesus' name, Amen.
Thank you.