

# Daniel 7:16-27

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Turn with me this morning to Daniel chapter 7. We're going to take one more look at this initial vision of heaven that Daniel records for us here.

We've been learning together how these clear visions of heaven impact the way we live as God's people today. We have seen already in this vision in Daniel 7, the Ancient of Days, God Himself take His seat as the ultimate judge to right every wrong and correct every injustice.

Last week we saw the Son of Man, Jesus Himself, bringing the comfort of the gospel to God's struggling people as He purely and righteously rules alongside the Father and stands with us.

This morning we will look forward through this vision one more time. There's the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, and then several mentions in this glimpse of heaven of the saints of God or the saints of the Most High.

[ 1 : 14 ] Listen for what we learn about them as I read beginning at verse 16. Daniel writes this, 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.

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 and that seemed greater than its companions.

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 in the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

[ 2 : 20 ] 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 whole earth 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.

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.

Their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but these words of our God will indeed stand forever.

[ 3 : 24 ] Let's pray, and we'll look at them. Father, thank you for these words. Might we approach them with the reverence they deserve as the holy, inerrant, infallible word of God for us today.

Might you teach us by your Spirit that you would clear out our wrong thinking, that you would challenge our wrong actions, and that you would give us hope because of our great Savior.

We ask that you'd speak to us clearly this morning, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. In high school, I loved playing football.

Or to be completely clear about it, I loved Friday nights. I loved the chance to compete for a couple of hours alongside my friends, to sweat with them, to celebrate with them after winning.

I especially loved the big games, playoff games, state championships. That's why I played football for those nights. I loved it. What I didn't love so much was practice.

[ 4 : 44 ] Summer two-a-days or three-a-days in heat worse than what's out there right now. I didn't like that. I hated all the hitting each other over and over with seemingly no point at all until you got sore.

I hated the up-downs and full pads that never seemed to end. I hated the weight room and the pain of being in there and just getting exhausted and sore and tired.

I didn't like it at all. But our coaches told us, and we learned that they were right, that if we wanted to enjoy Friday nights, if we wanted to walk off the field with a win, if we wanted to hold the state championship trophy and have the glory of that moment as high school boys, we had to go through the pain of practices and heat and headaches.

We had to get in shape to have energy left in the fourth quarter. The path to the glory of the state championship was necessarily marked by the difficulty of the weight room and the practice field.

You can learn that same lesson hiking up a mountain, can't you? There may be a glorious view at the top of the mountain, but the path to get there may be quite difficult.

[ 6 : 10 ] We went to Rock City in Chattanooga a couple of months ago as a family, and I'm telling you, if you've never been, it's a beautiful place. The views are indeed glorious. But if you throw on a backpack full of water bottles and then carry an exhausted, whiny three-year-old the whole time, the path to get to those views is very difficult.

Difficult. You see, I love beautiful mountain views. I'm a mountains guy. And I love winning state championships.

I'm intensely competitive, in case you didn't know that. But my preferred route to get to those glorious destinations is driving in my air-conditioned car up close enough that you then get out and walk all the way around to the front of the car to lean on the hood and enjoy the glorious view.

I like to have the state championship victory while just showing up for a couple of fun Friday nights to enjoy the big games.

That's how I'd prefer to do it. In fact, that's the way I'd design Christianity, too, if I were in charge. I want the good things God promises, His blessings, the prosperity, the glory this passage pictures for God's people reigning forever with Him.

[ 7 : 32 ] But I want to skip straight there. I mean, did you notice that the glorious vision of heaven we're given in this passage? We're told we're going to possess the kingdom forever and ever.

That we will reign over all earthly kingdoms. That we will sit alongside God Himself and Jesus, our Savior, forever. What a glorious promise that is, right?

Let's just want to go there and have that start immediately. We'll talk more about the details of this glorious vision of heaven in a minute. But that's the kind of Christianity I want.

You know, that's what I was signing up for. The only problem is that this passage also shows us God's people will encounter challenges on the way there.

The path to this glorious future, God promises Daniel, will be marked by great difficulty. And we don't just get to skip over it. It doesn't work that way.

[ 8 : 29 ] You heard it when I read the passage for us a minute ago. But here's the message of this vision. It's this. God's people are on a path to great glory.

But they should expect the path to be marked by great difficulty. On a path to great glory. But we should expect the path to be marked by great difficulty.

This passage doesn't back away from the glory of heaven at all. It's beautiful. It's amazing. But it also doesn't back away from the reality of suffering along the way.

So first, when it talks about God's people, when we see this phrase several times in this passage, the saints of the Most High, we see their difficult path.

Look at verse 21, for example. Right there towards the beginning of the vision, As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and even prevailed over them.

[ 9 : 28 ] Then down to verse 25, it seems to get even worse. 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. This is what Daniel sees as the future of God's people.

Being in the midst of warfare and sometimes losing the battle. Being exhausted by the relentless attacks of evil. Even being given into the hands of their enemies for a time.

I'm reminded of Job, right? One of God's people who was given over to Satan to torment for a time. And Job teaches us that there is indeed a time to weep.

Many times in this life where Christians should be and will find themselves as people of tears. After all, Jesus himself wept in the face of death, didn't he?

[10:32] Those who follow the suffering king will suffer too. Daniel learns that here. That's the clear message of God's word over and over and over.

Not merely the suffering of a broken world, but particularly the suffering of persecution. And the attacks of evil are described here particularly in Daniel 7, aren't they?

We read many of them. These awful, terrible, terrifying beasts and attacks coming on God's people. Jesus said it himself in John chapter 15.

Remember the word I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. He tells his followers. Paul tells Timothy this in 2 Timothy 3.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And that's the vision Daniel gets of the future of God's people in human history.

[11:37] It's a vision that makes him physically sick at the thought of the atrocities that God's people will undergo. Does that kind of reaction happen to you too?

When you see people suffering gravely for their faith? Brothers and sisters daily dying. Being torn from their families.

Starving to death. Because of their faith in Jesus. Perhaps we don't feel it as much like that day in, day out in Huntsville, Alabama.

But around the world, most agree that the 20th century was by far the worst century for Christian martyrs in the history of the world. Every year still, thousands upon thousands around the world lose their lives for following Christ.

Daniel longed for the beautiful view. It's what he wanted. For the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. For God's people to enjoy victory and rest.

[12:43] And this terrible attack of those who set themselves against God and against his people is too much for him to bear. He can't look at it. It makes him physically sick.

Does your heart break like that? But God gives us this vision this morning. He gives the vision to his people so that we understand the path to glory for the Christian is not as easy as we would like.

Even for us here today. If you are following Christ and haven't faced persecution, you will. That's what those verses tell us. It's what's on the path following our Savior.

The pathway always goes down before it goes up. And God wants you to know this so you won't be surprised. So you won't be surprised at the suffering you encounter.

So you'll be prepared to hold on to him in the midst of it. When you're riding a roller coaster, if you've done that recently, you'll remember that one of the things that helps you when you're riding on a very fast ride with a lot of turns is seeing which turn is coming next, right?

[13:57] When you see what's about to do it, how you're about to be jerked, your body braces for it, doesn't it? You prepare yourself for what you see coming. You may know you're about to drop and you can lean back.

You may see a sharp right coming and your muscles tense up in the right direction. We recently rode the Seven Dwarves Mine Train at Disney World.

It's a fun ride. It's a good roller coaster. But the mine is very dark. You can't see who's sitting in front of you in the train. So you definitely can't see what turn is about to happen.

My neck came out of there a little bit sore. It throws you around a little bit because your body's not prepared for the turns the roller coaster is about to take. They may not be the biggest turns, but when they happen and you're not ready for them, they can get you.

When you don't know what to expect because you can't see anything else, it can really throw you off. And I think part of God telling us about the suffering and persecutions we will face as his people is so that we can set our expectations appropriately and, as it were, brace our hearts.

[15:10] Christian, the brokenness of this world is bad enough and brings tears. It brings enough tears to us, but the evil one will attack your family.

He will inflame the idols of your heart. It will persistently war against you, Daniel says, until your strength to resist wears thin. The intention here in telling us this, that this is on the path to glory for Christians, is not in any way to minimize the evil.

Oh, well, it happens to everyone. No big deal. No. It's not to minimize the pain. Oh, well, you know, you'll get over it. Everybody deals with it.

It doesn't hurt that much. That's not the point. Rather, God tells us this to set the expectations of our hearts, to hang on tight to God and to the promises of his word.

And so to build our faith, our trust in him. That's how we brace ourselves for the turns, so to speak. By clinging tightly to God and to his word.

[16:20] Daniel, it's going to look like you're losing oftentimes. It's going to feel like my promises aren't coming true. But you need to know something very clearly, Daniel.

This suffering you're enduring is not a detour from the path. It's not an indication that you're out of my care. But rather, it's an indication that you're being held in my hand.

I know this is coming for you. And I won't leave you. This is what the path to glory feels like. It hurts. It's hard.

And God in his word doesn't instruct us how to avoid the suffering on the path. But rather, how to endure in the midst of it. I spend so much time trying to devise ways for me and my family to avoid the suffering.

But I often miss the opportunity to learn endurance in the midst of it. What God is trying to teach me and how he's supposed to grow my faith.

[17:28] I'd ask you this morning, where has life in general or the attacks of evil made you hurt? Where has it made you hurt so badly that you've concluded you're off track?

You're on the wrong path. You're out of God's care. God says, do not be surprised. Do not be surprised, 1 Peter 4, at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you.

As though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings. That you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

You see the connection between the sufferings, the difficulties and the glory? Both of them. The fiery trial is right on the path to God's glory.

Even and perhaps especially when it doesn't feel like it or we wouldn't have designed it that way. I don't know how to have picked any of them ahead of time. It's right there on that path because that's the path where the ancient of days shows up to deliver.

[18:36] Look how that happens twice in this vision. When does the tide turn for God's people losing the battle, wearing out against the evil one? They're exhausted. Verse 21, the horn is making war with the saints and prevailing over them until the ancient of days came.

And judgment was given for or on behalf of, in favor of the saints of the Most High. And the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

Let's go down to verse 25 where we saw him getting exhausted and see what happens. He's going to speak words against the Most High and wear out the saints of the Most High. And they're given into his hand.

But the court shall sit in judgment. That's the one where the ancient of days is on the throne. And his dominion shall be taken away to be consumed and destroyed. 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.

The glory to come is assured by God. He shows up. He has always remained in control, right? Even when he's given his people over to persecution.

[19:49] And both times God's people are wearing out. And at the end of themselves he shows up and rescues those who've never left his hand.

And we begin to get a clear picture of the glorious destination. We've seen the ancient of days. We've looked at the Son of Man in heaven.

But when we get a vision of heaven, what do we see? The saints of God, where are they? What are they doing? The summary is right up front in verse 18. The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.

That's the bottom line. Jesus affirms this reality that we're going to have the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. You may know these as the Beatitudes.

But they say things like, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. They're going to own it all. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

[ 20 : 55 ] For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. When they have endured, they will reign. Those who have battled against the evil one to the point of exhaustion.

Who have suffered severely. They will indeed prevail to inherit the earth, to rule in the kingdom of heaven. It's what 2 Timothy 2 says.

If we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we suffer, but if we endure in the midst of that difficulty, we will reign with Him.

It's a glorious picture, isn't it? This is the picture. It's one that empowers us to hope in the midst of pain. The ancient of days and the Son of Man, enthroned forever in heaven, right alongside them. The saints of the Most High, with them, forever, seated right with them. The vision of heaven we need to get a clear picture of this morning in the midst of our struggles, is of God Himself, Jesus, and all God's people reigning together, sitting in judgment, having won in victory, judging the kingdoms of this world and over the camp of the evil one.

[ 22 : 20 ] Did you realize that picture of ruling and judging alongside Jesus was a biblical one? Have you thought about heaven that way? Jesus tells His disciples specifically in Matthew 19 that they're going to be there.

Truly I say to you in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And Paul broadens it to those following Jesus after them in 1 Corinthians.

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? The destination for God's people at the end of the persecution is not undetermined.

It's not, well, I wonder if they'll make it. No. It's not uncertain. God has figured it out. It's not unclear. All the glory and judgment and authority and all those things we've talked about Jesus having, He determines to share with those connected to Him by faith.

Isn't that incredible? All of the glory He has, He wants to share it with you who are connected to Him. His dominion, we've been reading this week after week in the book of Daniel.

[ 23 : 35 ] His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and His kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed, Daniel 7, 13, and 14. And now, by the end of the chapter, their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.

It's difficult enough that some commentators even get confused and don't know what to do with it. Is it talking about Jesus or about His people, those who trust Him?

What's the answer to that? Yes. Yes, it is. That's how incredible the grace of our Savior is, that He would share His glory and His ruling authority with His people.

One commentator describes this beautiful union this way. So the servants have no kingdom apart from their king, and the king does not reign without His servants.

Jesus just cannot stand being separated from His people. Dale Ralph Davis. Jesus can't stand to be separated from us.

[ 24 : 45 ] We never will be separated from Him. We are connected to Him by faith. We will reign with Him. And so because of that, because we are bound to Jesus and He will never let us go, a day is coming, brothers and sisters, when you will not be trampled on and oppressed again.

A day is coming when Satan and his demons will be told, no more, you can touch them no longer. A day is coming when the sin that seems to get the upper hand on you will no longer plague you at all. A day is coming when you sit enthroned in heaven and the whole earth is yours to rule righteously on behalf of the true king, the way He always created you and intended for you to do, to rule over every corner of His creation that He has entrusted to you.

Amen? Isn't that going to be glorious? Because you're going to be doing it alongside Him, free from sin and free from the attacks of the evil one forever. That day is coming.

And Daniel wants you to know that it's coming because he's seen the pain. He knows the suffering you're going to walk through. And he wants you to know that glory is sure. The path may indeed go down first.

[ 26 : 07 ] And it may be painfully difficult when it does. But it will just as surely go back up. The end is glorious. The persecuted will triumph.

The view at the end when we finally reach our destination will be worth it. And it will never fade. That's a view we can be looking forward to, isn't it?

The great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon said it this way, We do not know yet, beloved, of what happiness we are capable. We can't even fathom how glorious the destination will be from this side. Oh, may I be there. If I may but see the king in his beauty and the fullness of his joy when he shall take by the right hand her for whom he shed his precious blood and shall know the joy which was set before him for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, I shall be blessed indeed. Oh, what a day that will be when every member of Christ shall be crowned in him and with him and every member of the mystical body shall be glorified in the glory of the bridegroom.

[ 27 : 14 ] What must it be to be there? Every one of us glorified in the glory of the one and only Son of God with him.

Why is it so important for us to have that view we look forward to? Among other reasons, it's so we have our hope in the right place so that we don't expect the glory God has promised us to be fully ours here and now but that we keep in mind the best is yet to come.

Seeing clearly that vision of heaven that we are a part of helps us believe the reality of the eternal so that our eternal glory becomes so real it has to be, you have to taste it that it's that real that it's coming so that it outweighs the sufferings we're undergoing now because we don't forget those, do we?

We don't forget the pain we're experiencing in the moment it's too real to us, we feel it and so God wants us to feel equally clearly the weight in the reality of eternity as we dwell on the glorious reality of heaven our grip on earth loosens a bit, doesn't it?

As we remember the eternal glory that awaits us forever the difficulty in comparison of a few days even a few years becomes not less difficult in itself don't hear me say that but less weighty on the other side of the scale of heaven it doesn't mean we care less about life it does mean we need less from it to fulfill us it doesn't mean we love others less it does mean we value their eternity more than their present it doesn't mean we wallow in self-pity it does mean our tears are not alone but are always accompanied by hope one final application not only do we need to remember that the view at the end will be worth it and look forward to that day we need to remember now that we have a companion on the path today when you're hiking up a mountain and you're really tired and you're ready to quit before you get to the view at the pinnacle one of the most helpful things to have is someone walking alongside you, right?

[ 29 : 48 ] a companion who can be there with you who can encourage you and say keep going you know, just somebody to talk to as you walk the difficult path one of the reasons that the path to glory for God's people is marked by the difficulty of suffering is because that is where we meet Jesus Jesus is calling us to walk the path He Himself has walked He left glory and was born into our humble and painful world He was reviled by men mocked and persecuted treated as nothing as worthless and of course He humbled Himself to the point of death for us so that the difficult path is worth it because we meet Him there and knowing Him really is the best and most valuable thing it's knowing Him and being connected to Him after all that will have us reigning with Him forever right?

did you know it's even better than that? He's an even better companion than that you see He's not just with us to encourage us today He's not just coming alongside us to say come on you can do it you can make it to the top He's ahead of us He has been there Himself and now will carry us to glory He's ahead of us looking back and saying I have done it and when you are exhausted from the persecution and you can't take another step when you are feeling defeated and you know you will fall again when the difficulty of life has blinded you and you can't even see the view at the top you're tempted to give up He says I will lift you in my strong arms and I will carry you to sit with me at the top I've already gotten there

I will have you reign with me and share my glory because you are connected to me forever I will not let you stop on the path that's the companion that we have what a great companion not just an encourager but one who's made it to the top for you and will see that you are there with Him what a glorious Savior cast yourself on Him this morning see yourself this morning connected to Him and see yourself at the end of a difficult path enjoying His glory forever let's pray Jesus would you give us a clear picture of that some of us need to know it today some of us will need to know it tomorrow and some of us will need it particularly in our lives at a time that you know would you just emblazon that vision on the minds of your people that they would see their Savior and they would see themselves seated with Him even already it's that real and sure your word tells us that we're there

with you now

Jesus the realities of our lives are very real to us would you make the glories of heaven that much more real and that much more significant that we might long for it and that we might indeed see you there and have hope for today and forever we ask it in your name Amen for more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org) listening to our 2021 and someone who