

The Interpretation of the Vision

Daniel 7:15-28

Daniel chapter 7, what a blessing and a challenge it has been for us as we have considered its prophecy over the last couple of weeks. We have seen Daniel's vision of the four beasts representing four beastly kings and kingdoms of men. We have seen Daniel's vision of the throne room of heaven as Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, receives the kingdom from His Father, the Ancient of Days.

Today we will consider the last half of chapter 7 in which Daniel is given some details about the interpretation of the visions that he saw that night. As we have seen these visions are prophecies that are expressed in apocalyptic language. They are in signs and symbols which stand for real persons and events in history and in the future. But as we have seen, some of the details of what all this means is hidden from Daniel and from us.

The good news is that Daniel was at least as troubled by the visions as we are. So Daniel asked about the meaning of the vision. So starting in verse 15 and going to the end of the chapter we have a divinely inspired interpretation of the vision which gives us some help and some more details in understanding this prophecy.

1. Daniel's Trouble and Divine Help (7:15-16)

15 "I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

Daniel did not hide the fact that he was grieved and troubled by this vision. Considering how Daniel prays in chapter 9, I think that Daniel's trouble was not just with the intensity of the vision, but with its implications for the Jewish people and their nation.

According to both Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision, there would not just be one, but three Gentile empires that would dominate the world before the kingdom of God would be given to the saints of the Most High.

The kingdom of righteousness promised by the prophets would have to wait. Maybe Daniel had hoped that at the end of the 70 year captivity that Jeremiah had foretold of, that the monarchy would be restored in Israel and that they would return to their former glory. Perhaps he prayed for a national repentance, a spiritual awakening, a revival in his land ending with the arrival of the Messiah and a new Theocratic kingdom being set up under Christ at Jerusalem.

And it seems also that what disturbed him more than the time frame was the fourth beast what it would mean for the world in general and for God's people in particular. Daniel trembled at the thought of it.

There is an application for believers in this verse. Is our study of Bible prophecy more of an intellectual exercise or are we being profoundly affected by the sharp, powerful Word of God regarding His incredible plan for the ages? These things were written for us, for our comfort, encouragement, and warning. Always ask

God to apply His truth to your heart and life. Never study the Bible just to gain knowledge without applying it to yourself.

16 "I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

We may be profoundly grateful that Daniel was not satisfied with just seeing the vision that night. He wanted to know more. He sought for an explanation and interpretation of God's Word, and therefore more truth was given to him. God invites us to ask Him for wisdom in the interpretation of His Word (James 1:5).

Who is this one that stood by Daniel in his dream? We do not know his name, what he looked like or what rank he held. But what we do know is that God had placed him there so that he could answer Daniel's question.

John Walvoord makes an important point regarding interpretation of symbolic language like this found in Daniel 7, He writes ...

It should be borne in mind that when a symbol is interpreted, while the symbol is obviously parabolic and figurative, the interpretation should be taken literally. Accordingly, the explanation can be taken as a factual exegesis of the truth involved in the vision. (Daniel 7 - Daniel's Vision Of Future World History).

So in the vision we have the symbol of the 4 beasts, the interpretation is that they are literally 4 kings. We have symbolically 10 horns. Literally they are 10 kings. If we take the interpretation seriously we cannot for example say that the 10 kings are not 10 real kings but that they simply represent world-wide power. When the interpretation is given to us, we should not look for another.

2. Daniel Given Truth about the Dream (7:17-27)

A. The Four Kingdoms (7:17)

17 'Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth.

The first answer of the angel was brief enough. It concerned the 4 beasts which Daniel is told are four kings. Looking down to verse 23 we can see that these beasts represent not only the initial king, but also their kingdoms. There the interpreter tells Daniel, **"The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms."**

Two weeks ago we looked at the similarities of the four kingdoms here in Daniel 7 and the four of Daniel 2. Daniel revealed that the first kingdom was king Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. History and the rest of Daniel shows us that the other kingdoms are Medo-Persian empire, the Grecian empire, and the Roman empire.

So world history will largely be the story of gentile rulers and empires. It will be a story of greed and war and destruction up to the very end. But the end belongs not to these kings and not to these warring parties but to the saints. We have a

kingdom. That is what the Son of Man will receive from the Ancient of Days, a kingdom on the earth. It is the fifth and the final kingdom.

B. The Fifth Kingdom (7:18)

18 'But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'

There would be four kingdoms of men and the final kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of Man who received the kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13-14). Here in verse 18 we are told that not only will Christ receive the kingdom, but it will also be given to the saints. The saints are the holy ones. In the New Testament that term is used to describe not some special class of super pious people, but all of us who are true believers in Jesus Christ, called by God (Rom. 1:7) and sanctified by Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). We are joint heirs with Jesus as the children of God (Rom. 8:17). The kingdom is given to Jesus Christ and because we are in Him, we receive the kingdom as well.

C. Details about the Fourth Kingdom (7:19-26)

1) Daniel's question (7:19-23)

Having received this brief interpretation of the dream, Daniel was not satisfied. He was concerned about the fourth beast. And in Daniel's question, he gives us some details about the vision that we had not heard before, that the nails were of bronze, that the little horn appeared stronger than the other horns, that the little horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them (cf. Rev 11:7; 13:7), and that judgment was given to the saints of the most High.

19 "Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet;*

20 "and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows.

21 "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,

22 "until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor of* the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

Daniel wanted to know about the ferocity and features of this fourth beast, especially about the ten horns and the little horn that spoke great words. How did he make war against the saints? What would this mean for God's people on the earth? How did the Ancient of Days come?

2) The explanation (7:23-26)

23 "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces.

In answering Daniels question, the angel told him about the fourth kingdom. We know from history that the Roman Empire conquered everything in its path. It controlled the known world of its day. But then the interpreter tells about the final phase of the fourth kingdom. Remember in Daniel 2 that there was a final phase of the fourth kingdom of iron represented by **"the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron,"** (Dan. 2:41). This is described for us in verse 24:

24 The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings.

So the later phase of this fourth empire will be one where 10 kings arise from it. It seems as though these 10 kings rule at the same time as contemporaries since the little horn which arises after them plucks out by the roots, or subdues, three of the ten.

So together they make up this fourth kingdom. But when would this be? Because try as one might (and many liberal commentators have tried with all manner of futile speculation), one cannot identify a historical Ten King Stage of Rome. And that suggests that this has not yet happened. This is that statue with its feet of clay and iron that represents something that is yet future. And I think that's supported from the fact that when the Son of Man returns to establish His kingdom, He destroys these kings. So it must be connected with that time. Parallel passages in Revelation 13 and 17 also mention these ten kings ruling on the earth in the end times.

(Rev 17:12-14 NKJV) **12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. 13 "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. 14 "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*"**

These kings are destroyed along with the beast when Christ returns. So this must be connected with that future period when Christ returns and His reign begins. That is why I believe this is a future aspect of the Roman Empire that has not yet occurred.

Verses 24-25 then go on to describe the little horn. We saw him in the vision in verse 8, **"I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words."** Who then is this little horn? Verse 24 interprets for us, **"another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings."**

This last great ruler of the fourth kingdom is described in many places in scripture and is known by a variety of names:

- Not only is he called the "little horn," here in Daniel but
- In Daniel 8:23 he is called "king of fierce countenance"
- in Daniel 9:26 he is spoken of as "the prince to come."
- Daniel 11:21 he is called a vile person
- Daniel 11:36 he is called the wilful king
- In II Thessalonians 2:3 he is called "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition,"
- In Revelation 13:1 he is called the "beast."
- 1 John 2:18 he is called the antichrist

The Greek prefix anti can mean "against" and "instead of." The final world ruler will be both a counterfeit Christ and an enemy who is against Christ.

Verse 25 describes what he does.

25 He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.

Verse 8 tells us of his eyes which would suggest that he has remarkable knowledge and skill in planning his exploits. We are also told that his mouth spoke great things, he will be a man skilled in using words and be able to promote himself so that people will follow him. His great words are blasphemous words against God Most High.

This is somewhat confusing because in chapter 8 we also have a little horn (8:9-14) that seems to refer to the Grecian Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 b.c.) who comes from the third kingdom during the Maccabean Period. He is a type of anti-christ which is always among us (cf. I John 2:18).

In Daniel these "little horns" are both arrogant and boastful. They reject the worship of the Lord God and try to destroy His people. They are both allowed by God to prosper and both will be destroyed by God. They come to epitomize rebellious, egocentric, fallen humanity.

Verse 25 .. and [he] shall **wear out** the saints of the Most High,

So he will be a blasphemer and he will be a persecutor of Israel and of believing gentiles. He will think to change times and laws. Chapter 9 says part of this is that he will put an end to sacrifice. 2 Thessalonians and Revelation show that he will require people to worship him as god. However, a divine limit is set on the Antichrist's activities "**For a time and times and half a time.**" So what does that mean?

The plural word times can mean dual, so it would read, a time, two times and a half a time. A time being one year means this last period will be three and a half

years. Revelation 13:5 says that he will have "**authority for 42 months**," which is three and a-half years. Revelation 11:3 and 12:6 describe this time as 1260 days, also 3 ½ years. Daniel 12 mentions a similar time of 1290 or 1335 days, or about 3 ½ years.

And then his end will come. It will come quickly and swiftly.

26 'But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy [it] forever.'

The court that we saw seated for judgment in verses 9-10 now executes its judgment on this last kingdom. His dominion is taken away by the decree of heaven.

D. The Eternal Kingdom (7:27)

27 Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'

The day will break, the night will end, and His kingdom will come. And His kingdom, God's kingdom, which He gave to His Son, Jesus Christ, the angel says will be an everlasting kingdom. And that is the glorious end to the dream, but the glorious end of all history.

Glorious, but Daniel was shaken up by what he had seen, and it was a lot to take in and signaled a perilous future for his people, perilous before the glorious part comes. That's often the way it is in life as well. We have a glorious future, each one of us, as God's people. But, in the meantime, we may have trials and tribulations, and they wear us down and they're very difficult. But all of this has been written to encourage us.

This remarkable vision, given when Babylon was still a world power, has an awesome climax. The Fifth Kingdom – the storm clouds roll away, the sun breaks through at last. The sound of war is silenced and the Messianic Age arrives.

An age proclaimed by the prophets when men will beat their swords into ploughshares, the dessert will blossom as the rose, when the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, peace and prosperity will be the norm, man will have just begun his life at a hundred, the world will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters now cover the sea, and Jesus will reign from Jerusalem.

No wonder the Lord taught us to pray, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

What Difference Does it Make?

What difference does all this make? After all, this is ancient prophecy that touches ancient history and yet-future events. Should it matter to us? How then should we live? Ray Pritchard outlined a few things that this should teach us. The truth of Daniel 7 should ...

- **Increase our confidence in God.**

God knows the future because He is the God of eternity. Though many things that happen around us make no sense at all, we can rest in the thought that God is working out His plan step by step. God is not worried about the “little horn” or any other horn for that matter. He knows how to “de-horn” the antichrist when the time comes. So take heart and trust in God.

- **Give us patience while we wait.**

Certainly this was a message the Jews in exile needed to hear. We may or may not live to see the final fulfillment of Daniel 7, but we know that sooner or later, it’s all going to happen just as God said it would. Be patient, persevere, hang in there child of God. The Lord is able save you completely.

- **Wean us away trusting in this world’s kingdoms.**

The kingdoms of the world, and the companies of the world, and the careers of the world, they come, they go, they rise, they fall, and soon they will all be destroyed by God. Use the world but don’t fall in love with it.

- **Warn us of the spirit of antichrist which is the spirit of this age.**

(1Jo 2:18) **18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.** There are many antichrists already in the world. These are men and women whose seductive purpose is to entice people into following them down the path of destruction. Beware of anyone who promises you peace, safety, and security apart from God.

- **Call us to courage in difficult days.**

You may wonder if I believe in the Rapture of the Church. The answer is yes I do. But I can’t tell you how long until the Rapture happens. That is hidden in the mind and heart of God. If Daniel 7 is to be taken literally, it predicts a deterioration of the spiritual condition as we enter the final period of world history. Our call is to be strong and of good courage while we wait for the Lord to return from heaven.

As the gospel song says, I’ve read the end of the book and we win. That’s certainly the final note of Daniel’s amazing vision. Bad days are coming for planet earth, but in the end those who know the Lord will reign with him.

Will you? Only those who have believed in Jesus Christ who have been born again by His Holy Spirit will live and reign with Him in the Kingdom. Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart, but come to Jesus. Repent of your sins. Ask Him to save you, forgive, and give you the gift of eternal life. He is able to save you today.