

Lecture #8

Daniel 7:1-14

Daniel 7:1-8

In Daniel 1-6 there are generalities and stories revealed, but in Daniel 7-12 there are specific visions. Chapters 1-6 describe the sovereign program of God for the Gentiles and chapters 7-12 describe the sovereign program of God for Israel. In these chapters, Daniel receives a series of four visions: Vision #1–Daniel 7; Vision #2–Daniel 8; Vision #3–Daniel 9; Vision #4–Daniel 10-12.

The vision given to Daniel in chapter 7 may be contrasted four ways with the vision given to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2, although the revelatory information is primarily the same.

(Contrast #1) - In chapter two the vision is to a wicked, heathen king–Nebuchadnezzar.
In chapter seven the vision is to a righteous, godly prophet–Daniel.

(Contrast #2) - In chapter two, Daniel is the interpreter.
In chapter seven, an angel is the interpreter.

(Contrast #3) - In chapter two, world history is viewed from man's viewpoint.
In chapter seven, world history is viewed from God's viewpoint.

(Contrast #4) - In chapter two, prophecies are general.
In chapter seven, prophecies are specific.

GOD IS SOVEREIGNLY IN CONTROL OF ALL POLITICAL, GENTILE WORLD POWERS FROM THE TIME OF DANIEL UNTIL THE TIME WHEN HE WILL DESTROY ALL EVIL AND ESTABLISH HIS ETERNAL KINGDOM FOR ISRAEL, AND HE ALSO CARES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND DESIRES THEY KNOW HIS PROGRAM.

God is the One who allows powers to reign. He will allow the Antichrist to come into existence. He will cast the Antichrist into burning fire (7:11). God is the One who is calling the shots in the world. He is the One in sovereign charge. His will, His purposes shall stand.

Daniel 7:1 – What God permitted Daniel to see.

God spoke to prophets like Jeremiah directly, but He spoke to Daniel in visions.

(Fact #1) - Daniel saw this in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar. **7:1a**

What this means is that Daniel saw this some nine years after Nebuchadnezzar had died (562 B.C.), in the first year of Belshazzar's reign (553 B.C.), some fourteen years before the fall of Babylon, in 539 B.C. Daniel received this vision between the events of chapters 4 and 5 of the book of Daniel. During that first year, Daniel had for the most part been forgotten. In fact, Belshazzar didn't seem to even know who Daniel was (Daniel 5:11-13).

(Fact #2) - Daniel saw this vision at night while he was lying in his bed. **7:1b, 2a**

A vision may be false (Jeremiah 14:14); it may be of one's own imagination (Jeremiah 23:16) and they were infrequent (1 Samuel 3:1). Daniel's vision was inspired by God.

(Fact #3) - Daniel wrote down what he saw. **7:1c**

The Hebrew word “summary” means that Daniel wrote all significant matters pertaining to this remarkable dream. This is one dream that God wanted in His Word, so Daniel wrote it down. This is one of the great evidences that Daniel wrote the book of Daniel because no one else had this dream.

Daniel 7:2-14 – Daniel’s written summary of what he saw .

(Part #1) - He saw the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea. **7:2**

This is not interpreted in the chapter but we may certainly contextually conclude that this means Daniel saw that all powers stirring the world were authorized and controlled by heaven, literally in Hebrew “the heavens.”

The “sea” is often in Scripture a metaphor for Gentile nations and powers (Isaiah 17:12-13, 57:20; 60:5; Jeremiah 46:7-8; 47:2; Matthew 13:47; Revelation 13:1; 17:15). In fact, we often refer to people as the “sea of humanity.” Wind is often used as that which refers to God’s sovereignty in blowing into existence that which He sovereignly desires (John 3:8).

So the picture is that heaven is the one who is in charge of those powers that stir the world. The invisible winds of God blow across Gentile powers and He permits them to rise up and make a stir. Also four winds indicate four different directions from where the powers arise.

(Part #2) - He saw four great beasts which are different from one another. **7:3-8**

In Hosea, these very beasts (lion, leopard, bear) are described as being used by God to bring judgment upon Israel.

We know from verse 17 that these four beasts refer to four different Gentile earthly kings and earthly empires. God permits four different kinds of earthly powers to reign over Israel and each is very distinct in its reign. Each beast comes up out of the Gentile world in a specific chronological order, which is specifically controlled by God. This imagery is very specific to each power and what God would permit.

Using the beastly metaphors is something even in our time. For example, Russia is represented by the bear. China is represented by a dragon. Great Britain is represented as a lion. The United States is represented as an eagle. This kind of political classification is not new to our time; it is as old as the Bible and is inspired by God in the book of Daniel.

Now we may observe that these beasts do not rise at one time. There is a sequential order to their power—i.e. first **(7:4)**; second **(7:5)**; third **(7:6)** and fourth **(7:7)**. What this tells us is that there is a specific chronology to those powers God permits to rise and fall.

Beast #1 - The first beast was like a lion. **7:4** = A reference to the Babylonian Empire

It is interesting that Jeremiah the prophet specifically referred to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire as a lion (Jeremiah 4:7) and Ezekiel refers to him being like an eagle (Ezekiel 17:3, 12).

- 1) It had wings of an eagle—archeological discoveries have found that the national symbol of Babylon was a winged lion. In fact, sculptures of huge winged lions stood at the entrances of the Babylonian royal palaces.
- 2) Its wings were plucked out—this is a dramatic alteration in the winged eagle.
- 3) It was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man.
- 4) It was given a human mind.

Nebuchadnezzar went from being beastly to humanly.

Beast #2 - The second beast was like a bear. **7:5** = A reference to the Medo-Persian Empire

It was clearly predicted that this Medo-Persian power would replace Babylon (5:28, 31; 8:20).

- 1) It was raised up on one side—this tells us one side was more dominant—Persia was superior to the Medes. The power was a partnership between the two but Persia was more dominant.
- 2) It had three ribs in its mouth—There were three main conquests involved in replacing Babylon—the conquests of Babylon, Lydia and Egypt. It devoured those powers.
- 3) It was ordered to rise up and devour much meat—this power was not satisfied with what it initially had, but wanted more conquests and more power, which she was granted. She became a much larger kingdom than the Babylonians.

Beast #3 - The third beast was like a leopard. **7:6** = A reference to the Greece Empire

It was clearly predicted that this power would replace the Medes and Persians (Daniel 8:20-22).

- 1) It had on its back, four wings—the Grecian Empire expanded with very unusual speed. In eight years, it conquered more than 11,000 miles of territory from Greece in the West all the way to India in the East.
- 2) It had four heads—when Alexander died at age thirty-two, this power was divided among four generals: 1. Ptolemy I; 2. Seleucus I; 3. Lysimachus; and 4. Cassander. Ptolemy controlled Egypt, Palestine, Arabia; Seleucus controlled Syria, Babylonia and east to India; Lysimachus controlled Thrace and Bithynia; Cassander controlled Macedonia and Greece.
- 3) It was given dominion—It is interesting that credit for this empire is often given to the genius of Alexander the Great. But one must ask, how is it that Alexander with his army of 35,000 was able to defeat millions of people? In fact, in his first battle with Medo-Persia, he was up against 200-300 thousand men. How in the world did he win? Most attribute the win to Alexander's genius, but that is not what gave him the victory. Truth is, Alexander couldn't even conquer himself. He died at age thirty-two and was a drunk. It was God who permitted him to have victory. God gives dominion.

Beast #4 - The fourth beast was a dreadful beast. **7:7-8** = A reference to Roman Empire and the Antichrist.

Notice **verse 7**, Daniel fixed his eyes on this beast because there was something very different here. This is a crucial matter of interpretation to the rest of the book of Daniel. The fourth beast is not specifically identified with any known animal. The Apostle John describes this beast in Revelation 13:1-10. It is a power that is like a leopard, bear and lion. This power will be the worst of all, the most ferocious.

This beast is very unique with nine qualities the other beasts do not have:

- 1) It is a dreadful, terrifying, extremely strong beast. **7a**
- 2) It had large iron teeth—this describes the Roman soldiers who were vicious and cruel. **7b**
- 3) It devoured and crushed and trampled with its feet. **7c**
- 4) It was different than all other beasts which ever existed. **7d**
- 5) It had ten horns—ten kings comprising ten kingdoms (Daniel 7:23-24). **7e**

Notice that this kingdom crushes the whole world.

There has never been in all of history a fulfillment of what is described here. Rome was never replaced by another great power and certainly it was never broken down into ten powers. The Empire seemed to disappear by internal corruption and the people seemed to blend into other nations. But there will come a revival of this Empire and there will be a reshaping of Europe under ten nations and then one will arise who will be the most beastly of all.

- 6) It had a little horn that arose from within it; **8a**—the Antichrist will surface when the ten nations are in power and are present on earth.
- 7) Three of the ten horns were pulled up by the roots before the little horn. **8b**
- 8) The little horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man. **8c**
- 9) The little horn possessed a mouth that boasted great things. **8d**

There are three phases to the history of the Roman Empire spelled out here in verses **7-8**:

- 1) The beast phase; 2) The ten horn or ten kingdom phase; 3) The little horn or Antichrist phase.

(Part #3) - Daniel saw these beasts before God established His throne on earth. 7:9-14

The scene now shifts from earth to heaven. The Ancient of Days (7:9) is God the Father and the Son of Man (7:13) is God the Son. There are several terms used pertaining to Jesus Christ. For example, “Son of God” implies His deity. “Son of David” implies His kingly royalty. “Son of Man” implies His humanity.

There is no question that the primary point is that even though these beasts are permitted to operate; God will ultimately set up His Kingdom which will last forever and ever. That point is stressed several times in Daniel 7 (7:14, 18, 27).

Now we may notice that the thing that will bring God’s Kingdom is a judgment from the books (7:10). At this judgment the beast (Antichrist) is cast into the eternal lake of fire (7:11). If we compare this to what we learn in Revelation, we learn that the Antichrist will be literally thrown into the Lake of Fire when Jesus Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 19:20-21). We also know that the final Kingdom will not be established until after the Great White Throne Judgment when all unbelievers are cast into the Lake of Fire by the works books (Rev. 20:12-15).

It has been many years since Rome came to power and then seemingly dissolved and blended into the world. However, the events predicted here are accurate and true and the stage is being set right now for the finale.

Daniel 7:9-14

Presently, Jesus Christ reigns over his invisible heavenly kingdom. Ever since ascending into heaven, He has been conducting His invisible work. However, there will come a time when Jesus Christ will bring His literal, visible, physical kingdom to earth and that is when Christ's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

These verses are important to Daniel and to God's people. There isn't much that is encouraging seeing that one godless power after another rules. If God keeps giving His earthly power to godless Gentile leaders, there isn't much that is positive **unless there is an eventual end to it**. God allowed Daniel to see the end in these very important verses.

GOD PERMITS HIS PEOPLE TO SEE THAT ULTIMATELY, ALL EVIL POWERS WILL BE ELIMINATED BY HIS JUDGMENT AND HIS ETERNAL RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM WILL BE ESTABLISHED AND THIS REALITY SHOULD COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE HIS PEOPLE AND PROMOTE A RIGHTEOUS RESOLVE TO SERVE GOD UNTIL THE END.

Dr. John Walvoord said that there are three major facts that stand out in these verses:

(Fact #1) - Daniel has a vision of heaven at the time of the final judgment. **7:9-10**

(Fact #2) - Daniel sees the little horn, the last ruler of the Gentiles, destroyed with his empire. **7:11-12**

(Fact #3) - Daniel sees a fifth kingdom established by the Son of Man who comes in the clouds of heaven and establishes an everlasting kingdom on earth. **7:13-14**

Daniel 7:9a – The vision let Daniel see a time when thrones were set up.

One writer said **Daniel 7:9** is the only verse in the Bible where God the Father is described in human terms (*Campbell*, p. 110).

Now we immediately notice that the noun “throne” is plural. Later in this verse it is singular, as a separate throne of the Ancient of Days. It seems to me that the reason for this is to establish that even though God shares His kingdom, He is still God and He still sits on a throne separate from all others in His Majestic Holiness.

The plural refers to multiple thrones established by God which are permitted to reign all over the world. But the context certainly implies that this is the time when God is ruling over all kingdoms in existence—angelic, human, earthly thrones. We know from the statement of Paul that believers are promised to share in God's reign (II Timothy 2:12), including the judging of angels (I Corinthians 6:2-3). We also know that Jesus Christ specifically promised Church Age believers a share of His kingly reign (Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21). It is very likely Daniel is actually seeing this here.

Daniel saw the time when God was starting the process of reigning everywhere. If we connect this to Revelation—this moment occurs when Christ comes back to establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:4).

Daniel 7:9b-12 – The vision let Daniel see the Ancient of Days taking His throne/seat.

This title “Ancient of Days” is only used in this chapter in verses 9, 13, 22. By contextual observation we may conclude that this is a title which refers to God the Father.

As Dr. Leon Wood observed, this title is a “finite representation” of eternity (p. 188). Dr. Walvoord said “the Ancient of Days” is clearly God the Father in **verse 13**, so it must be here also.

Now the “Ancient of Days” takes His throne, which would indicate He is a real Person and it also indicates He will really judge. He has some visible human characteristics which enable Him to sit on His throne. There are five main descriptions we get of the Ancient of Days:

Description #1 - We get a description of His appearance . **7:9c**

His “vesture” was like white snow and His “hair” was like pure wool. There is a similar description given by the Apostle John of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:14-15, which has caused some commentators to assume that this is Jesus Christ. However, since the Son of Man goes up to the Ancient of Days and is given the kingdom (v. 13-14), it is better to view this similarity as a reference to Deity, which all members of the Godhead have. Now the imagery of clothing like white snow and hair like pure wool seem to be references to total purity and total maturity. There is no question that the “white snow” imagery is used of the righteousness of God (Isaiah 1:18). This imagery informs us that there is total majestic holiness and righteousness which exists at God’s throne.

Description #2 - We get a description of His throne . **7:9c-10**

(Observation #1) - His throne was ablaze with flames. **7:9c**

(Observation #2) - His throne wheels are burning with fire. **7:9d**

(Observation #3) - Before Him and coming out from Him is a river of fire. **7:10a**

Notice the emphasis on fire at the throne of God. This perfectly coincides with other glimpses we get of God’s throne. For example, in Psalm 97, it is revealed that the Throne of God is a place of righteousness and justice and God is surrounded by fire (Psalm 97:2-3).

(Observation #4) - Thousands upon thousands are attending Him. **7:10b**

The exciting thing for us, if we are believers, is Daniel is seeing us at this scene.

Description #3 - We get a description of what is happening at His throne. **7:10c-e**

(Observation #1) - Myriads upon myriads are standing before Him for judgment. **7:10c**

(Observation #2) - The court is sitting in session. **7:10d**

(Observation #3) - The court is judging from the books. **7:10e**

There are three key books in Scripture that have to do with Divine judgment:

- 1) The condemnatory works books that record all evil deeds and store up wrath.
Isaiah 65:6-7; Romans 2:5-6
- 2) The book of life which records all the **names** (not works) of those who have believed on Christ. Revelation 20:15
- 3) The reward works books which record the things done for God from those in the book of life. Malachi 3:16

Taking all of these things into consideration, what is described here is the judgment of the nations. This is the same judgment found in Matthew 25:31-46, which occurs when Christ comes in His glory. This judgment of nations will occur just prior to Him establishing His Millennial kingdom here on earth.

Description #4 - We get a description of the judgment He pronounces on the beast. **7:11**

Prior to this scene, other political powers were eliminated by military conquest; this beast is eliminated by Divine judgment. There have been those who have been given to speculating that the “horn” being discussed here is some person from past history. However, this cannot be because there is no place in history where the toppling of an evil world leader leads to the establishment of God’s righteous kingdom on earth. So what is described here is a futuristic beast who is none other than the Antichrist.

Now the “beast” is the Antichrist and he is physically thrown into the Lake of Fire, body and soul. This occurs in Revelation 19:20 when Christ comes in all of His glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16). This event occurs just prior to Jesus establishing His kingdom, in which He will reign for 1000 years.

Description #5 - We get a description of what He permits to happen to the rest of the beasts. **7:12**

Daniel saw that the rest of the beasts were removed, but they continued to exist for an appointed period of time. Apparently the rest of the ten horn beastly powers are permitted a short time of existence following the destruction of the Antichrist. There would be a short gap of time between Revelation 19:20 and Revelation 19:21.

We also know that during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ, He will permit nations to exist; only they will not be under any influence of Satan (Revelation 20:3). He will permit Gentile nations to exist during the Millennium, after which time they will be destroyed (Revelation 19:7-9).

Daniel 7:13-14 – The vision let Daniel see the victory of the Son of Man.

When Jesus Christ comes to reign, the whole world structure will change. When He takes control, the nations will be raging and He will come back and break them with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9).

The other kingdoms are presented as being “beastly,” but this righteous kingdom is presented as being “Godly and manly.” The term “Son of Man” is referring to Jesus Christ (Son of God often emphasizes Christ’s deity and Son of Man often emphasizes Christ’s humanity) and there can be no question that when Jesus uses this term in reference to Himself, He is specifically referring to the same Divine Person Daniel saw in this vision. This term is often used by Jesus Christ pertaining to Himself (30 times in Matthew, 15 times in Mark, 25 times in Luke and 12 times in John) and this title is often used in the context of prophecy (Matthew 16:27, 28; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31). The title speaks of a Person who is both human and divine. What this means is that Jesus Christ will come as the God/man to reign as universal King.

Now contextually, this Son of Man goes up to the Ancient of Days and is given dominion over the whole world, which is an everlasting kingdom. So what this title means is that He comes as a man, but He is not just a man, He is the God/man.

Vision #1 - The Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven. **7:13a**

Jesus Christ told Israel that the next time they would see Him, they would see Him coming on the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:64). This is the moment Daniel is seeing—the second coming of Jesus Christ.

This is a reference to Him coming with the glory of God to reign. This is clearly a key eschatological moment specifically described by Jesus in Matthew 24:30. Coming with the clouds is often used as revelation of Deity. Let's face it, how many people have you ever seen coming with the clouds? (Exodus 13:21-22; 19:9, 16; I Kings 8:10-11; Isaiah 19:1; Jeremiah 4:13; Ezekiel 10:4; Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26)

Vision #2 - The Son of Man was presented to the Ancient of Days. **7:13b**

The Son of Man is worthy to approach the Ancient of Days. This is a high, holy, heavenly scene. He is able to go up to the Ancient of Days. The only one who is worthy to approach God the Father, is God the Lamb. No human is worthy enough to approach the Ancient of Days (Revelation 5:4). The purpose of this approach is clearly predicted in Psalm 2:6-9 to receive the nations from the Father.

Vision #3 - The Son of Man was given divine dominion, glory and a kingdom. **7:14a**

The glory of God the Father is transferred in this public scene to God the Son (Matt. 16:27). When Jesus was here on earth, He said if you saw Him, you saw the Father (John 14:9). This moment literally will be one in which all will see it. This is a kingly coronation in which the Ancient of Days turns over all power to the Son of Man.

During this time all peoples and nations and all languages serve Jesus Christ, something Christ Himself predicted (Matthew 25:31ff). The emphasis here is on the political reign of Jesus Christ during the Millennium. The emphasis here is that God is reigning over all people on the earth, in the Person known as the Son of Man. The word "dominion" refers to Him having ruling authority. The word "glory" speaks of divine glory as ruler. The word "kingdom" has to do with His organized righteous government. Jesus is given absolute rule on earth.

Christ's reign on earth will be wonderful:

- 1) It will be a reign over the whole earth (**Daniel 7:14**)—all peoples, nations, languages.
- 2) It will be a reign of absolute power and authority (Psalm 2:9; 72:9-11; Isaiah 11:4)—He will slay the wicked by speaking His judgment.
- 3) It will be a reign of righteousness and justice (Isaiah 11:3-5)—righteous and fair judgments. What a wonderful world it will be when Jesus reigns.

Carefully observe "**the kingdom comes when the King comes.**" Thy kingdom come means that the King comes and performs His will on earth as He does in heaven. Jesus Christ will universally rule the world as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (**Daniel 7:14**; Revelation 19:16).

Vision #4 - The Son of Man has His kingdom reign forever. **7:14b**

Once the Millennium begins, the reign of Christ is forever. At the end of the Millennium, Jesus will present the kingdom to the Father (I Corinthians 15:24-28); there will be the Great White Throne Judgment, in which all unbelievers will face Christ before being cast into the eternal Lake of Fire and after that Christ will create a New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem.

Daniel and his people could be comforted knowing this. Blessed are those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb in view of Christ's return. For those who do this—the future is bright.

STUDY QUESTIONS – LECTURE #8

(Daniel 7:1-14)

1. Why is Daniel 7 such a pivotal chapter?

Daniel 1-6 contains general data, but Daniel 7-12 contains specific visions.
Daniel 1-6 describes God's program for Gentiles, 7-12 describes it for Israel.

2. Where are the four visions found in Daniel chapters 7-12?

Vision 1 - Daniel 7; **Vision 2** - Daniel 8; **Vision 3** - Daniel 9; **Vision 4** - Daniel 10-12

3. What important point do we learn from Daniel 7:17 about these four beasts?

They are four different Gentile earthly kings and empires who will reign over Israel.

4. Explain the development of the first beast going from lion to eagle to man. 7:4

As Nebuchadnezzar developed, having been humbled by God, he became more humane and went from being beastly to humanly.

5. Why is the bear beast, Medo-Persian Empire, raised up on one side? 7:5

One side was more dominant in power- Persia was superior to the Medes.

6. To what does the four heads refer in the third beast, the Greek Empire? 7:6

It refers to the four generals who would replace Alexander the Great when he died.

7. What are the three phases of Roman Empire given in Daniel 7:7-8?

The beast phase; The ten horn or ten kingdom phase; The little horn or Antichrist phase

8. What are three key books in Scripture that have to do with Divine Judgment?

- 1) Condemnatory works books - Isaiah 65:6-7; Romans 2:5-6
- 2) Book of Life which records names of all who have believed on Christ - Revelation 20:15
- 3) Reward works book which record the things done for God by those in the book of life (Malachi 3:16).