

THE INTERPRETATION OF DANIEL'S DREAM

TEXT: DANIEL 7:13-28

INTRODUCTION:

1. Verse 13 follows verse 10 chronologically. Verses 11 and 12 are explanatory and do not advance the narrative. Verses 11 and 12 describe the end of the antichrist, which is also prophesied in Revelation 19 and II Thessalonians 2.
2. Verse 14 says the Son of man is given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." This is referring to our Lord's future kingdom, which will be a worldwide kingdom involving "all people, nations, and languages."
3. In contrast to the preceding kingdoms, it will be an "everlasting" kingdom which shall not pass away and be destroyed (7:14).
4. In Luke 1:33, the angel Gabriel told Mary that Christ "shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."
5. And this is what Daniel said in Daniel 2:44.
6. Here in Daniel 7, Christ is portrayed as a separate person from God the Father, just like the scene in Revelation chapter 5.
7. Daniel 7:13 says, "the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." Coming in the clouds signifies our Lord's deity, and there are many similar prophecies in both the Old and New Testament.
8. Our Lord said in His Olivet Discourse, "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26).
9. Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him."

I. DANIEL ASKS FOR THE INTERPRETATION (7:15, 16).

1. Daniel had seen a panorama of tremendous events to come, and the revelation affected him deeply. The word "grieved" (7:15) indicates his distress.
2. The word "spirit" (7:15) refers to his whole personality. The same word is used in Daniel 6:3, "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him."
3. This is the only time the Aramaic word translated "body" is used in Scripture. It literally means "sheath." John Walvoord says, "The expression *in the midst of my body*, literally "in the midst of the sheath," compares the soul in the body to a sword in its sheath" (*Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation*).

4. This might be what Job had in mind when he said in Job 27:8, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" God removes the soul from the body, like a man would take his knife or sword out of his sheath.
5. In verse 16, Daniel poses a question to one who stands by, probably an angel, and the interpreter made known the meaning of the vision.
6. Verse 17 summarizes the vision, and Daniel chapter 7 -- the "great beasts" represent four kings which shall arise out of the earth. The "four kings" refer to four kingdoms, as the beasts represent both a king and a kingdom -- Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
7. Verse 17 says the beasts "shall arise out of the earth," but verse 3 says "four great beasts came up from the sea."
8. Rev. 13:1 says John "saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns..."
9. In Scripture, the sea represents symbolically the nations covering the earth, and what is symbolic in Daniel 7:3 is literal in Daniel 7:17.
10. For example, in Revelation 17:1, the great whore is seen sitting upon many waters. In Revelation 17:3 she is pictured as sitting "upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."
11. Then in Revelation 17:15 we read, "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."
12. In verse 18, the interpreting angel states that "the saints of the most High" shall take and possess the kingdom forever. "The saints of the most High" include the saved of all ages (cf. Dan 7:21, 22, 25, 27; 8:24).
13. Jude 14 and 15 says, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."
14. Verse 18 says that the saints "shall take the kingdom" emphasizing that the saints will possess the kingdom forever, in contrast with the preceding kingdoms, which all will pass away.
15. Hebrews 1:8 says, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

16. Our Lord said in Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (cf. Dan. 7:22).
17. First Corinthians 6:2 says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"
18. This future kingdom possessed by the saints includes the millennial kingdom and the eternal kingdom of God which will follow.

II. DANIEL ASKS ABOUT THE FOURTH BEAST (7:19)

1. Whereas only three verses are given to the first three beasts, the remaining twenty-one verses of Chapter 7 concern the fourth beast.
2. Daniel apparently had no difficulty understanding the symbolism of the first three beasts, but the fourth beast, "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly," he did not comprehend (7:19).
3. Daniel repeated the same details given in verse 7, but adds that the beast had "nails of brass" (7:19).
4. Another added detail is mentioned in verse 20 -- the little horn looked "more stout than his fellows," i.e., he was greater than the other kings.
5. The little horn will make war with the saints and will prevail against them (7:21).
6. Revelation 11:7 says that when the two witnesses will have finished their testimony (during the tribulation), the antichrist "shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them."
7. Revelation 13:7 says, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."
8. The destruction of the fourth beast and the inauguration of our Lord's kingdom, described as the time when the saints will possess the kingdom, indicates the end of the age and the second coming of Jesus Christ (7:22; cf. 7:11).

III. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FOURTH BEAST (7:23)

1. Verse 23 again repeats that the fourth beast represents the fourth kingdom, an earthly kingdom which will be different from the preceding kingdoms and "shall devour the whole earth," meaning it will be worldwide in its sway.
2. All hopes and dreams for a one-world government will come to fruition when the antichrist defeats his three opponents and takes over (7:8, 20, 24).

3. In his ruthless climb to the top, he will tread down and break in pieces all other nations and kingdoms (7:23).
4. This awaits a future fulfillment, because nothing in history corresponds to this prophecy. At no time in history did the Roman Empire ever exist in the form of a ten-nation confederacy (7:24).
5. No one knows the extent of the revived Roman Empire because the Bible does not give us those details. Daniel 7:23 says it "shall devour the whole earth," so its area will probably be much larger than the territory covered by the ancient Roman Empire.
6. Its influence and power will reach all over the world. Apparently all the nations of the earth will eventually be brought under the power and direction of the ten kings (7:24) who will rule over the revived Roman Empire.
7. The whole world will be divided into ten kingdoms all of which will be under the control of this revived Roman Empire.
8. When the revived Roman Empire shall have reached this stage in its development, the antichrist (the little horn) will then arise and subdue three of the ten kings and set himself up as a dictator.
9. He will make himself the world ruler that is described here, as well as in II Thessalonians 2, the book of Revelation, and other prophecies.
10. The ten kings will reign simultaneously, and three of them will be "subdued" by the little horn (the antichrist). "Subdue" means he will bring them down.
11. These ten kings (ten horns) are also referred to in Revelation 13:1 and 17:12.
12. The "little horn" is described as a blasphemer who "shall speak great words against the most High" and as a persecutor of the saints who "shall wear out the saints of the most High" (7:25).
13. The antichrist will attempt to "change times and laws" (7:25), that is, to change times of religious observances and religious traditions, particularly the religious observances of Christians and Jews.
14. The antichrist will rule the world "until a time and times and the dividing of times" (7:25b). "Times" means "years" (cf. Dan 4:25).
15. This expression is also found in Daniel 12:7, and means three and one-half years, and refers to the second half of the tribulation period.
16. The term is identical with the half of a year ("week") of Daniel 9:27, which equals three and one-half years.
17. This refers to the last three and one-half years of the tribulation period, which precedes the second coming of Christ.

18. The three and one-half years (second half of the tribulation) is confirmed by the forty-two months (three and one-half years) referred to in Revelation 11:2 and 13:5, and the 1260 days of Revelation 11:3.
19. This midway point in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period is referred to in Daniel 9:27, where we read that "in the midst of the week he (the antichrist) shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."
20. When our Lord returns, He will establish the kingdom of God on earth (7:14, 27; cf. 2:44, 45).
21. The emphasis here in Daniel 7 is not on the greatness of the revived Roman Empire, but on the greatness of God's kingdom -- "the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven" (7:27).
22. God will judge the fourth beast (Rome) and its ruler, the antichrist. The career of the antichrist will come to an end.
23. At the destruction of the fourth empire, the succeeding kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and in it all powers and peoples will serve and obey God.
24. Daniel concludes the interpretation of the vision with these words: "Hitherto is the end of the matter" (7:28). His cogitations (thoughts) "much troubled" him, and his countenance changed, but he kept the matter in his heart, that is, he did not reveal it to others.
25. These words remind us of Luke 2:19, "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."
19. John Walvoord wrote, "Thus ends one of the great chapters of the Bible which conservative scholarship recognizes as a panoramic view of future events revealed to Daniel in the sixth century B.C...In a modern world, when attention is again being riveted upon the Middle East, and Israel is once again back in the land, these items become of more than academic interest, because they are the key to the present movement of history in anticipation of that which lies ahead" (*Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation*).

CONCLUSION:

1. This Friday we Americans celebrate "Independence Day," commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.
2. This officially declared our independence from the Great Britain.
3. Donald K. Campbell wrote, "In 1776, American preachers, politicians, and many ordinary citizens interpreted this chapter (he was referring to Daniel 7) as applying to America, particularly the

promise that the 'saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom' (7:27)."

4. "Evidence seems clear that our forefathers saw themselves as a nation with a millennial destiny. In 1771, Timothy Dwight (president of Yale College and a grandson of Jonathan Edwards), for instance, wrote a hymn, 'America,' which expresses this fond ideal:

*Hail Land of Light and Joy! Thy power shall grow
Far as the seas, which round thy regions flow;
Through earth's wide realms thy glory shall extend,
And savage nations at thy scepter bend.*

5. "But America has not and will not launch God's kingdom of justice and plenty. For that, we await the *climactic and glorious return of Jesus Christ*" (*Daniel, God's Man in a Secular Society*).
6. Timothy Dwight and the early American Christians had good intentions but they were wrong when they taught that America would inaugurate the kingdom.
7. God's kingdom is still future and it will be both spiritual and physical. Presently it is a spiritual kingdom, and it is not restricted to any geographical location.
8. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).