

Bold as Lions: Daniel 7 “The Final King and Kingdom”, 4/14/19

One of the most stunning sights I have had the privilege of seeing with my own eyes was 10 years ago on a mountaineering expedition in Russia. On our summit day, the morning dawned and the sun came shining over the peak and we saw a breath taking view of the **Ural Mountain range peaks** all in a row above the cloud rolling cloud line. This picture doesn't do it justice. Stunning. Of course below the cloud line between these peaks that were many miles apart were many lush valleys, rivers, small towns, roads, pastures... But from our vantage point, we only saw the enormous peaks stacked one after the other, seemingly close together. In Daniel 7, God gives Daniel a stunning vision of the future from above the cloud line as it were. This one prophetic vision spans thousands of years of human history hitting the peaks along the timeline. Daniel 7 is often called by scholars a **“passage of primary reference”** because not only is it the reference point and key that unlocks the other prophecies in the rest of Daniel, this passage is referenced numerous times by Jesus in the Gospels, the Apostle Paul in his church letters and John in Revelation. Therefore, we could spend many weeks on just this one passage but we are going to do a survey of thousands of years all the way to the end of human history...in the next 25 minutes.

Some context, Chapter 6 ends the chronological, historical part of Daniel. Now we get to the apocalyptic part, the prophetic part. So the best way to view Daniel is to slice it in two and say that the **first six chapters are mostly historical with a little bit of prophecy, but the last six chapters are mostly prophecy with a little bit of history**. Daniel's epic vision in Chapter 7 actually takes place at some point during the reign of King Belshazzar in Babylon, remember him from Chapter 5 and the “writing on the wall” guy? Like getting above the cloud line, and seeing six mountain peaks, In this vision, **Daniel will see six kingdoms**. While these aren't the only kingdoms in history, these are the ones that God wanted him to see.

Last bit of context, This vision should sound somewhat familiar to the dream Nebuchadnezzar had many years before. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of the huge statue, remember that from Chapter 2 that represented different kingdoms? The dream Daniel has is of wild beasts; same truths, two different images, although this one with more detail.

Daniel 7:1-4

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. ² Daniel said: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea.

³ Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.⁴ “The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.

1st Kingdom, Babylon: A Winged Lion (v.3-4)

How do we know these beasts are kingdoms? Well Daniel is told about some of the elements of this vision and we are told in verse 17 that these are kingdoms. And if the vision from chapter 2 correlates, Babylon would be first. You want to hear something fascinating? In the archaeological discoveries of the city of Babylon, especially at the gates of the royal palaces, they have found 120 winged lion engravings and busts, like **this one**. That was the depiction of Babylon by the Babylonians themselves, a winged lion; lion, the king of the beasts; eagle, the king of the birds. It speaks of power, domination, speed, all of which characterize Nebuchadnezzar when he took Carchemish 605 BC, defeated the Egyptians, took over the whole world speedily. Notice it says though that the wings were plucked off. That would indicate a loss of power and a loss of speed, Maybe a loss of dignity. As most scholars believe, this describes Nebuchadnezzar being humbled by God, and he was given a new heart, and different heart after that episode that we already discussed.

Daniel 7:5

⁵ "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'"

2nd Kingdom, Medo-Persia: A Bear (v.5)

Notice the three ribs, this could symbolize the three kingdoms it conquered Lydia, Egypt and Babylon. Notice also in this verse it says the bear is raised up on one side as if two feet are on the ground, and two feet are up. It's lopsided. That also is a depiction of the Medo-Persian coalition. It was never an even union. The Persians were much more powerful than the Medes were.

Daniel 7:6

⁶ "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule."

3rd Kingdom Greece: A Winged, Four-Headed Leopard (v.6)

This is a perfect depiction the Greek empire that defeated the Medo-Persians. Speed marked the kingdom of Greece. Alexander the Great took over the known world in just 10 years, by 324BC. Remarkable. But then there was the speed of breakup. He was thirty-two years old when he died. He died in Babylon. And when he was dying on his deathbed, the people surrounding him said, "What shall we do with the kingdom? And he said, "Give it to the strong." And the kingdom was divided up between the generals of Alexander. Guess how many there were? There were four generals like the four heads-Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy were the four generals and the kingdom was divided up as the Scripture predicted. Now how could Daniel have known that? That's why the critics said he couldn't have, it had to be written after the fact. Of course archaeology supports a sixth century writing, just like the Bible claims.

Daniel 7:7

⁷ “After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

4th Kingdom, Rome: The Ten Horned Beast (v.7)

Historically we know that the next empire after Greece was Rome. This seems to fit the description. The main feature of this strange beast is its iron teeth, much like the iron rule of Rome. Like the legs in the statue in chapter 2, the longest part of the anatomy, Rome ruled the longest. Not two hundred years like most of these others, but fifteen hundred years in total. Another significant feature are its 10 horns. While the Roman empire is long gone, many scholars believe we live in the “10 horned era” kingdoms that have emerged out of the fallen roman empire. Now if this isn’t strange enough, stranger things are coming.

Daniel 7:8, 24-25

⁸ “While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.”

As we read on we find out more about this boastful horn. *²⁴After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.*

5th Kingdom, The Antichrist: The Boastful Horn (v.8, 24-25)

When I say Antichrist, a lot of people don't take that seriously...and it sounds like a movie you would find on the sci-fi network. Antichrist in the category of the Easter Bunny. But this figure shows up quite a bit in Scripture. But did you know that there are over twenty-five titles of the Antichrist in the Scripture? Revelation 13 calls him the beast. Jesus Christ called him the abomination that causes desolation, referring to what Daniel spoke of. Paul the apostle in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, calls him the lawless one, the man of sin, the son of perdition. But Daniel was the first to mention this figure as the boastful horn. When we get to the New Testament and the church has been established, the earliest Christians had heard about the Antichrist; they knew all about him. John writes in First John, chapter 2, "Little children . . . you have heard that Antichrist is coming." Someone must have been teaching the book of Daniel.

Now, as you can expect throughout history there have been many predictions about the identity of this figure. Early Christians believed it was Emperor Nero because of his persecutions against them. Others believed it was the Emperor Caligula, because in AD 37 he put an image of himself in the Jerusalem temple. Or Antiochus Epiphanes who destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD. And there may be some validity in seeing these figures as a type of Antichrist. But then it gets crazy- Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Osama Bin Ladin, even Popes and Presidents...Most recent I heard that **Kanye West**, was the Antichrist...even he is surprised! **Next Slide** And sadly, evangelical Christianity in the last 50 years especially has developed a bad reputation for wild

predictions not only the Antichrist, but other end times events, 80 reasons Jesus is coming back in 1980...World is ending in 2000. Reached climax in left behind novels. My cringe meter goes off when I hear this kind of stuff...let's not be those people. But that doesn't mean we completely avoid the topic, because obviously God wants us to know some things, we can piece together some information about this Antichrist figure. We won't go into detail, but it is **clear from this text** that he will take political authority, he will be boastful and persuasive, and he will set himself up against God and God's people. Where do I personally stand? Kanye. I believe the Antichrist has not yet been revealed but will directly precede the 2nd coming of Christ and rule during what is called the "Great Tribulation", a seven-year period, the last 3 and ½ years of which there will be intense persecution of God's people and judgment of the wicked. For today, we will not open that can of worms further, because there is still a 6th kingdom, a final kingdom that Daniel sees that is the primary focus of Daniel's vision.

Daniel 7:9-10

⁹ "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

Here is a stunning portrait of God the Father as the Ancient of Days. The phrase Ancient of Days speaks to his eternity, his preexistence. And the picture is that he is coming for judgment. Fire flowing, a seated court, opening of books...Ominous and this is what happens, The boastful, oppressive horn, the Antichrist is judged and his kingdom comes to an end. Pick up v.13

Daniel 7:13-14

¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

6th Kingdom: The Eternal Kingdom (v.9-14)

Now, Daniel sees "One like the Son of Man." What does this mean? I think it simply means he saw One with a human form. Remember, so far he has seen these weird beastlike creatures come up out of the sea, talking horns, fiery, blazing white ancient figure of God on his throne, now in contrast to those he sees one like us..."One like the Son of Man coming." I love that picture, because that's exactly how John 1 describes him, The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, Isaiah 53 nothing remarkable about his appearance that we should notice. Look what the Ancient of Days, the Father, does- he coronates this son of man as king of a worldwide kingdom where this son of man will be worshipped for eternity. I have challenged

my Jewish friends, who else could this be?

Here is what is fascinating. Does the term “Son of Man” sound familiar? If you know the gospels it will be, because 81x in the four gospels of the New Testament the term “Son of Man” appears, and it was the term that Jesus used to refer to himself, to describe himself more than any other.

Matthew 25:31-32a

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him...”

Why? To communicate to a Jewish audience who knew Daniel, He is the God-man, coronated King, who will be worshipped by the nations for eternity. Fitting on Palm Sunday, welcoming the king of kings.

So this final kingdom of Jesus Christ, will rule forever. Later in Daniel and most vividly in Revelation 20 we get more details about this reign, it appears he will first rule a millennial kingdom...no, not a kingdom of 18-37 year olds...not that kind of millennial, but millennial meaning 1000 years, in fulfillment to the promise to the Jewish people, and then ultimately in the New Heaven and New Earth depicted in Revelation 21 and 22.

Blank Slide We covered a vast territory today, thousands of years of history and into the future. Ok, great Nate- That was one wild dream Daniel had, sure beats my dreams that I am flying or taking that same test over and over again...but what difference does this make to me?

From the Jews living in exile that would have first read Daniel to early Church Christians being persecuted under Nero, to the Christians today living under the persecution of Islamic radicals to us here in an increasingly post-Christian, increasingly hostile culture...**Daniel’s vision should make us both bold as lions...and gentle as lambs.** On one hand, Bold because we know who wins! because we know we will be with Jesus, what do we have to lose? Honestly...If you believe this, why should we be intimidated by “these other beasts and boastful horns” you come into contact with? We will have trouble, but he has overcome! But we should also be gentle as lambs. While the nations rage, while kings and kingdoms come and go, while things may get worse, we might have trials and scary things happen nationally or personally. From the perspective of the valley, things may seem bleak, confusing, we may be anxious and fearful. **Daniel’s vision is a call to get our heads above the cloud line.** See that vast peak just in the distance. It is Christ who is coming to bring justice to rule and reign. So get your heads above the cloud line.

Final thought- What we don’t see above the cloud line is what had to happen in the valley before Jesus could be crowned king. The Lion of Judah, had to first become the Lamb of God. He first had to come to die as our sin substitute. Ian McPherson once said, *Christ first bore the world’s frown, he will one day wear the world’s crown.* Do you know this coming lion and lamb? Do you know this coming king? Will you be on his side when he comes again?