

Last week we finished the first section of Daniel chapter 7; the vision. This is how those first 8 verses fit into the overall scheme of the chapter:

Daniel 7:1–8 Daniel's vision of the four beasts

Daniel 7:9–12 The Heavenly Scene (7:9–10 heaven preparing, 7:11–12 earthly results)

Daniel 7:13–14 Coming of the Son of Man

Daniel 7:15–28 Angelic Interpretation of the Vision

Starting with Daniel 7, verse 8, the vision now continues with a heavenly scene that would be unknowable to human observers on the earth at the time when these prophetic events take place, the little horn stage of the fourth kingdom. This will describe the “behind the scenes” activity of God which would remind us of the book of Job. Recall that whoever wrote Job was privy, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, to the heavenly scenes prior to the testing of Job. Job, his friends, nor Job's lovely wife or kids had any knowledge this was going on behind the scenes. Similarly, here is Daniel 7, we are given “the rest of the story.”

Daniel 7:9

I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, its wheels *were* a burning fire.

When we finished the vision section in verse 8, the scene on earth is chaotic. The little horn just dispensed with three of the other horns and he is now uttering boastful things which we will come to know are blasphemes against the Living God. Now as the focus switches to heaven, we see calmness in the Ancient of Days casually taking a seat on His throne. The contrast couldn't be more striking. Daniel says that thrones (plural) were set up. What are we to make of thrones being plural? Who are the thrones for?

There have always been two views (about even) for the thrones, either angels or human. Dispensationalists tend to see the thrones as belonging to angels. Reformed theologians tend to see the thrones as belonging to redeemed humans. Can you think of why this is the usual position for more reformed views? What do we know about their theological method? Remember step 2 and 3 in our systematic theology formulation approach? For non-dispensational methods, NT then OT? Is there anywhere in the NT where judgment (our Daniel 7:9–12 context) and redeemed humans are mentioned? In 1 Cor. 6:1–6, Paul is rebuking the Corinthians for bringing suit against a fellow believer before an unbelieving court. He says, “do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” The context is deciding between two parties in court, not divine judgment. I hesitate to read this verse back into Daniel 7 and conclude that the other thrones are for redeemed humans.

Is there any evidence these thrones are for angels? Well, we certainly know that there are some angels who are seated, who at least are sometimes seated (presumably on a throne). Later on in chapter 12, Gabriel will tell us that at the time just before the end, “Michael, who stands guard over your people, will arise.” Same Hebrew word root is used here twice; it means “to stand.” If you look at a plurality of English translations, it appears that the second usage depicts a literal standing up from a seated position; whereas the first usage is almost idiomatic ... “who stands over the people” →= “who watches/guards/has charge over the people.” We will have the same conflict when we come to the “elders” in the throne room of Rev. 5.

What about the term “Ancient of Days?” What could that mean? It is used only here in Daniel 7 (3 times). The text is a little ambiguous ... the Greek uses a nominative adverb which is just translated “old.” Since its in the nominative case, we know that “old one” is the subject of the sentence. The next works is a plural genitive form of the word “day.” Put it together it literally means “old of days.” The “Old of Days” took his seat ... having ...” Most expositors would see this as an idiom for “God the Father,” with the essential meaning pointing to God the Fathers’ eternal nature; His existence in eternity past. BTW, have you ever really contemplated that?

The Ancient of Days took His seat ... Thrones typically mean judgment. Judges sat on thrones. Kings, who dispense the ultimate law of the land, sat on thrones. The context will be clear soon that the Ancient of Days is calmly sitting down as He has had enough of the little horns' blasphemy and the existence of his kingdom. It is interesting to consider that God the Father is currently sitting on His throne (Rev. 3:21). Sometime in the future, He will get up and sit on this judgment throne.

Daniel then goes into a description of what he sees with respect to the Ancient of Days. His vesture (literally garment, raiment, cloak, an outer garment) was white as snow. Usually, white robes in the scriptures represent purity and holiness, and that thought, I think, is carried on to the hair on His head as being pure wool. We will also see some of this description in Revelation.

The throne of the Ancient of Days was ablaze with flames and its wheels were burning fire. Now whether this means the throne as on fire (but not consumed) or the throne was made of fire it difficult to determine. What is not difficult in this context is that the fire is surely pointing to what? Judgment!

Daniel 7:10

¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Daniel then sees a river of fire coming out from before Him. It brings to remembrance that when God the Father dwells with us in the New Jerusalem, the river of life will flow out from before the throne. Again, the fire is certainly representing God's divine judgment that will be poured out on the little horn and his kingdom.

Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, myriads upon myriads were standing before Him. Again, we have a slight interpretive issue in determining if these thousands upon thousands are angelic beings or redeemed humans ... or perhaps even a combination of both. There is really nothing in the text that helps us determine this. Later in Rev. 5, there is a direct reference that would eliminate the choice of *only* redeemed humans; so, we are left with angels or angels and redeemed humans in combination. Incidentally, ten thousand was the largest number for which ancient languages had a word. Ten thousand times ten thousand is 100 million. But the ten thousand is in the plural, lit. ten thousands times ten thousands ... so there are hundreds of millions (perhaps billions) of these beings attending the Ancient of Days.

Daniel's final sight here in verse 10 is that the court sat. An interesting difference might exist between the Greek and Hebrew exists here in the text (need help Chad). The Greek verb is in the aorist tense (simple "sat"); but the Hebrew is in the perfect. If the perfect in Hebrew is similar to Greek, this implies the act of "sitting" was complete, but there would be ongoing results. In any event, the time for judgment has arrived ... the books were opened.

What are these books that were opened? Are there any other instances that speaks of books in heaven? Yes, here is a list compiled by Thomas Overmiller, pastor of Brookdale Baptist Church in Moorhead, MN:

Exodus 32:32–33
Psalm 56:8; 69:28; 139:16
Ezek. 13:9
Here in Daniel 7:10 and in 12:1
Malachi 3:16
Luke 10:20
Phil. 4:3
Hebrews 12:23
Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:18-19

Some of the above reference a book of Life, or God's book of each of our days. Malachi make mention of a book of remembrance. Later in Revelation, John will see books (pl.) that are used for judgment. This is the imagery here. The books of all the deeds of the little horn and members of his kingdom are opened and judgment will be passed based on the deeds recorded in those books.

Daniel 7:11–12

¹¹ Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. ¹² "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

Now we have to be careful not to push the details of what Daniel saw too far. The scene now switches back to what is transpiring on earth, as Daniel kept looking because of the content of what the little horn was speaking. We will come to know in a few

verses that these boastful words are not just egotism or narcissistic prideful musings but rather blasphemy directed at the Ancient of Days Himself. The next part is where we need to take care.

Daniel kept looking until the beast was slain, its body destroyed and (its body) given to the burning fire. Here we have a melding of the symbols of the vision, what the symbols represent, and what exactly these symbols are conveying. Let us start with the little horn.

If we were to jump ahead to the interpretation part (Dan. 7:15–28), we will find that the little horn is a king, the ten kings arise from the fourth beast, and those kings represent kingdoms. So, we have a sort of vague equivalence, something like

little horn = beast = king = kingdom.

This equivalence is from 7:17 (beasts = 4 great kings), 7:23 (fourth beast = fourth kingdom), 7:24 (ten horns = ten kings).

The first item is that Daniel saw that the beast was slain. What does the beast mean in this context? Does it mean the little horn himself was killed ... or his kingdom killed/destroyed? I suspect that with the equivalence between a king and his kingdom (aka. via Daniel 2), this could be a reference to **both** the personal judgment and the destruction of the little horn AND the last Gentile kingdom represented by the fourth beast. Was there an analogous event in Nebuchadnezzar's dream that parallels this killing of the beast? Well, recall that Daniel 2 does not go into the details of the little horn, but it does mention the destruction of the fourth kingdom, namely, the stone struck the statue on the feet and destroyed it. The imagery of the personage who leads the fourth kingdom is not in Daniel 2, but the results of the destruction of his kingdom is there.

The next thing Daniel mentions is that the body of the beast is destroyed. Again, does that mean the little horn individually or is the imagery concerning the destruction of the fourth beast/kingdom? Well, it could be both, but I suspect only the kingdom is in view here, just because the next item I tend to see as a personal judgment of the little horn. Is there a counterpart to the Daniel 2 vision? Probably, again, the stone struck the statue at the feet and it was destroyed; indicating the end of the fourth kingdom.

Finally, Daniel says the body of the beast was given to the burning fire. Now since the beast can represent the kingdom itself, how would the kingdom be given to the burning fire, presumably for final destruction. Certainly, when you give a body to the burning fire, there will be no vestiges left of the original body. Perhaps this is analogous to the chapter 2 statue become chaff and the wind blowing it all away so there is nothing left. But there is also another possibility. This could be symbolic of the little horn personally being judged and his body given to the burning fire. Admittedly, this is reading ahead into Revelation a bit; for we know that the beast (interesting term) in Revelation 19 is thrown alive into the lake of fire. Furthermore, it absolutely must be that the beast and false prophet must already have their "resurrection" bodies before being thrown in there ... because after the millennium, during the Great White Throne judgment ... mention is made of the fact that the beast and the false prophet have already been in the lake of fire for the 1000 years! They are the original occupants of the lake of fire.

So, what I am proposing is that, yes, the body of the beast being given to the burning fire **could** just be analogous to the wiping away of all vestiges of the kingdoms in Dan. 2. But I see it as much more likely that Revelation 19 will shed light upon this passage in Daniel 7:10 when we get to Rev. 19 in a few years!

A last comment by Daniel concerning the beasts was mentioned. He says "as for the other (three) beasts" ... which not much is mentioned about them, their dominion was taken away. What does that mean? Dominion means ruling authority. Their ruling authority was taken away, presumably, in sequential order. God gave each of the kingdoms the ruling authority over the earth ... and He took it away from each of them. I suspect that is what it means for them to have "their dominion taken away." How about the extension of life granted to them. It seems like Daniel is saying though their ruling authority was taken away, their lives were spared as beasts. Probably doesn't pertain to the kings of the other three kingdoms, as each of them died when their dominion was taken away ... and some died before (Nebuchadnezzar). In all probability it refers to the nature of Gentile rule. That each kingdom was somehow assimilated into the previous ones. That is certainly true of the land that was conquered. But it may also perhaps refer to cultural and civil characteristics. The legal system of the Persians, the language of the Greeks, etc.

Daniel 7:13–14

¹³ I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom,

That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

We now come back to the vision of things in heaven. Daniel 7:13 is the most quoted verse from Daniel in the NT. There are three aspects to the first part of verse 13, all play together to emphasize a very important eschatological event; the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. First, Daniel sees One “coming with the clouds of heaven.” One of the critical aspects of what Daniel saw is that this One was coming on the clouds of heaven. Ancient Jewish rabbis believed that only absolute deity could come in the clouds of heaven. Perhaps they ascertained this from Psalm 104:3 ...

He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind;

Isaiah 19:1 also alludes to this as well. In any event, it was believed that that only absolute deity can come on the clouds of heaven. Second, Daniel describes this personage whom he saw as “like a Son of Man.” Since this Son of Man was absolute deity, and Daniel said He is “like” a Son of Man, this seems to indicate that He is more than just a man. Most expositors see this personage as none other than the Lord Jesus Himself. What is the evidence for this? It comes from Jesus Himself. He referred to Himself as the Son of Man all throughout the gospels. The term Son of Man is primarily a reference to Jesus’ deity, not His humanity. Finally, He is coming. That basic concept ... that He is coming ... or He is the coming One ... is also spread throughout the scriptures. For example, consider Jesus’ statement in Matt. 23:39 where He quotes Psalm 118:26 as referring to Himself, literally, as the coming one. Often times a NT reference to this concept in Daniel 7 is presented as a substantial participle, lit. “the coming One.” In this context, His coming refers to none other than the Second Coming.

Daniel tells us that the Son of Man “came up to” the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. It should be emphasized that this verb translated “came up to” does not have any translational characteristics, as in ... “I came up 20 feet to join dad on the roof to help with the shingles.” It does not mean translation from one place to another ... and thus any idea that this is referring to the ascension of Christ into heaven during His first advent is rejected by lexicographic means. The word has more of a horizontal spatial understanding ... “I came up to Dave to ask him a question.”

Now Daniel mentions two things about this Son of Man ... He was coming in the clouds ... and He was presented before the Ancient of Days. Nothing else is said. As a result of the presentation, HE was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom. This is certainly the added detail of how the stone that struck the image in Daniel 2 finally “grew” into a kingdom. Notice that this kingdom includes every people, nation, and language ... i.e., like the four Gentile kingdoms that were before it, this last kingdom would exercise rule over the entire world. The one detail here in chapter 7 that is not in chapter 2 is the king of this kingdom. He was given the kingdom; therefore, He will be the king of this kingdom of God.

Daniel finally mentions that item that directly links the coming kingdom to what Daniel said in chapter 2 concerning that kingdom. It will be an everlasting kingdom which will not be destroyed. Since there can only be one everlasting kingdom, the equivalency of the kingdoms of Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 is now established. Again, how long is the coming kingdom? Forever! The 1000 year reign in Revelation is the kick-off party.

In summary, the few verses before the interpretation (which we will begin next week) gives us a picture of the final period of time prior to the destruction of the little horn and the fourth kingdom. The time frame for these events depicts a time that involves the final stages of the fourth kingdom, the rise of the little horn, and his destruction in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ ... and then ... the kingdom! Later, we will discover that this last time frame is condensed into a 7 year period.

One last comment. It is often suggested by non-dispensationalists that the concept of the premillennial return of Christ and a subsequent physical kingdom on earth is only taught in the first half of Revelation 20 and nowhere else in scripture. And because it is only in Revelation 20 (they presume), and Revelation is to be interpreted allegorically because of its many symbols (again, they presume), the entire concept of a physical earthly reign of the Messiah is, in their opinion, a faulty view. This week, we have started to put all that nonsense to bed once and for all.

The simple fact is that premillennialism is taught all throughout the OT scriptures. We saw that it is a necessary result of the promise made to Abraham, it is a conclusion of the Davidic covenant, it is taught all through the prophets of the OT, and it will be clearly seen here in the rest of Daniel ... We have a fourth beast with ten kings, the little horn, the coming of the Son of Man in conjunction with the destruction of the little horn, and then the kingdom. Premillennialism is clearly taught here in Daniel 7.

μαράνα θά (1Co 16:22)