



BEASTLY VISIONS - (WEEK 3) -
*The Kingdoms Daniel
Foresaw*

Last week we looked at what the kingdom of God is and saw that we are standing in the middle of that kingdom because Christ rules now, but we are also waiting for the full consummation of His kingdom.

We are advancing the kingdom of God by doing His will (Thy will be done), but we are also waiting for His kingdom (Thy kingdom come).

Therefore, we live with this tension between the already and the not yet, which makes the kingdom of God (as one of our community group members put it) a humble kingdom. God's kingdom is a humble kingdom because God is sovereign over His entire universe, He is all-powerful, yet He chooses to advance His kingdom through these frail vessels of clay – you and me.

Today, we're going to look at a chapter from the book of Daniel in conjunction with a chapter from the book of Revelation and how they both speak of this coming kingdom.

- **Daniel prophesied about this coming Kingdom.**
- **There is overwhelming Scriptural evidence that Daniel foretold of many historical events before they happened.**
- **Daniel is prophesying about the ascension of Christ.**
- **It is after Jesus ascends that He sends the Holy Spirit to the church.**
- **This coming Kingdom is the kingdom of God that is in our midst now – the**

ministry of Christ through the Holy Spirit's work through the local church.

What we're going to see today is that this was all foretold before it all happened. This should build our trust in the truthfulness of Scripture.

If you doubt the truthfulness of Scripture, this should at least make you skeptical of your own skepticism.

- **The first 6 chapters of Daniel**
- **This book takes place right after Babylon's first attack upon Jerusalem. They exiled the Jewish people.**
- **This book tells of how the Jews maintain hope in the land of their conquerors.**
- **Daniel and his three cohorts become servants of the king of Babylon.**
- **You probably know his three friends by the Babylonian names they were given – Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.**
- **Chapters 1-6 contain the stories about Daniel and his cohorts during this time.**

- Then chapters 7-12 contain the 3 visions Daniel has about the future of God's people.
- One of the main stories of chapters 1-6 is the dream that Daniel interprets for the king about a giant statue made of four different materials. Each of these materials represents a different kingdom that will fill the world with violence. But a large stone crushes all these kingdoms in the end and becomes a large mountain.
- This stone and mountain represent the kingdom of God as we know it now.
- The other incidents that are important are the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar. Both are warned in dreams by God to humble themselves. Dreams Daniel interprets for them.
- In this pride, Nebuchadnezzar, becomes like a beast before he humbles himself. When he humbles himself, his humanity returns to him.
- Belshazzar refuses to humble himself and dies that very night.

Now we pick up in chapter 7, the beginning of Daniel's visions about the future of God's people.

Daniel is an old man now, probably in his 70s or 80s when he has these dreams. He has spent most of his life in captivity.

Daniel 7

Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts

7 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. 2 Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

Are you familiar with the phrase "the four corners of the earth?" That's what Daniel has in mind here. The four winds symbolize that what is happening is universal or global. In other words, it will impact world history.

Secondly, the sea represents the chaos of the world. Four kingdoms will arise out of the chaos of the world.

3 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

Daniel names three of the kingdoms that these beasts represent in Daniel 1:1, Daniel 8:20, and Daniel 8:21. The four kingdoms being referred to are Babylon (the first beast), Medo-Persia (the bear), Greece (the leopard) and Rome (the last beast). Now, let's look at the description of these beasts and notice how that last beast (Rome) is different than the first three.

4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings.

So, that first empire was ferocious and mobile.

Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it.

This empire is humbled to the point that we see its frailty, its humanity. When we are humbled, that's when we are at our most humane. When we are arrogant, we are like beasts in our reasoning and in our treatment of others.

5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'

This second empire comes along and devours other kingdoms, hence the three ribs in its mouth.

6 After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

This third kingdom is faster than the lion (the first kingdom), more mobile than the lion with its four wings and more ferocious than the kingdoms before it because it has four heads to devour.

- **Alexander the Great**

Approximately 250 years before Alexander began his world conquest, God provided Daniel with a glimpse into the future.

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

Notice that this beast is different from all the others, because it is not compared to any animal that we know. It is described more in terms of its effect – terrifying and dreadful and strong, devouring and breaking things into pieces.

We find when the Apostle John writes Revelation, he uses this same imagery.

Revelation 13

13 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. **2** And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

This beast in Revelation has strength, represented by the ten horns, and power, represented by the crowns. It's like all the beasts of Daniel rolled into one. The beast is symbolic of worldly power or secular power.

This power is the spirit of the anti-Christ that fights against God's people during the entire church age, between Christ's first coming and His second coming.

1 John 2:18

18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

When we talk about the spirit of the antiChrist – the state, unfortunately, is often an instrument of evil. What has been most responsible for taking human life and for oppression? The agent responsible for the taking the most human life is the godless state. Godless secular power has taken more Christian lives than anything else. Godless secular governments have taken more human life than anything else.

This is why historically Christians tend to be conservative politically, the less government control the better when it comes to religious liberty.

In Daniel's vision these four beasts were four empires. John's readers of Revelation would have understood the fourth beast in Daniel to be the Roman empire. But it's more than the

Roman empire. Again, this is all those beasts rolled into one. It's the spirit of the devil animating any power – state, culture, etc. – to be hostile against Christians, to wage war against God's people.

3 One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.

John is not speaking here of the specific person of the antichrist, but he is contrasting the limited power of Satan with the ultimate power of Christ.

4 And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

This beast is also slain, but appears to given a new lease on life. We know that the power of Satan has been destroyed by Christ through the cross. But at the same time, this beast is also crushing and killing and trying to devour. But this beast has been bruised, wounded, slain. John talks about him being bound. In other words, he is limited in the scope of his power.

What John is describing here is the spiritual battle his readers were engaged in and the spiritual battle we are currently engaged in. What I'm finding amazing in my study of Revelation is that its application has extended to the entire church age. It applied then and it applies now.

It's like D-Day in WW II, the battle on Normandy that was marked as the decisive battle that won the war. The victory was not in question. They knew the war against Germany had been won at that point, but there was still a war to be waged.

It's the same with Satan. We know that he is slain. He is bound. His power is limited like a mad dog on a leash, but there is still a war that rages. It raged then and it rages now.

John's readers may also have thought of Nero here regarding one of the beast's heads that was mortally wounded. Nero committed suicide in 68 A.D. That was believed to be the end of his rule, but then the Jewish temple

was destroyed in 70 A.D. and in a political and military turn of events Domitian came to power in Rome and it was as if Nero had come back from the dead. His policies lived on in the emperor Domitian. In other words, the spirit of his reign lived on.

The point is that evil will always push back against the righteousness of God. That's the spiritual battle that we're engaged in now. It manifests itself most clearly these days in diametrically opposed world views.

- **The Christian moral ethic, which flows from the grace of the gospel, has always run counter to culture in every age.**

5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

Satan also fights with words. He fights against the truth of Christ with falsehoods, false ideologies and false ideas and false beliefs. He is the king of counterfeits.

These are the words John has for the first century church that found itself undergoing heavy physical persecution, the kind of persecution that tempted many to compromise.

We are not experiencing this type of persecution here in American, but many Christians around the world find these verses just as applicable today as the church did in John's day. This is not about the future. This is about then and now. This is about the church age.

7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, 8 and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

10 If anyone is to be taken captive,

to captivity he goes;

if anyone is to be slain with the sword,

with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

This may happen in the future also, but John was writing to the Christians of his day who were very discouraged. They were

undergoing unthinkable physical persecution. They were discouraged because many were denying Christ. John is writing them, explaining the vision of spiritual battle he saw and encouraging them to stay strong no matter what. You may be taken captive. You may die by the sword, but he is calling them to endure.

This is the contrast of world views (or kingdoms) in Revelation 13. Christ rose from the dead and conquered death, but the world says it's a lie. Satan, who has been defeated, promotes world views that are in opposition to Christ. He holds up false views as true and right and good. In reality, they are lies. They are ultimately nothing. But the world is impressed with false ideas, so much so that it marginalizes anyone who does not have that same world view.

- **Progressive politics**
- **Cruel dictators**
- **Foolish academic fads**
- **Every generation's preoccupation with sex (maybe you're struggling with this as**

a new Christian | when you repent, which means to change your mind, you have changed your mind about Christ and when you change your mind about Christ and begin to interact with His word, you begin to change your mind about the world around you)

- **Who can match the cultural influence of Hollywood?**
- **Who can match the academic elite of universities?**
- **The most unwise reaction the church can have is by saying, as many do, "We have to become more relevant to them by becoming more like them."**

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

REVELATION 13:14

14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

Daniel 7

8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns

were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

9 “As I looked,
thrones were placed,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat;

This Ancient of Days began His reign. I believe Daniel is speaking here of the reign of Christ. As we examine the following verses you’ll begin to see why I believe this.

his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
its wheels were burning fire.

10 A stream of fire issued
and came out from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.

Answer key: head like pure wool = holy wisdom; throne of fiery flames = judgment; its wheels burning fire = sovereignty; stream of fire = holy judgment; the thousand thousands = angels; court sat/books opened = judgment begins

11 “I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.

12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

The 4th beast is the Roman Empire and it is destroyed. What kingdom takes its place?

13 “I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.

What is the problem with interpreting verse 13 as the return of Christ? Note the direction. He’s not returning to earth. He’s coming with the clouds of heaven and being presented before God.

Clouds are often symbols of appearances of God (theophanies).

Exodus 13:21

21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

Can you think of any other events in the life of Jesus where He is associated with clouds?

Acts 1:9

9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

What event might the clouds in verse 13 of Daniel be referring to? Daniel is referring to the ascension of Christ, where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father who gave Him authority and dominion over everything on earth. Daniel is foretelling about the kingdom that would crush all other kingdoms – the kingdom of Christ.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.