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Far From Home

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God starts everyone's story at a particular time with particular people in a place we call home. Then suddenly at various times in our life, the foundations under our feet shift and we find ourselves far from our place, far from our people, far from home. Where do we find courage when the foundations shakes? How do we live in a new place that feels hostile to our faith? How do we live and thrive? We are far from home.

Well, Providence family, it's good to see you. Welcome home and if you are guest with us, we're thrilled that you joined us. I hope for all of us, whether you are new or if you've been here a very long time, this will be encouraging to you. If you have a Bible in your hand, turn with me to Daniel chapter seven, Daniel chapter seven. If you don't have one, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you, and if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift. We want you to have that.

For those of you who were able to come last Sunday night, New Hope, to me to pray and to worship the Lord, about 800 of you came and it was just remarkable and I just want to say thank you. They were so encouraged. I just cannot tell you what that meant to them. And for those of us who went, it meant a whole lot to us as well. It was a really sweet night to worship. And so I'm really glad that you were there and just want to say thank you.

So let me pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you and we pray. God, we pray for our New Hope this morning as they meet, we pray for Mount Herman as they meet. We pray for every other gospel preaching church in our city that you would give favor and blessing, that you would give courage, you would give love. We pray by your spirit that you would move in your people around the world to strengthen one another and then to scatter with the gospel this week to make disciples in all nations. And that's what we pray for ourself, that you would bless us and keep us, make your face to shine upon us. Ask God that you would be pleased. I pray, Father, that the words in my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts will be pleasing to you today. So give us curiosity, give us understanding about some really complex ideas that we're going to read about and give us courage to apply the things that we learn that we know for certain that you're calling us to. I pray for those who are here today who were discouraged that you would use this, even this interesting, perhaps even strange passage to be just ointment to their soul. And so we look to you in faith and ask that you would do all these things and exceedingly more than we could ever ask or imagine. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

God tells us in Isaiah 46 these words, he says, "I am God and there is none like me declaring the end from the beginning. And from ancient times things not yet done. Saying my counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose." There are two ways to view the future. One sees the future largely as being fluid where everything hangs in the balance of human decision, where every election, world event, every news broadcast elicits fear or anxiety or anger.

The other way to view the future is to see it as largely fixed, not as hanging in the balance of human decision, but resting, including human will in the hands of almighty sovereign God. Where concerns, real concerns, are relieved by superior confidence in God Almighty and that he is working all things after the purpose of his will.

In Daniel chapter seven, we're given evidence for the latter that God almighty, just as he said in Isaiah 46, knows the beginning from the end and has determined his purposes and is working all things after the council of his purposes. Now if you've ever read Daniel, you know that there's really two different halves of Daniel. There's the first six chapters and the last six chapters.

And in the first six chapters we find these compelling and courageous stories of these young, these they start young and they grow old over time, Jewish exiles in Babylon. They've been taken away from their families brought to Babylon and what we learned from their stories, their remarkable life is how to live and thrive in a culture where the institutions within that culture are increasingly hostile to our worldview and to our faith. And so the first six chapters you find lots of history and just a little bit of prophecy. When you get to chapter seven, it flips, and what we find now is a whole lot of prophecy and just a little bit of history. What we find in chapter seven through 12 is something called apocalyptic prophecy. Okay?

The word prophecy means that God knows the future and he tells us what's going to happen in the future. And then because he's helping to control, I say helping, he is in control of all things, is that he's moving things to what he says is going to take place, his prophecy where he's telling us in advance what's going to happen.

Apocalyptic speaks about end times. In other words, for Daniel when he was living, his story begins in 605 BC. From 605 BC, around that time, what we find in Daniel is God Almighty is about to make prophecies that are in his future. Now, because we've lived a long time since then, some of these prophecies will have already been fulfilled, but these prophecies actually go not just to our day, but to the very last day here on the earth, to the end of times on this earth. And all of this is aimed at helping us to rest in God who is real and who is present, who is personal, who is faithful and who has all things in his hands.

Now it's really important, just a few keys. If I handed you a few keys and say, these keys are going to help you unlock some doors so that you can interpret what this prophecy is. It's important you know these keys. One is this. Is that prophecy, a lot of prophecy, uses a tremendous amount of metaphor, a lot of metaphor. And so we're going to find the word like and as a whole bunch, it's sort of like this, it's like that. It's not that, but it's like that. You're going to find this over and over and over again. And that makes interpretation confusing because sometimes he says, this is exactly what I'm talking about. Here's the real thing behind the symbol. And sometimes we're not certain.

In fact, there's a lot in this passage that if you don't pay attention today, really pay attention. If you jump in and out, you may jump in and I may say, lion, you may jump back in. I'm going to say bear or leopard or little horn or antichrist. And you're going to be, you walk out and you go, I have no idea. That dude is crazy, right? So it's really important. This is going to be a difficult thing for me. It's been two times in a row. This is number three, and this is going to be difficult for you, okay? There's a lot of metaphors.

Second is prophecy jumps in and out, in and out, in between the physical world and the spiritual world. Some people in the world, they don't think that there is a spiritual world. They just assume that all that there

is all that I can touch. But the Bible says that our war is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities in the spiritual places. Meaning there's a world out there that is spiritual, that interconnects with the physical world. And so the prophecies in one verse can be talking about a human king, and then in the very next verse, it can jump into a spiritual reality. And it doesn't give us always a warning when it moves between one and the other.

And then there's one other key or at least thing you need to keep in mind, and that is that these prophecies often have dual fulfillments, and those fulfillments sometimes are near and sometimes they're far. For example, if we went to the mountains and we came here and we said, "oh, look at the mountains. They're all so close together." And I say, you know what? When we get to that mountain, let's just say I'm a prophet. I'm not. Let's just say I was and say, when you get to that mountain, this is what's going to happen. Well, the fact is there's lots of different peaks and from a long way away it looks like they're all really close. But when you get up close to them, each of those peaks is considerable distance away. Well, same with prophecy. Some prophecies, they have dual fulfillment, meaning there's two things that it's pointing to and sometimes it's something that may be 10 years away, it's near fulfillment. But then another thing is maybe thousands years away.

Now, I have studied a whole lot this week about this, and if you've ever read Daniel, you go, probably understand why. And let me just say a few things before we jump in. The breadth, meaning the quantity of material is a lot, okay? It's intimidating to be totally honest with you. And much of the interpretation can be very confusing. There's things in it that you're probably going to go, what? But let me encourage us to jump in. And the reason is because Jesus Christ, the king of kings and Lord of Lords is waiting for us there.

The first truth I want you to see is this. If you take notes, and that is that God knows the future and controls it for our good. Sometimes our good doesn't happen today, but his plan considers our everlasting good, our lifelong good. He knows the future and controls it all for our good. We all view life like a parade, one float at a time, one little band at a time. And the parade that we get to see is not one where it's a straight road. No. We happen to be at a place to where every float, every band, everything that comes through the parade has to turn a quarter and enter our street. And so we see things one thing at a time as it comes in front of us. Or if you think about a fireworks show. We get to see one burst at a time, but God sees everything from the beginning to the end. And so he can stand next to us and said, you know what? You're going to love the fifth float, because he sees it all. He knows it all, and he controls it all.

And so notice what it says in verse one. "In the first year of Belshazaar, king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed, and then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter." And so up until this point, everybody who's dreaming happens to be a foreigner. But now Daniel is the dreamer, not the interpreter. It says that it happens in the first year of Belshazaar, that was one of the kings of Babylon. Now, we've looked at this guy in chapter five, which means that this vision, when he had this dream, it actually took place between chapter four and chapter five of Daniel.

And this is what we read in verse two. He starts, "Daniel declared, I saw in my vision by nine and behold the

four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea, and four great beasts came up out of the sea different from one another.” So just notice a few things here. By the way, I’m not going to read the whole text. We’re going to go a little bit at a time, okay? So just keep looking up.

In chapter seven verses two and three, he says this, he says, “There was four winds of heaven that were stirring up the great sea, north, south, east and west,” and notice that all of them originated with heaven. And the reason, or what this means, is that God Almighty is the one who is orchestrating the stirring. He is the one who is moving in the waters of the sea. He’s the one who’s causing the unsettled nature of the sea. This is his doing. He’s the principle mover here. Now, when he says that he’s stirring up the great sea, we’re like, I wonder what the great sea is. And fortunately what we have in the Bible is this, is that God also he gave a dream to a man named John.

It’s the last book of the Bible, Revelation. In Daniel chapter 17 through 12 and all of Revelation four to the end, maybe the whole thing, one helps us interpret the other. If you study one, you’re going to learn something about the other. And so in one, it maybe leaves a few things unsaid, but others can be like, wow, okay, that’s what it is. Well, in John’s Revelation in chapter 17:15 we’re told there that the sea that he’s seeing here, he says, is all the peoples and all the nations, all the multitudes, all the languages. In other words, God Almighty, by his power, is orchestrating an unsettledness in the sea of humanity. And he says, “Out of this sea, four great beasts come up out of the sea.”

Now, if you were here, or if you’ve ever read Daniel two where the king has a vision of this great big idol, this great big statue, and there’s different metals, the head was gold and then there was silver and bronze and iron. And so in each one of those, they all represented a world empire, world power, starting with Babylon, moving to Persia, moving to Greece, and then moving to Rome, it goes down. Well, what we find here is in the vision to Daniel is it’s a very similar vision in terms of its meaning, but instead of using gold and silver and these kind of materials, he uses animals. He uses these beasts, and so let’s work through each one of them.

Verse four, it says, “The first was like a lion and had eagle’s wings, and then 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 represents the Babylonian empire, in particular, the king Nebuchadnezzar. You remember in chapter four that he became all arrogant before God. And so for a period of time that he was humbled, he was plucked, and as a result of that, he eventually lifted his eyes to the Lord and what happened? God lifted him up. He was walking for a number of years like an animal on all fours, and suddenly he was made to stand on two feet like a man and his mind that had lost him all of a sudden was restored and the mind of man was given to it. This is a prophecy about Babylon. He’s saying, this is where you’re at. And of course, this is where Daniel was actually living. He was under a Babylonian king, Belshazzar.

The lion with wings. It’s really interesting is King Nebuchadnezzar, he created all these gates and there’s a gates called the Ishtar gate, and the Ishtar gate is currently in a museum in London, and there it’s been restored, but what we find there is one of the things that the king loved to decorate with, lions with eagle’s

wings, it represents Babylon.

So then we get to verse five. In verse five, we meet the next beast and it says, “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 and devour much flesh.” Well, this is the Medo-Persian empire. This is who would take over. This is who’s going to conquer Babylon, and it’s in a symbol of a bear. You notice a lumpy bear, right? It’s raised up on one side. It’s sort of a mangled kind of a bear. The Medes and the Persians, they joined forces, but eventually the Persians took over. They raised up, and so as a result of that, most of us simply call it the Persian Empire. It’s because they were more powerful and you notice that there was three ribs in the bear’s mouth, and we know from history that all of their armies, they had to conquer three different empires in order to well to rule the world, right? One was Lydia, which is modern day Turkey, Babylon, and Egypt.

Now, keep in mind that all of what he’s talking about now, Daniel could not have known simply by being a student of current events. Now God’s telling him things that are going to be taking place in the future, and then we get to verse six and we meet the third beast “After this, I looked and behold another like a leopard with four wings, a bird on its back, and the beast had four heads and dominion was given to it.” Well, this represents the Greek empire. Now, we all know that a leopard’s fast, but once it reaches to the sea, it’s got to slow down, right? Because it’s not a great swimmer unless that leopard has four wings and then something that’s really fast continues to be really fast. The king of Greece, Alexander the Great, he actually took power and he conquered the entire known world in 12 years before he was 33 years old, he never lost a single battle, and then unexpectedly, he died, and he didn’t have a living heir, and so his kingdom was actually divided up among four generals, which is why it says the beast had four heads.

The Greek empire, eventually history tells us, was divided into four, and that brings us to the four beast in verse seven. “After this I saw on the night visions behold the fourth beast terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke its pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the other beasts that were before it and it had 10 horns.” Well, this is the Roman Empire. It was different. It was different in its terror how much dread it had brought to the entire world. It’s exceedingly strong and had teeth like iron and its legions stomp their feet for over a thousand years. It was incredibly powerful. What’s interesting is when anytime you look at Bible prophecy and you talk about these world powers, it always ends with the Roman Empire, and the reason is because God Almighty is pointing us to his son, Jesus Christ.

You see God in all of his grace, he wants our attention to be fixed on him, and so what God is doing is he’s directing our eyes to the Roman Empire because that is who he appointed would be in power when Christ came, and listen, it will be who is in power when Christ comes again. Note that. We’ll come back to that.

Verse eight, “I considered the horns and behold there came up from 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.” This little horn represents the antichrist. The antichrist is a person who is going to be possessed by Satan himself, who have tremendous influence and power over the entire world near the very end. Now we’re going to come back to him, because the third point is all about him, and what God’s going to do with him.

But before we get there, I’m convinced when I was writing this, I thought, if I get to this point in time, who cares about any of this if you’re simply trying to stay married. I started thinking, who cares if you just received a diagnosis of cancer, who the leopard is? And it’s important for us to recognize the connection between those two. I know that many of us, we came in here when really looking for just some antidote of the soul to deal with our anxiety or our fear or our relational brokenness or our debt or our failing business. Some of us, we simply want encouragement and all of a sudden I’ve just gone through lions and bears and leopards and little horns and it’s like, what does it have to do with anything?

Let me just encourage you with this. God Almighty in His grace tells us that he knows all things, that he controls all things and that he uses all things for his glory and for our good. And so the point that I want us to consider thinking about how we apply to our life is this. Is that when you think about these things and you think about the burdens of your life is let’s lean on God’s sovereignty for hope and our own day.

You see, God Almighty, as I said, he knows all things. He knows where you’re at. If he can actually present this material to Daniel in a dream hundreds and even thousands of years before it actually took place, then he’s going to be faithful with his promises to you and to me. He controls all this for the good of his people. You say, “Well, how was any of this good for us?” Well consider, consider the fact that God used Babylon in order to pure by his people from idolatry and even give his people for all time the book of Daniel in the book of Jeremiah, and consider how he used the empire of Persia to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple that would both become instrumental in the ministry of Jesus, and maybe consider the fact that God by his grace would elevate the Greek Empire who would eventually unite the entire known world, most of the world around a common language called Koine Greek, knowing that the New Testament of the Bible would be written in Greek and therefore would be readable and accessible to most of the people in the world, and consider the fact that he would raise the Roman Empire, it would be instrumental in the death and resurrection of our savior, Jesus Christ.

He’s sovereign over all things. And when Peter was thinking about these things, Peter you remember was living in the first century and he’s simply looking back and he says, “You know what, ma’am? Like I still have a lot of things that are undone, and yet I can read from the book of Daniel and I can see that there are some prophecies that God Almighty said would happen.” And as Peter was looking back for him, they were history. For Daniel, they were future. And Peter says to us, “We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.” In other words, we’ve had the opportunity to live a little bit to actually see if God is faithful and trustworthy with his prophecies and with his promises and to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.

In other words, today if you happen to be in a dark place, you got a bad diagnosis, you're in a really difficult relationship, you're in debt, something's really bad. This really matters and the reason is because God wants to use it to prove to you that he's not done in your life, that he's still ruling all things, that you, your marriage, are still in his hands. He's sovereign over all things and it should shape our hope for today.

The second truth is this, is that God will crown his son to rule the world forever. Now, I know that some of you, you get all jazzed up when you hear the word antichrist, and so some of you're like, let's just get to that one. Let's get to that one. Listen, if you walk out of here and you happen to be a person who's more mesmerized and interested in the third point about the antichrist, then you are about the king of kings, Jesus in the second point, then either I have done a bad job teaching or you have missed the whole point. Christ is the center of this prophecy. He's the pinnacle, he's the apex. If you're impressed with anything you want to think about, you want to argue about, you want to talk about anything more than Christ on his throne, then your motivation is defective.

The pinnacle we're going to read here is that when God almighty crowns his son to rule the world forever, you see from this really tumultuous sea, we're rushed to God's throne, and we're rushed to God's throne at the final judgment. Look what it says in verse nine. "As I looked, thrones were placed and the ancient days took a seat. His clothing was wide as snow and the hair of his head like pure wool, his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire." There are all kinds of names that God chooses to describe his own character to us, and when he wants to describe that he's eternal and everlasting, he says, "I'm the ancient of days."

We like to tell people, Hey, I wasn't born yesterday. To infer our inability to be fooled, God leans into humanity and he says, "I'm the ancient of days. I was never born. I've always been. I won't ever be fooled." And you notice what it says about him. His clothing is wide as snow. This is the reference to his holiness and his purity. It's perfect. His hair like head of pure wool. This is his wisdom. It's perfect wisdom. His throne was a fiery flames. This is all representative of his justice and notice that his throne has got wheels and they're on fire. I mean, how cool is that. Just racing around. His wheels are just like, or just fire coming out from like what's that about? What is this? Is that God Almighty can come into every single home, every single hospital room, every single country, every nation, and he never leaves his throne. His justice travels with him. He always is in authority. It's not just one central place. His throne is movable. It's transferable because his authority goes with him. This is who God is.

And then notice what it says in verse 10. "A stream of fire issued and came out from before him. A thousand thousand served him and 10,000 times 10,000 stood before him and the court sat in judgment and the books were opened." Friends, this is telling us of a day of judgment that is coming for all of us, and the question that I have to pause and ask is, are you ready for this? There is a day coming when God Almighty will take his seat. The court of judgment will be in order and the books will be opened and you will be on the stand.

And I as well. The books are the deeds, the record of what we have done on the earth, including the book of

a Lamb's book of life that actually tells every name, who has put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Are you ready for this day?

Jesus, when he came to the earth, he said, "Let me tell you the criteria to be ready for this day." He says, "You therefore must be perfect because the heavenly Father is perfect." His holiness, his wisdom, his justice is perfect. He says, "You therefore must be perfect." Are you ready for this day? Either you have to have your own moral perfection on the basis of your own works against the law. The Bible says, none of us do. Or we have to know somebody who lived the perfect life, who is willing to extend and transfer his own righteousness into our account.

In a moment, I'm going to show you how this is available to each and every one of us, but before we get there, notice what happens next. Verse 11 and 12, all of a sudden we're reminded that there's this principality of evil called the antichrist. He said, "I looked then because the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking." In other words, this horn shows up in the throne room of God. "And as I looked, the beast was killed and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beast, their dominion was taken away and their lives were prolonged for a season and for a time." Again, we see the little horns, speaking words that are boastful until God Almighty effortlessly brings justice and this little horn is killed.

The effortlessness is intensified when you continue to read the New Testament and Paul, the apostle Paul, wants to tell us just how simple it is for Christ to defeat his greatest enemy because of his authority after his resurrection. And this is what Paul says of this lawless one. He says in Second Thessalonians, he says, "The lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth." You know how Jesus is going to kill evil? He's going to talk. That's the authority that flows from his mouth. He works through his word. This is the death of evil and this brings to us, to the apex of all history, the coordination of Jesus Christ.

Notice what it says in verse 13 and 14. He says, "I saw in the night visions and behold with the cloud of heaven, there came one like the son of man, he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given all dominion and glory and the kingdom that all people's nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away in his kingdom won that shall not be destroyed." You say, "Well, how did we get here? How did we get to this coronation of the king, the apex of all of history?" We get there by going all the way back.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and he created us for a relationship with him. For a period of time there was perfect peace and then we're told that there was an attempted coup on the throne of heaven by one of his archangels named Lucifer. Lucifer was thrown out of heaven, so he came into the garden where man and woman lived, and there in the garden he came to dishonor God and to tempt man to believe that God was not good, trustworthy, or just. The one restriction that God gave to us, the man and woman sinned against that instruction, and as a result of that brokenness, it flowed over all humanity. For the first time, they knew insecurity and guilt and shame. For the first time they knew strife in their relationship,

their bodies were going to die, and not only that, we're told that the sin nature that they had would be passed through every subsequent generation ensuring brokenness in every future generation.

And it was into this pain that God made a promise, a promise to send a son, a son who would become a savior, and a savior who would become a king. Isaiah nine says it this way, "To us, a child is born and to us, a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder." And in the fullest of time, Christ came to the earth and he came during the power of the ancient Roman Empire, and he came not as a leopard or a beast or anything with horns, anything with power. He came as the weakest animal. He came as a lamb. That was the metaphor given to Jesus. And he came to the Roman Empire. He lived without any sin and yet he was pierced. All of those horns from all of those enemies, they went through him and he died on a cross. He was buried in the grave and he rose from the dead and he extended an invitation to all humanity and it's this. He says, "You have not lived as you ought, but I have. And if you will stop trusting in yourself, but instead put your faith and trust in me that all you deserve and your sin will fall upon me on the cross, and all I deserve in my righteousness will fall upon you and your account forever."

This is the only way that we can actually receive what is necessary to get to that throne room. He says, "You must be perfect." Jesus is the only one extending the invitation of moral perfection to us where he actually transfers his righteous account to our account. This is the hope. Have you trusted him? Would you trust him right now? You see, when Jesus was on the earth, he repeatedly referred to himself as the son of man. Let me just give you a few of these references. He says, "The son of man," speaking of himself, "has authority to forgive sins." In Matthew 17, right before he went to Jerusalem to die, he says, "The son of man is about to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him and he will be raised in the third day and then he goes to his trial before the court." He says, "That you will see the son of man seated to the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

You see, each time Jesus was saying, "I'm the son of man," he was specifically saying to the Jewish people, "I am the one to whom Daniel spoke." Jesus is the son of man, he's human. He's also the son of God, he's the cloud writer, and don't you know that this is precisely what we find in John's vision. In chapter four and five of the book of Revelation, God, the Father is sitting on his throne, has complete authority over all things. Everyone's worshiping him and that everyone notices that there's a scroll in his hand. It happens to be the title deed to the whole universe. Whoever holds it has dominion forever and ever and ever. John looks around, there's no one who has the credentials to be able to go, and suddenly it says, "And one arose." And says, "He looked like something. He says He looked like a lamb who had been slain. He had holes in his body." In humility and yet authority, he walks up to God, almighty God the Father, his father and the son of God takes the scroll and suddenly all of heaven erupts in worship and they start singing, "Worthy are you the lamb who is slain to receive wisdom and power and mind and glory and blessing."

Friends, we will see this one day. And until that day, let me encourage us to rejoice in what awaits us, for in heaven forever and ever, Jesus will have complete authority. Think about this. There'll be no elections, no

restlessness, no rivals, no rebels, no fear, no dishonor of Christ, no death. No one will ever stub their toe in heaven and say, “Jesus Christ,” as a curse for he will only be honored forever. And this, what’s amazing is not only that, he’ll share his kingdom with us. Notice what he says in verse 15. “As for me, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me, and I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things, these four great beasts to four kings who shall rise out of the earth.”

But notice this, “But the saints, the most high, shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom of God, forever and ever and ever.” Jesus is going to share his kingdom with us, grace upon grace. The third and last thing I want you to see, which will be unfolded with great detail next week, is that God promises the rise and fall of the antichrist. I know the mention of the antichrist, because of books and movies, it causes either intrigue or fear, but don’t forget that Jesus Christ only speaks a word and he dies so clearly. He’s not the hero or the most powerful.

In verse seven, we saw that the fourth beast, which represents Rome, we saw that it has 10 horns. In verse eight, we saw that this little horn emerges among those 10 horns with eyes like a man and a boastful mouth, and this is reiterated and in verse 19 and 20, “Then I desire to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying in its teeth of iron and claws, the bronze in which devoured and broken pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. And about the 10 horns that were on its head and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, and the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things that seemed greater than its companions.”

Some believe that what I’m reading right now it that it describes a past event in the ancient Roman Empire. Some believe that this represents a spiritual reality, something that’s happening in the spiritual world. I believe the Bible teaches that this is a coming physical reality, an event that will occur before we see Christ Jesus return again and before we enjoy the fullness of his reign.

You remember the mountain range. What we find here is that when we look at the mountains and we look at these prophecies as it relates to Rome, we see some prophecies happening sooner and some prophecies will be fulfilled later. Jesus’ first coming came during the Roman Empire, but in Revelation chapter 17, we find a revival of sorts of the remnant of some of the nations in the Roman Empire that will have 10 kings, or powers, that will be in power when Jesus Christ returns. Out of those 10, a final king, in the final form of the Roman Empire will arise, and this is the antichrist.

Antichrist means against or in place of Christ. You see God almighty, he creates and Satan wants to create a counterfeit. So Christ is king, and so Satan sets up a counterfeit king. Christ’s kingdom is comprehensive. It has a government, it has a ruler, it has an economy, it has a morality, it has a place of worship and someone to worship. Satan’s counterfeit kingdom is also comprehensive. It has a one world order. It has one central economy, one trading system, a new version of morality, a new place of worship, and a new name to be worshiped.

And how does all this start? It starts little, like the little horn, but then that grows and it becomes violent.

That's what it says in verse 21. "As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them until the ancient of days came and judgment was given for the saints of the most high. And the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom."

Then he said, "As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth and trample it down and break it to pieces. As for the 10 horns, out of this kingdom, 10 kings shall arise and another shall arise after them. He shall be different from the former ones and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the most high and shall wear out the saints of the most high and shall think to change the times and the law, and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and a half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment and his dominion shall be taken away to be consumed and destroyed to the end. The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high, and his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominion shall serve and obey him. Here at the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarm me," which is totally understandable, "and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart."

Seven years before the return of Jesus Christ, the Bible talks about will be the seven worst years in the history of the world, the tribulation. During the first half of these seven years or three and a half years, the antichrist, we will learn, by the way, we're going to study all of this in chapter eight and nine. This is just a little free blessing here this morning. Okay? The antichrist, which is empowered by Satan himself will gain power in the world and will even help to rebuild the Jewish temple. In the second three and a half years, he will unleash a war against the saints the most high. During this time, he will establish, we're told in the book of Revelation, he will establish his own image in the holy of Holies of the temple and demand the world to worship him.

Verse 25, in Daniel seven says that he will think to change the times. We have Christmastime. It's a season of holiday. It's a season of importance. The antichrist is going to seek and think that he has the authority to change what people view as important, including the laws of morality in the land, and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. A time is one year, times is two years, half a time is a half a year. So three and a half years. During this time, he will require a mark be given to anyone to function in his worldwide economy, and those who refuse this mark will pay with their lives. Verse 25 also says that he shall speak words against the most high and shall wear out the saints the most high, which is precisely what we find in John's Revelation chapter 13. "The beast was given a mouth uttering, haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for 42 months."

How long is 42 months? It's three and a half years. "It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God. 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." Now, a lot of people love to ask the question, who are these saints?

And there's all kinds of different interpretations of who these saints are. Some people believe it's the church itself, that the church will still be there at the time. Other people believe that the church will be raptured to heaven either at the midpoint of that seven years or at the end of that seven years to protect us from all that will take place and that these saints happen to be people that during those seven years come to faith in Christ because they recognize that he indeed is the only way, the truth, and the life.

At the end of these seven years, Christ will return and he will establish his reign on the earth for a thousand years. In the book of Revelation chapter 20, we're told there that Satan during that thousand years will be bound in a pit. At the end of that time, he will be released and immediately banished to hell forever. And there we will live in a new heaven and a new earth under King Jesus forever and ever and ever. So friends, don't be afraid.

Let me finish with just a couple thoughts of application. First, let me encourage us as a church to be wise about our times. The ancient of days sits on his throne, but the spirit of antichrist is already on the earth. This is what John teaches us in first John four. He says, "Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is already in the world." In other words, there is a antichrist who comes in history, but before that, there's a spirit. How does it begin? It begins small. A little lust grows into a great big problem. A little false teaching, it grows into a great big problem. A little sensuality, it grows into a great big problem. It always begins little, but then it grows until Christ has been replaced as our highest authority and our greatest love friends.

Our war is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers. And this is why it is absolutely incumbent upon us for the work that we do as a church, that the ministry we do in our city is done in spiritual means. Spiritual work has to be done in spiritual ways. When we call you to pray, when we call us as a church family to come to God and say we need power, it's because of this. There is a world that is connected between the physical and the spiritual, and if we imagine that we can simply buy our way or organize our way out of problems and into effectiveness in our city, we are blind. We have to pray.

And what is the work that we're to do is to proclaim the gospel. This is the age of the church. This is the time when we have a commission from Christ himself that says before those times, people who do not know, therefore they are not ready, need to be known, and they need to be made ready by telling them the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they can be forgiven of their sin. This is our time to spread the gospel around the world and make disciples.

And finally, for those of you who have never put your trust in Christ, let me urge you to call on Christ and put your trust in him today. Listen to me. I got two sentences left.

Daniel chapter seven and beyond, it's not meant to turn its readers into curious investigators. It's meant to turn us into believers and worshipers. Jesus said, "You also must be ready, for the son of man is coming at an

hour you do not expect.” Are you ready?

So let’s pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you and recognize that apart from your spirit, we won’t understand these things. And so I pray, God, that you would move in the hearts of people right now as we prayed all morning, God, that many in this room right now who do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ, who are trusting in their own righteousness, trusting in anything else than Jesus or that they would see, that they would confess their sin, that would put their faith in Christ and they would be saved today. Please God, draw people to yourself. For those of us who know you, love you, would you keep our heart loving you? We know you’re the found of every blessing. We know that we’re prone to wander, and so we ask God that you would keep us close. Give us now, Lord, energy, to sing to you our faith and hope in Christ. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Would you stand? Let’s sing.

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