



Silverdale Baptist

STAND. A STUDY IN DANIEL • STAND STILL • DANIEL 7:1-28 • 7/11-12/2020

MAIN POINT

Put your hope in the eternal King and His eternal Kingdom.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever had a dream that was so real you woke up afraid? Can you share what happened?

How did you feel?

Daniel's dream in chapter 7 terrified him. He described it this way "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed..." (Dan. 7:28) Daniel's dreams were not like ours. But, if you have ever had a dream shake you up, you might understand just a little of Daniel felt.

Often end-times prophecies and visions like the ones in Daniel 7 lead us to confusion and speculation, but they are designed to lead us into hope. For the Christian, apocalyptic visions are more about life and beginning than destruction. At the center of this vision is the eternal King seated on His eternal throne. God promises His people an eternal kingdom where they will dwell with Him, made possible only by the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His sacrifice for us. While we wait for the future that is described in this chapter, we can trust in the present and eternal hope we have in God.

UNDERSTANDING

Note: The vision of the four beasts coming out of the ocean can be confusing. But don't worry! Daniel didn't understand the vision either, and that is why the angel later explains the meaning. Stay with us, and the meaning will become clear.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 7:1-8.

These verses describe the first vision God gave Daniel about the coming messianic kingdom.

How many beasts are there?

How is each beast described?

What makes the 4th beast different?

What do you learn about the little horn?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 7:7-12

How is the Ancient of Days described?

How is His throne described?

Who is the Ancient of Days?

What happens to the 4th beast?

What happens to the other beasts?

What stands out to you from the vision recorded in verses 1-12?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 7:9-14

In verses 13-14, who approaches the Ancient of Days?

What is He given?

How is this last kingdom described?

The descriptions of the Ancient of Days is the same description we see of Jesus in Revelation 1. God is a King who reigns forever and ever. We will never know the end of His days. He is eternally and radically in control of all human events. As his visions continued, Daniel saw One like a son of man, meaning this person was in human form. Jesus regularly referred to Himself as the Son of Man. The scene depicts Jesus the Messiah as being submissive to the Ancient of Days and obedient to His will. Just as God, the Ancient of Days, has the authority to set up and to destroy the kingdoms of this world, He also has the authority to empower His Messiah to rule.

Now, you may be asking yourself what in the world is going on with these visions! What does all of this mean? That is ok because Daniel didn't understand either. Verse 15 says Daniel was

terrified by the visions. So Daniel starts asking questions.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 7:15-18

What is the interpretation of the vision?

Daniel began to see visions in the first year of Belshazzar, approximately 553 B.C. By that time, Daniel was probably a man in his mid-60s. He had a dream composed of several visions. The images in his visions included the four winds, the great sea, and four massive beasts, which Daniel described in some detail. Traditionally, the four beasts represent the world powers of Daniel's day—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 7:19, 23-28.

What is the interpretation of the 4th beast and the little horn?

According to verse 25, how long does the little horn have power?

As amazing as these kingdoms are, especially the 4th kingdom, how is the 5th and final kingdom described in verse 25?

Daniel said his spirit was deeply distressed and terrified. The interpretation provided was not a complete description of every detail, but rather an outline of the events that would happen. The interpretation of Daniel's vision included a reference to the holy ones of God (v. 18). These are God's people, His saints, those who believe His word and obey His counsel. Unlike the worldly kingdoms—those four, massive beasts who faced certain destruction—the holy ones of the Most High will one day receive the kingdom that has no end. The evil kingdoms will be destroyed, and God's people will receive the kingdom established by the Messiah. Though the kingdoms of this world always attack Christ's kingdom and His people, ultimately, they will be destroyed. God's kingdom will survive the onslaught, will thrive and will stand forever. As Christians, we can live securely in light of the certainty that we will participate in God's victorious, sovereign rule both now and forever.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How should we react when we face trouble in this world? Should Christians be distressed or surprised? What hope do we have in those moments?

How can we, as a community of faith, live and minister with this eternal kingdom in our sight?

What implications does the eternal rule and dominion of God have for us as we seek to live for Him and tell others about Him?

The four beasts and the little horn remind us that evil is genuine and present in our world. How should the presence of evil, and the fact that it will continue to exist until Jesus returns, impact the way we live each day?

EXTRA CREDIT

If you have time re-read the first dream recorded in Daniel 2:31-45. Note the similarities between:

- the beasts of chapter 4 and the statue of Daniel 2.
- the stone that destroyed the statue and the kingdom of the Ancient of Days, the Most High.

PRAYER

Praise God for His eternal kingdom ruled by the eternal King Jesus. Pray that visions like Daniel's would fill us with the hopeful expectation of the future and fill us with the grace to persevere when trouble comes.

COMMENTARY

| DANIEL 7

7:1–28 This chapter of Daniel is one of the most important in the entire OT, an essential guide to biblical prophecy. Moreover, the vision of the Son of Man is the centerpiece of OT revelation concerning the Messiah. The Aramaic section of Daniel begins in chap. 2 with Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossus and ends at the end of chap. 7. One reason for repeating the similar information in chaps. 2 and 8 is that chap. 2 presents the world kingdoms from a Gentile perspective, while chap. 8 views the Gentile empires from the perspective of the Jewish people. Another reason for the repetition is to confirm the certainty of the predictions. As Joseph said, Pharaoh's dreams were repeated because "the matter has been determined by God, and he will carry it out soon" (Gn 41:32). The vision was included to give hope to Israel in captivity, informing the nation that life in the times of the Gentiles would get worse for God's covenant people, but ultimately the messianic kingdom would be established.

7:1. Belshazzar became co-regent with Nabonidus in 553 b.c. Assuming Daniel was about 15 when he was exiled to Babylon, he would have received this vision when he was approximately 67 years old. The events described in this chapter precede those of Daniel 5.

7:2. The four winds stirring up the great sea refers to the convulsions of the Gentile nations in the times of the Gentiles. The chapter later indicates that the sea represents "the earth" (v. 17) from which the four kingdoms arise. Moreover, "the sea" is frequently symbolic of Gentile humanity in other biblical passages (Isa. 17:12-13; 57:20; Rev 13:1; 17:1,15).

7:3. The four huge beasts represent the four nations previously identified in the vision of the colossus in Daniel. These four beasts are increasingly violent, perhaps indicating the growing moral degeneracy of the respective kingdoms they represent.

7:4 .The lion with eagle's wings represents the Babylonian Empire. The winged lion was a fitting symbol because some biblical passages represent Nebuchadnezzar as a lion (Jer. 4:7; 49:19; 50:17,44) and others as an eagle (Jer. 49:22; Lam. 4:19; Ezek. 17:3; Hab. 1:8). The Babylonian Empire used lions to represent itself, and statues with winged lions were common there. Perhaps the wings being torn off represents Nebuchadnezzar's madness, and the lion's being set on its feet like a man indicates his restoration.

7:5. The bear... with three ribs in its mouth represents the Medo-Persian Empire and its three main conquests: Babylon (539 b.c.), Lydia (546 b.c.), and Egypt (525 b.c.). Its lopsided nature expresses the Persian dominance in this joint empire.

7:6. The leopard represents the Greek Empire. Its four wings refer to the great speed of Alexander's conquests and its four heads represent the four principle sections of the empire: Greece and Macedonia, Thrace and Asia Minor, Syria and Babylon, and Egypt and Israel.

7:7. The terrifying fourth beast represents the Roman Empire. It was different from the previous three because it was more powerful and had longer dominion. Horns commonly represent kings or kingdoms in Scripture (Ps. 132:17; Zech. 1:18; Rev 13:1; 17:12), as the angel's later interpretation plainly indicates (Dan 7:24).

7:8. A little...horn represents a king who starts small in power but becomes dominant. The little horn's eyes... like a man's indicates its shrewdness and its mouth that spoke arrogantly points to its boasting blasphemously against God (cp. v. 25). This little horn is a future world ruler whom Scripture also calls "the coming prince" (9:26); the king who "will do whatever he wants" (11:36); "the man of lawlessness," "the son of destruction," (2Th 2:3); "the beast," (Rev 13:1-10); and the "Antichrist" (1Jn 2:18).

7:9-10. The phrase the Ancient of Days refers to God's eternal nature.

7:11-12 The destruction of the beast by burning fire refers to the end of the fourth kingdom, the revived Roman Empire. The rest of the beasts, meaning the previous three kingdoms, would continue to exist but without their earlier dominance, until the coming of the messianic kingdom.

7:13-14. Although some have maintained that the son of man is the archangel Michael or a collective personification of the "holy ones of the most high" (v. 18), this One is none other than the divine Messiah Himself, who will fulfill the destiny of humanity (Ps. 8; Heb. 2:5-18). Jesus understood it to be a messianic title (Mk. 14:61-62), and He used it to speak of Himself. Later rabbis saw it as one of the names of the Messiah.

7:18. The holy ones of the Most High is most likely a reference to Israel when the nation turns in faith to their Messiah Jesus (Zech. 12:10; Rm. 11:26). The literal covenant people will receive the kingdom, emphasizing that Messiah's final kingdom will be a literal kingdom on earth.

7:23-24a. After a summary of the vision's meaning (vv. 19-22), the angel explains that the fourth kingdom, in its future state, will devour the whole earth, indicating world domination. The 10 kings could be a metaphor for completeness. More likely, it refers to an empire with a literal confederation of 10 kings (cp. Rev 17:12-13).

7:24b-26. Another king, the antichrist (cp. vv. 7-8), described in the vision as the little horn, will arise and take control of this last human empire by subduing three kings. He will be characterized by blasphemy (words against the Most High), anti-Semitism (he will oppress the holy ones of the Most High), religious corruption (he will intend to change religious festivals and laws). He will oppress the Jewish people for time, times, and half a time, meaning three and one-half years, or the second half of the future tribulation (cp. Rev 7:14). Some conclude that this was fulfilled when Antiochus oppressed the Jewish people from 167-164 b.c. This is unlikely since that period was for only three years and not three and one-half years. It is better to view this oppression as yet future. When the heavenly court will convene, the antichrist will be completely destroyed forever.

7:27. The Son of Man will take His throne and rule over His everlasting kingdom. Then the people—the believing remnant of Israel, also called holy ones—will receive this kingdom under the authority of their Messiah, the Son of Man. [1]

[1] Michael Rydelnik, "Daniel," in CSB Study Bible: Notes, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1337.