

DANIEL

Chapter 7 -Notes

Understanding Apocalyptic Literature

- Apocalyptic literature is a wholly unique subset of biblical literature, and what it asks of us in reading it is very different from other genres, such as narrative. In reading apocalyptic literature, we step fully into the biblical world of symbolism, imagery, and association. No detail is insignificant or arbitrarily given. In order to understand the visions, we must come to be intimately familiar with the symbolic world of the Bible. We must think in the categories they thought. We must understand imagery as they did. We must know of how the Bible uses and utilizes such images and symbols elsewhere. And we must be careful not to become too woodenly literal in our expectations.
- A Word of Caution: While we certainly may seek understanding in the events which fulfill biblical visions and prophecy, often times it must suffice us to rest in the general understanding of the vision, without full disclosure as to how such details manifest themselves in reality, in all their particular elements.

Daniel 7 Outline

- Daniel receives a vision
 - Four beasts come up from the sea
 - A lion
 - A bear
 - A leopard
 - A great beast w/ 10 horns

- A new horn arose on the fourth beast with eyes and a mouth
- The Ancient of Days is seated with his heavenly court
- The little horn is slain.
- One like the Son of Man comes to the ancient of days and receives the kingdom.
- An angel interprets the dream
 - The beasts are four kingdoms
 - The one receiving the kingdom are the saints (in Christ)
 - The little horn is an antagonist to God and His people
 - The little horn will be judged and the saints will subsequently come to rule.
- Daniel is alarmed

Elements of the Dream

- Four beasts from the great sea
 - Lion with wings. Wings plucked, made to stand as a man, and given the heart of a man
 - Bear standing on one side. Three ribs in its teeth. Told to eat much meat.
 - Leopard with four wings, four heads, and dominion.
 - Fearsome and terrifying beast with great strength. Teeth of iron and claws of bronze. Tramples down other beats. Possesses 10 horns, and then an eleventh.
- The Ancient of Days
 - Seen arriving to sit with a heavenly court, surrounded by many heavenly hosts.
 - Bright white clothing and hair.
 - Throne is a type of chariot, all ablaze in fire, with a stream of fire flowing from Him

- The Son of Man
 - Arose before the Ancient of Days upon clouds and came near to Him
 - Given dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom.
- The Little Horn
 - Possesses eyes and a mouth that is boasting
 - Wages war against the Ancient of Days and the saints
 - Tries to make changes in seasons and law
 - Saints will be given into his hand for a time
 - Judged and destroyed

The Angel's Interpretation

- Four beasts from the great sea
 - These are four earthly kings/kingdoms
- The Fourth beast & Little Horn
 - It is a fourth and mighty kingdom greater than all before it. It conquers the world.
 It's ten horns are 10 kings. The little horn is different from the others, and will
 cause three to diminish. It will wage war against God and His saints, but he will
 be judged and destroyed.
- The Son of Man
 - The Son of Man, as a singular figure, is never directly addressed, but is collapsed
 into the corporate people of God, His saints. Thus, the angel declares that the one
 like the son of man in the vision, is the saints of God ascending to receive the
 kingdom of God.

Possible Additional Interpretations

- The Four Beasts
 - The Lion – Nebuchadnezzar/Babylon
 - The beast is seen undergoing the same transformation as Nebuchadnezzar
 - The Bear – Media Persia
 - Standing on one side, representing a partial righteousness (Released the Jews and honored Yahweh), like Nebuchadnezzar who was made to stand.
 - The three ribs in his teeth could represent Jews whom he had consumed (in a good way). These were Daniel, Mordecai, and Esther.
 - The command to eat much meat was a command to take on (eat) more jews.
 - The Leopard – Greece
 - The four heads are said to represent four divisions within the Greek rule and empire.
 - The four wings remind us of the cherubim who serve as God's throne and transport. Thus, the wings of the leopard represent the development of protection and transportation for the people of God throughout the ancient world. The ability to now move freely throughout the known world.
 - The Fourth Beast – Rome
 - Shares iron and bronze qualities similar to past vision imagery (Dan. 2).
 - Is the empire that treads down and absorbs all the rest.
 - Is the empire in command when Christ takes His throne.
- The Little Horn – ?

- Many scholars take all kinds of different approaches to who the little horn is. It could be the Herodian Dynasty, Nero, Titus, the Pope, and others, all depending on one's interpretations elsewhere.
- In my opinion, the Herods, Nero, or Titus are most likely.
- The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man
 - Traditionally, most Christians identify the Ancient of Days to be God the Father, and the “one like the Son of Man” to be Jesus. However, there is a lot of overlapping language ascribed to The Ancient of Days and Jesus, as in Revelation 1, for example. Moreover, the angel seems to collapse the saints of God into being represented by the figure who was “like the Son of Man.” Yet, Jesus clearly identifies himself with that figure, and is seen at his ascension literally coming with the clouds to the Father.
 - How do we make sense of all this? Who is who in the vision? I propose that in this instance, both can be true. The Ancient of Days can be both the Father and Jesus, and the Son of Man can be both Jesus and the Saints, depending on time and perspective. Just as the one beast can represent a whole empire, so too does the one Son of Man represent the whole of God's kingdom.
 - The Father and Jesus are one (John 10:30). And we the saints are the one body of Christ (Rom. 12:5). Therefore, Jesus can rightly claim that he is the Son of Man, as it is he who first ascends to the father and receives the kingdom. However, in this, we can also understand that we who are in Christ, have also ascended into the heavenly places, with Christ, and have been crowned with him. Christ can be both the one who is crowned and the one who now gives crowns.

The Point

- There is a lot going on, and it is easy to become bogged down by the weight of the details of this vision. So what's the point of all this? Verses 17-18 serve as an excellent summary that dispenses with all the peculiarities and gives us the gist: ¹⁷ 'These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.' (Daniel 7:17-18)
- Here we see the primary takeaway for Daniel, his audience, and us: the saints of God will win, and they shall receive the inheritance and blessings of God. How will they receive this kingdom and this glory? It will be given to the one like the Son of Man by the Ancient of Days. And those who are in him have received what he has been given.