

God's Incredible Plan For The Nations
Daniel 7:1-8, 15-17

We come to the second major division of the prophecy given to Daniel. The first six chapters had to do with personal matters relating to the life of Daniel. They deal primarily with history. As a young person, he was carried away captive into the land of Babylon. He was trained to be a specialist in Jewish affairs in the government of the Babylonians. Through a series of transfers of power, Daniel had served in four administrations. We have seen the power of God in the miracles God performed in Daniel's life and the life of his friends.

From the seventh chapter through the conclusion of the book, we have the prophecies God gave to Daniel, revealing to him things which are going to come to pass in the future. These are the things Daniel saw and wrote down. These events would take place beyond the lifetime of Daniel. God is giving Daniel a series of prophecies about the end times. During the lifetime of Daniel, God gave him these prophecies which had to do with events which would begin in his lifetime and would extend far beyond his lifetime. This chapter places us squarely in the middle of Bible prophecy. This is the most important chapter in the entire book of Daniel. A lot of times, if it does not apply to us, we don't focus on it very much. We need to focus on this because it is talking about the last days.

A lot of the Bible has to do with prophecy. There are different predictions and prophecies. Some of the greatest prophecies given in the Old Testament and the New Testament have to do with the first and second coming of our Lord Jesus.

There are over 300 prophecies having to do with Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Prophecies which predicted the first coming of Jesus Christ were fulfilled in detail when He came. There are prophecies about the second coming of our Lord. All of the prophecies concerning His first coming have taken place, so we can be confident that the prophecies concerning His second coming will also take place.

When we look to the past and see what God has done and how He fulfilled His promises, then we can look with confidence to the future. Every promise which God has made to us, we can believe that one of these days will all come to pass.

We see, in the book of Isaiah, a prediction about prophecy. *"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I shall do all my pleasure."* Isaiah 46:9-10

It says that God is able to declare the end from the beginning. It also says that God is able to declare the things that are not yet done. The Bible is filled with prophecy, and it is God who can predict the future.

We are rewinding the clock back to Belshazzar in Daniel 7. To this point, Daniel has been the interpreter of dreams, but now he will be the teller of dreams. He tells us how history is going to turn out. This is the first of four dreams he will see. In the opening verses of chapter 7, God gives his revelation to Daniel in a dream. He begins by telling him the good news and how things are going to end. He is now a participant in the dreams. The same man who had a quiet confidence in the face of dictators and wild beast is shaken, and his face is pale. He is disturbed by this vision.

Dreams were often used by God in the process of the revelation of scripture. Hebrews 1:1-2 says. *"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe."*

Daniel wrote more than he could understand. Many times, the Bible writers wrote things which were mysteries to them. Everything has been third person until now, but now Daniel is writing in first person. Peter tells us about God's revelation to the Old Testament writers. *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."* 2 Peter 1:21

Daniel didn't just come up with this dream, God gave this dream to him. God revealed this to him. Though he didn't understand all that was involved, what God gave to him and what we now have in our Bible, is God's inspired,

infallible, Holy Word. He was seeing the future, and he was shaken by what he saw.

We don't dream dreams today because God has given us the completed scroll of scripture, the completed revelation of the Bible. God gave Daniel some visions and dreams. The result of that is going to be Daniel writing down scripture. He's going to be writing down the Word of God. Daniel wrote some things he himself didn't even understand.

1. The Burden Of The Disturbing Dream

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea." Daniel 7:1-3

Daniel says in verse 1, *"I had a dream."* In the second verse he says, *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea."* The four winds are a picture of the providence of God. We see the winds of God blowing upon the waters of history. We see the will and workings of God as it moves in human history.

Daniel says he saw the great sea, probably a reference is to the Mediterranean Sea. God is going to reveal to Daniel about the future of world powers that all the powers are gathered around the Mediterranean Sea. Here is the burden: the four winds of God on the waters of human experience.

The reference is to the chaos of the last days. The sea is a reference to the sea of people, the multitudes of humanity. The great sea is the sea of humanity, and the four winds are political strife. The prophet sees the world in the last days in political unrest and filled with strife.

As we look around, our hearts may be troubled, and we may be concerned about the future. God gives to Daniel a vision of His plan and reminds him that He rules in the end. God wants to give us a positive vision about His sovereign plan and sovereign rule over the universe. Daniel has taught us all through his book there is a God in heaven, and reminds us that God is ultimately in charge.

One of the great themes of the book of Daniel is that God is on His throne in heaven. In spite of what you see and your present circumstances, God is still in control and still on His throne. Whatever you may see and however troubled you may be about the current affairs of our world, one of these days God is going to bring it all to conclusion. When it's all said and done, and when the dust is settled, God's still going to be on His throne, and everything is going to be alright. We refer to history sometimes as "His" story, because God is in charge of history. God is sovereign over all. That gives me great comfort when I look at turmoil in the world situation.

Daniel's response to the dream is in verse 15,

"I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this." Daniel 7:15-16

In Daniel 12:4 God said to Daniel, *"But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."*

God said to Daniel, "Close this book and seal it until the time of the end." There is a very close connection between what Daniel predicted and what John saw in Revelation. We will be going back and forth as we look at the visions that God gave to both Daniel and John.

2. The Beasts Of The Dream

"Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea." Daniel 7:3

In Daniel chapter 2, God gave a vision to Nebuchadnezzar. God gave a vision of world power to him, and it was in

the form of an image with a head of gold going all the way down to the toes, which were made of part iron and part clay. In that image God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, He show the four major world powers under the symbol of an image. God is going to give to Daniel a vision of the same world powers, but it is going to be as great beasts coming out of the sea. These were creatures who were symbolic of the nature of certain kingdoms. In Daniel 2, the world powers were listed in their chronology, but now they are shown to us by their nature and their actions. In chapter 2, you have the view of the coming world powers as the world sees them—shiny, precious metals. In chapter 7, you have God's view, and He sees them as evil monsters. Nebuchadnezzar saw it from the viewpoint of a political revelation. Daniel sees it from a viewpoint of a moral revelation.

The first beast is a lion and is a reference to the kingdom of Babylon and the Babylonian Empire.

“The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.” Daniel 7:4

The lion was a frequently used symbol in Babylon. When archeologists discovered the gates that guarded the city of Babylon, they found winged lions were engraved on them. The lion was a national symbol of the kingdom of Babylon. Daniel said it was a lion that had eagle's wings.

The Babylonian Empire was a mighty empire. It was like a lion chasing down and defeating its foes. He says his wings were plucked, a prediction that one day the empire was going to fall. *"And it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it."* This is a reference to the experience that Nebuchadnezzar had. God drove him from his kingdom into the thickets of the Euphrates for a period of 7 years, and then God restored his mentality to him and gave him the mind of a man once again.

The second beast is the bear and is a reference to the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians.

“And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up and eat your fill of flesh!’” Daniel 7:5

When the Babylonian Empire fell, it was replaced by the kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians. Contrary to a lion that devours its foes, they devastated everywhere they went, and they devastated the armies of the Babylonians. They moved through like a clumsy, cumbersome bear, devouring everything in their path. The Empire of Medo-Persia were the first nation in the history that gathered together great armies in the field of battle. Some estimate they had as many as two and a half million soldiers that would go to battle.

Verse 5 says that *“it raised up itself on one side.”* This means Persia was the stronger part of the coalition. *“There were three ribs in the mouth.”* Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt formed a coalition against the Empire of the Medes and Persians and yet it says, *“it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up and eat your fill of flesh!’”*

The third beast is a leopard and is reference to the kingdom of Greece.

“After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.” Daniel 7:6

This leopard had upon its back four wings. The thing that was so characteristic about the armies of the Greeks was the swiftness with which they moved. One beast was the lion that pounced upon its enemies. One beast was the bear that stalked its enemies and crushed them, but this beast is a winged leopard. This is a picture of swiftness and lightning attack. The Greeks developed a very devastating aspect of military war. They put razor sharp swords on their chariot wheels. The king of Persia came out to witness the battle between the Greeks and the Persians. He had an army of a million people. The Greeks had an army of only sixty thousand, but the massive army was no match for Greeks in those chariots with the razor-sharp swords. The king of Persia sat and watched his army of a million people chewed to pieces by the lightning-fast attack of the Greeks.

The great general of the Greeks was Alexander the Great. When Alexander the Great conquered the known world of his time, he sat down and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. He abused himself and died at an early age. When Alexander died, his Grecian Empire was divided among four generals. The accuracy of the prophecy is astonishing to see.

The fourth beast is so astonishing and cruel and beastly that he doesn't even give a name to it.

“After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.” Daniel 7:7

The fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire. God revealed to Daniel the successive world powers right down to the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was characterized by iron. We're told in Daniel 2 that, *“It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left.”* The Roman Empire dominated the world of its time and was very, very strong. When Jesus was born into the world in the land of Israel, it was dominated by the Roman Empire.

Then Daniel is standing by the angel and asked him what all of this meant. He is not simply having the dream. He wants an interpretation to the dream.

“I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ‘The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.’” Daniel 7:16-18

In verse 20 it says, *“I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.”* He described those horns. Those ten horns represent ten kings, and there has been no fulfillment of this particular part of the prophecy of Daniel. This is a prediction that the Roman Empire is going to be revived at the end time and is going to be gathered around these ten horns, or ten kings. Bible teachers for many years had looked at the events taking place in Europe, the federated states of Europe in early days, and today, the European Union. There are many Bible teachers who believe that this is a fulfillment of the end time prophecy concerning the revival of the Roman Empire.

Right now, we know that there are more than ten states involved in the European Union. Today, 27 countries are part of the European Union. That says that you need to be careful and don't be too dogmatic when you come to these kinds of things because it may not be so at all that the European Union is a fulfillment of this prophecy, but it is possible. We don't know at what stage we are in God's prophetic calendar or where we are in terms of what God is doing. There may be more than ten states right now. There could be combination of states. There could be a gathering together of states. Before it is all over, it is entirely possible that there will be ten states. Be that as it may, here is the prediction from Daniel, that there will be these ten horns, these ten kingdoms, ten states, ten powers. An amazing development will take place.

3. The Blasphemer Of The Dream

“While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.” Daniel 7:8

What is the meaning of this little horn, and who is this little horn? The implication here is this personality is going to have unusual insight and intelligence. *“This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man.”* Daniel 7:8

It says, *“And a mouth speaking great things.”* Daniel 7:8 He's going to be a powerful communicator.

In verse 20 he picks up the description again, *“the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes*

and a mouth that spoke boastfully.” It says in verse 21, “As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them.” This is a strange revelation, a strange picture that God gives to Daniel.

A great deal of the book of Daniel can be understood only as you tie it to the book Revelation. In Revelation 13, it relates what God revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos to what God revealed to Daniel in the land of Babylon. In Revelation 13:1 it says, *“And I (John) stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads, and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads, the name of blasphemy.”*

Revelation 13:2 says, *“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion.”* He mentions three of the same animals that Daniel mentions in the Old Testament, but there is a difference in the order in which he gives these animals. When Daniel saw them he said, *“I saw a lion, a bear and I saw a leopard.”* Then he saw that fourth beast. John says, *“When I saw this beast out of the sea, I saw a leopard, a bear, and a lion.”* Why is it written that way? When Daniel saw that, all of that was in the future. It was predicted prophecy to Daniel. When John was given this revelation, he is looking back at completed history. He sees Greece, Medo-Persia, and Babylon, and all of it is fulfilled prophecy. But John, in the Book of the Revelation, said he saw a composite beast, having all of these characteristics, and it was a beast out of the sea.

In Revelation 13:5 we can discover who this beast is. *“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months (3 and a half years). And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”*

This beast is going to have a mouth, the ability to communicate in fascinating and appealing ways. When you put it together, here's what you have. The little horn of Daniel and the beast out of the sea in the Book of the Revelation are one and the same. It is none other than a predication of the coming Antichrist. The Antichrist is going to become a one-world ruler. He will have mesmerizing powers of communication. *“And they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?”* Revelation 13:4

“As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them.” Daniel 7:21

4. The Brilliant One Of The Dream

“Until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.” Daniel 7:22

The Ancient of Days takes His place. Our country is not mentioned in prophecy, but our citizenship is in heaven, and that is mentioned; and heaven will last forever and ever and ever. That is what you need to do, embrace the kingdom that will go on forever.

“As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.” Daniel 7:9-10

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” Daniel 7:13-14

He is the Ancient of Days, and He will right all wrongs. He will sit in judgement upon the earth. He has always existed.

God's incredible plan for the nations is to rule them.

In the interpretation, Daniel has a series of visions about thrones.

- A Temporary Throne

“The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.” Daniel 7:12

“The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.” Daniel 7:24

“He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.” Daniel 7:25-26

The Bible predicts that the Antichrist is going to do what nobody has been able to do. He is going to bring peace to the Middle East. You and I look at the Middle East, and every day there's a new outbreak somewhere. Look how long peace with Israel and Hamas lasted. There is the Palestinian and the Israeli conflict. There seems to be no hope for peace, but the Antichrist is going to come. We'll learn later in the book of Daniel that he's going to sign a treaty with the Jewish people. He will allow them to rebuild their temple, and for three and a half years there will seem to be peace in the Middle East.

He will change times and seasons. In the midst of that, in the very middle of that seven-year period of time, after three and a half years, he will issue an order that there will be no more sacrifices in the temple, and they will be given unto his hand for three and half years. It will look like it is all over for God's chosen people.

“Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.” Daniel 7:12

The Ancient of Days is always seen as judge. He has come to judge the little horn. In verse 11, the little horn keeps speaking these blasphemous statements. This is not the judgement of the nations or the Great White Throne judgement.

It says in verse 13, *“I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven.”* That is a reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the title which Jesus Himself used to refer to Himself. About 82 times in the Gospels alone, Jesus is referred to as the Son of man.

When Jesus stood on trial before the high priest, we see quotes from Daniel 7.

“Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, ‘Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?’ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?’ ‘I am,’ said Jesus. ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’

The high priest tore his clothes. ‘Why do we need any more witnesses?’ he asked. ‘You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?’ They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, ‘Prophecy!’ And the guards took him and beat him.” Mark 14:60-65

They said, “Prophecy.” Then they spit on and hit with their fist. The image of God. The radiance of His being. All for saying He was the Son of God.

In Matthew, chapter 24, we see a statement about the Son of Man that ties in with what Daniel predicted.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24:30

One of these days the Son of Man, the Savior, Jesus Christ, is going to come back to this earth. He'll do away with the Antichrist, and the Bible says He'll have dominion. He'll have a kingdom, and He will rule and reign on this earth for a thousand years. At the conclusion of that thousand years, it will usher right into eternity and the kingdom of Jesus Christ will be that kingdom of eternity forever, and forever and forever.

Don't worry about what's going on in this earth and all the little things that seem to be so prominent. God is on His throne in heaven. Jesus Christ is going to come, and He's going to reign on His throne on this earth. All you need to worry about is, "Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your Savior?"

- The Millennial Throne

"I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them. Until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom." Daniel 7:21-22

There is a limit to the persecution. There is a limit to the trouble. The ancient of Days will come for you too.

- The Eternal Throne

"But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever." Daniel 7:18

Daniel saw the coronation of the Messiah King. The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. *"But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever."* Daniel 7:18

Matthew 5:5 will be fulfilled. *"The meek shall inherit the earth."*

Jesus receives His father's gift - a universal kingdom.

"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.'" Revelation 11:15

The kingdoms of this world battled with the kingdom of Christ, and Christ emerged victorious! It will be a kingdom without limits. It will be unified kingdom while the kingdoms of this world will be torn.

"And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: 'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.'" Revelation 11:16-17

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:1

History does not end in destruction. It goes on to reconstruction. This final kingdom was decreed by the Ancient of Days. No more judgement but life-giving water.

Here is my question for us today: Are you ready for His return? You do not want to meet this day unprepared. If you are not ready, how do you get ready? Here is a good word from Romans 13:11–12, *"Awake out of sleep . . . The night is far spent, the day is at hand."* In other words, do not be absorbed by the culture in which you live, and do not be complacent. Today is the day of salvation! Now is the time! If you have never received Christ as your personal Savior, make that decision now. Before all these things come to maturity, the Lord is going to come back to this earth, and He is going to take everyone who has put their trust in Him home to heaven. The way you get ready for heaven in

the future is by receiving Jesus Christ now.