

LIVE TO WIN IN THE END

Daniel 7:1-27

If you were a student of history and were to review all the nations and kingdoms, you will find that almost every one of them assumed that they would rule forever. Many of the nations around the Mediterranean Sea had significant influence on the then-known world. Because they also influenced the Hebrew people, we find records of this influence in the Bible. The Egyptians were a great and mighty nation. They assumed that their nation would last for ever. We see evidence of that belief in the pyramids that they built to house their kings so that these could be brought back to life at some later time. This nation decayed and others arose: the Assyrians, the Syrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans. Each one of these had illusions of grandeur that they would not be like the others but would survive. We know that they did not. In more modern times, the Spanish were powerful and set out to explore and influence the world, the British were dominant for a while (the sun never sets on the British empire). Germany tried it twice, Russia tried it for 70 years and we have seen the failures. Worldly kingdoms rise and fall – some seem benevolent and others want to oppress and dominate; but all, no matter how powerful, will pass away.

The rising and falling of nations are not chance events, but are known to God and all fit into His plan. The predictions of such events that were to happen take up much of the writings of Daniel. In Chapter 2 of Daniel, the Babylonian king had a dream of a great statue that represented coming kingdoms that would influence the world. Later on Daniel himself had a dream or vision of several animals that came up out of the sea. Many believe that these represent kingdoms and nations that were to come on the world scene. Some believe that these kingdoms in Chapter 2 are the same as were pictured in Chapter 7. Others think that the beasts of Chapter 7 represent yet-to-come nations in the end times in which we are living. It is likely that both are right. Let's take a look at what Daniel saw.

Evil Will Persist – 7:1-8

¹ In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind *as he lay* on his bed; then he wrote the dream down *and* related the *following* summary of it. ² Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ³ "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. ⁴ "The first *was* like a lion and had *the* wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. ⁵ "And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs *were* in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' ⁶ "After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷ "After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ "While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great *boasts*. Daniel 7:1-8 (NASB95)

The first prophecy was given to the Babylonian king. This parallel revelation was given directly to Daniel. We see mention of the four winds in the end time events preceding the opening of the 4th Seal in John's Revelation account. The great sea was likely the Mediterranean, but symbolically refers to the multitude of people and nations. The beasts are related to various kingdoms of the ancient world that had a beastly nature.

We can compare the statue and the four beasts that Daniel saw. The lion with the eagle wings is thought to symbolize the Babylonian empire. The metamorphosis of the lion describes

the transformation Babylon from a fast-moving, sweeping, dominant beast to a revelation that it too was accountable to the God of the universe. The tearing off of the wings was the experience of Nebuchadnezzar who lost his mind for seven years and then acknowledged that God was sovereign.

The bear is thought to be Medo-Persia and the three ribs were the three major conquests of Lydia, Babylon and Egypt. The leopard was thought to be Greece with the wings representing the rapid conquests of Alexander the Great. The Grecian Empire was fast moving in its conquests and four empires evolved after the death of Alexander the Great. The four heads represent the main divisions of the Greek Empire which were Macedon and Greece under Cassander, Thrace and Bithynia under Lysimachus, Egypt under Ptolemy, and Syria under Seleucus.

The fourth beast is thought to be the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire met all the criteria of being terrifying, frightening and powerful. The ten horns are likely the ten kings which arose out of the rebellion against Rome. These are leaders of the peoples known as Goths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgundians, Franks, Lombards, Alamenis, Suevi, Anglo-Saxons and Heruli.

The “little horn” (verse 8) was different compared to the other ten. It had eyes (could comprehend things the other didn't understand) and a mouth (claiming authority it didn't have – boasting). The little horn that boasts is said by many to represent the anti-Christ. All of these represent a very frightening situation; however, there is hope because Daniel's dream was not over.

God Is the Supreme Judge – 7:9-12

⁹“I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, Its wheels *were* a burning fire. ¹⁰“A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened. ¹¹“Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. ¹²“As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time. Daniel 7:9-12 (NASB95)

Between verse 8 and verse 9, it appears that a significant amount of time passed. We move from the time of the break up of the Roman Empire into ten smaller kingdoms to the start of the “end time” events.

It seems that this scene in Daniel's vision was obviously the throne room of God in heaven and is apparently the same scene that John saw in Chapter 4 of the Revelation. The opening of the books is also described by John.

The “horn” in verse 11 is apparently hundreds of years removed from the “little horn” of verse 8. This particular horn (who is also referred to as the beast) makes his appearance after the start of the opening of the books (seals) as given in the Revelation that John recorded.

The beast of the Revelation had seven heads and ten horns. In later prophecies we will see that the little horn in Daniel 7 appears as a head in the Revelation account. The other beasts are representative of the nations of the world that continue to exist until the end of the time of sin.

The Ancient of Days holding court is the assurance that God is still in control and that there will be a judgment time in the future. Even the terrifying beast will be stripped of power and the anti-Christ destroyed. Daniel's vision went on.

Christ is Lord – 7:13-14

¹³ “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB95)

What Daniel was witnessing could have been the homecoming of Jesus after He ascended back to Heaven. Another possibility is that this is at the final Judgment where the authority to judge all the nations is given to Jesus. If that is the case, then this is the point where every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. If the second alternative is true, then this will be at the end of the 1000-year reign of Christ.

Regardless of which event Daniel’s vision is about, we see that in the progression of earthly kingdoms there are many frightening things happening; however, we can take comfort in knowing that there is a Kingdom that is built on righteousness and holiness and is one that will never pass away. The Jews who were in captivity were looking for deliverance from their captive situation; however, what Daniel was shown was that God planned to deliver all mankind from captivity to sin and the world system.

The remaining verses of this chapter are further explanations and interpretations of what Daniel saw in his night visions.

Security Based on Promise of Victory – 7:15-18

¹⁵ “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. ¹⁶ “I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 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 7:15-18 (NASB95)

It is not difficult to identify or empathize with Daniel’s consternation regarding what he has just seen in the visions. In these verses, we see for the first time that Daniel was not alone. There were “others” standing by. Based on evidences given to us in chapters 8 and 9, these “others” were angelic beings and the one who made known the interpretation to Daniel was named Gabriel. We find Gabriel in other situations in which highly significant communication needed to be made from God to man as in the case of the announcement to Mary regarding the coming of the Messiah. Therefore, our conclusion should be that these “night visions” of Daniel are very significant and should not be ignored or just glossed over.

Daniel was an interpreter of dreams and had been called on to explain the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. He had also been called on to explain the message of the hand writing on the wall for Belshazzar. Now Daniel was at a loss to know what this dream meant. The general theme is that four kingdoms would arise from the earth but that the saints of the Most High will eventually receive the kingdom and will possess it forever. Daniel was then shown some of the details of what would happen before this great judgment came (or is to come).

Notice that the four kings who represent the four kingdoms arise from “the earth.” This realm of “the land” or “the world” is the dominion of the serpent who was cast out of heaven. Since they arose from that dominion, they are beastly in character (they are flesh eating or fueled by carnality) and are contrasted with the kingdom of God that originates from the spiritual realm.

Here we see the continuation of the overall theme of the horizontal (physical) reality versus the vertical (spiritual) reality that characterizes the accounts in Daniel. This represents the overall cosmic battle of good versus evil and provides assurance that God’s kingdom is forever and that the others will pass away.

Discovering the Truth of the Fourth Kingdom – 7:19-22

¹⁹ “Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, *and which* devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, ²⁰ *and the meaning* of the ten horns that *were* on its head and the other *horn* which came up, and before which three *of them* fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great *boasts* and which was larger in appearance than its associates. ²¹ “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them ²² until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Daniel 7:19-22 (NASB95)

Daniel was especially concerned about the fourth beast. It was significantly different and more fierce than the other three beasts since it had teeth of iron and claws of bronze.

The “horn” that made war with the saints is the little horn described earlier. There are many and various interpretations of who or what this is. Some say it is the anti-Christ which is yet to come. Other say it is Antiochus Epiphanes who tried to pressure the Jews into accepting the Greek way of life and actually sacrificed hogs on the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem. Some will tell you that the little horn was the rising to power of the papacy in 754 A.D. In this interpretation the three kings or kingdoms that were replaced were the Lombards, Revenna, and Rome. Others believe that the 10 horns represent the 10 nations that grew out of the Roman Empire and that the rise of the small horn is yet to come.

This prophecy also tells of a time when the saints (church) would fall into significant oppression (waging war against the saints) but that the time would be limited. The end of the domination of the “little horn” would correspond to events in Heaven associated with what both Daniel and John saw happening (until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints).

Recognizing the Terrible Beast – 7:23-25

²³ “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the *other* kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. ²⁴ ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. ²⁵ ‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. Daniel 7:23-25 (NASB95)

There is a lot of similarity of this vision of Daniel with the Revelation of John. This vision could apply to many situations that have already happened and many more that are yet to come.

The description of events of verse 24 has been related by some to what happened in AD 538. The Papacy had waged war against the Heruli, Ostrogoths, and Vandals over a religious argument concerning the deity of Christ (the Arian Controversy - Arius taught that Jesus was not equal to the Father). The dominance of the Papacy over the other seven tribal nations is a matter of history. This has caused some to speculate that the mention of “another will arise after them” is a reference to the Roman Catholics and specifically to a succession of the popes.

Take, for example, the description of the action of this little horn in verse 25: He will speak against the Most High and shall oppress the saints of the Most High. He will try to change customs and laws. The period of power for the “little horn” is time, times, and half a time (3.5 years x 360 days/yr) or 1260 “days.” Now since this is an apocalyptic prophecy, a “day” equals a year. Some will argue that this represents the 1260-year reign of the Papacy from AD 538 to AD 1798.

A coalition of “church and state” was started around AD 533 when Emperor Justinian granted to the Pope what amounted to absolute power as “Corrector of Heretics.” There was a

rapid succession of four different Popes (about one a year) until Vigilius took office in 537. The time period of 538 to the beginning of 1798 is 1260 years in which the Papacy dominated and persecuted all who would not submit to the authority of the Roman Catholic Papacy. In February 1798 the Pope was arrested and put in prison by Napoleon's general Berthier. Is this coincidence?

Looking at the specifics of verse 25, we see the following:

- a. **Speaking against the Most High:** The title of the pope in Latin is "Vicarious Filii Dei," and means "in place of the Son of God." In English, differing forms of this title are used, for example, "Vicar of Jesus Christ" or "Vicar of God." The meaning is still the same: in place of Jesus or in place of God. Taking the place of God is what Lucifer attempted to do in his rebellion.
- b. **Oppression of the saints:** In the 1260-year reign of the Catholic Church, it has been estimated that tens of millions of people were sentenced to death for refusing to receive its doctrines.
- c. **Changing of set times and laws:** In AD 787 the Second Nicean Council removed the second commandment and divided the tenth into two separate commandments so that 10 would remain. The fourth commandment was reduced to a few words so questions would not be raised regarding the day of worship.

Others argue that this not about the Roman Catholics. We might even say it describes what is going on today. Just look around you at what is happening with people in high place and in the media that show no regard for God and in the name of "artistic expression" ridicule Jesus Christ. The church is under attack for the primary purpose of discrediting it to negate its influence. People are trying to reinterpret the Constitution to eliminate any Christian influence from our society. I think that the influence of the little horn is present even today.

God Has the Final Word – 7:26-27

²⁶ 'But the court will sit *for judgment*, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. ²⁷ 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' Daniel 7:26-27 (NASB95)

The scene shifts from earth to heaven and Heaven's court is convened. Arguments can be made that the timing is coincidental with the end of the 1260-year domination of the Papacy. Verse 22 says that the "little horn" defeated the saints **until** the Ancient of Days pronounced judgment in favor of the saints and they (the saints) possessed the Kingdom. This interpretation would lead some to conclude that this judgment resulted in the Trusteeship for the Plan of Salvation being switched from the Catholic Church to the Protestant Church. Others see this convening of Heaven's court as a future happening that will usher in the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth. There are also questions raised as to whether the "people of the saints of the Highest One" is a reference to Christians or to physical Israel.

We can agree with Don Carson as he states in *The New Bible Commentary*

The interpretation he (Daniel) received illumines the vision but by no means makes it plain. It is not surprising that commentators have differed in their interpretation of the passage. Its difficulty should warn us not to be dogmatic in explaining it.

Whatever the case, we can take heart, God is going to hold court and judgment will be given. The influence of evil will be destroyed. At that time another kingdom will be established and Kingdom of God is the only kingdom that will that remain.