**The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (Part 1)**

The Four Beasts and the Little Horn

Daniel 7 (Lesson #9)

Before Christmas we talked about prophecies, one of the things I said was that many prophecies have a literal, earthly, small fulfillment as well as a literal, spiritual, heavenly, and ultimate fulfillment.

I want to remind you of that point and expand the discussion. So, we will quickly look at two prophecies and draw some conclusions that will be critical for us going forward in the book of Daniel.

Prophecy #1: ***“14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."” (Mt 2:14-15 ESV)***

***“1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. 2 The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. 3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. 4 I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. 5 They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. 6 The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. 7 My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.” (Ho 11:1-7 ESV)***

OK, what did we just learn.

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Prophecy #2 ***“16 ¶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."” (Mt 2:16-18 ESV)***

***“15 Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." 16 Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. 17 There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.” (Jer 31:15-17 ESV)***

OK, what did we just learn.

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As we come to Daniel chapter 7, we are still in the city of Babylon, and we are we are taking a step backwards in time. In Daniel chapter 6 it was around 537ish(BC). We are now stepping backwards in time to the first year

of King Belshazzar (approximately 556 BC), so we are stepping backwards approximately 20 years.

Also, as we come to Daniel chapter 7 we cross one of the dividing lines in the book of Daniel. Let’s take a moment to reflect back to what we have seen so far and a glance forward to see what is coming.

The first six chapters of the book were principally historical narrative, they were the court stories of Babylon (as examples the golden statue, fiery furnace, handwriting on the wall, and the lions’ den). This historical narrative covered the span of time from 605BC to roughly 537BC. This was again, principally historical narrative with some prophecy mixed in.

The second six chapters are a totally different genre that is referred to as apocalyptic literature. Although you have probably heard this term before (The Revelation is apocalyptic literature), you may not have a working definition of what that means. It is prophecy, but it is prophecy where the truths are taught with imagery and graphic symbols. So, it is prophecy taught in a flowing graphic movie form, where the one receiving the visions sees powerful flowing imagines that represent other things. For example, today beasts, as we will see represent kingdoms and horns seem to represent kings.

Often times, in apocalyptic literature we find that God routinely provides in the vision a messenger, who helps explain the meaning of the symbols.

**This means, interpreting and understanding apocalyptic, literature, or stated differently understanding prophecies that are provided in apocalyptic literature are even more complex.**

**One observation and three recommendations:**

1. This is why there are different understandings about some of these things in Daniel.
2. This is why we should not be dogmatic on things that are not crystal clear.
3. This is why we should show grace to one another in areas where the church of the living God has not historically totally agreed (apocalyptic literature and prophecies).
4. It is best to find the main points and focus on those. It is easy as “Bible sleuths” to focus on the minutia and miss the main points altogether.

OK, so all of that by way of introduction. I would ask you keep all of this in mind as we advance in Daniel from here forward!

By way of reminder, the Aramaic section of Daniel began in Daniel 2:4 and goes until the end of chapter 7. It started with the vision of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed and it ends with the parallel vision in chapter seven involving four kingdoms.

Dr. Voddie Baucham said this about our text: *“Here is the great irony! We go to Daniel chapter 7 and people spend years, years, trying to interpret all the little details of the four beasts there in that first paragraph. What is this and what is that? What that rib, what is that bear. What is that this and what is that that? We get mired down in all this trying to figure out where this is coming from and where that is coming from. Folks, read Daniel chapter 7. Where is your attention supposed to go? To the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man and to the Kingdom that will never end! I do not have to know who all of those beasts are. All I have to know is that they are examples of the kingdom of men that come and go. They are violent and ungodly. And I long for the kingdom that has no end!”*

John MacArthur said this about chapter 7: *“Now, what is the theme of the vision? What is the heart and soul of the vision? Simply this – and mark it – the thrust, the theme, the major point of this vision is the coming of the King and the establishment of His eternal kingdom.”*

Chapter 7 divides into four movements, four scenes, four sections. Although one of them (the third scene) is a zoom in of the first scene.

***1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. 2 Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4 The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as 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. 5 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, devour much flesh.’ 6 After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up 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.***

Now as we read these verses at first, they seem very abstract. Almost disconnected from any reality that we are familiar with.

**VS 1 –** First year of Belshazzar. Our best estimate of when this vision occurred is **556 BC.**

\*\* If our timeline is correct, Nebuchadnezzar has been dead for 6 years or so. Daniel is probably no longer at a point of prominence, but it is during this quiet time that God gives a vision to Daniel! \*\*

**Vs 1 –** We see that Daniel had a dream and wrote it down. A dream that as we will see troubled him. God revealed… Daniel wrote!

It funny, you do not know, what you do not know. What we did not know, is that while Daniel is interpreting dreams and visions, he is also having dreams and visions that he cannot understand!

**Vs 1 –** Notice also that he **“told the sum of the matter.”** So, he wrote it down and it may be that he talked to God’s people about it.

**Vs 2a – Scene 1 –** He saw **“in my vision by night”.** So, it would seem that God is giving this revelation to Daniel via a dream as he sleeps. Keep this in mind.

**Vs 2b –** The we are told what he saw, **behold (NKJV – suddenly), the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.**

The Great Sea, as Daniel would have understood it is more than likely the Mediterranean Sea.

Daniel would have been familiar with the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.

These four winds are stirring up the Great Sea (that is probably what he sees), but this Great Sea is representing something else. This is the nature of apocalyptic literature.

**Vs 2b -** The sea is often used to represent mankind or the world. In fact, this is what the angel tells John in Revelation when he has a vision involving the sea (specifically a great whore who sat upon many waters):

*“And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.” (Re 17:15 ESV)*

So Daniel saw an ocean, but it represented the sea of humanity. So, these beasts are coming out of the water (that is what he sees), but they are coming out of the sea of humanity (that is the lesson).

It is from this chaos and disorder that we are introduced to four **“great beasts.”** The word beast is the Aramaic word for **animal**.

**Vs 3 –** Daniel tells us the sum of what he is about to see: **And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.**

**The good news, in verse 17, one of those present in the vision told Daniel what these beasts represent:**

*“These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.” (Da 7:17 ESV)*

So again, apocalyptic literature, God is providing a heavenly messenger to help explain what He is showing the prophet that these animals represent four kings or a most scholars believe four kingdoms.

Most scholars (but not all) believe these are the same four kingdoms portrayed to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream (chapter 2). Although here the kingdoms are presented in a much more graphic and scarry way.

**Vs 4 -** So the first is a lion. A ferrous and powerful animal, with eagle’s wings. The eagle a fast and powerful bird, both of the animals eat flesh, both rule their dominion.

Here is a lion with eagle’s wings, we should be thinking of a fast and powerful animal.

Lion with eagle’s wings, most scholars agree this is Babylon. **But the wings are plucked off (it is lifted from earth) and made to stand on two feet like a man, given a man’s heart.** As we reflect back to what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, this is a good description.

When God humbled him (wings plucked off) because of his pride and yet God restored him (man’s heart was given to him) More than likely this was Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion.

**Vs 5 - *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, devour much flesh.’***

**Behold – (NKJV) Suddenly ---** The second beast – Here we have a massive powerful bear. Again, a powerful animal, it is lifted up on one side, it was larger on one side. This seems like an odd observation, and it has three ribs in its mouth. Almost as if caught in the act of consuming another animal.

Notice what it was told - **‘Arise, devour much flesh.’**

This second ferocious beast replaces the first. So, we know these are kings or kingdoms, if the first is Babylon, **who is the second?**

Sure, historically it would be the Medo-Persian empire and if we look back to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel chapter 2, this is this is the chest and arms of silver.

Now a weird observation, makes sense, namely this bear was **raised up on one side.** The Persians were a much larger and stronger portion of this Medo-Persian empire (out of balance if you will).

**Vs 5b -**  Had **three ribs** in its mouth. Now we cannot be sure, nor do we need to be dogmatic.

Although there is not complete agreement, there is at least a consensus that these three ribs represent the three countries that the Medo-Persina empire defeated to consolidate the empire, **Lydia** (546BC), **Babylon** (539BC), and **Egypt** (525BC).

Now, these are small details, but they seem to line up with what we know from history.

**Vs 6 -**  There is **behold** again (NKJV – **suddenly**), the third beast, a leopard (very fast) with four wings (even faster) and four heads. This animal was given dominion.

Here is another beast, a leopard known for its swiftness, with wings, making it even more swift and it has four heads. There is no obvious answer to who this is.

But if we take a peek at history and simply ask, who defeated the Medo-Persian empire, without belaboring any of the details, we know for sure who defeated the Medo-Persian empire.

It was the Grecian empire under Alexander the Great. In fact, the defining moment was the Battle of Arbela on Oct 1, 331BC.

Something that we should never forget. **No one knew who this beast was until after it happened. They had all the details, but it did not become obvious until it happened.**

Most scholars agree this is the Grecian empire (the initial king) (Alexander the great). Took to the throne at 20, conquered a great portion of the known world and died in Babylon at 32 planning his next campaign. (Best guesses for cause of death are poisoning or malaria).

The four heads, what in the world could that mean?- Following his death, Alexander did not have a son to leave his kingdom to and an internal struggle (we could deem it a free for all occurs). Ultimately the kingdom splits into four kingdoms, each led by his four generals:

* Cassander ruled Greece and Macedonia
* Lysimachus ruled Thrace and a large part of Asia Minor
* Seleucus I governed Syria, Babylon, and much of the middle east
* Ptolemy I controlled Egypt and Palestine

To consider for a moment these four heads are given to Daniel and this kingdom has not yet come into power! This is shockingly accurate!

**But no one would have understood all this in advance. This would only make sense after the fact.**

**Vs 7 -** The fourth beast, this beast is not described by animals we are familiar with, but instead with adjectives (dreadful, terrible, and very strong).

Iron teeth, devouring, breaking, and trampling the residue. Some believe the animal cannot be described but is like a dragon or dinosaur. Other believe it is a composite animal, we simply do not know.

What this is, from the text is not obvious, but again, if we look at history and ask what kingdom over-threw the Grecian kingdom. It is Rome, it is the Roman empire. In fact, it was at the Battle of Corinth in 146BC, that we see the beginning of the end, where Rome slowly overtook the Grecian empire.

Again, most scholars agree this is an apt description of the horrific and powerful nature of the old Roman empire.

**It was different than the other animals** (does not explain exactly why) but just in the fact that he could not be described by an animal we know makes it different. It is also horrific and grotesque.

**Also, notice it had ten horns**, we will talk more about these next week. But we would say these **likely correspond** to the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, that were not developed by Daniel when he gave the interpretation to the King.

**Vs 8 -** As Daniel (**considered**, the nature of the horns of this animal) A little horn appeared among them. **This little horn caused three of the 10 horns to be plucked out by their roots.**

Two quick observations about this little horn:

1. He had **“eyes like a man.”**
2. He also had a mouth that spoke “**great things**.” The word translated “great things” is the Aramiac word for great, as in the **“four great beasts”** of **Vs 3**. **רברב** (*rab-rab’).*

We will see more details about the little horn next week.

This is scene one… It was scary, probably somewhat confusing, each video if you will, probably played for a period of time and then fell to the next beast.

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**Then… Scene #2**

***9 "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. 10 A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.***

**These are the most important verses in Daniel chapter 7. These are among the most important verses in the entire book of Daniel.**

**These are important theologically, these verses, as you will see are important Christologically, and these verses are important eschatologically.**

In the first eight verses we saw these wicked kingdoms rise out of the mass of humanity. This was scary, horrific, and violent.

**Vs 9 -** As Daniel is watching…. **Scene 1** seems to have a new scene that overlays it, we will call it **scene two**… This scene could be no more different from scene #1!

**In scene one, we were looking down at the sea, in scene two we are looking up towards heaven (the throne room of God)!**

**Vs 9 –** Daniel sees **“the Ancient of Days**” seated on his throne, his garment was white as snow, **(holiness and purity)** the hair on his head was pure like wool **(purity and wisdom)**.

Now as much as you pictured chaos and beasts that were horrible. You should picture just the opposite! We see a righteous kingdom, a king that is more pure, more strong, more beautiful, and more holy.

Here is the focus. Here are the most important verses in Daniel 7. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall all the while destroying one another.

But here is the majestic one. Who is seated on His throne, who is altogether lovely!

**Vs 9 –** **his throne was fiery flames -** WOW! This may be a picture of God, on his throne, in a way we have never imagined God! **God seated on a fiery throne!**

Imagine the sheer beauty and awe as the King of Heaven, the Ancient of Days, is seated on a fiery throne!

**Vs 9 -** **its wheels were burning fire.** This is the only place this word is used, the etymology is to swirl or whirlwind. It appears this a chariot throne, like a warrior would ride in, but much more awesome, much larger, much more spectacular!

**Vs 10 -** **A stream of fire issued and came out from before him;** If scene one grabbed our attention, this should even more. We are beholding, in picture form. The Throne of the Living God.

By the way this name for God **(Ancient of Days),** is only used by Daniel and only in three places (7:9, 7:13, and 7:22). All right here in this chapter.

**Vs 10b –** **A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.**

He is seated on a throne of fire, and fire is coming out before him. What our mind draws here, should be awesome!

Thousands serve him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him, and the courtroom is set for judgment.

Yes it appears to be judgment day. The books are opened!

These words and this picture are reminiscent of Rev 5:11-12-

*“11 And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” (Re 5:11-12 ERV)*

Or: Rev 20:11-12 –

*“11 ¶ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.” (Re 20:11-12 ESV)*

**Scene #1** The chaos and fake power of the four kingdoms of the world.

**Scene #2** **The serenity and true power of the Sovereign of the Universe, the King of Heaven, the King of glory, the Mighty God, the Ancient of Days.**

God is enthroned and thousands upon thousands are surrounding him and worshipping Him.

**The kingdom of God, this is the focus of Daniel. This should be our focus.**

There is turmoil in this world, wicked kingdoms rise, and they are put down by more wicked kingdoms.

But there is a throne that stands above all of this chaos and turmoil.

By the way something incredible is about to be pictured in this kingdom, something amazing, something wonderful. Something that changes everything! We will see it next week.

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Scene #3 comes into focus….

***11 "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.***

**VS 11 -** As he is watching this, taking it all in, He hears **“great words”** from the little horn of the first scene….

**Vs 11 -** He watches, the suddenly this beast that could not be described. This beast that was horrible, powerful, and terrible is killed (apparently along with the horns and the little horn and thrown into the burning fire.

Suddenly, without warning, without elaboration… The beast is killed it’s body destroyed!

**This is a stark reminder that our God reigns! This is the point of the whole chapter and indeed the whole book of Daniel.**

**Vs 12a -** **As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away.**

If each beast is a kingdom… which they are. Then this is a good description of what happened, the **kingdom was destroyed**, but **the people (for the most part) were allowed to live in and under the new kingdom.**

**Vs 12b –** **but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.**

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