

Daniel
The King of the Beasts (Part 1)

Daniel 7

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Tonight, we come to the second half of Daniel, and specifically to Daniel 7. Now it's possible that as we come to this chapter that you are largely unfamiliar with its contents. But I think it's likely that you are unfamiliar with its importance. Let me give you just a couple of quotes to put in sort of picture the reality of its importance in the book of Daniel. Towner writes, "Modern commentators are generally agreed that chapter 7 is the single most important chapter of the book of Daniel." Is that how you think of chapter 7? Portius writes, "It is the heart of the book of Daniel." Heaton says, "It would be no exaggeration to say that this chapter is one of the most important passages of the Old Testament."

Why is that? Well, there are several reasons for its importance. It's because it marks the change from historical narrative in the first six chapters to prophesy in the others. It is truly transitional; like the preceding narratives in chapters 2-6, it is written in Aramaic, but it's linked to the prophecies in chapters 8-12 by the mode of revelation, that is, visions, and by the subject matter. It's also important to the Jewish people because most of the Jewish Apocalyptic literature of the following centuries after Daniel was influenced by Daniel 7. But for us, I think the reason that those authors and that I would say it's one of the most important is this: it provides one of the best prophetic overviews in the Old Testament. It is the Old Testament equivalent to the book of Revelation. John Walford writes, "The vision of Daniel here provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophesy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament."

Now before we look at the chapter itself, I need to remind you of how it fits into the overall theme and structure of Daniel's book. You remember the theme of Daniel in its entirety is this: YHWH, the God of Israel, is sovereign over the lives of individuals, the affairs of nations, the span of empires, and all of human history.

Daniel can be structured or outlined in three separate ways, I noted for you, one of them is according to emphasis. In the first six chapters, you have historical narrative. In the chapters 7-12 you have prophesy. There's clearly a difference of emphasis in these chapters. Another way to outline the book is by its thought development. Chapter 1 is pretty clearly an introduction to the book. Then in chapters 2-6, you have the events unfolded in the lives of Daniel and his Hebrew friends in relation to the rulers of Babylon. And then in chapters 7-12, you have Daniel's visions of the great world empires. A third way to outline this book is by the languages that are used. You have Hebrew and Aramaic. The first Hebrew section is really introduction, it begins in chapter 1, verse 1 runs through chapter 2, the middle of verse 4. Then begins the Aramaic section, beginning in the middle of chapter 2, verse 4 and running through the end of chapter 7.

Here you find YHWH's message to and His plan for pagan nations. And then chapters 8-12 is the second Hebrew section. YHWH's message to and plan for Israel, His people.

And so, this is how the book unfolds. Daniel writes in two languages because he was deliberately targeting two distinct audiences: Jews and Gentiles. Babylon, where most of his life unfolded, was multi-racial, but the trade language was Aramaic and had been since the 8th or 9th century B.C. That causes one author Friedman to write this,

Daniel had two distinct, although related, messages to deliver. One was a message of judgment concerning the defeat and final overthrow of the Gentile world powers. The other was a message of consolation and hope concerning future deliverance for Israel. The first message in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the near East, was appropriate for the prophet's message concerning the future history of the Gentile kingdoms. The second message, which was exclusively directed to the Hebrew people, is appropriately in Hebrew.

Now, we have studied then, chapters 1-6 and the historical narrative. Tonight, we come to transition, to chapters 7-12, and to prophesy. Before we look at that, and chapter 7 remember, will still be Aramaic and then it will change back to Hebrew in chapter 8. But before we look at this, let me just make some general observations about the relationship between these two sections of the book in terms of the kind of literature; historical narrative in the first, and prophesy in the second part of it. And that would be the first general observation. The first six chapters are, in fact, historical narratives, the final six are all prophetic visions.

A second observation will be that the narratives about Daniel in the first six chapters provide the platform for us to receive the prophecies from Daniel in the final six chapters. In other words, the reasons you should listen to Daniel's prophecies become pretty clear if you read the first six chapters. Here's a man whom God has given keen insight into life, and history, and the future.

Thirdly, the historical narratives of chapters 1-6 are written in the third person, but the prophecies of 7-12 are written in the first person with the exception of two verses: chapter 7, verse 1, and chapter 10, verse 1. You see that shift. Daniel describes himself as if he were outside looking in, in the first six chapters, but it's very personal in the final six.

Another observation we can make is that the first six chapters are in chronological order, marking the life of Daniel in Babylon and then in Persia. The same thing is true of the final six, they also are in chronological order. Chapter 7 says it was written during the first year of Belshazzar; chapter 8, the third year of Belshazzar; chapter 9, the first year of Darius the Mede; and chapters 10-12, the third year of Cyrus. Now, if you'll notice, based on what we have

discovered already, you'll see that chapters 7 and 8 were written during the time of the Babylonian Empire, and chapters 9-12 during the time of the Persian Empire.

The final general observation I would make is this: chapters 1-6 provide evidence for us that God's people will endure as we see them enduring in hostile Babylon and Persia, but chapters 7-12 provide God's prophetic assurance, God's prophetic promise, that they will, in fact, endure. This, by the way, is why prophesy, have you ever wondered this? Why does God bring prophesy into the lives of people when it's discussing events in the distant future? Prophesy about future events served as a great benefit and blessing and comfort to the Jewish people in Babylonian captivity. Because undoubtedly, they had been carried off into a foreign land. They were suffering for decades under the heel of Gentile world powers. They might have obviously wondered, "Is God done with His people?" God assures them through Daniel that they would return from the land of captivity. More than that, eventually their Messiah would come. He would deliver them from spiritual bondage to sin, as we'll see in chapter 9. And, He would deliver them from physical bondage to pagan, Gentile empires and the Messiah would establish His own kingdom over which He would rule.

Now, it's interesting when we come to chapter 7, to note that chapters 2 and 7 are parallel. They both describe a series of successive kingdoms that will dominate world history. So why repeat them? Why have an image representing that in chapter 2, and have a vision representing that in chapter 7. Well, its because there are obvious and unique differences between these two records of the same basic series of world powers. In chapter 2, you have the vision of a pagan king. In chapter 7, you have the vision of a godly prophet. In chapter 2, the kingdoms of man, the great empires of world history, are represented as a noble image with expensive metals, gold and silver coming to the less expensive iron. In chapter 7, you have the empires of this world represented as beasts without a conscience. So what you really have in chapter 2 is a history of mankind from man's point of view. What you have in chapter 7 is history from God's point of view.

In chapter 2, the statue that represents all those kingdoms you'll remember is destroyed for no obvious reason. But in chapter 7, it becomes very clear the nations are destroyed for their rebellion against God. And in chapter 2, God's power is seen as an inanimate stone. You remember, cut out of the mountain without hands. That comes and crushes all of the kingdoms of this world to powder, and grows into a great mountain that fills the earth. In chapter 7, that becomes very personal, because God's power is revealed in the Son of Man. So this is why both of them are here, they give us two different perspectives on human history and its empires. So we could put it this way: in Daniel 7, God provides us with His own view of human history and its empires.

So, let's look at it together. Chapter 7 begins with the vision of four beasts in verses 1-14. We're not going to make it all the way through that tonight, but let me read it for us together. You follow along, Daniel 7, beginning in verse 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. Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. 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. 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!" 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. 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. 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.

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.
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.

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. 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.

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.
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.

Now, as this vision of the four beasts unfolds, it begins in verse 1, as you noticed when we read, with the vision setting. Notice verse 1, "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon." Now the first year of Belshazzar was the third year of his father, Nabonidus. So the year of this vision, based on putting the history together, was the year 553 B.C. This chapter then, jumps back in time, about 15 years before chapter 6 and the lion's den which was around 539 B.C. In the year of this vision, that we're reading about here in chapter 7, Daniel was only about 67 years old. Nebuchadnezzar had only died about nine years before and in the first year of Belshazzar, Daniel receives this vision. Now we can only guess why God chose to give Daniel this vision in this year, but likely, it's because the people of God were understandably concerned about their future in light of the wicked rule of this man, Belshazzar. And so God assures them through this prophesy that He still has a plan for His people, that they will, in fact, endure.

Verse 1 says, "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed." One night during that first year of King Belshazzar, Daniel was asleep and he had a dream, and in that dream, he had visions. This is a lot like what we have already seen occur a couple of times in this book. Verse 1 goes on to say, "then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it." When Daniel woke up from this dream, he realized that the vision that he had seen in his dream was, in fact, a revelation from God. Remember now, he's a prophet, God is not communicating revelation to you in dreams. But as a prophet, he understood that's what had just happened. And so when he woke up, he wrote it down. Literally, the Aramaic says, "*he wrote the head or the chief of the words*". Meaning, a *summary*, as it appears here in the NAS, or *main facts* or *the key details* is the idea.

Now having set the setting for the vision, Daniel describes these four beasts in verses 2-8, let's look at it together. Verse 2, "Daniel said, 'I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.'" In his dream Daniel watched this vision unfold and "the four winds of heaven," a very picturesque expression for all of the factors that influenced nations, "were stirring up" or churning up the great sea.

What is this sea? Some have conjectured, well, maybe it's the Mediterranean or something like that. No, verse 17 tells us that these beasts will arise from the earth, so this is just a picturesque expression. The great sea here represents the nations of the world. It's not surprising, since in Scripture the sea often stands for the peoples or nations of the world. In fact, you remember Isaiah describes the unbelieving peoples of this world this way, in Isaiah 57:20, "the wicked are

like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud." One commentator identifies the great sea here as "the agitated world of nations." Miller writes, "The peoples of the earth are portrayed as a great sea of humanity in a constant state of unrest, chaos, and turmoil." Boy is that off the front page of today's news. So, the great sea is the sea of humanity; churning, tossing, turning up refuse and mud. *Stir up* means to strive or to churn up. The idea is the winds come all at once in a great fury and explode the surface of the water. What are these four winds? The four winds are likely the different forces that influence nations and kingdoms, that bring up trouble and therefore, change to the nations of the world.

So as these great forces come to bear on the great sea of humanity, on the peoples of the earth, verse 3 says, "four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another." In the confluence of various forces and events in our world, Daniel says there would be four beasts who would arise out of the sea of mankind. Now what do these beasts represent? Well, it becomes pretty clear if you just glance through this passage. Notice in verse 12, they have "dominion". In verse 17, they are "four kings." In verse 23, they are "four kingdoms," same thing in verse 27. So, in Daniel's vision, these four predatory animals are four great world powers or empires. In verse 3, we're told they're different from one another, meaning distinct in their make-up and character. And notice verse 3 says, they are "four great beasts." In other words, these are the four greatest in the Mediterranean world, not necessarily every single nation or kingdom that came along.

You understand this. I mean we still think this way. Historically, nations, and especially world powers, have been represented by animals. Even today, Russia is often represented as what? As a bear. The U.S. is often represented as an eagle. So the animals that we use to portray the great world powers are often predatory, ferocious, fear-inducing animals. Aren't you so glad that Benjamin Franklin's idea of a turkey didn't stick? So what we have here then in Daniel 7 is simply a different and more complete perspective on the world empires that we met back in chapter 2. In fact, let me give you a comparison. Here's a comparison between the image of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2, and the beasts in Daniel's vision in chapter 7. In chapter 2, you have the image with its head of gold representing the Neo-Babylonian Empire; in chapter 7, that's a lion. In chapter 2, you have the chest and arms of silver representing the Medo-Persian Empire; in chapter 7, that's a bear. In chapter 2, you have the belly and thighs of bronze representing the Greek Empire; in chapter 7, that's a leopard. In chapter 2, you have the legs and feet of iron representing the Roman Empire; in chapter 7, that's simply the fourth beast. And then in the image in chapter 2, although it's not explicitly laid out, you'll see why I say this, you have the toes of the image of iron and clay representing some form of the Roman Empire, either continuing or revived; and in chapter 7, that's the ten horns that come from the fourth beast. So you can see, there's a direct correlation between these two pictures and I showed you before why there are two different pictures. One is human history from man's perspective. This glorious precious metal image and human history and its empires from God's perspective in chapter 7. A bunch of ferocious predatory beasts who devour and destroy.

So let's look at them together. The four beasts. The first beast we meet in verse 4, "The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle." This first beast then is primarily like a lion. Now notice it's not a lion, it's like a lion, but it has also the wings of an eagle. Now these were common representations of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. In fact, even in Scripture,

Nebuchadnezzar is compared to a lion. In Jeremiah 4:7, Jeremiah 49:19, Jeremiah 49:22 and so forth. Nebuchadnezzar is also compared to an eagle in Jeremiah 49:22, Lamentations 4:19, and in a couple of other passages as well. In addition to that, as I have shown you, lions adorn the ancient city of Babylon, including the famous Ishtar Gate, and among the ruins of Babylon, archeologists have found winged-lions which serve as symbols of the Babylonian Empire. In fact, winged-lions guarded the gates of the Royal Palace. Now this isn't surprising, remember Daniel lived in Babylon, this would have been as familiar to him as the things in our lives are to us.

Verse 4 says, "I kept looking until its wings were plucked." Most agree, that's a description of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation recorded in chapter 4. His seven years of insanity, when he behaved like an animal physically, just as he had behaved like an animal as a person before that encounter. "And it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man." Notice, he "was lifted up." That is, he was passively acted on. This is by God. "And made to stand on two feet like a man," that describes God restoring Nebuchadnezzar to sanity and to acting like a man, rather than an animal. It goes on to say in verse 4, "a human mind also was given to it." This also probably refers to both his sanity returning, but also to his now, after his sanity returned, treating people humanely and not beastly as he had before. So, the first beast is the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

We meet the second beast in verse 5, "And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear." Notice again, it's not a bear, it resembles a bear. This refers to the Medo-Persian Empire which, like a bear, was known for both its size and its ferocity in battle. Verse 5 says, "And it was raised up on one side." This refers to the greater strength of the Persians over the Medes in the Medo-Persian Federation. You can see this, by the way, and we'll see this when we get to chapter 8, because in chapter 8, verse 3, a ram appears, and that ram is identified in chapter 8, verse 20 as the kings of Media and Persia. And that ram in chapter 8, is described as having two horns, one of which, was larger than the other representing the more powerful Persian kingdom. So, this idea of the bear being on its side, seems to relate to that same idea.

Verse 5 goes on to say, "and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'" Since these ribs are in its mouth, the implication is that these are previous conquests. Nations that have been defeated, destroyed. At the very least, it pictures the bear's craving to devour other nations, but most commentators think that these three ribs refer to Persia's three great military conquests; Babylon in 539 B.C., Lydia in 536 B.C. and Egypt in 525 B.C. In addition to the three ribs in its mouth though, notice it's told, "Arise, devour much meat!" In other words, "Go subdue many other nations!" And this was exactly what happened with the Medo-Persian Empire. Eventually, the Persian Empire reached from Egypt and the Aegean in the west, to the Indus River in the east. It had a territory far larger than any empire that had come before it.

The third beast comes in verse 6. "After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard." Now, notice the expression, "after this," that's really important, because it makes it clear that these four beasts don't all arrive at the same moment of human history. Rather, one comes after another. And here comes the third. This third beast is most like a leopard. There are several distinguishing characteristics of a leopard: its grace, its speed, its cleverness, its insatiable

taste for blood. Leopards are incredible hunters. I did a little research this week on leopards and it's astounding what they're capable of physically. They can run 36 miles per hour after their prey. They can jump from a standing spot twenty feet forward to land on their prey. And they can leap ten feet vertically. The leopard perfectly represents the kingdom that follows Medo-Persia and that was the kingdom or Empire of Greece. Greece. A leopard.

But if the leopard isn't fast enough, this leopard, notice verse 6, "had on its back four wings of a bird." The picture is, this even dramatically increased its speed. Now, that's so amazing. Remember, Daniel is writing in the 500's B.C. and the Greek Empire comes in the low 300's B.C. So 200 years before it happened, he writes this prophesy that captures the reality of Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great carried out his conquest with lightning speed. He invaded Asia Minor in the year 334 B.C. and within ten years, he had conquered the entire Medo-Persian Empire, all the way to India. Ten years. Legend has it, that once he had finished conquering the Persian Empire, he wept because there were no more nations to conquer. Fast. A leopard with wings.

Verse 6 goes on to say, "the beast also had four heads." In Scripture, *heads* most often represent rulers, and clearly that's what it represents here, because the four heads of verse 6, are identified as four horns in chapter 8, verse 8. Notice that, "Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; [that's Alexander, we'll see that when we get there] and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven." And these become obviously rulers. What's this talking about, these four heads? Well after Alexander's death at the amazing age of 33, there was a period of conflict in the Greek Empire. And then, Alexander's kingdom was divided into four parts, ruled by four kings, just as Daniel had prophesied 200 years earlier. The four kings, who divided the Greek Empire, were Antipater, later Cassander, who took the bulk of Greece and Macedonia, really the home territory belonged to Antipater, and later Cassander. The second division was Lysimachus, who took Thrace and much of Asia Minor. The third was Seleucus, who took Syria, Babylon, and much of the Middle East. And the fourth was Ptolemy I, who took Egypt and Palestine. Now, as we will see in the next chapters, the last two of these guys: Seleucus and Ptolemy I figure prominently in biblical history, because the land of Israel was literally between them. And so, Israel becomes that piece of bait between the two of them and is constantly swapped back and forth between these two leaders once Alexander dies and his kingdom is divided.

Now, go back to verse 6. It says, "and dominion was given to it." Notice the passive. It "was given to it." We're not told who gave it, but the answer is clear and obvious. Alexander thought that his military might and brilliance that built his empire, but Daniel says, no, in reality it was God. It was given to him.

Now in verses 7 and 8, we encounter the fourth beast. Verse 7, "After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast." Notice, he doesn't say this beast is like anything. And that's because this beast resembles no animal on earth. If we were to look in the weeks ahead we'll look at this passage, but in Revelation 13:1-10 which is the counterpart to this one, the beast is described as having the characteristics of all three animals: a lion, and a bear, and a leopard at the same time. And so, this is a unique beast. Since this kingdom follows Greece, almost all commentators agree that Daniel is describing the Roman Empire. Rome replaced

Greece as the dominant world power by the second century B.C. Notice how Daniel describes it in verse 7, "dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong." This beast has enormous power and therefore, it elicits dread and terror from all who encounter it.

Verse 7 says, "it had large iron teeth." By the way, remember iron was used as the metal in the corresponding kingdom on Nebuchadnezzar's image. But these large iron teeth imply that this beast consumed everything in its path. Notice, "it devoured," it completely consumed other nations. "It crushed," the Aramaic word is it *shattered*, it broke in pieces, either with its teeth, by chewing its iron teeth, by crushing what was between it, or by its body, by pouncing. And whatever was left, notice verse 7 says, it "trampled down the remainder with its feet." That's not surprising, since in verse 19, we're told, it had "bronze claws." This is a vicious, destructive, predatory animal, and it's pictured as being in continuous forward destructive motion. Verse 7 says, "and it was different from all the beasts that were before it." This kingdom would be unlike all that went before it, because it was more powerful, more terrifying, more destructive and more widespread in its domination and influence.

Miller writes, "Rome possessed the power and longevity unlike anything the world had ever known. Nations were crushed under the iron boot of the Roman legions. Its power was virtually irresistible. And the extent of its influence surpassed the other three kingdoms."

An ancient author, Dionysius, says this, speaking of Rome, "It, first and alone, in all recorded time, made east and west bounds of its sway, and the period of its might is not brief, but such as no other city or kingdom ever had." This is this fourth, terrifying beast. And then Daniel adds one more detail at the end of verse 7, "and it had ten horns." Just like heads, in Scripture, *horns* usually represent rulers. A horn represents power; both offensive power to attack and defensive power to protect. On an animal, its horn is the source of its power, and so it's used to describe rulers who are powerful influencers of their nations, controllers of their nation. I could give you a series of passages, but I don't think I need to prove that to you.

Daniel makes this clear in our text, because the ten horns here in verse 7, are identified over in verse 24. Notice what he writes, "As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise." So the ten horns are ten kings who will arise out of this fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, and will have some connection to it. We are probably to understand that these ten horns are the same as the ten toes on Nebuchadnezzar's image. Now this beast, this fourth beast with its ten horns, obviously fascinated Daniel. Look at verse 8, "While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them." "While I was contemplating," implies that some time passes, and he's thinking about this fourth beast which is unlike any other beast he's ever seen.

And suddenly, as he sees those ten horns, which we've just learned represent ten kings who will arise out of this fourth kingdom, another horn appears among the other ten horns or kings. And this other horn or ruler starts out little, but it quickly grows in power. Notice verse 8, "and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it." So this new ruler who arises among a confederation of ten kings, this new ruler, surpasses the others in power. In fact, notice down in verse 20. In verse 20, we're told that this new horn will become larger in appearance than its associates, so it grows larger than all of them. Back in verse 8, we're told that this ruler, this little

horn that grows up and becomes more powerful than the rest of them, he will uproot or, the picture is, he will violently overpower or overthrow three others. In fact, look down in verse 24, where it's crystal clear, "As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after him, and he will be different from the previous ones and [notice this and] will subdue three kings."

Now go back to verse 8. We learn a little more about this ruler who comes on the scene who subdues three kings in a ten nation confederation. Verse 8 says, "and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts." Eyes, are the primary instruments through which most people observe and learn. So the picture here is that this will be a man of extreme intelligence, of keen insight, profound cleverness, and worldly wisdom. But his mouth, notice will utter "great boasts." Literally, the Aramaic says, *will utter great things*. These great things, we learn, are blasphemies against the God of Heaven.

Go over to chapter 7, verse 25. In verse 24, we learned about this horn who will subdue three kings, and notice how he's described in verse 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." Three and a half years. Although he will blaspheme God, most of the world will, as one author puts it, "fall under the spell of his winsome words and captivating personality." So, understand who this is. This is a ruler connected to the Roman Empire. He will start small, but he will grow to subdue three of the ten nations in this confederation, and he will lead the other seven. In other words, he will gain control over the entire empire. And he will be extremely intelligent and greatly blasphemous.

Who is this man? This man must be still in the future because we're told, here and other places, that the federation that he oversees, the empire that he controls, will only be destroyed by the return of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom. Look at chapter 7, verse 26. We just read about what he will do his blasphemy wearing down, verse 25, "the saints of the Highest One."

But the court will sit for judgment [verse 26 says] and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 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.

So this ruler, that's described here, is someone who is destroyed when Jesus Christ returns to defeat this world and to establish His kingdom. So this little horn then, that we've met in this passage, must be the most famous political ruler in history, the Antichrist. A powerful, political world ruler who will come during the Great Tribulation.

Now, in case you think this is some Johnny-come-lately view that came along with Larkin or something, you need to know this is not a new interpretation. Around 400 A.D. Jerome identified this little horn as the Antichrist. Jerome described him "As one of the human race in whom Satan will wholly take up his residence in bodily form." Antichrist. He's described in a number of passages. He's described here in Daniel 7, we'll see it unfold as this chapter unfolds. He's

described in chapter 9, verse 27, "he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

We see him in chapter 11. Chapter 11, beginning in verse 36. He's described as, "the king who does as he pleases, he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done." It goes on to describe him all the way to the end of chapter 11, verse 45.

He's also described in the New Testament. Turn over to 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. Second Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 1,

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. [This was circulating in the church, they thought the day of the Lord had already come and he says in verse 3], Let no one in any way deceive you: for the day of the Lord will not come, unless the apostasy comes first, and [here it is] the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

He's also described in Revelation 13. Revelation 13, verse 1 says,

And the dragon [that's Satan] stood on the sand of the seashore [that is, humanity, again, that picture], Then I saw a beast [here he is] coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And [notice this] the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon [that is Satan] gave him his power and his throne and great authority. [Verse 3, apparently, he pretends a sort of fake death and resurrection, and out of that he's worshipped. Verse 4] they worshipped the dragon [that is, Satan] because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth and blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and [notice this] authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

So, the fourth kingdom then, in Daniel's vision, the Roman Empire, will either continue, in some latent form, which I'll mention in just a moment, or it will be revived or resurrected in some

form, until it is destroyed by the Son of Man, when He establishes His kingdom. It is interesting to note, that Rome was eventually divided, but never truly conquered.

As E.J. Young observes, the nations of modern Europe "may in a very legitimate sense, have arisen from Rome." You see, Rome really still rules through Europe and Europe's offspring, including the U.S. Daniel tells us that just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, a powerful, intelligent, but profoundly evil person will arrive on the world stage. He will begin small, but he will soon conquer three nations in a ten nation coalition of nations. And then, he will arrest or seize control of the entire empire. An empire that will consist of a federation of nations that has arisen from the ashes of the old Roman Empire. And eventually, as we saw in Revelation 13, that powerful empire will rule the entire earth. It's amazing, isn't it, that God through His Holy Spirit and His prophet Daniel, opens up the throne room of heaven and allows us to see His plan of the ages.

What's the point of all this? The point is that God is on His throne. Belshazzar is on his throne in his first year, threatening the people of God, and God says to Daniel, don't even worry about him. He is a flea on the history of humanity. I have a plan, and nothing will stop that plan.

Sinclair Ferguson writes this,

This section is not meant to be an amusement for armchair theological sleuths, [or detectives.] It is intended to give an overwhelming impression of the mysteries of God's purposes and the awful conflict that lies behind and beneath history. Here is true Apocalyptic. Our depravity is unveiled, and the curtain that hides the Glory of God is momentarily drawn back. And we are given a brief look into the throne room of the universe and the sovereignty of God. Verse 1 through 8 describes Daniel's vision of four beasts or empires, but the center piece, verses 9 through 14, records his vision of the throne of God, and One like the Son of Man; and the reason for that is because God rules the kingdoms of this world. He judges the kings and kingdoms of this world, and He is bringing everything to His own perfect planned conclusion.

What comes next in Daniel's vision beginning in verse 9, is a vision of the throne room of God. We get the blinds pulled back, the curtains are lifted, and we can look into God's very throne room and see His plan unfold. Truly incredible, and in a couple of weeks, we'll study it together.

Let's pray. Our Father, I pray that You would help us to be in awe, not of the powerful kings and kingdoms of this world, but of You and of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Remind us Father that, as You look at human history, You don't see a polished statue of precious metals. You see ferocious predatory beasts destroying this world and its people. Father, thank you, that Your plan calls for You to bring an end to that. While You use human government for our good to prevent the overflow of human depravity, to prevent anarchy, still they're nothing, but beasts. But thank You Father, that for those of us who have believed in Your Son, we know the end of the story. We know that the day is coming, when You will bring the kingdoms of this world to nothing. When You will destroy them to powder and they'll blow away like chaff. And you will establish

forever, on this planet for a thousand years, and on a new earth forever, the kingdom of Your beloved Son.

O God, help us to live in light of these realities, help us to trust you as history unfolds in our lifetimes, as we see this world teetering and tottering on the brink of destruction, remind us O God that nothing happens apart from the orders from Your throne. Give us comfort, give us peace, give us anticipation for the day when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.