

Theme: Daniel has a vision of four kingdoms (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome), which in their rebellion to God are beastly forces who oppress God's people. However, he also sees the Son of Man who established the eternal kingdom of God that will grow throughout history and defeat all rebellion against God.

I. Intro - The More Things Change...

- A. The popular saying - applies to Daniel 7-12
- B. Everything has changed - historical narrative to apocalyptic visions, mainly present to the future
- C. But the key message is the same - our God reigns!
- D. Chapter 7 is a key hinge for the whole book
 - 1. The genre changes with this chapter
 - 2. It completes the chiasm from Daniel 2-7
 - A - 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's vision of 4 kingdoms & God's
 - B - 3 - The three faithful believers in the fire
 - C - 4 - Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon humbled
 - C' - 5 - Belshazzar of Babylon humbled
 - B' - 6 - Daniel the faithful believer in the lion's den
 - A' - 7 - Daniel's vision of 4 kingdoms and God's kingdom
 - 3. Its message will be expanded in chapters 8-12
 - 4. The Aramaic portion of the book ends with 7:28
- E. A word about interpreting apocalyptic writings
 - 1. These can't be interpreted 'literally' - they are inherently symbolic and full of metaphor
 - 2. Don't try to press every minor detail - that leads to many crazy interpretations
 - 3. All Scripture points to Jesus - even apocalyptic!

II. A Terrifying Vision of Four Beasts

A. A terrifying vision of chaos and four beasts

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. ² Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. ³ Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. Daniel 7:1-3

1. The first year of Belshazzar - between Daniel 4 and 5 (553 BC or so)
2. Winds churning up the great sea - picture of chaos
 - a. Churning sea is a picture of chaos in Scripture
 - b. Also used this way in ANE creation myths
 - c. In many of these epics the Creator God has to overcome to Sea-Chaos - sets the scene here
3. The beasts come from the sea - they are forces of chaos arrayed against God

B. The four horrid beasts from the sea/chaos (vv4-7)

1. A lion with eagle's wings torn off, heart/mind of man
2. A bear, higher on one side, ribs in mouth, devouring
3. A leopard with four wings and four heads, given authority to rule
4. A terrifying, powerful beast with iron teeth and 10 horns, trampling, crushing, & devouring everything

5. These are the same kingdoms as in Daniel 2

- a. The chiasm helps us interpret
- b. The angel tells us they are kingdoms!
‘The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. Daniel 7:17

6. These are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome

- a. Lion like Nebuchadnezzar - wings ripped off, heart and mind of man given - Chapter 4 (also told in Daniel 2)
- b. Persia - devouring all before it (also chapter 8)
- c. Greece - Alexander dies, 4 kings (also chapter 8)
- d. Rome - iron teeth; trampled all before it; Christ comes during Rome’s reign!

C. The coming beastly kingdoms

1. This is the same message as Daniel 2
2. This reveals the true nature and underlying spirit of human kingdoms - they are beasts of chaos fighting against the rule of God
3. The four beasts are specifically Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, but they are representative of all human kingdoms that rebel against God.
4. As we will see next week, the beastly kingdom’s rebellion against God often leads to persecuting the people of God.

III. A Glorious Vision of The Kingdom of God

A. The vision shifts to God on His throne

“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. ¹⁰ 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

1. The scene changes to God on His throne
2. An awesome scene of God’s power, glory, authority
3. During the time of the 4th kingdom, God is judging the beastly kingdoms of man

B. The arrival of the “Son of Man”

“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. Daniel 7:13

1. One “like a son of man” - a key phrase!
2. This Individual is human - a son of man
 - a. This is what the phrase literally means
 - b. Drawing upon Psalm 8 and God’s call for humanity what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁵ You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: ⁷ all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, Psalm 8:4–7

1. Reflecting upon Genesis 1 - man's call to rule
2. Specifically rule over the beasts and bring everything under God
3. Humanity has failed - but this Son of man succeeds!

3. This Individual is also Divine

“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. ¹⁴ **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

a. God is the one who rides the clouds (ANE; Bible)

Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds — his name is the Lord — and rejoice before him. Psalm 68:4

He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. Psalm 104:3

See, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them. Isaiah 19:1

1. The LORD is the One who rides on the clouds!
 2. This was also a common motif in pagan religions
 3. God rides the cloud to judge the nations and their gods (Isaiah 19:1)
- b. The Son of Man has authority, glory, and power and is worshipped by all nations - only God!
- c. Unlike the beasts and their kings, the Son of Man will rule forever and ever! This is the God-Man!

C. This is a picture of Jesus' ascension, exaltation, and current rule (session) at the Father's right hand

1. This happened during the time of the 4th kingdom (Rome) - here in Daniel 7 and also in Daniel 2:44
2. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God has arrived!

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:15

- a. The long-awaited kingdom of Daniel 2 & 7 was here!
 - b. The time has come! The kingdom is near (perfect tense for 'has come near')
 - c. This is why Jesus preached so much on the kingdom and told parables of the kingdom
3. Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man in the Gospels 82 times! - His favorite title
 4. Jesus claimed to be the Son of Man riding the clouds of heaven in judgment
But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” ⁶² “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.**” Mark 14:61–62
 - a. Jesus states He is the Son of God
 - b. He is the Son of Man riding the clouds (Daniel 7:13)
 5. Jesus has all authority NOW
Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Matthew 28:18
 - a. Not “will be given to me when I return in thousands of years” - HAS BEEN GIVEN - past

- b. This is the basis for the Great Commission.
6. Jesus ascended on the clouds to the Father
And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, **he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.** Acts 1:9 ESV
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. Daniel 7:13
- a. Not just “hid” as in NIV - He rode the cloud away
 - b. This is a reference back to Daniel 7:13
 - c. Notice in Daniel 7:13 Jesus rides the clouds to God - not down from God to us! It is the ascension, exaltation, and rule of Jesus that is pictured in Daniel 7:13-14, not His Second Coming.
7. This is why Stephen saw Jesus at the Father’s side
“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Acts 7:56
- a. Not just “Jesus” the “Son of Man”
 - b. This is a reference back to Daniel 7:13
8. Jesus the Son of Man is presently subduing all God’s enemies
Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” 1 Corinthians 15:24–27
- a. Jesus is now reigning and will continue subduing God’s enemies
 - b. This continues until death is destroyed after the Second Coming
 - c. This is the fulfillment of Psalm 8 and Daniel 7:13-14!

- D. Jesus the Son of Man is now ruling and reigning, bringing everything into subjection, and He will one day return to consummate God’s eternal plan.

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I see the nature of rebellious human kingdoms?
 1. These 4 kingdoms are all in the past not future
 2. They do not describe a kingdom that is future for us
 3. But the principle is the same for all human kingdoms - they tend to rebel and act in a terrifying, beastly manner.
 4. This is why we remember our true citizenship and loyalty lie with the kingdom of God, not any earthly kingdom.
 5. Like Daniel we serve as citizens in these kingdoms, praying and working for them, but our ultimate loyalty and hope is always reserved for the kingdom of God alone.
 6. We will discuss this even more next week - but we should never be surprised by opposition and persecution for our loyalty to Christ.
- B. Do I see that Christ is ruling all things now and bringing everything into subjection to God?
 1. Daniel 7:13-14 is NOT about the second coming but rather about the ascension and rule of Christ
 2. Jesus has already been raised, is ascended, received all power and authority, and is reigning to bring all things in subjection to God’s will!
 3. This is critical because He is ALREADY ruling - the kingdom has come and continues to grow!

4. Christian, take heart - our God reigns!!
5. This is why we should be people of true hope!

C. Communion

1. We are invited to the Table of the King of the Universe!
2. He invites all of His people to come, receive, and worship!
3. Revelation 5:6-14
4. The Table of the King

The Beasts and the Son of Man

Daniel 7:1-14
September 19, 2021
Communion
Revelation 5:13-14

Teaching keywords: Kingdom of God; two kingdoms; ascension, exaltation, and session; Christology; judgment; prophecy (Old Testament)

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”¹⁴ The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped. Revelation 5:13–14

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.² Daniel said: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea.³ Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

⁴ “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 man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

⁵ “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!’⁶ “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.

⁷ “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.⁸ “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 man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

⁹ “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.¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ “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. ¹² (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

¹³ “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. ¹⁴ 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 7:1–14