

Theme: Daniel has a vision of four great beasts and a little horn that oppress God's people, but the Son of Man has established the eternal kingdom of God which grows throughout history and will be given to God's covenant people.

I. Intro - Churchill's Reaction to Pearl Harbor

- A. Dark days of winter 1941 after Battle of Britain
- B. At dinner with American Ambassador he hear the news
- C. He was appalled and outraged - but also filled with hope
- D. "Being saturated and satiated with emotion and sensation, I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful," - Churchill
- E. Dark days were ahead, but he knew the outcome was certain - America's entry meant victory for the Allies
- F. Daniel's vision elicited similar reactions - fear and hope
 - I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. ¹⁶ I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ¹⁷ 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever — yes, for ever and ever.' Daniel 7:15–18
 - 1. He was very troubled - there were dark days ahead
 - 2. But the saints will receive the kingdom in the end!
 - 3. There are a lot of symbols and things hard to understand here, & the vision shifts back and forth but we must keep the central message before us!
 - 4. The key message is clear - four kingdoms, the Son of Man inaugurates the kingdom of God, and after persecution and suffering the people of God inherit the eternal kingdom!

II. The Four Beasts and the Little Horn

- A. The Four beasts - four kingdoms that will rise
 - 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. Daniel 7:17
 - 1. Last week we saw these were the same as the four in Daniel 2 - Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome
 - 2. Daniel 2 sees these as precious metals because they do bring blessing - government is a gift of God
 - 3. Daniel 7 shows them as beasts because fallen humanity always twists God's gifts and rebels against God and His law and Sovereign rule.
 - 4. Furthermore, we see that in general, the beasts become more fearsome, frightening, and bizarre
 - 5. This culminates with the fourth beast which is far more terrible than all before it, and this beast is the one that Daniel wants to know about (v19).
 - 6. It also culminates with the fourth beast (Rome) because it is during this kingdom that the Son of Man came and established the Kingdom of God.
- B. Ten horns - and the 'little horn'
 - He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. ²⁴ **The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom.** After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. Daniel 7:23–24
 - 1. The coming kingdom of Rome will be different and more terrifying than all before it - and it was!

2. The ten horns represent the 'kings' of Rome

- a. Remember the symbolic nature of all of this - animals represent human kingdoms; the kings and the kingdoms are used interchangeably; symbols are used fluidly as we will see
- b. The ten kings probably represent the authority and power of Rome
 1. Rome did not have kings - they were ruled by the Senate until the Caesars, who never called themselves kings
 2. The number ten is used symbolically in Scripture, and especially in apocalyptic writings.
 3. Some see the first 10 Caesars represented here since the 10th one was the one who destroyed the Temple, but on the whole, I think they are symbolic of Roman rulers.
- c. The key point here is that these horns and the beast are terrifying and fight against God and His people.

3. The 'little horn': his identity, character, and work

- a. The 'little horn' is the Caesar's of Rome, and especially Nero
 1. The little horn fits parts of many different Caesars
 2. He especially fits Nero and his persecution of Christians for 3.5 years
 3. But some see him as Vespasian who came immediately after the year of the 3 emperors and whose son Titus led the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple - 3.5 years of time
 4. But as we will see, a leader in the 3rd kingdom is also called "another horn" (7:8; 8:9), and he will do many of these same things. This was Antiochus Epiphanes and he desecrated the Temple - for 3.5 years!

5. Thus, I think that just as the ten horns are symbolic of Roman leadership, so also the 'little horn' is symbolic of human rulers who persecute God's people, especially the line of Caesars, and particularly Nero.

6. This might also point to a future antiChrist - but this is NOT the main point of the passage

7. More than identity, note his character and work

b. The 'little horn' is arrogant and boastful (vv8, 20)

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**. Dan 7:8

c. The 'little horn' speaks against God (blasphemer)

He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. Daniel 7:25

1. The Caesars viewed themselves as divine

2. This was a great change - human rulers declaring themselves to be God as demanding worship

d. The 'little horn' persecutes the people of God

He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. Daniel 7:25

1. The Caesars persecuted Christians brutally.

2. This was especially under Nero (for 3.5 years from December 64 to mid 68 AD when he committed suicide) who used Christians as a scapegoat.

3. This was repeated by many Caesars, most notably Domitian and Diocletian, who led the final persecution before Constantine declared Christianity the official faith of the Empire.

- e. The 'little horn' tries to alter the faith and worship of God's people

He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and **try to change the set times and the laws**. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. Daniel 7:25

1. The set times and laws - God's law and worship practices
2. This was done by Antiochus but then came to a head under the Caesars of Rome.
3. When Christians refused to join the worship of the Emperor they became hated and repeatedly suffered waves of persecution.

- f. The 'little horn' is allowed to persecute for a limited time

He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. **The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time**. Daniel 7:25

1. Notice the saints are 'handed over' - God is still Sovereign and determines the extent and length of the 'little horns' authority.
2. Time, times, and half a time - 3.5 years, or a limited time period. Both are possible meanings of this cryptic phrase.
3. But the principle is always true - God Sovereignly rules over humanity, and no persecution will be allowed to go forever.

- g. The 'little horn' appears to be about to eliminate God's people and then is removed by God

As I watched, this horn was **waging war against the saints and defeating them,** ²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of **the saints of the Most High**, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:21–22

He will speak against the Most High and **oppress his saints** and try to change the set times and the laws. **The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.** ²⁶ **“But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.** Daniel 7:25–26

1. It looks like God's people will be destroyed - but then God suddenly intervenes!
2. In both cases, it appeared that the faith was in danger of being destroyed!
3. Nero put Paul and Peter to death and persecuted the church horribly! Everyone deserted Paul (2Tim 4:16)
4. Antiochus and Nero both persecuted God's people for 3.5 years and then came to a dramatic, swift end.

- C. The beastly kingdoms, especially Rome and the line of Caesars, were arrayed against God and persecuted His people brutally, but in the end, God intervened and crushed them and delivered His people.

III. God's People Inherit His Eternal Kingdom!

- A. The key issue is the eternal kingdom of God!

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 7:14

1. We saw this last week - this is central!
2. All these other kingdoms will fade, but God's Kingdom is eternal!

- B. The people of God will inherit God's eternal Kingdom

The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. ¹⁸ **But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever — yes, for ever and ever.** Daniel 7:17–18

As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of **the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.** Daniel 7:21–22

But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' Daniel 7:26–27

1. All of these passages say the covenant people of God will inherit the eternal Kingdom of God.
2. The four kingdoms and the little horn persecuted the people of God, but Jesus, the Son of Man established the Kingdom and it will grow throughout this age until the time comes for God to consummate His plan (see Matthew 13:31-33)
3. Throughout this age, the Kingdom of God grows like a mustard seed into a great tree, like yeast working throughout a loaf of dough, but the kingdoms of the world persecute the people of God.
4. This is why the Church continues to grow rapidly throughout the world, but so does persecution. The church has never grown faster than it is today, but it has never suffered more persecution either.
5. But in the end, God's Kingdom will reign supreme, all other kingdoms will end, and the people of God will inherit the eternal Kingdom as their reward for faithfully following Him even at the cost of suffering.

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I understand the biblical teaching on the Kingdom of God in this age? (See After Hours)
 1. The 4th beast and the little horn speak to the time of Rome when Jesus established the Kingdom of God

2. Jesus taught the Kingdom will grow and spread throughout this age and that people from every people group will come into the Kingdom.
3. But the Kingdom is not yet completed, and God allows the saints to be persecuted during this age.
4. Do I see that as an exile I should expect to be excluded, ridiculed, ostracized, and even persecuted?
5. Pray for the persecuted church!!!
6. Do I see that God's Kingdom will progress and grow until the time that Christ returns - even though we are persecuted?
7. Invitation to come to Christ and receive an eternal inheritance and Kingdom

B. Communion - The Table of the Kingdom

1. Corporate confession of faith - Romans 8:31-39
2. At the Table, we celebrate that Christ has saved us!
3. At the Table, we confess that He is worth more than life itself!
4. At the Table, we look forward to the consummation of the Kingdom when all things will be restored!

The Beasts, the Little Horn, and the People of God

Daniel 7:15-28
September 26, 2021
Communion
Revelation 1:4-6

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

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to whom be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Rev 1:4–6

“I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. ¹⁶ I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. “So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ¹⁷ ‘The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever — yes, for ever and ever.’

¹⁹ “Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws — the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. ²⁰ I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell — the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

²¹ As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

²³ “He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it.

²⁴ The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

²⁶ “‘But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’ ²⁸ “This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”
Daniel 7:15–28