

Daniel 7:15–28 (ESV)

15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. 17 ‘These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’ 19 “Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, 20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. 23 “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.’ 28 “Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”

The Contrast of two kingdoms

Let's start with verse 15 of Daniel 7 this morning.

15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me.

I would like to also add verse 28

28 “Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”

This is the question that gripped me as I studied this passage:

Who is most likely to know how to take a message from God? The person who received it first, or someone who read it thousands of years later?

There may be exceptions, but usually it would be the one that God gave the message to.

So we can assume that if we understand the prophesy the same way that Daniel understood it, we are likely to respond to it in a similar way that Daniel did.

What evidence do we have about how Daniel received it?

His spirit was anxious. The visions alarmed him. His thoughts about the visions alarmed him. And he turned white due to his emotional state.

We will see, too, that the horn held his attention.

The last kingdom held his attention.

It was deeply upsetting to him. Why? Because what he saw was really really scary and probably different than what he expected to see.

Daniel may have thought from his reading of Jeremiah that once the 70 years of exile was over, the Jews would return to the promised land and everything will be **hunky-dory**. The Jewish kingdom will be free, will grow, and will take over the world. After all, isn't that what some of the Old Testament prophesies seem to say?

What Daniel saw in this vision is that his world view was **completely wrong**. First, the Jewish political nation did not even play a part in this. The kingdom of God is **different** than all the other kingdoms. It is more than the Jews. This kingdom has people from all over, Jews and Gentiles.

What might have been even more shocking to him is that the **political kingdom** of Israel was **just as beastly** as the other beasts. A restored Israel is not where the answer comes from. We know from history what the restored Israel did. Even when they were under the Romans, they used what power they **did** have to **do what?** They killed the Son of God. Can you imagine anything more wicked?

Anything more beast-like? Daniel would have gotten the implications that only a **spiritual kingdom** can accomplish **spiritual good**. Nothing that arises from the sea will be of any help. There is no hope to come from the kingdoms of man.

Daniel also experienced the **beastliness** of the **beasts**. He saw where they came from. They arise from human origin. They come from the turbulence of humanity. They are destined to destroy. They are violent. And they are particularly violent, when they have the opportunity to be, especially to the

people of God. None of the beasts exist with an intention to **love God** or **His people**. None.

Plus all the kingdoms are temporary. None of them last. But while they exist, they are motivated by the same kinds of evil.

I think this is probably the main point of this chapter. The beastliness of the beasts contrasted with the Sovereign rule of our God.

The beastly kingdoms are temporary

The heavenly kingdom is eternal

The beastly kingdoms hate God and His people

The heavenly kingdom hates wickedness

The beastly kingdom loves power

The heavenly kingdom loves God and His people

The beastly kingdoms culminate in blasphemy against God

The heavenly kingdom culminates in true enthusiastic praise of God.

The beastly kingdoms are found to be **impotent** to chart the future

The heavenly kingdom is **omnipotent** in charting the future.

All the beasts are different in their wicked characteristics, but they are similar in their wicked motivations.

Now suppose we read this chapter with a different focus.

Suppose we read this chapter and begin to focus all our attention on the specifics of the beast. Suppose we think that this scripture is given to us for us to **play detective** with the beasts. If we were to approach it this way, we are not going to respond to this chapter like Daniel did. We will be driven to solve a puzzle. We will want to play a matching game with world history. We will feel excited to imagine how we can match things up in a unique way to describe why we are right about what is what. The whole prophesy could actually be fulfilling to us if we think we are actually solving it.

My point is, that is not how **Daniel** received it. This was not some objective puzzle to Daniel. This was horrifying news to Daniel. It was deeply disturbing to Daniel. It set him on his heels. He had to rethink how he thought about all life.

And he especially had to rethink what he thought about world kingdoms.

That is why I have approached it the way I have. I think we are **looking at it** the way we are supposed to so we get the **points** we are supposed to.

Now the section we are in is very interesting. Let's look at it.

16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.

OK, So Daniel asks him essentially, what does all this stuff mean? The angel answers him.

17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.

This would have been where most of those with a futurist take on prophecy would have flipped out. What do you mean? You haven't given me anything solid to peg which kingdoms you are talking about. I want details. How in the world will I write a best seller if you don't tell me more. It is your job to make these kingdoms easy to identify.

But no. The angel gives no specific detail because we do not need it. And it is not the main point of the text. What comes next is more important than the details about the beasts.

18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'

Here is what **Daniel** most needed to know. Here is what **we** most need to know. Believers benefit in the end. Believers will not **create** this kingdom, but they will **join** it. They will become part of its structure. And they will be in it forever. That is the positive point of this whole prophecy. That is what Daniel must have clear. So Daniel is probably thinking like we would think. What happens between now and then? And how in the world is this wicked horn getting away with what he gets away with? How can God possibly allow this.

19 "Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, 20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

It is easy to see why Daniel would focus in on this. He understood kingdoms and kings. I doubt King Nebuchadnezzar would put up with any kind of

insubordination. We saw plenty of evidence that he was quick to have people killed.

So here is a king that was overtly and continually speaking blasphemies to the King of Kings. He is making arrogant claims. He is sassing off to God and insulting God. And he is killing the saints. He singled the people of God out and is actively and effectively killing them. And God is letting that happen.

Now it is clear that God was not going to put up with that forever. But it was probably a mystery to Daniel that he would put up with it at all.

So Daniel says, explain that.

The angel says this:

23 “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Now if you were Daniel, how satisfied would you be with that answer? The angel told him precious little more than what he already knew. This fourth kingdom is violently superior to the other kingdoms. Maybe its power is more absolute. Maybe technology allows it an ever tighter grip of control over the lives of people. The kingdom appears to be made of parts that are joined together rather than a singular government that has taken absolute power over all the nations. It looks like a bunch of countries come together and then a single king takes over 3 of the nations of the alliance.

This leader will be the height of arrogance, so much so that he draws Daniel’s stupefied attention.

He will wear out, or probably kill the saints.

He will probably attempt to change how God is to be worshipped. That may be what **the times and the law mean**. The reformers mostly thought this was all referring to the Catholic church. And they had good reasons to think so. The Catholic church changed all kinds of things from what scripture said to what they said.

And the people of God will be given over to his hand for 3 and ½ times. Many believe that number is symbolic of an incompleteness. 7 is perfect completeness. 3 and ½ is incomplete.

Futurists say it is an actual 3 ½ years. And most of them say this will happen right before the Millennium.

Whichever it means, the saints will not be completely destroyed. Only a portion of them will be killed. He will never completely have his way with them.

26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

Isn't it interesting that Daniel only asked about the **last** kingdom. He does not ask about the **end** judgment. But the angel does not let the judgment **out**. **Knowing our God** is always more important than **knowing our enemies**. Knowing **who wins** is more important than knowing **about the threats**. The enemies of God are never the focus. They are the props. They will all serve to provide greater glory to the king of kings.

Now the court shall sit in judgment. While this will be a one time event at the end of history as we know it, it is not like God never sits in judgment now. Maybe that is what is intended with a couple of the kingdoms continuing after their judgment? Maybe this court is always there. We just got a picture of it being set up to function. It is so hard to tell.

But we know for sure that the **thrones** and the **judgment** is the primary focus of the text. It is the point of the text. And the angel is not about to leave that out. And this is what will happen.

All of the power that the world leaders are so proud of, all of the things that made them think they were so great, all of those things will be **stripped** from the worlds kingdoms and be **given** to the saints.

It will be just like Jesus said in the sermon on the mount:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons[fn] of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and

persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

On this day we will see all of Christ's words to His followers **fulfilled**. God always makes what happens here worth our while, even on the days that we cannot see it by **sight**, we can know it is true **by faith**.

Now what are we to do with this truth that Daniel 7 provides to us? We are to do exactly what Daniel did with it. He processed the truth internally while he faithfully did his service to the beasts as he experienced them. He served the Babylonians for probably close to 70 years. Then he served the Medes and Persians for a few more years.

Our danger is to, as Voddie Baucham says, fall off of either side of this road. One side of the road is to say that these kingdoms **are so wicked** that we should have nothing to do with them. The extreme of that way of thinking is probably the **Amish** way of thinking. That was not Daniel's response. Wherever Daniel was working, his environment was **better** for his **presence**. The civil government was better for his part in it. The people of God ended up having a protected state because of the testimony of the 4 Hebrew children. Daniel rose through the ranks and was able to help more people because of his hard work through the years, as well as the supernatural gifts that God provided to him.

A Christian working for a civil government is not contributing to the **beastliness** of the nature of government. Jeremiah can be comforted in that. As well as Sarah and Ruth and Carla and Jarrod who work for government services. When a Christian enters that environment, he or she is bound to have a tempering effect, a salt like presence. Just like Daniel, Christians are strategically placed in all kinds of positions to do good. They will never save the beast from being a beast. But they will represent the sweet fruits of heaven in the environment that the beast provides.

The other side of the road is to say that it is the church's job to **change** the beast, to take away its beastliness. Those on that side say that, because we have a Democratic Republic, and we are given some power to make changes, that we owe it to our government to take away its beastliness. We should spend our time and resources on prioritizing passing better laws and fighting corruption and on and on.

If that were so important to Christ one would think he might have mentioned that somewhere. Christ's focus was always on rescuing those who **live under the**

shadow of the beast. His efforts were never prioritized to **changing** the beast. He did however tell Peter to go fish for a little so he could pay the temple tax. He told people to give Caesar what is Caesar's.

We have discussed this at length. How much we owe to Caesar is a matter of faith in our world. But we cannot make it our mission to change the heart of that which God says he will destroy. We, like Daniel, can make a lasting change for the people of God. But we, like Daniel, will never take away the beastliness of the beasts.

Another point I am borrowing from Voddie this morning is something he pointed out that I would not have thought of.

Have you ever heard someone quote this:

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing,"

The next appeal we usually hear after someone gives a quote like that is something like, "if you don't want your gun rights to be taken away, you need to be willing to die to keep them." This can be applied to more than just guns. But gun rights is probably the clearest example.

And it might actually be true. If, in the future, every time the government tried to confiscate a gun there was a shoot out, they might give up.

So we might feel like we **owe this** to Caesar. After all, our constitution says we have rights. We should make a stand for the constitution. That is a common line of reasoning.

But the question comes down to, **what do we owe to Caesar**, and what do we owe to **God**? Without a doubt what we owe to God supersedes anything we owe to Caesar. And we have to keep in mind, Caesar is the beast. So we give **something** to Caesar, but we cannot lose sight of what it is we are contributing **to**, and what that contribution is **costing us** in the kingdom of God. We should never **rob** the **mission of Christ** to **support** the **mission of the beast**. Civil government has a valuable purpose. So we are for it. But we need to walk that tightrope closely.

Right along with that thinking, have you ever heard that the sad state of the world's affairs is because the church is not doing its job. If the church did better, the world would not be so wicked.

Have you ever thought about that?

That is simply not how the Bible describes things. It is not the true church's fault that there is an abortion mill in Cumberland. It is not the true church's fault that there are so many women willing to use that service that is legal in the state of MD. It may be the churches' fault that **Christian** women would use it. There may

be some things we can do to minister to the women who pursue such a thing. We might be able to pull some out of the burning house. But it is not our fault the house is on fire. The true church has been preaching the truth about this for 50 years now. They have spoken with clarity and persuasiveness. The world has known the true church's teaching on this for a long time.

Scripture does not tell us that the world is so bad because the church is not doing its job. Romans 1 tells us why the world is so bad. We are born with a predisposition to hate God and to rebel about what He tells us to do. We, by nature, love darkness.

We might want to go back to the statement and rework it.

Instead of-

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing,"

It should say

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for God to remove His restraining hand,"

The question is never, "Why is the world so bad?" Given the nature of the beasts we can **expect** bad. The wonder is really, "Why is it **so good**?" "Why is there so much **human kindness**?" "Why are people, in general, so **good** to each other?" That is the harder question. And I think it comes down to the common graces of God in our world.

I hope that the Lord provides you with application from this morning's sermon.

The biggest takeaway to me is the need to have a proper expectation of this world. **It Is Not Our Home**. God certainly blesses us in this life. And we are free to enjoy **every one** of those blessings. He provides us with this church family, our individual families, excess income that we can spend on enjoyable things, the beauty of our surroundings, warm houses, plenty of food, and we can go on and on. But it is important that we frame these things properly. This world does not have the capacity to **fulfill our souls**. That is not what it is currently for. And that is not what **we** are made for. So we must continually **lift our eyes** to the hills. We must **set our minds** on things above. We must **flip our perspectives** from what we **see** to what **God says**. Then, when the beastly kingdoms show their true characters, when our God allows the kingdoms a longer leash, we will not be shocked or dismayed. We will be able to say, by God's grace, **Praise God, I am only passing through**.