

## **Daniel – Chapter 7**

New International Version of the Holy Bible

The Book of Daniel divides into two parts. The first half was written to introduce us to Daniel: the great and faithful man of God whose example of courage and faith ran throughout a long life of trial and temptation. His example must strengthen and inspire all who would live godly in this present evil world. The second half of Daniel's book into which we now venture contains the visions and dreams of the prophet. These chapters are certainly no less a treasure than the better-known first portion of the book. Daniel's dreams were not like ours - the empty shadows of a restless night. Daniel's dreams were heaven-sent visions by which God in his mercy chose to show the saints of all time the kind of world in which they must be prepared to live, as Daniel lived.

The dreams of Daniel take us through the ages of the earth from his time until the end of the world. In them God unrolled the future, even to the age in which we are living and beyond, like an enormous tapestry. This information is given to man not to simply satisfy human curiosity about what was or is to come, but to help us, his redeemed people, to walk wisely and to discern the times because the days are evil. Our course to heaven is marked out for us. We are to know also the shape of things which make our going difficult and dangerous. What a blessing to possess a real understanding of the monster forces which have their day on the earth. Daniel's dreams foretell the future so that we walk not in darkness but with awareness. God shines about us with a steady light and through the visions of Daniel and we have a lamp unto our feet.

## **The Vision of Daniel - A Lamp unto Our Feet**

After reading the prophecies of Daniel some would say: "We are still in the dark, for these visions are strange and meaningless." But those are the people who never trouble to study the visions. The visions are wonderfully strange but are also made wonderfully clear by God himself as we shall readily see. It is not for us to make something out of Daniel's dream. It is for us to accept the meaning which the Lord gave them. If we can do that, we shall have enjoyed the wisdom they impart.

In the first year of Belshazzar our prophet had a vision in which he saw the sea raging under the four winds of heaven and as Daniel looked - there arose out of the water (one after the other) four strange animals, each of which underwent certain changes as he watched. After the fourth animal, Daniel saw the Ancient of Days, clad in white raiment and seated upon a fiery throne. Around God were thousands and tens of thousands that served him. Then the judgment was set and the books opened. The last beast was slain and his body was given to the fire. Then the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom which belongs unto the saints forever and ever.

Does not every Bible Christian feel at home in such a vision? Are the words in the vision familiar to us? Here is the Son of man. Here are the legions of angels that serve God and carry out his commands. Here are the clouds of heaven which shall bring the Son and all the holy angels with him to the final judgment and the opening of the

books. Daniel's vision, then, reaches to the very end of time - to the Day of the days when our Lord and Savior will bring us home.

The Day of the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be a day of victory for him and for us, his saints. A true Christian is someone who has learned to set that Day as the crowning glory for all hope and striving. All the Christian's roads must lead there; all pathways must meet there; all hopes, desires and prayers are beamed at that hour when the people of the most High shall finally take the Kingdom and possess it forever. **“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’ ”** **Matthew 25:34** Before we hear those words we must live and fight through our share of the time that will proceed the age of the beasts.

Daniel sees the beasts that rise out of the great ocean of time, amid the sea of nations churning and rolling through the centuries. We do not need to search the files of our wisdom to discover what God wished to picture with those four beasts. For He himself tells Daniel that they represent four great kingdoms which will occupy the inhabited world. We shall not undertake to examine the beasts in each of their peculiar features for they are easy to recognize without detailed study. The Lion-like beast with wings that were plucked and standing like a man remind us of Nebuchadnezzar and the mighty empire of Babylon. This gave way to the rule of the Medes and Persians, represented by a bear with three ribs in its mouth because the Persians devoured the kingdoms of the Lydians, Babylonians, and Egyptians before their voracious dominion yielded to that of the leopard. The leopard

represents the Greek empire created by Alexander the Great and later ruled by his four generals. Last of all, however, there comes a monster without a natural name, a horrible beast with iron teeth chewing at everything within reach of its jaws and crushing everything that cannot be reached. In this connection we recall the iron section of the statue which Nebuchadnezzar once saw in his dream, and recognize this new power that followed the Greeks. This empire is the Roman Empire that ruled the earth in the days of the Herods. As the beast had ten horns, which represented ten kingdoms, so from the Roman Empire has grown all the succeeding kingdoms of the earth (existing side by side or in series). Ten is the number of incompleteness in the prophecies. Little and big, the horns of the beast sum up all human dominion from the days of Rome to the Day of Judgment. We are living in the time of the ten horns.

It is noteworthy that Daniel asks no questions of his heavenly adviser about the first three beasts. His attention turns to the fourth - for there, it seems, is the main thrust of the vision. How unspeakable ugly is the fourth beast. Although the first three were unnatural, each in its own way, this one does not even deserve an individual name. And worst of all, there is that eleventh horn - the one that is apart from the normal totality represented by the other ten. This eleventh horn has eyes and a mouth which speaks very great things and the horn that by itself makes war against the saints. God tells Daniel that this is a different kind of king that will grow out of Rome and will speak against God, trying to wear down the saints who are destined to endure until the coming of the Christ

## II

What does the Christian learn from this vision about the world, past and present, in which he lives?

It is worth observing that the visions produced in Daniel a grieved and troubled heart and mind. **Verse 15: “I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.”** And again in verse 28: **“I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”** What he had seen was not pleasant for him or for any child of God on earth. The entire history of the world to the Day of Christ is filled with the rule of beasts, one more cruel and brutal than the other. The powers that seek to control and shape the course of human society are not in the hands of an upward-looking, prayerful human group who walk hand in hand with God. Society will be controlled instead by a down-ward looking, earth-bound and corrupt spirit which can never know the true God. And there is no hope for a change. Only when the last beast is slain will there be a complete re-orientation and the perfect peace of an eternal Kingdom of Christ in which our Lord will then prevail eternally. But this will not occur before the Day of final judgment, as Daniel’s vision clearly shows and as the Scriptures teach again and again.

Scripture teaches us that the Christians will be hemmed in and pressed on all sides by forces that are not for Christ but against him and his gracious rule. The anti-Christian poison is manifested through human activities in many forms and shapes and will run in the blood of sin-depraved mankind. But as Daniel foretold, the very center of anti-

Christian power finally formed itself like a horn on the head of the last great beast. This kingdom will come out of Rome and its king, different from all others. This king will have “wise eyes and a mouth that speaks big things”. Here is the very anti-Christ, the Roman Papacy so well characterized by Luther and the Confessions. Other anti-Christian forces as found in communism, lodgery and modernism will come and go, wax and wane but will continue to prod at the saints of God and “wear them out.”

How poor, then, are the prospects of Christ’s disciples in this anti-Christian sea that will thunder on until Judgment Day. How can any Christian look into the clear mirror of Daniel’s prophecies (which is also perfectly matched by the Revelation of St. John) and not see some hope? Should we be deceived by the smile of the beast or the leering mouth of the eleventh horn? Or shall we accept the truth that beast and horn know of nothing save making war against the saints? We have no substantive future in this physical world. By God’s grace we enjoy many blessings in our earthly life but these are given us, as it were, directly from above by a violent, miraculous over-ruling of the Prince of this world and his henchmen, to provide us with sustaining strength and give us breathing space while we labor before “the night comes”.

In view of this a question seems appropriate. Just what is all the rush about? What is our hurry? Why the leaping bounds with which we try to match the gait of the earth-bound masses? Where do we think we are going? It is remarkable to see children of God running themselves breathless in the affairs of this life and finding so little time to devote to spiritual renewal and to preparations for another future.

They think it important to sit in a dentist's office for an hour or two waiting to have a tooth repaired but cannot spend that much time in looking after the needs of their souls in prayer, worship or seeking their pastor's counsel and in similar pursuits. They may spend hours waiting for repair work but find it difficult to remain through an entire communion service. When a day is needed for rest and relaxation, Sunday is chosen at the expense of church attendance because all other days are taken and it would be unthinkable to relax while temporal affairs and rewards are waiting. We ask once again: "What's the rush?" Perhaps it is a "living" we must make. But we recall having heard somewhere that God, who clothes the grass of the field, will provide even for those of little faith when they seek first the Kingdom of God. The trouble, evidently, is that we are not always fully convinced that there is really nothing else worth seeking so strenuously as a part in this world's rewards.

Be sure that if you strain and strive and stretch out your hand here on earth that the object of your energy is not already being held by the forces of anti-Christ. What the beast does not have between his teeth, he stamps with his feet. The one thing we can gain on earth is a few souls, saved from the jaws of destruction, and our own life which is hid with Christ in God.

If we have the spirit to rule and to profit, then let us apply it to the ruling over our sinful hearts. Let our profit be of the things hidden in the wounds of the Christ. In this way we will have something when this nightmare ends. Then the kingdom and dominion shall be given to the saints of the Most High, forever and ever.