

Message #9  
Daniel

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## HISTORY IS HIS STORY DANIEL 2:31-45; 7:1-28

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

When I was a youth pastor, I found out that one of the more spiritually minded teenagers in my youth group had become involved with drugs. I was reasonably certain that his mother didn't know about it. So one night I told her about the information that I had discovered.

As I was describing the situation, I could see that there was a battle going on inside of her. Her emotions told her, "No, this is my son. I know him better than you do. He just would not take drugs." But her intellect told her, "This evidence is persuasive, and I know that Kurt would not make this up." Fortunately she chose to believe what I told her. When confronted by his mother, the son confessed. The son got straightened out, and there was a good outcome.

It was difficult for this Christian mother to accept the notion that her son was taking drugs, because she did know her son better than anyone else. The evidence for her son's misdeeds was there, but the perspective that she had of her son had not allowed her to consider the possibility that her son was involved with this stuff.

It is amazing how people can look at the same information and come to radically different conclusions about what the data means or how it should be interpreted. People look at the pandemic and conclude, "We need massive government spending to get us out of this mess. Everybody needs to take the vaccine." Others look at the same information and argue, "We need to trim government spending. This deficit spending is going to kill us. Also this vaccine is untested, and we don't know what the long term effects of it will be."

Some look at the rise in global temperatures and conclude that increased carbon dioxide emissions are going to get our world climate into big trouble. Others look at the same information and conclude that carbon dioxide emissions have nothing to do with it, and the rise in global temperatures is really very minimal. Some look at the creation about us and conclude that it is the product of chance. Others conclude that it is the handiwork of God. Some look at an unwanted pregnancy and see only the right of the mother to choose. Others see only the human life inside of the womb and see only the right of that child to choose.

Some look at the objective data of history and conclude that history proceeds in cycles. Others look at that information as evidence of the evolutionary development of man. Others see the events of history as having no particular direction or goal. Still others see these events as fitting into some grand scheme that has a definite direction and a definite goal.

What is responsible for these widely divergent views of life is the philosophical and moral framework with which we start. The advantage that we Christians have over others is that we have an infallible framework by which we can understand the meaning of life and the nature of the world around us. This framework is found in the Bible. The Bible does not tell us everything that there is to know or the correct answer to every problem that we encounter in life. But it provides us with a basic way to understand life and the world. It also helps us to understand history. Where are we going, and how will we get there?

We have come to Chapter 7 in the Book of Daniel. The first six chapters have dealt primarily with history and biography. The rest of this book focuses primarily upon future events, upon prophecy. Scholars call it apocalyptic literature. Prophecy is exciting and important because it tells us where humanity is going and how it will get there.

Christians commonly make two errors in looking at prophecy. Some become absorbed in it to the exclusion of all else. The details of prophetic understanding take priority over Scriptural principles about how believers should live.

On the other hand some just write prophecy off. It is too boring, or it is too hard to understand, or it doesn't have much relevance to my daily life. The truth is that one fourth of the entire Bible is related to prophecy. God did not intend that such a big section of the Bible should be ignored. He wants us to understand it. He put it there for a purpose. That purpose has to do with history. That purpose has to do with understanding the meaning and direction of life. That purpose has to do with understanding what God is doing in the world around us.

It also relates intimately to the two questions that we have been considering in our ongoing study of Daniel: How should I live in an often godless society? And: Is God worthy of my trust? So let's look at what this section of prophecy has to teach us.

I.

Back in #2 we looked at the events surrounding a dream that Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had. We saw how God's revelation of that dream to Daniel saved the lives of our four Jewish heroes and the other government advisors. It led to promotions for Daniel and his three friends and to new respect for the God of Israel. We did not look at the dream itself. We are going to look at NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM (PROJECTOR ON--- I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM) now and see how it relates to the dream that Daniel has in chapter 7.

So you might turn in your Bible back to #2 as I briefly summarize the contents and interpretation of that dream. In vv. 31-33 Daniel tells the Babylonian king, **"You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. 32 The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay."**

(NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S STATUE) The head of that statue was made of gold. Daniel said that this head represented Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. The torso and arms were made of silver. This represented a kingdom that would arise after Babylon. The stomach and thighs were made of bronze. Daniel said that this represented a third country. The legs of the statue were made of iron, and its toes were made of clay and iron. According to Daniel's interpretation that kingdom would be as strong as iron and would crush and shatter all things. It would be a divided kingdom, however. The mixture of clay and iron in the toes meant that part of the kingdom would be strong, and part of it would be brittle.

In his dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a stone strike the foot of this statue and become a huge mountain. According to #2 v. 44, **“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.”** This fourth kingdom will destroy these previous kingdoms and will last forever.

II..

(II. DANIEL'S DREAM) In #7 we come to DANIEL'S DREAM. The dream that Daniel has in Chapter 7 seems to refer to these same four kingdoms. We read in v. 1 that Daniel has this dream during the first year of King Belshazzar. This would probably be 553 BC, almost 50 years after Nebuchadnezzar had his dream and 14 years before the incident involving the handwriting on the wall in chapter 5. Daniel would be about 67 or 68 years old.

A.

Daniel proceeds to describe a HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT which involves THE FOUR BEASTS in his dream (II. DANIEL'S DREAM A. HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT--- THE FOUR BEASTS). He begins to speak from the first person point of view: “I saw these things.” The four kingdoms in his dream are represented by four animals (FOUR BEASTS) in contrast to the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream made up of four different metals. The dream in chapter 2 appears to describe man's perspective on these four empires whereas the dream in chapter 7 gives God's view of these nations. Man sees them as majestic kingdoms. God sees them as devouring beasts. They come up out of the sea in Daniel's dream. In the Old Testament the sea is often used as a symbol of chaos and evil.

Consider each of these kingdoms. (DANIEL'S FIRST BEAST) The first beast that Daniel saw was a lion who had the wings of an eagle. Clearly this represents Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. The lion was the symbol of the Babylonian Empire. (BABYLON WALL) Painted pictures of lions adorned the main gate of the city of Babylon and were painted on the walls of its main street.

The lion corresponds to the head of gold (NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S STATUE) in the statue in chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are also represented by the head of

gold. The decreasing value of the metals in the statue may have to do with the decreasing authority of the leaders of the different kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar's word was absolute law. With each of the succeeding kingdoms limits are placed upon the authority of the leader. The rulers after Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon become subject to law.

(DANIEL'S FIRST BEAST) In chapter 7 v. 4 the wings of the eagle are plucked, and then a human heart or mind is given to the lion. Most conservatives understand this to be a reference to Nebuchadnezzar's period of insanity. After his sanity returned, he was much more human in his dealings with people.

The second beast (DANIEL'S SECOND BEAST) resembles a bear. It is raised up on one side and has three ribs in its mouth. The most obvious identification for this animal is the Medo-Persian Empire. The fact that it is raised on one side points toward the reality that the Persians dominated the Medes in this empire. The three ribs probably refer to Egypt, Lydia, and Babylon, the three primary conquests of this kingdom.

(NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S STATUE) The bear corresponds to the silver trunk in the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The third kingdom--- the bronze stomach and thighs in the statue--- is like a leopard with wings. (DANIEL'S THIRD BEAST) The leopard is known for its speed and agility. This leopard even has wings. The most logical correlation is with Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire. In the space of twelve short years he conquered all of the civilized world. He never lost a battle. But he died in 323 BC at the young age of 32. The four heads on the leopard would seem to refer to the division of the Greek empire into four parts after the death of Alexander. Each of these parts was led by one of Alexander's surviving generals. (PROJECTOR OFF)

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, when Alexander the Great came to Jerusalem, the high priest showed him Daniel's book, and he read this very chapter. He especially looked at v. 6: **"After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it."** When Alexander read it, Josephus says that he supposed that it was referring to himself, and it made him glad. (*Antiquities of the Jews*, II.317-345) Consequently Alexander was very generous to the Jews, allowing them to maintain their own laws.

According to the prophet Isaiah, the Lord promised that His Word would not return to Him void. That promise includes the prophetic part of His Word. Biblical prophecy had an effect even upon this unbeliever Alexander. If indeed we are approaching the latter part of human history, we ought to have a special interest in prophecy. For it is more relevant than ever. Today Iran (ancient Persia), Iraq (the home of Babylon), and Israel are all regularly in the news.

There is no animal (PROJECTOR ON--- DANIEL'S FOURTH BEAST) that Daniel knows about which can adequately describe the fourth beast--- the legs and toes of the

statue in chapter 2. It is a strong, terrifying beast. It crushes and tramples its enemies. This is descriptive of the character of the early rulers of the Roman Empire. Rome was the next empire which appeared on the world stage, and it lasted for many centuries. It had two parts--- east and west--- which are represented by the two legs.

The identifications of these four beasts and four parts of the statue seem obvious. Yet some critics disagree. Even though Media never had any world prominence, they insist that the second animal is Media, the third is Persia and the fourth is Greece. (PROJECTOR OFF) Why? Because even if Daniel was written in the second century BC, as they mistakenly think, it would mean that the author foresaw the rise of the Roman Empire, which was still a future event to people living in the second century BC.

The presupposition of these critics is that there can be no such thing as supernatural prophecy. So they deny the evidence of the authenticity of the book, they deny the obvious identifications of the beasts, and they deny the testimony of Josephus that the Book of Daniel was in existence in the fourth century BC during the lifetime of Alexander the Great.

B.

The fourth beast, however, describes not only the Roman Empire in the time of Christ but also a revived Roman Empire that is yet future. A FUTURE FULFILLMENT (II. A. B. FUTURE FULFILLMENT--- THE FOURTH BEAST) is also in view. For in v. 20 and v. 24 we see that the beast has ten horns which represent ten kings. Then another horn, a little horn, rises up and conquers three of these kings. According to v. 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.”**

Nothing in past history fits with this description. But there are other passages in the Bible that speak about a future evil ruler and that fit with this description. This little horn is given at least 30 titles in the Scriptures. He is best known as the Antichrist. Perhaps the most detailed description of him appears in Revelation #13.

Here in Daniel 7:25 we are told that this individual is a blasphemer. He will persecute the saints. Verse 21 says that he will make war with them, and he will appear to be winning. Verse 25 says that he will try to make alterations in times and in law. Perhaps this Antichrist will try to change the seven day week, as the French revolutionaries tried to do during the French Revolution, when they unsuccessfully introduced a ten day work week. The Bolsheviks in the early 1900s and Joseph Stalin some years later also tried unsuccessfully to change the seven day week. Verse 25 implies that this future leader will also have limited success.

He will succeed in persecuting Christians. The end of v. 25 in our chapter says that the saints will be given into the hands of the little horn for “a time, times, and half a time.” That same expression appears in Revelation #12 v. 14. That time span is equated with 1260 days, which works out to three and a half years. This fits with an understanding

that the Great Tribulation will last for three and a half years. This time period will also be consistent with a time period where a prince who is to come will hold power, according to Daniel #9 v. 27. We will get to that passage in a couple of weeks.

C.

The fourth beast, however, will be replaced by AN ETERNAL KINGDOM (II. A. B. C. AN ETERNAL KINGDOM). Verse 26 says that the court will sit for judgment. God will intervene. The scene in heaven is laid out for us beginning in v. 9. Amid the thrones the Ancient of Days takes His seat. From the contrast with the Son of Man in v. 13, it appears that this is a manifestation of God the Father. As such, it may be the only place in Scripture where God the Father is portrayed in human form.

He is surrounded here by thousands upon thousands of attendants. The court sits and then, according to the end of v. 10, the books are opened. Apparently these are books in which deeds are recorded, especially the works of the four beasts and the little horn, the Antichrist. The sins of this revived Roman Empire and the blasphemy of its ruler, the little horn, are evident. Judgment is pronounced, and they are sentenced to death. The other kingdoms, according to v. 12, shall also lose their dominions, but they shall not meet the same sudden, climactic fate that the fourth kingdom and its ruler meet.

Then in v. 13 we see the intervention by the Son of Man. There is no definite article in the original Aramaic. So this may be translated either as "one like a Son of Man" or "one like the Son of Man." The title "Son of Man" appears many times in the Old Testament, but it always refers to a human being. Here it refers to a human being as well. But this human being is also God. For this is a vision of the future God-man Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament in Matthew 26 vv. 63 & 64 (PROJECTOR ON--- MATTHEW 26:63) Christ was being examined by the high priest shortly before He was condemned. The high priest says, "**But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.'**" (MATTHEW 26:64) **Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.'**" At that point the high priest declares, "**He has blasphemed.**"

Christ was identifying Himself with the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13. We see from vv. 13 & 14 in our passage that as sentence is passed upon a revived Roman Empire and its ruler, the Ancient of Days--- God the Father--- grants the Lord Jesus Christ dominion over all of the earth. (PROJECTOR OFF)

So at some time in the future Christ will return to earth in the clouds and establishes His eternal kingdom upon earth. Verse 27 adds that the people of the saints of God will rule on earth with Him in this kingdom. We Christians will be included among their number. We know from the Book of Revelation that the first part of this kingdom will involve a thousand year reign of Christ upon earth, which is commonly called the Millennium. Thus human history will be consummated by Christ's return to earth and the

establishment of His rule upon it. This will be the final evidence that history is actually His story.

### III.A.

Consider THE APPLICATIONS (PROJECTOR ON--- II. THE APPLICATIONS A. HOW SHOULD WE LIVE IN AN OFTEN GODLESS SOCIETY?) waiting for us here. One of the questions that the Book of Daniel answers for us is: HOW SHOULD WE LIVE IN AN OFTEN GODLESS SOCIETY? Daniel tells us that we should live godly lives in this kind of world. One lesson that arises out of this chapter is that we can learn to live godly lives by seeking God's perspective on world events.

God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2 that His kingdom was to be the first of four mighty kingdoms upon earth. But to Nebuchadnezzar those four kingdoms appeared as parts of a mighty statue, and he was the head of gold. In chapter 7 Daniel sees those same four kingdoms, but this time they appear as four animals. The fourth animal is described as a terrifying beast with iron teeth. It devours and crushes and tramples down. Chapter 2 was man's perspective on the broad outline of Gentile history. Chapter 7 gives us God's perspective on the course of Gentile history.

Man regards those four kingdoms as majestic and exalted. God regards them as animals, and He regards the fourth kingdom as being especially evil. Yet we know from other prophecy that when the leader of this fourth kingdom appears, most people will regard him as a hero. He will be charismatic and powerful. He will bring a certain kind of peace to the world. He will offer solutions to the world's problems. He will be the people's choice. Yet in God's view he will be the epitome of man's evil and of blasphemy. He will be the great beast.

To live godly lives in an often godless society, to have lives of influence, we need to acquire God's perspective on the world around us. As Americans we can appreciate our godly heritage, our traditional defense of freedom around the world, our support of Israel, and our promotion of freedoms of speech, press, and religion. Yet I wonder if God looks at our nation and sees growing signs of beastliness. I wonder if He regards our acceptance of abortion and redefinition of marriage as an "alteration in times and in law," as Daniel warned about.

I wonder if He regards as beastly a federal government which sends a SWAT team to arrest a sidewalk counselor at an abortion center in Pennsylvania. Mark Houck (MARK HOUCK), a Catholic father of seven children, was acting as a sidewalk counselor outside of an abortion center one day when an abortion counselor got in his twelve year old son's face and was harassing him. Mark Houck pushed the harasser back from his son. The abortion counselor filed criminal charges. The local police refused to pursue the case. The harasser appealed to the feds, claiming that the father's shoving was a violation of the federal Freedom of Access to Clinics Act. One morning a FBI team of 25 agents in 15 vehicles showed up to arrest Houck. He faced a possible sentence of eleven years in prison. Fortunately a jury found him innocent of all charges. (PROJECTOR OFF)

I wonder if we had more of God's perspective if we might be more motivated to pray for this society, if we might work harder to promote Biblical values in the community and in government, and if we might not be more inclined to give to Christian causes.

I also suspect that the view that some people have in our community is that we are part of a quaint church that is a kind of relic of the past. Those who knew enough to have a little understanding of our theology might look at it as a fundamentalist throwback from the past clearly out of step with the direction of our culture.

I wonder if God's perspective might be a bit different. I wonder if He might see us as one of a handful of outposts in the community that have the truth in their possession, that understand where history is really going. I wonder if He might see us as one of the few instruments in our community capable of having an impact upon the world of eternal significance. I wonder if He might see us as possessing access to riches and power and divine influence of which people around us might not have a clue.

I wonder also if the God who is there might also see us as individuals as the lone ambassador, or one of the few ambassadors, of an eternal kingdom in an entire office building or an entire school or an entire factory. I wonder if He might regard us as being the only source of light and hope in a particular neighborhood. I wonder if He might see us as possessors of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. I wonder if His primary concern for us might be (PROJECTOR ON--- EPHESIANS 1:18-19) that the eyes of our heart be enlightened, so that we may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Our perspective on life is determinative of the way that we live. If we want to develop God's perspective on the world around us, the best thing that we can do is to follow Daniel's example that we talked about in chapter 6. Maintain a program of regular devotions. Get into God's Word to get and keep the right perspective on the world around us. Be involved with people. Pray.

B.

The second question that the Book of Daniel answers is this: IS GOD WORTHY OF OUR TRUST? (III. THE APPLICATIONS A. B. IS GOD WORTHY OF OUR TRUST?) The resounding answer from #7 is "Yes, He is." Sixty years before it happened, God revealed that the Medes and Persians would have a dominant role on the world stage. Two hundred years before it happened He revealed the coming of the Greek Empire. Four hundred years before it happened He revealed the advent of the Roman Empire.

If His Word has been true in all of these things, should we not believe that the Son of Man is going to return to earth, judge the world, and establish an eternal kingdom? Should we not trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior? Should we not trust Him as our Lord?

In the news media and in our schools we are bombarded with messages about where history is headed. We are warned about global warming and the danger of Covid. We are told about the possibility of a collision with an asteroid and the world calamity that such an event could cause. We are told that mankind is involved in the process of evolution. In the presentation of these messages we are called upon to trust in science as the guide to the future.

In the world of finance we are presented with messages about where the stock market and the economy are headed. We are given sometimes conflicting messages by economists about what the future holds. The source of authority that we are called upon to rely is economics.

In the world of politics we are informed about threats to our foreign policy. We are told about the dangers that are posed by our national debt. We are faced with an insecure national border. We read about the regular problems of crime and homelessness and drug abuse and unemployment and the housing crisis and corruption in government. The realm of study in which answers are sought is political science.

In the face of all of this we Christians need to keep in focus that the best guide to the future, the real source of authority, the ultimate place to find answers is God and His Word. He and His Word are worthy of our trust. He and His Word do not specifically tell us how to deal with all of these problems. But they provide us with a basic framework for approaching challenges about us, and they tell us ultimately what is going to happen to our world.

When the United Nations headquarters in New York City was built, the Soviet Union donated a stone wall that was placed in Ralph Bunch Park across the street. (UN ISALAH) These words were inscribed upon it: **“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither will they learn war any more.”**

Unfortunately the UN is never going to bring about this state of peace upon the earth. In fact what man will eventually produce is a final world chaos known as the Great Tribulation. The peace described in that inscription will one day happen, but it will be God who brings it to pass. What the Russians omitted from that inscription taken from Isaiah #2 v. 4 (ISAIAH 2:4) was the first part of the verse: **“He shall judge between the nations,/ and shall decide disputes for many peoples...”**

Jesus Christ will one day return to earth in visible form. We who know Him will become participants in a wonderful earthly kingdom. Isn't this God who controls the course of human history and who is preparing a tremendous future for us worthy of our trust?