

4—Advent—Daniel 7:1-28—The Hope of the Coming Son of Man

I. Introduction

- A. If you knew the future what would change about you? If you knew what you know now, what would you change about your past? If you knew who these four beast-kings were in our passage today, what could you do about it? You and I can't even control our own emotions much less the likes of these four beasts.
- B. God said to Job in chapter 41—speaking of Leviathan that great beast of the sea...Job 41:8-11 ⁸ Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again! ⁹ Behold, the hope of a man is false; he is laid low even at the sight of him. ¹⁰ No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before me? ¹¹ Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.
- C. Well, this chapter in Daniel stirs up four beasts that you cannot defeat but we know who can and we are looking for him.

II. Main Point

- A. The main point rests in the center of Chapter 7—Where the Ancient of Days gives dominion and glory and the Kingdom to this cloud-rider who is like a Son of Man to whom all peoples, nations, and languages will serve him and his dominion is everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom shall not be destroyed.
- B. That's it. That's that main point, not the discovery of who the four beasts are or breaking some code.

III. Outline

- A. Four Frightening Beasts
- B. The Heavenly Son of Man
- C. The Final Victory is Certain

IV. Exposition

- A. Much of this is not explainable and I don't think most of the details are meant to be. What this chapter explains we will explore but that which is left ambiguous will be left that way. The reason for that is due to the type of writing this is and its purpose. What does God mean to reveal to us about these four frightening beasts? Let's take a look.
 - 1. Whatever you make of this scene, just remember that God is revealing it to Daniel and now to us. That means God knows and governs the future events of the world.
 - 2. As we move on in the storyline of Daniel, we encounter some familiar territory—more dreams. While I've maintained the fact that Daniel is primarily a book of wisdom, there are certainly aspects of it that are prophetic.
 - a) We need the prophetic future to live faithfully and wise in the present.
 - b) This scene is a revelation to Daniel through a dream. He then writes it down...as least some of it while part of it remains top secret.
 - 3. The dream begins with something akin to an outrageous storm.
 - a) Can you imagine the four winds of heaven all blowing on the same spot?
 - (1) Just to help with the visual here—it is like the wind is out of the North, South, East and West converging on the sea in place.
 - (2) The sea is obviously stirred up and chaotic. It's like the world before God fashioned it and made it orderly and good. It is the cursed world that we live in that needs the curse to be reversed.
 - (3) No doubt the scene is even more scary being at night as Daniel lay in his bed.
 - 4. The four winds of heaven stir up four great beasts that come up out of the sea.
 - a) The four winds of Heaven are making known what is hidden and unseen.
 - (1) We will explore why later.
 - b) These four beasts (living creatures...same words) are all different from one another.
 - (1) Before we look at what they are now, let's be reminded of the origin of living creatures
 - a) Genesis 1:20-25 ²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹ So

God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. ²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

- (b) All that God made was good. What we are about to witness follows the fall. The world we read about here is not what it was meant to be.
- (c) The story of Christmas is that of God remaking the world through that one who comes from heaven who is like a Son of Man.
- (d) Let's see the chaotic and deformed world we live in.
- (2) The first beast is a frightening lion with eagle's wings.
 - (a) This is at least very weird and unnatural.
 - (b) This mixture of the different kinds of beasts is unsettling. They aren't meant to be that way.
 - (c) At this point in the dream, we don't know what all this means but we are nevertheless repulsed by the sight of this thing or maybe you are in awe of it.
 - (d) The beast's wings are plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it.
 - i) This is frightening and it's supposed to be.
- (3) But there's more. The next beast is described to be like a bear.
 - (a) It seems to have been doing what bears do as three ribs are seen in its mouth.
 - (b) It is commanded to “arise, devour much flesh.”
 - (c) Whatever we are to know about this beast, we must rightly see that violence and destruction will come from it.
- (4) The next beast is like a leopard.
 - (a) Yet it is no ordinary leopard. It has four wings like a bird on its back.
 - (b) Additionally, it has four heads. This is even more deformity.
 - (c) Again, dominion was given to it and that's not what we would want exercising authority in the world.
 - i) Man is supposed to have dominion on the earth, not beasts.
- (5) And finally, a fourth beast. It is absolutely terrifying.
 - (a) There's no living creature to compare it to.
 - i) Maybe it's liken to this one in Isaiah 27:1 In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.
 - (b) Whatever it is, it's dreadful and exceedingly strong.
 - i) It either devours the things of the earth with its teeth of iron or stamps what is left with its feet.
 - (c) This beast is different in that it has ten horns.
 - i) Horns are a sign of authority and power. I'm sure you've heard the phrase, “if you mess with the bull, you gets the horns.”
 - ii) This beast had 10 of them which is to portray great authority and danger but not all authority.
 - (1) Three are pushed out by the roots when a new little horn pops up.
 - (a) This horn has the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, that is boastful things.

5. The ambiguity may be troubling but I think we understand well enough that things are as they are supposed to be. This world is fallen and violent. It is perverse and deformed. The twisted-ness of these dangerous beasts are obvious.
 - a) It seems for now, we are supposed to be terrified about this.
 - b) The lack of information adds to the fear as the unknown always seems to do.
 - c) This is bad news. It's horrid. It is the world we live in. But it is the world we chose at the fall. It is life outside of Eden. God's crown of creation handed over dominion to the snake and God must take it back through a son of man.
 - d) I haven't explained any of these beasts because there's been no interpretation yet and I think that's what we are supposed to do. We need to feel the uncertainty and danger of the scene.
- B. Whatever this means, the next section will shed some light of the scene as we move from the stormy sea to a courtroom. There we will see judgment rendered by God and the Kingdom given to someone from heaven like a son of man. Let's take a look.
 1. The first thing Daniel sees are thrones being places with no description of who they are they sit upon them.
 2. Except one—the Ancient of Days took his seat.
 - a) He is clothed in white. His hair is like pure wool.
 - b) His throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.
 - (1) His throne is described as though it's a chariot.
 - (2) A stream of fire issued and came out from before him.
 - (3) A thousand thousands serve him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
 - c) It says there at the end of verse 10 that the court sat in judgment and the books were opened.
 - d) Who is this Ancient of Days?
 - (1) This is YHWH—the Most High God. The Eternal One. Uncreated. The Judge over all. The righteous One. The all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, all-wise Sovereign Lord of the Universe.
 - (2) "He is timeless and older than days" (House 505).
 - (3) The Ancient of Days is the "I am" described in Exodus 3:14.
 - (4) He is this one of Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
 3. The next scene is that of the little horn on the fourth beast speaking proud and boastful words in court.
 - a) Unlike the Ancient of Days who will never end, there in verse 11 the fourth beast is killed.
 - (1) Its body is destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.
 - (2) This is judgment rendered from the books that were opened.
 - b) Verse 12 tells us that the rest of the beasts' dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.
 4. This next scene is the reason we are looking at the book of Daniel during Christmas. There comes a cloud-rider from heaven who is like a son of man.
 - a) This courtroom scene appears to be on the earth because the one who has descended from heaven comes to the Ancient of Days.
 - (1) He was presented before him. We've been seeing this happen with Daniel and his three companions come before the earthly kings.
 - (2) The beasts have just had their dominion taken from them but here in verse 14, dominion and glory and a kingdom are given to this cloud-rider who is like a son of man.
 - (a) The reason it was given to him is stated—that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him and not the beasts.
 - (b) Unlike the previous dominion the beasts had that was taken away, this one like a son of man is given an everlasting dominion.
 - i) It shall not pass away.
 - ii) His kingdom shall not be destroyed.
 - b) There seems to be something very special about this ruler king.

- (1) He is from heaven not from sea or the earth.
 - (2) Yet, He is like a son of man.
 - (3) He seems to be divine and human joined in one.
 - (4) He must be both divine and human to have an everlasting Kingdom.
 - (5) We simply do not know how from this chapter in Daniel.
 - c) There's certainly more that could be said about this glorious Son of Man in comparison to the beasts. But for now we will move on in the scene.
- C. The final scene of chapter 7 tells us of the certainty of victory for this Kingdom given to this Son of Man.
- 1. We finally get some interpretation of the beasts from scene 1 now.
 - a) Daniel's spirit is anxious within him, and the vision of his head alarmed him there in verse 15.
 - b) We are still in the courtroom and one among the thousands that served and stood before the Ancient of Days, is asked by Daniel concerning the truth concerning all this.
 - (1) We are on the right track if we do not know what's going on because Daniel doesn't know either.
 - (2) We miss the point if we are trying to identify and decode the four beasts before now.
 - c) So, this one told him and made known the interpretation of the dreams.
 - (1) Verse 17 and 18 are very important to understand what we've been seeing.
 - (a) Daniel 7:17–18 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.'
 - (b) There it is. At this point now we know the beasts are four earthly kings. We don't know who they are and it doesn't seem to matter because the saints of the Most High God are given an eternal kingdom. Victory is certain!
 - i) It's back like it's supposed to be—dominion in the hands of those who walk in fellowship with the Most High God.
 - ii) But how? We see the victory but how can this be? Who are the saints? Who defeats the beasts?
 - iii) Also, I thought it was given to the cloud-rider who is like a son of man. How are we to make sense of the Kingdom being given to the saints?
 - 2. For now, Daniel is not concerned about that. He wants to know more about the fourth beast.
 - a) We hear some new information that it has claws of bronze.
 - b) And more importantly, in verse 21, the boastful horn on the fourth beast "made war with the saints and prevailed over them."
 - (1) This is what we were dreading from the first scene. Indeed, we live in this broken world and we abandoned God's good world and design for us. In the Garden of Eden, man was deceived by a beast of the field, the serpent and we were exiled from the Garden.
 - (a) But there was to be a child born of a woman to crush the head of the serpent. But until then, the beast roams to and fro seeking some to devour.
 - (2) But the bad news is short lived. The horn only prevails 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.
 - (a) Here's a fitting spot to hear Paul say this from Ephesians 6:11–12 ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
 - c) In verse 23, Daniel's interpreter goes on to tell him a little more about that terrifying fourth beast.
 - (1) It will be a kingdom different than the others. As you might expect, it's exceeding worse than those before.
 - (a) It shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.
 - (b) In its rage against the saints of the Most High God, it will attempt to change the times and the law; and the saints will be given into his hands for a time, times, and half time.

- i) What is right will be considered evil and that which is evil will be considered good. This sounds much like what is going on even now in this world.
 - ii) While it pains us to hear that the beast will prevail on the saints, we must see that it is by divine permission. The beast does not just take them, they are given over to it.
 - iii) But his dominion will be taken away and he will be destroyed to the end.
 - iv) Take note of this—Daniel 7:27 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.'
 - (1) Did you see what he did? The Kingdom is given to the people of the saints of the Most High and it is also His Kingdom. The only answer rests in that child born a king in Bethlehem. That's what Christmas is about.
- d) So what? How are we to survive being handed over to the fourth beast? How are we to live in this broken world while we await the return of our King?
 - (1) I intentionally skipped the opening phrase of chapter 7.
 - (2) If you will look back there, this dream came to Daniel during the year of the reign of Belshazzar. That means, he had not yet been handed over to the lions (beasts).
 - (a) I think knowing how it all ends in the future gives us hope to face any beast that comes our way.
 - (3) "Today we live in a world of terrifying beasts, but we shall not live in their world forever. There will come a day when all wrongs will be made right, when all tyrants will be dethroned, when all that is broken will be fixed. There will come a day when all hunger will come to an end, when all sickness will be cured, when every sorrowing heart will be comforted. There will come a day when even death, the last weapon of the beast, will have its power broken once and for all. On that day, the Great Beast, Satan himself, will be bound and brought before the throne; he will answer for his crimes and be cast into the lake of fire forever."
 - (4) "The challenge of Daniel 7 for us is therefore not to work out the specific identity of the different beasts, as though we could do something about it. Rather, in the midst of this beastly world, our challenge is to live our lives with our eye firmly fixed on the heavenly throne room. Instead of being terrified by the beasts, we must daily live remembering the one who will deliver the final and decisive judgment." (Duguid 119).
 - (5) The story of Christmas is that the cloud-rider from heaven who is like a son of man came to crush the head of the serpent-beast. He did that through death on a cross and the resurrection. Indeed he has broken the power of sin and through repentance and faith in him we can be forgiven and counted righteous.
 - (6) We are, therefore, adopted into the family of God through this Savior born in Bethlehem. We have been made a Kingdom unto God—a Kingdom that will last forever.
 - (7) The greatest gift ever offered to man is a gift to be received by faith as we await his return to destroy all evil and gather us to himself forever. Do you know this King?