

**Daniel 7:1-28****Daniel's Dream of Four Beasts**

7 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. <sup>3</sup> Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

<sup>4</sup> "The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.

<sup>5</sup> "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

<sup>6</sup> "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back, it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

<sup>7</sup> "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

<sup>8</sup> "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 human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

<sup>9</sup> "As I looked,

"thrones were set in place,

and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was as white as snow;

the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire,

and its wheels were all ablaze.

<sup>10</sup> A river of fire was flowing,  
coming out from before him.

Thousands upon thousands attended him;  
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

The court was seated,  
and the books were opened.

<sup>11</sup> “Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. <sup>12</sup> (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

<sup>13</sup> “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples 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.

#### The Interpretation of the Dream

<sup>15</sup> “I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. <sup>16</sup> I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this.

“So, he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: <sup>17</sup> ‘The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. <sup>18</sup> But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.’

<sup>19</sup> “Then I wanted to know the 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

<sup>23</sup> “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. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.

<sup>26</sup> “‘But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. <sup>27</sup> Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’

<sup>28</sup> “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.”

## **Matthew 26:57-68**

### **Jesus Before the Sanhedrin**

<sup>57</sup> Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. <sup>58</sup> But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

<sup>59</sup> The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. <sup>60</sup> But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally, two came forward <sup>61</sup> and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

<sup>62</sup> Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” <sup>63</sup> But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

<sup>64</sup> “You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

<sup>65</sup> Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. <sup>66</sup> What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

<sup>67</sup> Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him <sup>68</sup> and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

### Sermon: “God’s Forever King”

Please have your Bibles opened up at **Daniel chapter 7**– we’ll be looking at the whole chapter.

There is an outline if you would like to take some notes!

Let me **pray** first...

### Apocalyptic/Intro

Chapters 7 to 12 of Daniel – are what we call **apocalyptic literature**.

So, we’d better define “**apocalyptic**”

#### **[Slide-Definition]**

Dictionary definition: *Forecasting or prophesying the ultimate destiny of the world.*

#### **[Slide-Biblical definition]**

A more comprehensive Biblical definition: *Biblical apocalyptic literature is prophecy that seeks to enlighten and encourage Christians despised and cut off by the world, with a vision of the God who will come to impose His everlasting Kingdom on the wreckage and rebellion of human history – and it communicates this vision/message using wild, scary, imaginative, bizarre and head-scratching*

*imagery [like the beasts in Daniel 7]. This same type of imagery is also found in the Book of Revelation.*

### **[Slide-Intro/Overview]**

In Daniel chapter 7 – we have an **overview of human history** from God’s perspective as God sees what human history is really like – and this overview is given so that people – like us – can prepare for what we might have to face in our lives and to prepare for what comes at the end of time.

Now because it’s apocalyptic literature – the way human history is described - here in Daniel 7 - is in terms of a vision of four great beasts that Daniel sees in his dream.

If we skip down to verse 17 of Daniel 7 – we get a bit of a spoiler alert – and we read that “*the four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the Earth*”

We’re not told who the four kings are and what kingdoms they rule.

We can waste time guessing and speculating – and I’ll give you a suggestion later – but that’s not the main point of giving us the description of the beasts.

**The purpose of the descriptions of the beasts is to show us what human kings and kingdoms throughout history are really like**

### **[Slide-Headings]**

So, we going to look at Daniel 7 under **three headings**

1. What human kings and kingdoms are like (vv1-8)
2. What God’s King and Kingdom is like (vv9-14)
3. What will happen to human kings and kingdoms (vv15-28)

Then we'll finish with how this applies to us today – now that we know all this about human history

### What human kings and kingdoms are like (vv1-8)

#### [Slide-human kings/kingdoms]

1st then – **What human kings and kingdoms are like** – that's in verses 1 to 8.

We pick up the story in verse 1 – it's the first year of King Belshazzar – King of Babylon - and Daniel had a dream and visions passed through his mind.

His vision has him at the seaside – v2 – and the great sea (Mediterranean?) is churned up by four winds of heaven.

In Apocalyptic literature, the sea is a symbol of chaos. We've all seen the chaos that the sea can cause when there's a storm. Back in 2007 – the container ship, Pasha Bulker, ran aground on Nobby's Beach in Newcastle during a humdinger of a storm.

V3 – Daniel saw 4 great beasts coming out of this chaotic sea – each of them was different. Now remember these 4 beasts represent four Kings (v17)

#### [Slide-4 Beasts]

The 1st beast was like a lion and had wings of an eagle. The lion is the king of the jungle and the eagle is often a symbol of freedom, courage, strength and wisdom.

The wings were torn off and enable the lion to stand on two feet like a human being – and the beast had a mind of a human being. Remember back in chapter 4 – God punished Nebuchadnezzar and he became a beast for a while and then eventually got his mind back when he acknowledged God.

The 2nd beast looked like a bear – raised up on one side – and had 3 ribs between its teeth having devoured a victim.

The 3rd beast looked like a leopard – with four wings and four heads – and it was given authority to rule.

The 4th beast was most terrifying and frightening and very powerful – with large iron teeth. It crushed and devoured its victims and trampled what was left. This 4th beast was totally different and so Daniel can't say it's like anything he's ever seen before. Plus, it had ten horns. Horns are always a symbol of kingship, power and strength.

And if the 4th beast is not bad enough as it is – another little horn pops up from this beast – and this horn had some human attributes – the horn had eyes and a mouth – it spoke boastfully.

As we read these descriptions, it's meant to scare us.

Did you notice that in those descriptions of the beasts the word “*like*” is used? That's because – Daniel's never seen anything like those beasts – so he can only describe them in terms of creatures he knows.

If I've only ever seen a wheelbarrow – and then someone shows me a car for the first time – and I have to describe the car - I might say the car is like a wheelbarrow but it has 4 wheels and sides and windows and you can sit it in – and it takes you places rather than you pushing it.

### [Slide-kings/kingdoms]

Note: we are not told which kingdoms are represented by the beasts. Much ink, paper and keyboards have been used to speculate which kingdoms are in view. As

the vision is similar to the Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 of the statue made of different metals representing kingdoms, some people speculate that the four beasts represent kingdoms where: the Lion = Babylon; the Bear=Medo-Persia, the Leopard=Greece (4 heads represent Greek Empire splitting into 4 after Alexander the Great); and fourth beast is Rome.

But rather than speculating – what we can say is that the reason beasts are used to describe Kings/Kingdoms is to show what happens when Kings/Kingdoms - rule with no reference to God. When they ignore God – they descend into evil rulers, who are arrogant and thumb their nose at God and His rules – and they devour and oppress the people in their kingdom. These rulers move far away from being created in God's image – and become corrupt and evil dictators and oppressors. They become beastly monsters like: Nero, Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Augusto Pinochet, Kim Il Sung, Saddam Hussein, Robert Mugabe and Putin – to name a few. So, the point of the four beasts is to give us a review of what Kings/Kingdoms throughout history are like – they have the same patterns of evil – there are beastly. And often each evil kingdom that comes along is worse than the previous one.

That seems to be the case with this 4th beastly kingdom – which has this little horn that pops up – and is speaking so boastfully at the end of verse 8.

But this little horn is interrupted by something far superior – in verses 9 and 10.



## What God's King and Kingdom is like (vv9-14)

### [Slide-God's Kingdom]

Which is our 2nd heading – **What God's King and Kingdom is like** – that's in verses 9 to 14.

It's a bit like a pantomime – where the 4 beasts are on the stage and the little horn is carrying on like a pork chop

And the audience cry out – look behind you! Look behind you!

And there in verse 9 we have a picture of God's throne room.

And someone called the “**Ancient of Days**” takes his seat.

The Ancient of Days is actually God the Father.

And being ancient doesn't mean God is too old to be useful or powerful – it means God has existed before days were even created – and that He is the source of all creation – and the source of all wisdom and power.

And God is described as having clothes as white as snow – and hair as white as wool. Both symbols of his perfection and purity –which is a stark contrast to the beastly evil kings and their kingdoms represented by the four beasts.

And God's throne is described – still in verse 9 – with flaming fire – and its wheels ablaze. In the ancient eastern world royal thrones were often on wheels. Yet it is just as likely that the wheels represent the endless activity of God. And the fire represents God's judgment and purification.

When we get to verse 10 – the fire of judgment is flowing from God – and we have a courtroom scene – where thousands attend the court – and they are seated – when God's book of life is opened.

God's courtroom is in session – and He's ready to judge these beastly kings and kingdoms.

And just as this little horn of the 4th beast is prattling away and boasting – verse 11 – Daniel keeps watching the pantomime – the beast is slain and its body destroyed and thrown in a blazing fire – a picture of Hell. We're told the other beasts are also stripped of their authority but allowed to live for a while.

What we have here is God dealing with these beastly human kingdoms.

Now some people today laugh at the idea that there is a Day – when God judges everyone.

You might have come across people who think that.

But maybe those people should ask themselves – what would happen if God didn't ever intervene – and didn't ever judge – what would happen in the world – it would descend into Hellish evil.

And God is not alone as he deals with these beasts.

In verse 13 we are introduced to one called the **"Son of Man"** coming with the clouds of Heaven. The clouds of Heaven show this is a divine figure yet also a human figure – and definitely not like these 4 beasts.

And God, the Ancient of Days gives this "Son of Man" the authority, glory and sovereign power; so that all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him.

And this Son of Man is a forever King of a forever Kingdom – which will never be destroyed like those beastly earthly Kingdoms.

Now it's pretty obvious that this Son of Man is Jesus, God's Son.

We get that from our New Testament (NT) passage from Matthew 26 – where we have another court room scene where Jesus is standing before the High Priest, Caiaphas, and the chief priests and the Jewish council are looking for false evidence against Jesus to put him to death (v59) and they come up with false witnesses.

Caiaphas sarcastically asked Jesus “*tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God?*” Jesus replied in v64. “*You have said so, but I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.*”

What Jesus is doing here is confirming that He is the “Son of Man” in Daniel 7 – appointed as judge by God the Father – and He is the one slaying the beast. Caiaphas the High Priest knows all about Daniel 7 – and tries to deflect this by accusing Jesus of blasphemy.

But what we have here is not Caiaphas the High Priest – but Caiaphas the Beast! He’s just like the beastly kings of Daniel 7 – He is far from God – and condemning God’s Son to death!

And God already knows what Caiaphas and the Jewish Council will do to Jesus – because it was God’s plan for Jesus to die on a cruel cross to take the punishment for the sin of the world – and to offer forgiveness. And it was also God’s plan to raise Jesus to life – to offer eternal life to all who care to believe in Him. And it was God’s plan to take Jesus to Heaven. And it’s God’s plan for Jesus to return, one day, as that judge described in Daniel 7.

## What will happen to human kings and kingdoms (vv15-28)

### [Slide-what happens]

Which brings us to the 3rd and final point – **what will happen to human kings and kingdoms** – that’s in verses 15 to 28.

Understandably, Daniel is troubled – in v15 – by the vision of the four beasts. They are scary!

And even though these four beasts represent beastly kings and kingdoms, Daniel is told in verse 18 that God’s holy people will receive God’s kingdom and possess it forever – that is - they will have eternal life in Heaven.

If I dare quote the movie – Hotel Marigold – “*everything will be alright in the end so if it’s not alright, it’s not the end*”

Now Daniel is particularly concerned about the activity of the fourth beast in the vision, because – v19 – it crushed and devoured its victims – and v21 – the little horn waged war against God’s holy people and was defeating them.

What we have here is **a picture of persecution and suffering** – which unfortunately is a consequence of having these beastly kingdoms on Earth. And we’ve seen this persecution and suffering against Christians throughout history – and it continues even today!

But there’s an end in sight to this persecution – v22 – when God, the Ancient of Days comes and pronounces judgment on these beastly kingdoms and God’s people possess his everlasting kingdom!

Daniel is then given a bit more detail in verses 23 to 25 about this 4th beast. The best way to describe this 4th beast is that it is the last human kingdom on Earth where human evil and rebellion against God reaches its peak, before Jesus returns. But this evil will not continue for a long time – we read at the end of verse 25 – that it will only be for a period of time – described as – ***a time, times and half a time*** – which gives us **the number 3 ½** - which is **half of God's divine number seven** [[seven used in creation, for Sabbath, and seven seals, trumpets and bowls in Revelation](#)].

In other words, **the time of persecution will be cut short** – it won't last forever. Jesus tells us the same thing in Mark 13:20.

And we've seen that throughout history – evil beastly kingdoms pop up – wreak havoc – and then they are cut short.

But Daniel 7 finishes with what will happen in the end - in verses 26 and 27 God's court room sits – power is taken away from the beast – and he is completely destroyed. And God's people are handed God's forever kingdom – and everyone worships King Jesus.

God wins!

(pause)

So, what will we take home this morning – to make some sense of this confusing passage in Daniel 7?

## Application for us

### [Slide-Application 1]

1. 1st - Because human kings and kingdoms are beastly – we will suffer persecution – and this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people (Revelation 13:10b)

### Slide-Application 2]

2. 2nd - God has victory over these beastly kingdoms by sending His Son Jesus – the Son of Man to judge all people. And Jesus’ kingdom is an everlasting kingdom that cannot be destroyed. So, we do not need to concern ourselves of what lies ahead for us – our future in Heaven is secured because of Jesus – as Daniel 7:28 says – *‘This is the end of the matter’*. (pause) God wins!

### Slide-Application 3]

3. 3rd - Instead of wasting time – guessing and speculating on who these 4 kings/kingdoms are – and guessing when Jesus is coming back [which by the way no one knows] – instead we need to get back to the basics. When Jesus began His ministry – he called His disciples with these words *“the time has come,”* he said. *“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (Mark 1:15)

And when Jesus completed His earthly ministry – here’s what he told His disciples – in Acts 1:7-8 - *“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;”*

**and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Let's pray...

*Father God, thank you for your insight into the fallen and corrupt nature of human history. Thank you that we have King Jesus, the forever King of a forever Kingdom, who is our Lord and Saviour. Thank you that because of Jesus we have the certain hope of Heaven to look forward to. In the meantime, help us to endure suffering with patience and faithfulness; and Father, equip and enable us to be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the Earth. In His precious name, we pray, AMEN.*

### **Benediction (Daniel 7-27-28a)**

***Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'***

***"This is the end of the matter" AMEN.***