

Daniel Chapter Seven  
LESSON EIGHT  
**Dare to Be Ready**

Introduction: We come to a rather abrupt transition in the book of Daniel that leads you wondering where God is going. If I did a survey here I probably would discover that most of us when we read Daniel start to lose interest right around here. I am reading a book right now that started out exciting and fast pace but about three fourths of the way through I found myself saying, *I think you have said all you needed to say. You have lost me.* That is often our reaction with reading Daniel. The first six chapters are riveting and exciting. It is hard to put the book down. But something begins to change by the time you get to chapter seven and eight and it is easy to begin losing interest. There are many times in reading the book of Daniel that I have not gone past chapter seven. There are two reason Daniel chapter seven through twelve are worth reading. First, because it is the word of God and everything in the word of God is worth reading. Secondly, because there is meat in the content and when you are done chewing this meat you will be well fed. If I had not taught this class there is a good chance I would never appreciate the richness of these chapters.

I. Let's begin with the context. By the way, chapter seven was originally written in Aramaic along with chapter 1-6, while chapter 8-12 was written in Hebrew. There is something about chapter seven God intended still for the Gentiles to hear while the rest of the book was a special word for the Jews. Verse one tells us that this particular dream occurred in Belshazzar first year.

***1. In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream,*** This means you can pick this section up and move it back and place it along side, or in-between, chapter four and five. So Daniel had this dream when things were still in transition in Babylon. Daniel is probably in his 80's by now and could likely be facing a lot of insecurities of his own similar perhaps to what someone who as been active all their life suddenly faces at retirement. This was the time that Daniel had faded into obscurity. It is sad today when older people are ignored. Perhaps one night Daniel is laying in bed thinking about the past, and how God had once used him so effectively and suddenly he finds himself drawn to a vision and he quickly takes out his dusty journal and writes it down. Verse one continues; ... ***and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.*** You get a vivid picture here of how the scriptures came to us. 2 Peter 1:21 explains that God spoke through the ordinary lives and experiences of people. *Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

That is the context of the dream. Daniel has lived in obscurity for 60 years, he is lying in bed one night and he has a dream. We need to now look at the content of the dream which will involve several things. The **description of the dream by Daniel** in vs.2-14, and the **explanation of the dream** by an Angel in vs. 15-28. We will find as we look at this that especially in vs.15 and 28 that what Daniel sees sucks him into a mood of deep discouragement and despair. Let me make one more comment about the dream before we look at it. What Daniel sees in this dream are the same events described in Neb's dream of the statue in chapter two where he is the head of gold, the Persians and Medes are the arms and chest of silver, the Greeks under Alexander the Great are the legs of bronze and the Romans are the feet of iron and toes of clay. What Neb saw as grand and glorious Daniel sees as dark and horrifying. To Neb human history was all about what man can achieve and it is represented in a glorious statue, while for Daniel human history is seen as beastly and dark. Daniel sees the belly side, or the underside of history which reveals its true character. Ironside refers to this section as the same scenes *as viewed in God's unsullied light.* He continues by saying that *"Daniel, the man of God, has a vision of the same empires, and he sees them as four ravenous wild beasts of such a brutal character, and so monstrous..."* It might be good for us to recognize that beneath what we see as the great achievements of man has a dark side to it. As believers we can see what man glorifies and recognize that evil lurks in it. That emerges in this dream. So remember, what Daniel sees is the true picture of history as it unfolds. That actually becomes darker through out Daniel as things become more bleak for Israel and the anti -Christ emerges out of the shadow to counter God's Kingdom.

**1. The first thing Daniel sees are evil forces at work in the events of human history.**

**2. Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea.** The four winds churning up the great sea is a picture of spiritual forces at work in the world. It could be four evil spirits, or simply telling us that as God is at work, it stirs even more the forces of evil against him. Usually *the sea* is a metaphor in the bible for humanity, as revealed in the expression, *a sea of humanity*. Further more, like wind, when the Spirit, or possibly in this case, spirits, are in motion, you can't see it, but you can see its effects. The fact that there are four winds, lets us now that what is stirring in the world is happening on all four corners. And the four winds are churning the sea and there is a building up of spiritual activities that will effect everyone. You look at the troubled nations today, and you can only believe that they are the result of spiritual forces at work that are invisible. It is good for us to realize that when we see world tragedies such as wars, or tragic events, that behind it are forces at work that would knock us over if we could see it.

**2. When you look at the dream of the four beasts, which represents four empires, Daniel is viewing again the underside of real events in human history.**

**3. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.** These four beasts are different from each other, but still have the same agenda and that is to destroy. Through out history Satan has used all sorts of kingdoms to achieve one goal. If you have read the Chronicles of Narnia you know that the witch shows up in different colors. In one story she is the White Witch, in another story she is the Green Witch. As we look at these beasts you will notice that Daniel describes them as best as he can. He tells us that they looked *like* a beast, or *like* a bear or *like* a leopard. These were ghastly creatures which did not fit well with anything familiar to Daniel. So Daniel compares them as best as he can to images or ideas that we can relate to. What man sees as the head of Gold, God sees a beastly lion. What man sees as the Arms and Chest of Silver, God sees as a bear out to devour others flesh. What man saw as legs of Bronze, God saw as a leopard with four heads. What man saw as feet of iron, God saw emerge the most horrific beast in v.7 that is terrifying and frightening. Let's look at them.

**4. "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 man, and the heart of a man was given to it.** This is how God viewed the great King of Babylon, King Neb. This is the beastly side of the head of gold. To man, King Neb was majestic and grand. He rule was every man's dream of conquest, but the godly man sees something that looks like a lion with something that looked like eagles wings. The fact that wings were torn off means his ability to conquer across large territory was taken from him. This could refer to his seven years of insanity. Many believe the reference to standing up with a heart of a man refers to the weakening of the Babylonian Kingdom under Belshazzar, his grandson. Babylon loses the heart of lion and is seen as a mere human figure.

**5. "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!'** This describes the Mede and Persian Empire. This is the Arms and Chest of Silver. History tells us that they were ruthless and destructive devouring everything in its path.

**6. "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.** This describes Alexander the Great who moved fast and conquered quickly covering a great amount of space in a short period of time. The four heads are the four generals who served Alexander and who took over the Greek army after he died. This is the belly and thigh of bronze from Neb. statue in chapter two.

**7. "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.** What Daniel sees here is the revival of the Roman Empire in the last days represented in the ten toes of the Statue in chapter two. But what looks like ten strong nations in the statue is really the story of a demonic movement that will give birth to the antichrist. Look what happens;

**8. "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 man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.** We will look in more detail at who and what all this is when we get to chapter seven and eight of Daniel. Let me put before you this thought. All the world empires that have existed have been set up, or the stage setting for the final kingdom that will make a last stand against God's kingdom and it will look most like the Roman Empire and actually be built upon the ashes of that empire. You notice here that God doesn't allow Daniel to dwell any further on this because beginning in v.8 Daniel *was beginning to think about the horns* and his thoughts were about to get to him.

Something happened beginning in verse 7 that brings Daniel to a state of near despair. There is a deeply darker side to Neb's statue that goes far deeper than any of the other empire, something that emerges from the Roman Empire. What Daniel sees here he can only describe as a fourth beast. There was no way for Daniel to put into any distinct words what he sees. There is a dark side to the feet of iron and ten clay toes of Daniel two that is demonic. God doesn't allow Daniel to dwell anymore on this before having spiritual perspective. There is a pause to the vision as Daniel's attention is drawn to Christ. Here is Daniel on the verge of collapsing so he needs a view of Christ. And what a view.

### **3. A View of Christ (v.9-10)**

What happens next is absolutely necessary if Daniel is going to hold up under the rest of the dream. And so is it with us. You and I cannot see the dark reality of the world, and hold up, apart from a view of Christ. Daniel needs what happened next otherwise he would have lost his sanity. I received the same kind of perspective when my son was dying when a friend gave me this word of encouragement. *Mitch, remember what is happening to you has not knocked God off his throne one bit.* And that is what Daniel needed to hear. Or as one preacher put it, Jesus vacated the tomb but not the throne. So look what God offers him.

**9. "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.**

The fact that thrones were set in place tells us that God's rule is well established. The actual phrase there is *Thrones were cast down, or throne in place* as though God brings or throws his authority and rule into the dark terror that Daniel is witnessing. Daniel is also viewing the day of judgment in this. Thrones set in place means that at the end of all this, all humanity will face God's court and answer for their lives, particular those who have done such evil.

Daniel also describes God here as the Ancient of Days which does not mean at all that God is an old man. Rather, he is eternal. He has always been around and always will be around and he is unchanged in his character by the events that happen here. He can handle the distress the world is under. Daniel leans on that.

The description of what goes on around that throne is dazzling. God's clothes are white as snow, which speaks of his absolute righteousness as does the hair on his head being white as wool. Daniel needed to know with all that he saw that God would do what is right, because he is righteous. Fire flaming from the throne speaks of justice. God will show judgment because he is the righteous judge. What Daniel sees, and what we see, will not be tolerated by God.

**10. A river of fire was flowing,  
coming out from before him.**

This speaks of God's wrath which will be poured out by God at the right time. No one who has done evil, especially Satan, will get away with it. We need to be patient and know that God will pay man for his sins.

*Thousands upon thousands attended him;  
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.  
The court was seated,  
and the books were opened.*

This is a picture of the myriad of angels who serve God and do his will. Living in a world where that does not happen, it is good to look up and to see that in heaven there is no opposition to God and everyone lives in the pleasure of serving God. What Daniel sees there too is an army poised for battle. He will hear more of that in chapter nine. That little horn in v.8 is a boastful horn who challenges God but Daniel gets a quick view here that his legacy is short lived. The court is seated, and books are opened. It is just a matter of time when God will act. And that is what happened. With one eye still on the throne, God allows Daniel to see things here again, but now with the right perspective.

**11. "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. 12. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)** Daniel must have pumped his fists here and said, *Yes, God is on the throne. Nothing can knock him off.* But it doesn't end there. Daniel sees more happening as God unfolds his plans.

**13. "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.** Read 1 Thess. 4 and who is this? Of course it is Jesus. *He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.* Hebrews 2:10 speaks of Jesus *bringing many sons to glory.* The image here is of a conquering hero, bringing before the king all those who he delivered from captivity and presenting them to the King. That is what Daniel sees and it must have filled him with hope. **14. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men 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.** We know that when Jesus returns he will bring all things subject to God and according to Phil. 2:10 every knee will bow and tongue confess that he is Lord.

### **III. The Concern for the Present. (vs.15-28)**

It doesn't take Daniel long to be burdened again by the vision because he realizes that although it will work out in the end, things are not good right now. Our hope is in the future, but we live in the present.

A. Daniel's first reaction is to be burdened and his burden is probably mostly for what he knows his own people will have to go through before that final day of deliverance comes.

**15. "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.** There is something about all that Daniel has seen that is emotionally draining and I don't think it is just the effect of the evil around him. Daniel reacts also because of the overwhelming affect of seeing the activity in heaven and the work of God unfolding. I believe one of the reasons God keeps a lot from us is because we would not be able to handle it. Something's about the future are just better left to God.

Now somehow Daniel is able to react in real time in his vision. This is why dreams are different than visions. Dreams are the playing out of events in our minds, while visions are real situations to which God invited people into and even to participate in them. This is why Daniel is able to see the future in his vision along with the present and why he is able to interact during the vision with one of the angels. **16. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this.**

B. The Angel reacts with excitement.

**"So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 17 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. 18. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.'** This is what I refer to as a holy BUT that shows up occasionally in the scriptures. *All this*

will happen Daniel, the angel explains. *It will be horrible. Terrifying and evil. But not for those who are in Christ. They belong to another kingdom that will never be destroyed and will never fall apart. And Christians will possess it forever.* I love the end of vs.18 where the angel breaks out with the outburst, *yes, for ever and ever.* I can picture him saying this while pumping his fist in victory. Angels see things we don't see. They see the whole picture, they know the full story.

C. Daniel is now ready to hear the explanation and he insists that the angel tell him and he especially braces himself to learn the true identity of the fourth beast.

**19. "Then I wanted to know the true 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.** This beast, whatever it was, was bent on going on a rampage against God's order. The fact that it is a beast exposes the true identity of Satan and what he sought to do all along against the people of God. There is nothing about what Satan has done that has ever been or ever will be that is good and noble. He IS evil. The fact that the beast trampled under foot whatever was left, shows again the agenda of Satan and that is the complete destruction of God's people and God's purposes.

Daniel seems most curious about the one horn that seems to slip into the spot light of history. **20. 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. 21. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, 22. until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.** We will get into more details about all this in the next weeks, but what is good for us to lean on as we live in a time when the stage for all this continues to be built, that God is on our side. What matters is not so much what and how it will happen but that we are on the right team. I love the transition from what seems to be a moment of despair to hope in what is given to us in v.22. *..until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment.* Luther's great hymn A Mighty Fortress, has the line, *If not the right man were on our side, a man of God's own choosing.* That is Jesus. We can count on him in our helpless time to come and defend us and defeat the enemy. When he comes he comes *in favor of the saints, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.* We have a lot to look forward to and we do not need to worry about world events.

Yet what will happen before Jesus comes will be troubling. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and it should burden us as it did Daniel.

**23. "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. 24. 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.** There is one significant difference between this one last empire from all the others. As wicked as the Babylonian, Persian and Greek and Roman Kingdom's were they still brought order and control to the world they had conquered. Not this one. This kingdom, Satan's kingdom will *devour the whole earth* v.23 tells us *trampling it down and crushing it.* We are already seeing this kind of ambition to destroy in the Islamic faith. They have two goals. One is to annihilate Israel, and the other is to impose their religion on the whole world. There is no room for other options in the Islamic faith.

Notice also that Daniel sees a key figure emerge from what began as a coalition of ten nations. There are ten nations that will come from this kingdom (v.24) and this coalition will produce a figure will lead the charge of destruction and to oppose God and his plan. Many see this ten nation coalition as being the European Union, but we don't them flexing their muscles in such a way that will fit this. Perhaps it will be a coalition of Islamic nations, or coalition sponsored by Islamic nations.

**25 He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.** There are many who can fit this mold. Julius Caesar established a new calendar system called the Julian calendar but perhaps what should draw our attention again is the nation of Islam who use a completely different calendar than the rest of the world and we know that wherever they establish themselves, they require that this system be used. This anti Christ will seek to do two things.

He will speak adamantly and blatantly against God and he will oppress the saints or literally try to wear them out. The fact that he changes the set times and laws shows his desire to play God. You remember though from 2:21 that God is the one who *changes time and seasons*. He will never allow the laws of nature to be tampered with. And we see this in the closing verses. The statement that the saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time refers to the great tribulation both for Israel from the return to Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah and for believers in the last days. There is a note of hope in that statement. While Christians are not immune to persecution there is a limit to it. The word *times* means years, and times, times and half a time means year, two years and half a year, which is a total of three and half years. That is nothing compared to the *forever* that we have to look forward to. Christians who are persecuted, have courage because they know God will deliver them.

We will hear a lot more about what all this means in the next chapters. My challenge though is don't try to speculate what it all means as much as prepare for it. The book of Revelation expounds more on this, but it can also compound it. I am of the view that when the time actually comes the Holy Spirit will lift the mist for believers and help them see clearly the full meaning of these prophecies. It seems the more that believers study prophecy with the bible in one hand in a newspaper in the other hand that the fog thickens. You can't peel stickers off from these pages and neatly place them on an outlined picture of current world events. (For further study on the matter of end times and readiness read; Matthew 24:42, 25:13, Mark 13:5, 13:35-37, Luke 12:35-38, 21:36

All suffering is short lived. I clung to that when I went through my childhood depression. **26. " 'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. 27 Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'**

We can assume today that a court room is set up and a trial will one day come condemning and sentencing the one who has caused the world to live in fear and turmoil. **The court will sit** simply means there is in place a system for judgment reserved for evil. And we as believers get to share in the spoil. What God did in brining about victory will be our victory. (Romans 8:28-29 will come true as will Luke 21:25ff).

Daniel's reaction to all this shows a man who has probably seen too much.

**28. "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."** Daniel is affected by what he is seen but also burdened for what his own people would have to go through. He kept it to himself until of course it was placed in writing for us to read. We too ought to be deeply troubled by what we see going on around us, but confident that God will take care of it. Our burden for the lost and hurting ought to be visible to others and it ought to affect what we do and how we pray.