THE VISION OF THE COMING CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM

Daniel 7:1-28

Key Verses: 13, 14

“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. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every languages worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Thank God for blessing our study of Daniel up to chapter 6. The first six chapters are mostly history with a little bit of prediction; the last six chapters are mostly prediction with just a little bit of history. This chapter 7 is solely a prophecy that sweeps the whole history of the future world from the life of Daniel to the return of Jesus Christ. Then in chapters 8 to 12, the individual elements are dealt with. So, the panorama comes in chapter 7, and the individual features are dealt with in the following chapters. As a single chapter, this is the most comprehensive, pervasive and panoramic prophecy of the future world in the entire Old Testament, and perhaps even in the New Testament. This chapter 7 is one long vision, in which there are three segments: the four beasts that rise out of the sea; the scene of the Ancient of Days on the throne; and Christ being given his kingdom as he comes in glory to the earth. May we be able to grasp this amazing passage.

Verse 1 says, “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.” In chapters 2 and 4, Daniel interpreted the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter 7 here, Daniel had his own dream, having visions pass through his mind, which we believe was due to his deep prayer life. Its interpretation was given from heaven, and he wrote down the substance. Daniel clearly mentioned that it was the first year of Belshazzar when he had this dream. “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon”, this short description shows that what is written here is a reality in this world. The substance is absolutely related to the history of this world, in fact so astonishing and too great to talk about.

Then in verse 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.” In this verse, we see the excellent description of the state of the world, the people and nations of the world. The world is like a violent, turbulent sea. In Revelation 17:15, an angel said to John, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.” The world is in raging, disturbed turmoil because of sin, here particularly churned up by the winds of heaven, surely blowing from the four corners of the earth. Yet, God is sovereign and he is in control ruling the world to fulfill his divine grand purpose. And here the great sea seems to refer to the Mediterranean Sea, for the Bible only mentions, basically, four seas: the Sea of Galilee (a small lake), the Dead Sea (a larger lake), the Red Sea (just a narrow strip of water) and the Mediterranean Sea, which was often called the great sea. Human civilization was born in the Mediterranean area, and the region was at the heart of human history. Daniel, of course, lived by the Mediterranean Sea and, in his vision, he stands on the shore of the largest sea he had ever seen.

Now verse 3 says, “Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.” Here the four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth (17). Here, we are reminded of the four kingdoms which we thought of in chapter 2 concerning the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, who saw in the dream an enormous, dazzling statue of gold-head, silver-chest and arms, bronze-belly and thighs, and iron-legs and the feet of the mixture of iron and baked clay. In that statue, four great world empires were represented, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The same world empires were mentioned here, but from a different perspective. The metals of gold, silver, bronze and iron were shining and of something valuable, but beasts are monstrosities, bloody and fearful. From a human viewpoint, the kingdoms of the world are as something marvelous, and thrilling, and colossal, but from God’s viewpoint they are as something ugly, wild, murderous, and bloody. Man looks on his empires as achievements. God looks on them as out of control in chaos.

Let’s see the description of the four great beasts. Verses 4 says, “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.” The first, which is Babylon, was like a lion and it had the wings of an eagle. The lion was the king of beasts and the eagle, the king of birds. These speak of the pinnacle of the monarchy of Babylon through Nebuchadnezzar’s powerful and swift conquering. After the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar just swept across the known world and conquered it all. Interestingly, in archeological discoveries in digging around the ancient ruins of Babylon there were, guarding the gates into the royal palace, lions with wings. That was the Babylonians’ own symbol for their kingdom and government.

And “the wings of an eagle were torn off” can be referred to Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation due to his prideful mind. 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” is related to God’s restoring his sanity. It is amazing that one whole chapter 4 is summed up in this just half verse.

The next is in verse 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 is the description of the Medo-Persian Empire, which was like a bear, known for its strength and its fierceness in battle. It being raised up on its side, probably with one foot up in the air, speaks to the fact that in the Medo-Persian Empire, the Persians dominated the Medes, having the greater importance, power, and dominance. Three ribs in its mouth between its teeth were mostly likely Babylon, Egypt, and Libya (Da 11:43), for all of them were defeated by the Persians. “Get up and eat your fill of flesh” in other translations (ESV; KJV) is “Arise, devour much flesh” which may indicate that the Medo-Persian Empire extended far beyond the boundaries of Babylon. It spread far beyond any prior kingdom and continued for 200 years.

Then verse 6 says, “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 is the description of the Greek Empire, which followed the Medo-Persian Empire. A leopard is fast enough, but the four wings on the back emphasizes its agility and speed in action. It is the swiftest of all with an insatiable thirst for blood. Of course, the great monarch of the Grecian period was Alexander the Great who conquered the world faster than anyone in history, with remarkable swiftness, like a leopard with wings rapaciously sweeping across the world.. He ruled everything from Europe to India – just swept it all. By the time he was 33 years of age, he had conquered the whole world. The lightning character of his conquest was without equal in the ancient world. This description was even before his birth.

This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. This is also an amazing description. Historically, it was shown that the final phase of Alexander’s Greek world empire was divided among his four generals: Cassander, Lysimacus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. Cassander had the area of Greece and Macedonia. Lysimacus was given Thrace and Asia Minor, which is a little east of that. Seleucus took Syria and the Middle East, from where we got the Seleucids. And Ptolemy was given Egypt. This division among Alexander’s Greek world empire was described before the empire existed. Again, history confirms the word of God’s prophecy.

The final kingdom is written in verse 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.” The fourth beast did not look like any animal. It was just a consummate beast. We don’t have any idea what it looked like. It probably embodied all the elements of the other beasts, a composite of a leopard, bear, and lion, much like the beast of Revelation 13:2, which resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. It’s the sum of all the past, this incredible Roman Empire. The Roman Empire lasted much longer than the others. The others lasted a maximum of 200 years. The Roman Empire went on for nearly 1,500 years. It is was a tremendously powerful empire.

The description is “terrifying and frightening and very powerful.” It was first of all dreadful and terrible. And “very powerful” is exceedingly strong (ESV, KJV). It had large iron teeth, which speaks of its ability to crush and devour, ripping and tearing. And it stamped the residue with its feet. If ever there was anything that symbolized Rome, it was its crushing legions that tramped their way through the world conquering. It was different from all the beasts that were before it. It is also written in verse 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.” It is also written in verse 24, “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.” And “It had ten horns.” A horn refers to authority, or power, or a king. The final phase of the fourth empire is a ten-kingdom monarchy.

So far we thought about the four beasts, the four kingdoms of the earth, which was also written in chapter 2. Now something peculiar comes. Verse 8 says, “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.” This little horn refers to the Antichrist, the final ruler of the final kingdom of the Gentiles. And it is also written in verse 20 says, “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.” And verse 24 say, “…After them (ten kings), another king will arise, different from the earlier cones; he will subdue three kings.” Although we cannot comprehend fully, it seems that somehow in this conglomerate of members to the final form of the Roman Empire, there is going to be some kind of an interplay. And in the middle of that interplay, there will probably be some kind of a triumvirate. Some of the elements of it will be dominant, but out of the midst of that, the little horn will rise and overthrow those three leading nations or leading elements. Three rivals will be set aside as he surges and rises to the place of prominence and power. As a little horn, he starts little, but becomes dominant. And the way of becoming dominant is through gradual squeezing and replacement. This individual is so subtle in his political skill that, without upheaval and without a revolution, he subtly moves himself up the political ladder to dominance. In Revelation 6, for example, he comes riding on a white horse with a bow, yet with no arrow, to conquer. In his subtlety, he conquers without fighting until the proper time.

And having eyes like the eyes of a man refers to insight, intelligence, mental ability. He will be clever and knowledgeable. He will be able to give advice and solve problems of the world.

And a mouth that spoke boastfully is a mouth speaking great things (in ESV, KJV), even speaking against the Most High (11, 25; Rev 13:5-6). He will be an oratorical and political genius.

And in verse 21, “this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them…”. In Revelation 13:4, people say, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” He is invincible. Revelation 13:7 says, “He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.” He is a military genius as well as political, intellectual, and oratorical. And in Revelation 17 and 18, he even controls religious system ultimately for him to be worshiped appearing a pseudo Christos as well as anti-Christos, and he controls a worldwide economic system, which incidentally crashes down when Christ comes to establish his kingdom.

And he tries to change the set times and the laws. He probably tries to change the times of worship and the times of religious observance in the society that he’s in. Perhaps he will try to obliterate the God-ordained pattern. And clearly, he will try to change God’s moral laws, wiping them out. He’ll do everything he can to overturn everything God has established. However, his time of ruling is very limited for a time, times and half a time (written thrice in the Bible, Rev 12:7)

Now God’s throne is described in verses 9 and 10. “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. 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.” In the flow of the passage, “the Ancient of Days” which is uniquely written here in the book of Daniel refers to God. In Micah 5:2, “ancient times/days” is “days of eternity” in the footnote. The Ancient of Days is the Old One, the One who is in eternity. He is the eternal God. His clothing being as white as snow is an emphasis on purity, and the hair of his head being white like wool, an emphasis on wisdom. And fire is mentioned 3 times: his throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze, and a river of fire was flowing. It speaks of his authority and so his judgment. The eternal God sits in judgment.

Then in verses 11 and 12, “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. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)”

Now in verses 13 and 14 Daniel wrote, “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. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” Here is the theme of the vision or the heart and soul of the vision. That is the coming of the King and the establishment of His eternal kingdom. Then the foremost important question is who is one like a son of man? In the New Testament, Jesus often identified himself as the Son of Man. One good example is Jesus’ saying of himself, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). He also said on the way to the cross, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again” (Mk 8:31; Lk 9:22). And Jesus often used the title “the Son of Man” in the anticipation of his second coming. He says in Matthew 16:27, “For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.” At the time of trial before Sanhedrin Jesus said, “In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven” (Mt 26:64; Mk 14:26; Lk 22:69). And in Jesus’ parable of a persistent widow to teach his disciples to pray, not giving up, he said, “…when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Lk 18:8). Jesus directly said of his coming, “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Mt 24:30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27). We can believe that in saying these words, Jesus was connecting Himself with the prophecy of Daniel to show that He, in fact, was its fulfillment. It is also written in Revelation 1:13, “among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.” This is the description of the risen Christ.

And clouds appearing are a symbol of deity. God is seen manifest in the clouds. Deity and clouds go together in the Scripture.

Here in Daniel 7, one like a son of man approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.” In other translations, he was presented before him. It is the coronation of the King. It is a very glorious, magnificent, crowning scene. This is the absolute apex of history. This is the most crucial moment in the history of eternity. This is the greatest event in all of God’s time and eternity, the coronation of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Daniel goes all the way through all of human history and sees a glimpse of the Son of Man at His coronation.

Yet, this is not a new theme in the Bible. It is as old as old as the book of Genesis. Genesis 49:10 says, “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.” This is Jacob’s prophecy concerning the tribe of Judah from which the king comes. God promised David in 2 Samuel 2:12, 13, “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom…I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” This is concerning Christ the king and his eternal throne. We also see the picture of the King and His coronation in Psalm 2:6, “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

And it is written in Isaiah 9:6, 7, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders…Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” In these words, Christ’s first coming and second coming as King, One who has government on his shoulders, are viewed together. In the New Testament Jesus said in the parable of the ten minas, “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return” (Lk 19:12). This is regarding Jesus’ himself. While on earth, he knew he would be appointed king. In Revelation 5 verse 1 it says, “Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.” There was no one who could open the scroll in heaven or on earth under the earth. Opening the seals means to obtain the title deed to the earth from the usurper Satan, that is to be the king of the whole earth. When the one who was worthy to open the scroll was found, there was a heavenly song to the Lamb, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (5:9). And we read in Revelation 11:15 we read, “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” That’s what’s going to be shouted and sung around the throne. And in Revelation 19:16, “On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” So, both John and Daniel had a glimpse of the glory and the wonder of the coronation of Christ. And God gives us a glimpse of the very coronation of Jesus Christ itself through these words of God in Daniel. It’s as if we were ushered into the future, and we were sitting down around the throne of God, and watching Christ being crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords, which occurs just prior to the time that He gathers us all up and comes back to the earth to establish His kingdom. Ah, what a glorious and thrilling thing it is.

Then here in verse 14, “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power.” In other translations, “He was given dominion, honour and a kingdom.” As a king the most important thing is authority or dominion. But also honour and glory are to be there. He will have honor from those over whom He rules. From their hearts people will honour him. With authority but with no honour, one cannot be a true king. And definitely a kingdom is there. Verse 14 continues, “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.” It begins with a 1,000-year millennial period and then moves on into eternity.

In verses 15-27, the word “saints” is written 6 times. In verse 18, “the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.” This is truly incredible. What a blessing it is to be saints of the Most High! And in verses 21 and 22, “As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.” And in verses 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.” Finally in verse 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.” Christ’s king follows that final issue of judgment. Praise God for this amazing event! Saints are those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. All saints of all the ages will be in the kingdom. The word “saint” seems to be Paul’s favourite. He says in Ephesians 1:1, “To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.” And he says in Colossians 1:12, “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” Jude 1:3 says, “…to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” And in Revelation 5:8, “…golden bowls full of incense, which are prayers of the saints” (8:3, 4). And we read in Revelation 18:20, “…Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets.” May we keep this identify as saints in whatever situation as we live in this world. John says in 1 John 4:3, “Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” Amen.