

Lesson 17

Last week we started Chapter 7, and what we found was similar to what we saw in Chapter 2 - four kingdoms. In Chapter 2, they were depicted as parts of a large statue. Here in Chapter 7, the four kingdoms are depicted as four beasts that rise from the restless sea. Either way, they are earthly kingdoms very much different from God's eternal kingdom.

As we saw last week, the fourth kingdom was different from the previous three, and we saw that the fourth kingdom was Rome. The beast depicting Rome had ten horns in verse 7. As we said, any time we see a horn in apocalyptic language we should be on the lookout for a king. In the next verse, we will see another horn. Who are these horns, and how do they relate to Rome? Let's keep reading.

Daniel 7:8

8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Daniel considers the ten horns of verse 7. If we find ourselves having trouble understanding parts of this image, we can take comfort in the fact that we are not alone. Daniel also struggled to understand here! Here he is considering the horns, and later in verse 16 Daniel will ask for an explanation.

While Daniel considers the horns, something happens. An eleventh horn (called a little horn in verse 8) comes up among the ten horns from verse 7. So I guess it's a good thing we didn't spend a lot of time in verse 7 trying to figure out why the number 10 was used. Why? Because we instead need to explain the number eleven! There are 11 horns - the ten from verse 7 and the little horn from verse 8. And in verse 8, three of the horns are uprooted, which leaves only 8 horns. What does all of that mean? Let's save that question for later in the chapter.

This eleventh horn has eyes like a man and has a mouth that speaks great things. Who or what is this little horn? We will discover that when we get to verses 24 and 25, but for now let's just notice that there are at least two other similar descriptions in the Bible.

Revelation 13:5 - And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 - Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Are those verses related to what we are seeing here in Daniel 7:8? For now, let's just say maybe. They certainly sound the same on the surface, but we need to dig down some more into the text before we make up our mind on that question.

But before we move on, let me say a few things about those verses we just read from 2 Thessalonians.

First, we sometimes hear it said that the apostles all thought incorrectly that Jesus would return very quickly during their own lifetimes. There is nothing in the inspired record to support such a notion. In fact, in 2 Thessalonians, Paul says just the opposite. There he said that the end of the world could not happen until something else happened first.

Second, we today often say that Jesus can come at any time. And that is correct. Jesus could return five minutes from now or five millennia from now. But has that always been true?

When Jesus ascended to heaven in Acts 1, could Jesus have returned five minutes later? The answer is no. Why? Because Jesus had just told them about the something that was about to happen but that had not yet happened - the restoration of the kingdom to Israel in Acts 2. That prophecy had to be fulfilled before Jesus could return again. How could Jesus return to deliver a kingdom to God the Father if that kingdom had not yet been established?

Paul's point in 2 Thessalonians is similar. "For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed." Paul was telling them that Jesus could not return until something else happened first. There was a prophecy yet to be fulfilled, and that had to happen first before Jesus could return. That is what Paul was saying in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

What was that prophecy, and when was it fulfilled? Let's hold off on those questions until later in this chapter, but perhaps we shouldn't be surprised if the prophecy turns out to have been fulfilled in the days of the Roman empire. Why? Because that is the context here in verse 8, and Daniel's prophecy here sounds quite a bit like the prophecy Paul was pointing to in 2 Thessalonians.

Daniel 7:9-10

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Here we have a great judgment scene in which the ancient of days sits at the head of an enormous court in which the books are opened and judgment is rendered.

There are many different judgments in the Bible. Which judgment does this great scene depict? Is this the final judgment? Is this the end of the world?

Yes, this looks like what we might expect to see at the end of the world, but we need to be very careful before we leave the context of the previous verses and suddenly jump thousands of years (at least) into the future.

Remember one of our guidelines - similarity of language does not imply similarity of subject. And nowhere is that guideline more important than when it comes to language about judgment.

Why? Because there are many judgments in the Bible, and many of them are described with very similar language.

Let's look at some examples.

Isaiah 13:10, 13 - For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. ... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Babylon (Isaiah 13:1).

Ezekiel 32:7 - And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Egypt (Ezekiel 32:2).

Isaiah 34:4 - And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Edom (Isaiah 34:5).

Matthew 24:29 - Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:34).

Joel 2:30-31 - And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of the earthly kingdoms on the day the eternal kingdom was established (Acts 2:16).

2 Peter 3:10 - But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Is that the end of the world? Yes, it is. And that language in 2 Peter, I believe, is not apocalyptic, but rather is a literal description of what will happen on that last great day. The descriptions we looked at of other judgments borrow those descriptions of the last day and use them to figuratively describe earlier judgments by God.

When Babylon and Jerusalem fell it was as if the sun had quit shining and the stars had fallen from heaven, but those things did not literally happen at that time.

So what we can say now about verses 9-10? Could such language be used to describe the final judgment at the end of the world? Yes, and such language is used elsewhere in the Bible for that purpose. Is that the case here? Is the end of the world being described here in verses 9-10?

I don't think so. Why? Because of the context and the time frame. In verse 8, we were looking at

Rome, and, as we will find out later in this chapter, we were looking at Rome in the first century.

What about the context after verses 9-10? Are those verses also talking about first century events? Let's look at them and see. And then we can circle back and look at verses 9-10 again after we have the full context in view.

Daniel 7:11-12

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

The judgment of the court was that the fourth beast be destroyed, and this event is pictured in verse 11. The beast is burned with fire and utterly destroyed.

We should keep in mind the identity of this fourth beast, which we saw all the way back in Chapter 2 and which we learn more about later in this chapter. This fourth beast is the Roman empire, and as we will soon see, the Roman empire in the first century. That time frame is important as we try to figure out what is going on here and in the surrounding verses.

Verse 12 tells us that the other three beasts (which we now know are Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece) have lost their power (their dominion was taken away), but they are pictured in verse 12 as still being around (their lives are prolonged for a season and a time).

Why are the first three beasts still here? Weren't they defeated earlier? Yes, they were, but they are here so that, with Rome, they can hear their own fate. They are shown here awaiting their own judgment.

And there is another reason they are shown as still being here - in a sense they were still here. The first three beasts lived on in the fourth beast. They were all earthly kingdoms that were trying to take the place of and were intent on destroying the work of God.

And they had something else in common - they would all be swept away by the eternal kingdom that was established by God in the first century.

We saw this image earlier in Chapter 2, where all four kingdoms were shown by a single giant statue - and all four were destroyed by the same stone made without hands. God is showing us here in Chapter 7 that same event using different imagery. These four beasts are that giant statue, and once again they are being destroyed.

We also see this same image in John's description of Rome:

Revelation 13:1-2 - And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a **leopard**, and his feet were as the feet of a **bear**, and his mouth as the mouth of a **lion**: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

In Revelation 13, the beast (Rome) is like a leopard, a bear, and a lion. Where have we seen those three animals before? In Daniel 7, we just saw a lion, a bear, and a leopard (in that order). In Revelation 13, John mentions a leopard, a bear, and a lion (in the reverse order). Daniel and John are both looking at the same three kingdoms, but Daniel is looking FORWARD through time while John is looking BACKWARD through time!

Daniel 7:13-14

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

At the end of this remarkable judgment scene, Daniel sees "one like a son of man" come to the Ancient of Days to be presented before him and to be given a kingdom. Two questions - **who** is this, and **when** is this?

First, **who** is this?

We know that this son of man is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In fact, this is where the Messianic title "the Son of Man" came from. When Jesus used that title of himself what he was saying was that he was the Son of Man of Daniel 7! Jesus was taking a Messianic title familiar to every Jew and applying it to

himself.

Jesus was applying verses 13 and 14 to himself - that he would come before the Ancient of Days to be given dominion, glory, and a kingdom! We often read right past that title "Son of Man," which occurs over and over in the gospels, but after studying these two verses, we will never be able to skip over that title ever again! Jesus is the Son of Man!

Second, **when** is this?

So far our time frame for this fourth beast has been the first century, and I see no indication of a change anywhere in these verses.

Once again, as in Chapter 2, we see here in verse 14 a fifth kingdom - one totally unlike the other four we have seen. This fifth kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed (verse 14), unlike the other four that were just destroyed! This kingdom in verse 14 is the same eternal kingdom we saw in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2:44 - And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.

When was that kingdom set up? Daniel told us that in the verse we just read: "In the days of these kings." Who are those kings? The kings of the fourth kingdom.

The eternal kingdom of Christ - his church - was established in the first century as described in Acts 2, just as Daniel told us it would be in Daniel 2. Here in verses 13 and 14 we are once again being shown those same wonderful first century events that we saw in Chapter 2.

But when did Jesus come with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days? Did that happen in Acts 2? No it did not. That happened in Acts 1.

Acts 1:9 - And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Verses 13 and 14 are showing us the ascension of Christ back to heaven following his resurrection from the dead. And once there, he was given the kingdom that was established in Acts 2.

But why can't this be the end of all time? Because when that great day happens Jesus will **deliver** a kingdom to God, not **receive** a kingdom from God.

1 Corinthians 15:24 - Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

Jesus receives a kingdom in Daniel 7:14. When did that happen? That happened as soon as the kingdom was established - in the first century. The kingdom is the Lord's kingdom, the church.

In Acts 1, Jesus received a kingdom (Daniel 7:14). At the end of time, Jesus will deliver that same kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Acts 1 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those on earth. Daniel 7 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those in heaven - and what an incredible scene it is!

The victorious Christ returns to the glories of heaven and is presented before the Father to receive the eternal kingdom that he purchased with his blood. And all of this is described after the judgment scene at which the earthly kingdoms of this world - including the fourth kingdom, which had put Jesus to death - are judged and destroyed to make way for the eternal kingdom of Christ - the church of Christ! Can anyone ever look at the church in the same way after studying these verses?

Daniel 7:13-14 - I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The church of Christ is that kingdom! We are that kingdom! Do we believe it? Is that how we see ourselves? If not, then we need to spend more time reading Daniel 7!

And who is crowning Christ in Daniel 7? Who is giving him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom? The Ancient of days. Not us. We do not crown Jesus king despite sometimes singing that we do. God the Father crowned Jesus king. I obey Jesus because he is king, not to make him king. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, which means he is king and lord of everything and everybody.

Now let's circle back to a question we looked at earlier.

If verses 13-14 are showing us a first century event, then isn't that even more evidence that the great judgment scene we saw in verses 9-12 was also a first century event?

Those verses showed us the judgment of Rome, just as Jesus used similar language in Matthew 24 to describe the judgment of Jerusalem and just as God uses similar language elsewhere in the Bible to describe other past judgments.

Will there be a great judgment at the end of the world? Yes. Is that great judgment described in the Bible? Yes. Is that great judgment being described here? I don't think so. I think we are looking at the judgment of the four beasts when the eternal kingdom of God was established in Acts 2 and swept them all away.

Daniel 7:15-16

15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

At this point we still have some unanswered questions. For starters, we haven't yet determined who those eleven horns are.

Fortunately, Daniel was just as curious as we are, so he asks someone standing nearby for the truth of the vision, and he receives the interpretation.

But Daniel was more than just curious - Daniel was also grieved in spirit and in body. Daniel had just seen some incredible and disturbing images, and he wanted to know what they meant.

At this point we should pause to consider another question: why was Daniel given this vision?

One possible reason comes from Isaiah. A surface reading of Isaiah might have led some of the exiles to believe that the Messiah would appear immediately following the Babylonian captivity. In fact, liberal critics even today incorrectly believe that many of Isaiah's prophecies about Christ are instead statements about Zerubbabel, who proved to be a disappointing Messiah. If the liberal critics are confused today, then maybe some of Isaiah's readers were also confused.

But Daniel's vision says NO. Daniel's vision tells us that the Messiah would not come immediately after the exile. Instead, Daniel's vision tells us that the Messiah will not come until two other kingdoms had first come and gone (Medo-Persia and Greece). Instead, the Messiah, Daniel was told, would come

during the days of the fourth kingdom (Rome), which, of course, is precisely what happened.

Daniel 7:17-18

17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

The first thing we are told in this interpretation is that, as we have been suggesting, these four beasts are kings or kingdoms. But what are they? Kings or kingdoms?

The terms "king" and "kingdom" are sometimes used interchangeably, and we have to look at the context to see what is meant. In ancient kingdoms, the king was the kingdom, and the kingdom was the king. The king was the embodiment of the kingdom. This is what we already saw in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2:39 - And after thee [King Nebuchadnezzar] shall arise **[another kingdom]** inferior to thee.

The fourth beast is called a king here in verse 17, but the same fourth beast is called a kingdom later in verse 23. And verse 24 later tells us that "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings." Those ten horns were on this fourth beast - so verse 24 will confirm that the beast is a kingdom and the horns are the kings of that kingdom.

This also makes sense from our comparison of Chapter 7 with Chapter 2. In Chapter 2, the four parts of the great image were four kingdoms, and here the four beasts are also four kingdoms. In fact, they are the same four kingdoms.

Should God's people have been frightened of these four fierce beasts that had arisen from the earth and sea? No. Why? Because of a small but crucial word that begins verse 18 - "but."

Things look bad, BUT we are going to win. God's kingdom (unlike these earthly kingdoms) will never pass away. God's kingdom will outlast them all. Verse 18 is a message of comfort to Daniel, and it is a message of comfort to us as well. Today we are the "saints of the most High."

Verse 18 says that we would take and possess the kingdom. A better translation is that we would receive and possess the kingdom, and that is what we have done. God has given us the eternal

kingdom; we have received the eternal kingdom; and we possess the eternal kingdom. And we know from our study of Daniel 2 that that eternal kingdom is the church, which was established in Acts 2 during the days of the Roman kings.

Daniel 7:19-22

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Daniel skips quickly in verse 19 to the fourth beast, which in this vision was different from all the other beasts.

What about the other three beasts? Either Daniel does not ask about those beasts or Daniel does but does not give us the details regarding the answer he received about them. We will learn a great deal about the third kingdom in the visions that occur later in the book, and also about the second kingdom.

Daniel repeats the details regarding the fourth kingdom and in doing so we learn more about the vision.

Notice, for example, that we again see the three uprooted horns from Daniel 7:8. Here in verse 20 these three horns fall before the little horn. We started with 10 horns, and then we added a little horn so that we had 11 horns, and now three have fallen, making the little horn the eighth horn.

Notice also in verse 21 that this little horn wages war against the saints and prevails against them. But verse 22 tells us that that situation would not last forever, but only until a time of judgment by God, when the saints would possess the kingdom.

Which judgment is this?

What is the context? What is the time frame?

The context is the fourth beast - Rome. And particularly Rome in the first century when the Messiah came and established his eternal kingdom. We have even seen the ascension of Christ from Acts 1 in this chapter. This chapter is describing the establishment of the the kingdom from Acts 2, not the deliverance of the kingdom at the end in 1 Corinthians 15:24.

So with that context in mind, who is being judged here in verse 22? The text answers that question for us. The little horn is being judged along with the kingdom of the little horn. And that kingdom is the fourth beast, Rome. Verse 22 is describing the judgment of Rome because of its persecution of God's people.

This judgment is given to the saints in verse 22. What that means is that the saints are the reason for the judgment, and the judgment is their vindication. The judgment of Rome, which is described here and later in the book of Revelation, was motivated by the prayers of the saints. In fact, the entire book of Revelation could be seen as God's answer to the question in Revelation 6:10.

Revelation 6:10 - How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

#daniel