

# Lesson 18

Last week we looked at the four beasts of Daniel's vision in Chapter 7, and we, like Daniel, were focused on the fourth beast that was different from the rest. And we saw that the fourth beast was Rome.

When we ended last week we still had not discussed the identity of the 11 horns, but recall that first there were 10 horns, and then a little horn rose from them, making 11 horns. But three of those 11 horns were uprooted, making 8 horns. Today we will look more closely at those 11 horns, and what we will find is one of the most remarkable prophecies in all the Bible!

## Daniel 7:23

23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

The explanation of the fourth beast that Daniel receives in verse 23 is a completely accurate picture of the Roman empire, which grew from a dusty village on the Tiber River in the eighth century BC to control virtually the entire known world by the first century AD.

The world had never seen anything like Rome. Rome was different from all the other kingdoms in its organization, in its unity, and in its power.

This fourth kingdom is not Greece as the liberal critics would have us believe; this fourth kingdom is Rome. This fourth beast breaks things into pieces, unlike Greece which was itself broken into pieces.

## Daniel 7:24-25

24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Verse 24 confirms what we said earlier. The four beasts are four kingdoms, even though they are also

called four kings. As we said last week, and as we saw earlier in Chapter 2, the words "king" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably in this book.

And that usage is not unique to Daniel. Remember what Jesus said:

**Luke 17:20-21** - Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

The Pharisees were looking for the kingdom, and Jesus told them that the kingdom was already in their midst? Why? Because the king was there! The kingdom was in their midst because the king was in their midst.

Likewise here, the four beasts are both kings (verse 17) and kingdoms (verse 23).

Here in verses 24-25 we once again meet the ten horns and the eleventh little horn, and now that we know from verse 24 that these horns are kings, let's figure out who they are.

And to do that, let's look at the evidence.

We know that these kings are kings of Rome because they are horns on the fourth beast, which represents the kingdom that was in power when Christ came and established his eternal kingdom and ascended back to Heaven. And so, in fact, we know not only that they are kings of Rome, but they are kings of Rome at the time Christ did those things. First century Rome is our context and our time frame for the fourth kingdom, both here and also back in Chapter 2.

That fact really narrows things down for us, but let's keep looking at the clues.

We also know the number of horns. We had 10 horns, and then we had 11 when the little horn was added, and then we had 8 when three of the other horns were uprooted. So we have 10, 11, 3, and 8.

But are those numbers literal or figurative? Yes! At least, maybe yes at this point for at least some of them. So far we have seen other numbers that were literal, but were most likely chosen by God because of their symbolic significance. Maybe that is what we have here as well. Let's hold off on that question for now.

Let's move on instead to the million dollar question: Can we find 11 Roman kings in the first century?

Yes, and we don't have to look any further than our handout!

There were precisely 11 Roman emperors in the New Testament period of the first century, starting with the first emperor of Rome, Augustus, and ending with Domitian near the very end of the first century.

Those 11 emperors can be divided into three groups:

- The first group of five makes up the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and they take us from before the birth of Christ during the reign of Augustus up to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul by Nero.
- The second group of kings are the three civil war kings who reigned and died in a single year, AD 69, the so-called year of four kings.
- The third group is the Flavian dynasty, consisting of Vespasian and his two sons Titus and Domitian. Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, and that dynasty continued until Domitian's death in AD 96.

Between Augustus and Domitian we have the entire first century New Testament period. So it should not surprise us at all if these prophecies in Daniel are focused on Augustus, Domitian, and the kings in between those two - who together make up eleven kings - the precise number of kings we see in Daniel 7, written half a millennium earlier!

But what about the three uprooted kings of Daniel 7:8, the three fallen kings of Daniel 7:20, and the three subdued kings of Daniel 7:24? Who are they?

That question really answers itself when we look at the list of kings. You have two complete dynasties separated by three civil war kings who all reigned and died within a single year. Who else could the three fallen kings be other than Galba, Otho, and Vitellius?

I think those three would have been the first to agree with their description here of being "uprooted"! One was hacked to pieces in the Roman forum, one killed himself, and the other was killed when Vespasian's army entered the city - and that all happened in a single year! Can you imagine the turmoil in our country if we had four presidents in a single year? That is what happened to Rome in AD 69.

So who is the little horn? Who is this eleventh king who raise after the 10 horns and who becomes the eighth king after three kings are uprooted?

Earlier when looked at two similar descriptions from elsewhere in the Bible. Let's read them again.

**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.

I believe Daniel 7, Revelation 13, and 2 Thessalonians 2 are all describing the same person - the Roman emperor Domitian, who was both the 11th king (if we count the three uprooted kings) and the 8th king (if we ignore the three uprooted kings).

Do the numbers 8 and 11 have a symbolic meaning? Yes, 11 falls short of 12, the number for God's people, just as 6 falls short of 7. And 8 is the number of renewal, with the 8th day being the start of a new week. Do those symbols 8 and 11 apply to Domitian? Yes, they do, but let's come back to that question after we first look at what Domitian was like.

Do the descriptions from Daniel 7, Revelation 13, and 2 Thessalonians 2 fit with what we know about Domitian? Yes, they do.

For starters, we need to understand that Domitian was the worst sort of leader - arrogant, vicious, and crazy. (I'm sure glad we don't have any rulers like that around anywhere today...) As for the crazy part, listen to what Suetonius had to say about Domitian in his book *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*:

In the beginning of his reign, [Domitian] used to spend daily an hour by himself in private, during which time he did nothing else but catch flies, and stick them through the body with a sharp pin. When some one therefore inquired, "whether any one was with the emperor," it was significantly answered by Vibius Crispus, "Not so much as a fly."

As for why his book was called *The Lives of Twelve Caesars*, he included Julius Caesar, who, though certainly a Caesar, was not a king. He wanted to be a king, and that was why he was assassinated, but he was not a king. Augustus was the first emperor of Rome. Rome was still a Republic when Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. Rome did not become an Empire until about 15 years later, when Octavian became Augustus and adopted the title "Imperator Caesar" (which all followed the suicide of

Antony and Cleopatra in 30 BC.) We will see some of this history foretold in Daniel 11.

But back to Domitian. Was Domitian arrogant? Seutonius wrote:

From his youth [Domitian] was far from being of an affable disposition, but was on the contrary presumptuous and unbridled both in act and word.

Did Domitian claim to be deity? Did Domitian, as verse 25 says, think that he would change the times? In Daniel 2:21 we read that God changes the times. Did Domitian claim to be in the place of God? Again, Suetonius wrote:

With no less arrogance [Domitian] began as follows in issuing a circular letter in the name of his procurators, "Our Master and our God bids that this be done." And so the custom arose henceforth of addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation.

Was Domitian a persecutor of God's people? William Barclay wrote:

But with the coming of Domitian there came a complete change. Domitian was a devil. He was the worst of all things - a cold blooded persecutor. With the exception of the mad Caligula, he was the first Emperor to take his divinity seriously, and to demand Caesar worship.

Domitian began an empire policy of persecution that did not end until 311 AD under the Edict of Toleration by Galerius and Constantine.

But Domitian was not the first to persecute God's people. Nero had also done that, and it began again with Domitian. Domitian renewed the persecution inflicted by Nero. Tertullian called Domitian a "limb of the bloody Nero," and that name was associated with him even into the third century. Eusebius called Domitian "the successor of Nero."

In life, Domitian was the eleventh king, but here in Daniel 7 Domitian is also shown as the 8th king after three are uprooted. Later, in Revelation 13, Domitian is shown only as the 8th king, with the three uprooted Civil War kings being ignored.

Why was it important to depict Domitian as number eight? Listen to what Milligan had to say about the number eight:

The number six itself awakened a feeling of dread in the breast of the Jew who felt the

significance of numbers. It fell below seven just as eight went beyond it. [The number eight] denoted more than the simple possession of the Divine. As in the case of circumcision on the eighth day, of the great day of the feast on the eighth day, or of the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning in active power.

The Year of Jubilee when everyone got the chance to begin all over again, followed seven sevens of years. The leper who had been excluded from the congregation was given a new beginning on the eighth day (Leviticus 14:10). In early Christian literature, Christ was referred to as 888.

How does the number eight fit with Domitian? It fits because of what Domitian did - he renewed the persecution of God's people. Nero had been the first to actively persecute Christians. Tertullian wrote:

Consult your annals, and there you will find Nero, the first emperor who dyed his sword in Christian blood.

And Tertullian referred to Domitian as a "limb of the bloody Nero." In fact, a rumor arose during the reign of Domitian that he was *literally* Nero, raised from the dead. How else would Domitian be described except by the number eight - the number of renewal?

But the number 11 also has symbolic significance, falling short of the number 12, the symbol for God's people. Rome thought they were the special people. Rome thought they were the eternal kingdom. But they were not. They fell hopelessly short, and that is depicted by the number 11. Rome was not a 12! Rome was an 11! And neither Nero nor Domitian was a 777! Instead, they were a 666!

How was Domitian different or diverse from the former kings as verse 24 says? For one thing, Domitian was the first to make it a policy of the empire that all who refused to worship him be persecuted. In fact, Domitian began an empire policy of persecution against Christians that lasted for years after he died.

What does it mean in verse 25 when it says that the saints would be given into his hand for "a time and times and the dividing of time" or "a time, two times, and half a time"?

That phrase denotes three and a half years, a period of time that is also found frequently in Revelation. In each case that symbol of three and a half years denotes a state of affairs in which God's people are persecuted but sustained. That symbol denotes a temporary state of affairs - something that will not last.

But how does the number three and a half denote a temporary state of affairs? Because it is a broken seven, and seven denotes perfection - something that will last. A broken seven denotes something that is temporary.

And again, we sometimes see God using a literal three and a half for that same purpose. The drought for which Elijah prayed lasted three and a half years (James 5:17). It was a temporary affliction.

The duration of the eternal kingdom is a seven! The duration of the Roman persecution is a broken seven! Whatever persecution we face in this life, we can take comfort in the knowledge that it is a broken seven - it will not last forever.

I think we can also learn something about Domitian from how news of his death was received by his fellow citizens. We are told that upon Domitian's death, the Roman Senate was:

Overjoyed ... [and assailed] the dead emperor with the most insulting and stinging kind of outcries ... Finally they passed a decree that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased, and all record of him obliterated.

That decree, which is called the *damnatio memoriae*, destroyed all the statues and inscriptions of Domitian, such as Domitian's arch at Hierapolis and dedicatory inscriptions at the Temple of the Sabastoi in Ephesus.

But they did not destroy everything. A Roman coin has been found that provides strong circumstantial evidence that Domitian was a persecutor of Christians. The front of that coin shows Domitian. On the reverse is shown Domitian's infant son, who was born in the second consulship of Domitian in AD 73 and who died in AD 82, the second year after he became emperor. That child of Domitian is depicted on the coin as seated on a globe with his arms outstretched surrounded by seven stars! The inscription surrounding the child, *DIVUS CAESARIMP DOMITIANIF*, means "the divine Caesar, son of the emperor Domitian." If Domitian believed his son was divine, what does that tell us about how he viewed himself? And where else have we seen the image of someone called the son of God surrounded by seven stars?

**Revelation 1:13-16** - And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many

waters. **And he had in his right hand seven stars:** and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Coins minted during Domitian's reign show his son as a god reaching for seven stars. How could such a person not come in conflict with Christianity? Particularly when we know how unbalanced he was?

Now let's pause for a moment to consider just how incredible this prophecy is.

Daniel received this vision in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, which was probably the year 553 BC. At that time, the Babylonians were still in power, and the events of Daniel 5 had not yet happened.

And so between this vision and the fulfillment of this vision we have two entire kingdoms that would rise and fall (Medo-Persia and Greece) before Rome would come to power.

And between the vision in 553 BC and the death of Domitian in AD 96, we have nearly 650 years! That would be like someone giving prophecies in 1372 about the number of U.S. presidents in our own century as well as the kingdoms that rose and fell in between!

Now we see why the book of Daniel has always been such a target of the liberal critics. They refuse to recognize the hand of God in anything, and no one who believes Daniel can possibly fail to see the hand of God at work! And so the liberal critics attack Daniel and call him an imposter. But Jesus called Daniel a prophet in Matthew 24!

And one more thing - the liberal critics can't move the book of Daniel beyond the prophecies in Chapter 7 no matter how hard they try. Why not? Because we have physical copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls that predate the prophecies in this chapter! And that is why those same critics tell us the fourth kingdom is Greece despite all of the evidence to the contrary. If they agree that the fourth kingdom is Rome, then they must also agree that the Bible is from God and not from man - and that fact is something they will never accept.

## Daniel 7:26-27

26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.



Verses 26 and 27 contain one of the most incredible and wonderful prophecies in the Bible. We find here a prophecy that could never have come from the mind of man, and that no one would ever believe absent faith in the God who revealed it to us. These two verses are a prophecy that the church would overthrow and outlast the mighty Roman empire!

Who could believe such a thing? The Roman empire - with all of its vast wealth and power? The Roman empire - with all of its soldiers and politicians? The Roman empire - with all of its far flung territories? The Roman empire - which feared nothing and no one? How could such an empire ever be defeated by anything - much less by a small religious sect composed mainly of the lower classes and slaves? What could such a group ever do to damage Rome in any way, much less defeat it?

Well, for starters, that small seemingly powerless group had very powerful friends! And that small group had very powerful weapons - the word of God and prayer! And if Rome had taken the time to read the writings of that group, they would have known, not only that they would be defeated by that small group, but that their fate had been sealed over 500 years earlier!

What we see in verses 26 and 27 is the stone of Daniel 2 not made with human hands striking and destroying that giant statue made up of the earthly kingdoms of this world, including Rome as the base of that statue - the part that was struck by the stone.

"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

That kingdom is the church, and we are the saints of the most High! And the kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom. And all dominions shall serve and obey him! Why? Because God's kingdom is the only eternal kingdom; it has no competition. It will destroy and outlast all of the kingdoms of men.

When I teach the book of Revelation I often make the point that when we understand what that book is saying about the church, then the book of Revelation becomes a book of Revolution! Why? Because it shows us how God views the church, and it shows us just how important and beautiful the church of Christ is. I think the same can be said for Daniel. This book also shows us the beauty and importance and power of the church. This book also shows us how God views the church. And if we aren't viewing the church the same way, then we need to look again!

One final point on these verses - was such a beautiful and important kingdom really established in the

first century?

Many premillennialists say no. They say that God intended to set up a kingdom in the first century, but God changed his mind when the Jews rejected Christ, and so instead, they say, God postponed the kingdom and set up the church instead.

Is that what the Bible teaches? No. Of course not. the Bible teaches just the opposite. And would we really expect otherwise? God told Daniel that the eternal kingdom would be set up in the days of those Roman kings. Do we really think God would change his mind about that? After all the planning that we see in this book, do we really think God would postpone what he had promised? I don't see how anyone could ever believe such a thing!

And if the kingdom was postponed, that postponement seems to have fooled the New Testament writers. Why? Because they said they were in the kingdom! They told us that the kingdom was around in the first century!

**Revelation 1:9** - I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and **in the kingdom** and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:13 - Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

**Hebrews 12:28** - Wherefore **we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved**, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

**Mark 9:1** - And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, **till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.**

The church is the eternal kingdom, and that kingdom was established in the first century in Acts 2 just as God had promised.

#daniel