

DANIEL

Week 17, chapters 6 and 7

Last week we dealt with the famous biblical story of Daniel in the lion's den. This narrative, found in Daniel chapter 6, has been a favorite among children and adults for centuries. On the surface it is a story of bravery and courage in the face of death, and a testament to what true trust in God looks like when we have an opportunity to exhibit faith unto death. "Faith unto death": is that a Christian motto or saying that we hang around our necks or exhibit in a pretty frame and nail it on a wall in our homes? Or is it actually something that we are ready to live out as Daniel and as our Lord, Yeshua, did?

And yet in a broader sense the historical event of Daniel in the lion's den is at least as much about righteously motivated civil disobedience as it is about a Believer putting faith in action. It's about prioritizing or harmonizing God's government with our human government. It is also about how a worshipper of the God of Israel is to deal with the harsh realities of trying to live a heavenly lifestyle in a carnal world. And it challenges us on what to use as the criteria for making personal choices of when to obey (and if there is ever a cause to disobey) the laws of our nation; whether that nation is a monarchy, dictatorship or a democracy. And what Daniel teaches us is that giving our lives over to God, even since the advent of Christ, comes with a personal cost. Messiah paid the price to pay for our sins; and as Believers we pay the price to live the way Our Savior demands that we live.

The standard, and true, statement among Christians is that divine grace is a free gift from God. The pardon we receive for sinning against the Father is bought and paid for by another. But over and over again the bible also cautions us that while grace is indeed free, that grace is also something that is given on a spiritual and eternal level. On earth, and while we live in these fleshly tents, we too must pick up our crosses physically as well as spiritually in order to follow the Crucified One, and be willing to accept the likely consequences. Picking up our crosses doesn't mean to publically display our Messianic and Christian faith with religious bumper stickers and jewelry. It means, if need be, to suffer along with our Christ the same way He did (and I pray that none of us ever have to face such a dire predicament). It means to follow divine truth when the crowd prefers to follow religious convention and tradition. And at times it means to disobey what is an otherwise legally enacted civil law if it directly conflicts with God's law.

We discussed in our prior meeting how to discern when to say "no" to our government, and when to do what it demands no matter how difficult or even humiliating the doing might be. Briefly: we must divide our civil government laws into two categories: laws of morality, versus laws of finance, fairness, and preference. And unless we know God's Torah, it's unlikely we'll even know in which category to place each law. For instance, I've heard it said that it is immoral to tax people too highly. Or it is immoral for the government to control our healthcare; or that it is immoral to demand

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military conscription in order to defend our nation. Not according to the God's Word. Rather from a heavenly standpoint these are issues of fairness, finance, and personal preference that the Lord has turned over to human government to administrate.

I've also often heard it said that homosexuality and gay marriage are issues of personal preference. That a woman's right to choose an abortion is an issue of fairness or even finance. That adultery, cohabitation, sex outside of marriage, and minor children indulging in medical birth control without parental approval are private matters of choice and preference. That being cunning and taking unfair advantage of others in investments, even if it involves deceit that is not technically illegal, is simply an issue of finances. Rather, all of these things the bible says are issues of morality.

So once we know which category a government law falls within (preference or moral), then we can know better how to respond. At the same time we cannot allow our government to define those categories for us. For a Believer our only choice is to follow the Lord's definitions of morality and of preference. So as with the example of Daniel, when the government oversteps God's intended purpose for it, and the government decides to redefine morality and preference, we are under no obligation in God's eyes to adhere to it. In fact, especially as Messianic and Christian, we have a duty to disregard or even disobey laws that are immoral from God's perspective if we are pushed into a corner and have no choice but to make a decision. Yet, fair or not, we are also to understand (as Daniel) that dire consequences may, and probably will, eventually accompany our righteous decision; we should not be surprised at this. And there is no better illustration than Daniel in the lion's den as the cost for taking up our crosses and becoming disciples of Yeshua. In fact, when we read of the one-world government of the coming Anti-Christ, Daniel's situation is going to be repeated countless times over around the globe for Believers.

Let's re-read only the last few verses of chapter 6.

RE-READ DANIEL 6: 26 – end

After King Darius (***Daryavesh***) disposed of those politically motivated conspirators who had devised a scheme to get rid of Daniel, and after the king saw the miraculous power of Daniel's God in action by saving Daniel from becoming lion food, he responded as his patriarch, King Nebuchadnezzar, had done when he had ordered ***Shadrakh, Meshakh, and Aved-N'go*** into the fiery furnace for disobeying a government decree, but they survived. Nebuchadnezzar subsequently ordered that, on pain of death, no one on earth was to harm these 3 Jewish men. So in imitation, Darius issued an edict demanding that all people on the earth are to fear and reverence the God of Daniel. As with Nebuchadnezzar, ***Daryavesh*** is (from his perspective) king of the world. Obviously he is not a stupid man and knows that practically speaking he only controls a corner of the world. But at the same time, such is the level of his grandiosity. It is not unlike a rather common way that we hear the President of the United States spoken of as the single most powerful man in the world. That may or may not be entirely true on a practical level, but it is a prevailing mindset and in some situations the President probably indeed has an upper hand above all other national leaders on this planet.

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The king's decree of verses 27 and 28 extols the virtues of Daniel's God. But at the same time we must not think that Darius has overthrown all of his own gods for Yehoveh. He never implies or confesses that Yehoveh is the only true God. The only demand is that all within his power to command are to show proper respect for Daniel's God. He certainly acknowledges some attributes of the Father that even in his thoroughly pagan mind were obvious: the Lord is living and active in the lives of men. He is eternal and His kingdom (more meaning domain) can't be destroyed, nor can His rulership be overturned by some other god or goddess. He is a God who is able to save and deliver His followers from otherwise impossible situations. He reveals His presence and power in signs and wonders (meaning miracles). And He does this not only in heaven but also on earth. And understand that from Darius's perspective heaven is more the undefined expanse of the clouds and skies where it was understood that all gods and goddesses lived; it is not the biblical Heaven of Judeo-Christianity.

Chapter 6 ends with the notice that Daniel prospered during the duration of Darius the Mede's reign and also later when Cyrus the Persian replaced him. I think it ought to be noticed that while there were moments of great danger, even imminent death, in Daniel's life in Babylon, it seems that most of the time he did quite well for himself and enjoyed a meaningful if not abundant lifestyle. I suspect that the faithfulness, truthfulness, courage, and loyalty seen in the lives and service of these Jews to their masters, that of **Daniel, Shadrakh, Meshakh, and Aved-N'go**, had much to do with the generally decent way that the exiles of Judah were treated during those 70 years in Babylon. So much so that when soon Cyrus would call for the Jews to be given permission to return to their homeland of Judah, and even committed Persian government money to help rebuild the Jerusalem Temple, relatively few Jews took advantage. The majority had created good lives for themselves in Babylon, established family and community ties, and preferred to stay.

Let's move on to chapter 7.

READ DANIEL CHAPTER 7 all

This chapter is one that I'd almost rather avoid. It is difficult, full of ambiguity, and can cause huge arguments and sometimes hurt feelings no matter what position one takes about things that it says. Even more, we're going to necessarily have to get technical if we want to do more than to only sensationalize and over-simplify the prophetic elements of this chapter that have been the subject of so many novels and movies in the last few years. So I want to take a few minutes to talk about the nature of this chapter in general.

With the close of chapter 6 we exit what can properly be called the historic section of the book of Daniel, and in chapter 7 we enter into the prophetic. We don't want to take that description too far, as of course in the "historic" section there was some prophecy, and in the "prophetic" section there will be some history. Nothing is ever as nice, neat and clean as our commentaries and textbooks often make it seem with these lovely labels. However it is also evident that Daniel chapter 7, although still written in Aramaic and thus having a somewhat gentile orientation, represents a transition or a shading-off from a gentile bent until we reach chapter 8 that changes to the Hebrew language and with it a predominately Hebrew orientation.

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Overall what we see is that the underlying substance of the vision of the statue consisting of 4 metals that God gave to the gentile pagan **Nebuchadnezzar**, is now presented in a vision to the pious Jewish Daniel but using different symbolism; that of 4 beasts. Thus the succession of the 4 metals of the statue presented in order from head, to chest and arms, to torso and thighs, to legs and feet (gold to silver to bronze to iron) are paralleled by the 4 different beasts as they appear one after the next. And so we can generally draw a connecting line between a metal, a beast, and a particular gentile empire (or kingdom).

There are some differences between those visions, however. **Nebuchadnezzar's** vision was given at the beginning and height of the Babylonian Empire's status, power and reach. The vision received by Daniel occurred during the reign of the final king of Babylon; the first year of that king's time on the throne to be specific. **Belshazzar** governed over a diminishing, weakening and soon to be conquered Babylon; its last days as an empire. And the nature of vision, the symbolism used, while said to be parallel more represents a duality. That is to say that the dream statue of Daniel 2 (an image of a man) presented the history of gentile nations in how they are viewed outwardly by other men; these empires are powerful, rich, and majestic. They are to be feared and admired. Daniel's vision of the 4 beasts in chapter 7 is representative not of how the world sees these 4 empires, but how God sees them. Inwardly they are spiritually decrepit, morally bankrupt, dangerous to God's people and plan of redemption, so they are worthy only of destruction.

So as a means to help us dive into Daniel chapter 7, we can say that this chapter relates directly to Daniel chapter 2. And especially as regards the 4th beast, or the 4th empire, we are given more details as progressive revelation. But I must also warn you that since we all come from different church or synagogue backgrounds, we will have heard many different interpretations of what this chapter is telling us about the future. Therefore it is probable that what I tell you will not entirely match what you have been previously taught. And way back in the 2nd lesson on the Book of Daniel I presented you with a summary of the 3 primary theological viewpoints of End Times doctrine called Post-Millennial, Amillennial, and Pre-Millennial (not to be confused with post, mid, or pre-tribulation doctrine, which though related, is not the same thing). I'm not going to take the time to review these doctrines, as you can do so on your own. However the way one views and interprets Daniel chapter 7 is nearly invariably wrapped up in one of those 3 End Times doctrines even if you don't know it by name.

To put a finer point on it: theologically speaking, pastors, commentators, academics and bible teachers generally have been taught, accept, and therefore view biblical End Times events through the lens of 1 of these 3 different End Times doctrines BEFORE they ever enter into study of a biblical book that speaks about End Times matters. Therefore, whatever a book or passage says it is automatically bent and shaped to fit within that pre-packaged doctrine. From my perspective certain aspects of each of these 3 doctrines has merit, and other aspects are dubious at best. Sometimes conclusions are firmly drawn not because there is strong evidence to back it up, but only because a particular doctrine allows for no other conclusion or the doctrine itself falls apart. So, as we continue and you hear words from my mouth that sound like I am fully supporting 1 of these 3 doctrines over another, that is not the case. In truth, if one was to take the total weight of one End Times doctrine as compared to another, what I will tell you probably sounds closest to the Pre-Millennial doctrine. But it would be wrong to assume that I am teaching you the rather

conventional Pre-Millennial viewpoint.

Further I want to remind you that what we will read in Daniel 7, especially concerning the 4th kingdom, is mostly future to us. Some of Daniel 7 is in the past and prophetically fulfilled. But some is in progress, and some has yet to happen. In fact whether an event is past, in progress, or entirely future to us form the main differences among the 3 main End Times doctrines. And I also want to say that the scholars and bible teachers who helped to form these 3 doctrines so many years ago were not fools or crack-pots. There are some good Scriptural reasons why they settled on what they did as a base of interpretation for Daniel's and for other End Times prophecies. I will explore that with you (lightly) as appropriate. I am also going to challenge some of these doctrines that many of you hold dear, and perhaps introduce some other possible interpretations that you might not have thought about. I feel quite free to do this because unfulfilled prophecy is something no human ought to think is his or her sole province. No one holds all the knowledge of the future, or do they have a clear vision of how most of these End Times events will actually play out.

In our years of study together one thing ought to have become crystal clear: not even the Prophets who were given dreams and visions from God about the future knew anymore than what those who heard those same oracles from these Prophets' mouths knew. If the Lord intended for these prophecies to be clear and unmistakable and used as a means to chart the future, the language would have been precise and more details given. It takes time and a flow of history for some things to become more evident. And only in hindsight can we ever be certain of exactly how a prophecy came to pass and what it looked like. As Sir Isaac Newton said (and I paraphrase), the purpose of biblical prophecy is not to give us a glimpse into the future so that we can take advantage of what is coming, or to satisfy our curiosity. The purpose of prophecy is for God to show His mastery over time and space. He tells humans enough information in advance about improbable things that will happen later; and then when it does happen it is proof of His omniscience, omnipotence, and faithfulness that only the unbelieving or the apostate can deny.

I have much respect and admiration for Prophecy teachers who study hard, pray even harder, and present us with their insights. But that respect diminishes when their conclusions harden, their assumptions turn to fact in their eyes, and no difference of opinion is tolerated. Some may turn out to have been correct, at least about some aspects of End Times events. But, as they say, even a stopped clock is right twice a day. So I want you to know that because we are going to be discussing unfulfilled prophecy, it is necessarily so that much of what I offer is my opinion, sometimes speculation, and I claim no office of Prophet. I'd like to think that most of what I'll say comes from diligent bible study, examining historical and extra-biblical evidence, considering God's established patterns, and trying to avoid fitting doctrinal square pegs into prophetic round holes. I'm sure that on some level I'll fail at that. That's the danger of teaching prophecy, and it's why so few pastors will even venture there anymore. So with that caveat, let's see what we can learn from Daniel 7.

Verse 1 says that almost immediately after **Belshatzar** became a king, Daniel was in his bed at nighttime when he had this vision. He felt it was complex enough and important enough, that he took the time to write it down, no doubt so that he could read it over and over as he tried to comprehend its significance.

The first descriptive elements of the vision that we receive are of 4 winds blowing over the great sea. The Aramaic word for wind is the same as the Hebrew: **ruach**. And **ruach** carries a dual meaning of a physical wind along with a spiritual wind. So **ruach** is the word used for spirit in the bible (as in **Ruach Hakodesh**, the Holy Spirit). Wind, like spirit, is mysterious because you can't see it, and no one knows where it comes from or goes to. It is common in the bible and in both ancient and modern literature to speak of the 4 winds as coming from the 4 corners of the globe.

The great sea does not mean the Mediterranean Sea as it sometimes does in the bible. Rather this is a symbolic sea, and as in some places in the Book of Revelation, the sea is symbolic of the nations and peoples of the world as a whole. We're told that the 4 winds break out over the great sea. So the mental picture is of a divinely orchestrated series of global events that create turmoil and chaos among the nations, just as hurricane force winds whipping over an ocean creates a dangerous boiling, roiling, chaotic cauldron of waves and foam. And out of this chaos of the gentile nations arises 4 strange beasts, no two the same. Let me re-emphasize: this is speaking of **gentile** nations.

The sequence is from the 1st to appear, the next to appear, then the 3rd and finally the last one, the 4th beast. So they don't all arise simultaneously, they arise one after the other. The first beast is said to be LIKE a lion but with eagle's wings. Like a lion means that it has similarities to a lion, perhaps attributes of a lion, but it wasn't a lion. For one thing, lions don't have eagle's wings. Then after the lion beast arises, something removed those eagle's wings and lifted this beast off the earth and made it stand on two feet like a man, with a human heart given to it.

A lion was considered the king of beasts. An eagle was considered the king of birds. A lion was powerful but has a limited range and dominion. An eagle had a wide range and an extended dominion as it soars above the mountains and valleys below going great distances. So some of this beast's power was taken from it when its wings were removed. It still had power (like a lion) but lost its ability to project its power (to go out and conquer) due to its limited range (the attribute that at first had been provided by eagle's wings).

Nebuchadnezzar had been compared to a lion and an eagle in Jeremiah, Lamentations, Habakkuk and in Ezekiel. So it's rather easy to see that the 1st beast represents the Babylonian Empire. And as a reminder: a king and his empire were seen as one and the same. A King is representative of his empire. Then there is the matter of the beast losing its beastly attributes and gaining human attributes (made to stand on 2 feet and gains a human heart). Recall the story of King Nebuchadnezzar being made like a beast of the field for 7 units of time due to his blasphemy, and then when he recognizes who the God of Daniel is and gives Him proper homage, God gives him back a human heart and restores him to his throne. This is, without doubt, what is being spoken of here.

Then a 2nd beast appears and it is LIKE a bear (similar to bear) but it is not a bear. So the lion beast comes first, then the bear beast comes next. The 2nd beast is different than the 1st beast. Probably it is fair to say that in ancient times if the king of the beasts is the lion, the bear is the prince. A bear is known for its ferocity and strength. But the language of this passage about the bear beast is very difficult and while not that hard to translate, it is hard to make any definite sense

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from it. There have been a number of attempts to understand what it means by the bear beast raising up on one side. Some say it is speaking of the walking motion of a bear as it stalks its prey. Others say it means it leaned on one side, while elevating the other. Another interpretation is that it is in reference to the dream statue of Daniel 2 and its two silver arms, as well as to chapter 8 and the animal with two horns with one horn rising up higher than the other. Thus the bear beast rising up on one side is the same as the one horn rising higher than the other horn. And this is supposed to represent the double-sidedness of the world-kingdom symbolized by this bear beast. And since the Media-Persian empire was double-sided (Media and Persia) then the double sided bear beast is its symbol. Personally, I find that contrived if not exhausting to even follow. So I really don't think the symbolism is at all clear.

As for the 3 ribs in the bear beast's mouth, there is equally as impressive a number of interpretations for it as there are for the bear rising up on one side; and some of them are just as tortured. At the least, the 3 ribs indicate that this violent predatory creature had just killed and eaten since the ribs were still being carried in its teeth; and then the next words of the passage were an instruction to go and gorge itself with flesh. So the ribs in the teeth and the gorging of flesh are connected. However I see a pretty logical explanation that history shows is probably the right one by which to interpret this passage. If the bear beast is the Media-Persian Empire (which I think it is and this thinking is generally accepted), we know that they conquered (devoured) 3 substantial kingdoms: Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia that would obviously represent the 3 ribs in the bear beast's teeth. This is the simplest most apparent solution, in hindsight it is exactly what happened, and I see no reason to reject it.

The 3rd beast now appears and it is said to be LIKE a leopard or a panther. Again, it is NOT a leopard or panther, but it has similar attributes. This panther beast had 4 heads and it also had bird's wings. Please make a mental note because we are going to refer to this again next week; this 3rd beast is specifically said to have 4 heads, which is the only one of the 4 beasts with multiple heads. Assuming that this is symbolizing Macedonia-Greece, or just Greece for short (as I think so and as almost unanimously this is the verdict in the bible academic world), the panther or leopard is known less for its power and more for its lightning fast agility. So the 3rd world empire is the panther, which in chapter 2 was symbolized by the torso and thighs of bronze. The bird wings again indicate the extent of its range and that this beast is not only swift but also able to cover large distances. Historically speaking, Alexander the Great, the king of this 3rd world empire of Greece, was able to conquer more quickly and more wide ranging territory than anyone before him. In fact this was perhaps his hallmark.

Now as to the 4 heads of this 3rd beast; some say that it represents the 4 points of the compass, the 4 corners of the world, similar to the sense of the 4 winds blowing over the great sea to begin this chapter. So the thought is that it is representing how widespread Alexander's empire became. But historically we find that the government of Greece indeed became a 4 headed creature. Before he died Alexander divided up his empire into 4 districts, and gave one each to Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip, and Antigonus. So it is hard for me to see the symbolism of the 4 heads as anything else than these 4 rulers of the Grecian Empire who ruled separate districts simultaneously, just as these 4 heads of the beast in the vision existed all at the same time, as opposed to one appearing, and then another, and then another in sequence.

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Then in verse 7, the 4th beast appeared. It was totally unlike the previous 3 (themselves all different from one another). The differentiation between this beast and all the previous ones is that the 4th beast is given no likeness at all. No beast of the field is given as similar because the wanton destructiveness of the 4th is so unlike anything else that there is no comparison in the animal kingdom to draw upon. Whereas the 1st and 2nd beasts had characteristics to go out and conquer, and the 3rd beast was given characteristics to rule effectively, this 4th beast's main characteristic is its terrible destructiveness. Probably its main feature is its iron teeth, which helps to identify rather readily with the dream statue 4th empire of iron, and therefore this is the Roman Empire.

Even the destructive nature of the beast had no bounds. Its intensity was such that even after it had devoured and crushed, whatever debris was left it went back and ground it to dust. The final words of verse 7 speak of its difference also in that the other 3 had come before it. So we get additional confirmation that this not a random order, but that the 4 beasts appear in the exact sequence presented to us. And this 4th beast is the only one to have horns; 10 of them.

In antiquity and in the bible a horn is representative of power, and thus usually symbolizes a kingdom. Thus this beast had on its head 10 horns representing 10 kings with their kingdoms. That said some excellent expositors like Edward Young claim that even the number 10 is symbolic and should not to be taken literally as an exact number of kings and kingdoms. That is the number ten is a numerological symbol of divine completeness, so these kings need not be exactly 10 in number nor do they have to appear and rule simultaneously; they could be spread out over time. Since the horns seem, on the surface anyway, to be a parallel of the toes on the feet of the dream statue, then it seems as though the number 10 ought to be taken literally rather than only symbolically. However Edward Young is one who points out that in chapter 2 nowhere does it say that the dream statue has 10 toes; just "toes". For me that is pressing a point a bit too far. Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue was of a man, and every other body part mentioned was the correct and expected number. Why would anyone think that it was necessary to inform readers that numbers of toes that a man has is 10? So I think that the number 10 is meant literally **but it also** represents a numerological symbol just as we find with a number of other events in the bible: Israel with 40 years in the wilderness, the number of tribes as 12, the Godhead being 3, Jonah in the belly of the fish for 3 days and nights, and so on.

Then Daniel sees another horn, a smaller horn, suddenly sprout from the midst of the 10. But as a consequence of the appearance of another horn, 3 others were uprooted, meaning they were either superseded or destroyed. This horn, unlike the others, is said to be "little" and it had the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke great things. Some bibles don't say "great things" but rather "blasphemous" or "arrogant" things. That is simply the opinion of the bible editor and that idea nowhere present in the bible text. Great things is the best translation.

Obviously Daniel is fixated upon these horns because of their importance; they are apparently the key to the mystery of this 4th beast. The eye and the mouth of the little horn means this is speaking of a man, a particular potentate, and not necessarily of a kingdom (remember a horn is typically a king who is representative of his kingdom). So this horn is quite different in nature from the other 10. Biblically speaking an eye symbolizes wisdom and insight; circumspection and prudence. The mouth that speaks great things is meaning a man who has the power of persuasion like few men

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who have ever lived. But it is also a mouth that knows its power and so speaks words of self-glorification.

As we near to a close today, this is a good time to point out that bible critical scholars say that the author of Daniel is using the little horn to symbolize Antiochus Epiphanies. This idea seems to have begun with a Neo-Platonist philosopher in the late 200's A.D. named Porphyry. He had a strange love-hate relationship with Jews and Christians, and of course the bible. And he particularly wanted to discredit the Book of Daniel for reasons not clearly understood. So he was among the first to challenge its authenticity. He wrote that obviously the little horn was Epiphanies, who had overthrown three other horns (kings with their kingdoms): Ptolemy Philometer, Ptolemy Euregetes and Artarxia. Hopefully Porphyry was a better philosopher than a historian, because both of the Ptolemy's that he named as being 2 of the 3 horns that Epiphanies overthrew were dead before Antiochus Epiphanies was even born. Such is the length that some scholars, in all ages, will go to in order to try and discredit the Word of God. But if God's people will just take the time to investigate and study, it seems that most of the accusations can be exposed for the speculations, intellectual dishonesty and baseless assumptions that they turn out to be.

Next time we'll dig even deeper into the prophecy of Daniel 7 that has so much connection to the Book of Revelation and the relevance to End Times that are just ahead of us, and we'll especially look closely at the identity of the little horn.