

DANIEL

Week 18, chapter 7

Today and next week in our continuing study of Daniel chapter 7 we are going to go where angels fear to tread, and we'll probably stick a fork in a few sacred cows. We're also going to take a detour that I think will add some understanding to the life and times of Yeshua our Messiah, and help us to get a clearer picture of where some of the Messianic and End Times religious concepts actually originated that are nearly universally credited to Christianity as new innovations.

In our last meeting we examined Daniel's vision of 4 beasts rising up out of the sea that parallels the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had of the statue made of 4 metals, back in Daniel chapter 2. Briefly: the 1st beast to rise up was said to be "like" a lion. The 2nd beast to rise up was said to be "like" a bear. The 3rd beast is described as being "like" a leopard (or panther), and the 4th as being substantially different from the first 3 and thus it was not compared to any known creature from the animal kingdom. What made this beast so different was its destructive and violent nature and that atop its head were 10 horns.

A key word to pay attention to is "like". That is the 1st beast was **like** a lion in some ways, but not entirely a lion. The 2nd beast had some attributes of a bear, but wasn't exactly a bear. The 3rd beast had similarities to a leopard, but wasn't quite a leopard. This "like a" terminology is going to become even more important in a few more verses.

The lion beast symbolizes the same thing as the golden head of the statue. The bear beast equates to the silver arms and chest of the statue. The leopard beast is indicative of the bronze hips and thighs, and the final beast is a parallel of the legs of iron. Each of these is a metaphor for the inherent characteristics of an empire that will arise, and then in time collapse, only to be replaced by the next one in succession. The various metals of the statue represent outward characteristics of each empire as humans see them, while each associated beast represents the inward characteristics of each empire as the Lord sees them. These 4 gentile empires are generally agreed to be Babylonia, Media-Persia, Macedonia-Greece, and Rome. There are some theologians who disagree with this list and say that the empires are Babylonia, then Media, then Persia, then Macedonia-Greece and so Rome is not represented. A small handful say that the empires are Assyria, Babylonia, Media-Persia and Macedonia-Greece and so again Rome is not represented. I think I can say without reservation that this rather tortured viewpoint not only doesn't hold up to what recorded historical hindsight shows actually happened, but it also is born from the premise that Daniel is a fraud and is a Jewish book of fiction written in 160 B.C. instead of perhaps 530 B.C. as it claims; therefore there is no way that the Roman Empire can be the 4th Empire or Kingdom. We have looked at this issue carefully in past lessons, and forthrightly dismissed it as little more than a modern secular human attempt to discredit the bible wherever

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possible, and to deny the existence of the spiritual sphere and the domain of predictive prophecy in general. That will be my position for the remainder of our study in the Book of Daniel.

Let's pick up in Daniel 7 at verse 8.

RE-READ DANIEL 7:8 – end

I mentioned last time that in some ways I'd like to avoid this chapter. But on the other hand, I think my wife would tell you that I don't mind occasionally opening a can of worms just to see what crawls out. And that's what we're about to do.

Verse 8 speaks of the little horn, an eleventh horn, that sprouts up among the 10 horns that are on the head of the 4th beast (a horn represents a king). And the result of the little horn sprouting up is that it uproots and removes 3 out of the 10 original horns. The little horn had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly. The eyes symbolize a person of great enlightenment who possesses wisdom and uncommon insight. The mouth is for self-aggrandizement and (in this case) speaking falsely against the Lord.

We're going to pause here for a few minutes as I want to explain to you the 3 primary theological doctrinal views based mostly on verses 1 through 8. The reason I want to do this is as a way to reinforce that intelligent and well-studied people can disagree radically when it comes to examining unfulfilled prophecy. Since most Hebrew Roots Christians and Messianics come from a conservative and often Evangelical Christian worldview, most have been taught what is called the Pre-Millennial doctrine concerning this vision of Daniel as well as other end times matters contained in the Book of Revelation. And so many folks have not heard of the alternative viewpoints.

I want to state emphatically that we have to be most cautious in becoming too rigid in our thinking about any unfulfilled prophecy, otherwise we risk missing these prophetic fulfillments when they happen because they don't fit some mental picture or denominational creed that we've adopted as unassailable. That is not to say that some End Times doctrines don't better fit the actual words and sense of the Scriptures than others. Rather it is to remind us that the vast bulk of Jewish society of Yeshua's day, and to this very day, did not and do not believe that He is the Messiah primarily because of manmade traditions and doctrines that were created by Jewish intellectuals and religious leaders. Jesus just didn't fit their predetermined mold for a Messiah and so He was rejected. A bit more open mindedness and humility, and little less rabbinical authoritarianism and fear of losing one's social circle, would have made a great deal of difference in the outcome and I have no doubt there would have been many more Jewish Believers in Yeshua had this been the case.

I am determined to approach this difficult matter as intellectually and biblically honestly as I can, by not adopting any particular end times doctrinal package as absolute, and I intend to teach you from that mindset. It is not a sign of ignorance or lack of biblical knowledge to say, "I don't know". Or to admit that a prophetic fulfillment could be "A" or it could be "B" or maybe a combination of the two, or even neither of the two. Sometimes it is the wisest thing we can do (especially as we dare

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to enter into the realm of unfulfilled predictive prophecy) to admit that we simply don't have sufficient information to come to definite conclusions. And this circumstance is precisely what we're dealing with at this point in the Book of Daniel and (since it is so connected with Daniel) the Book of Revelation.

That said, let's take out our can opener and see what's inside. First, I want to begin by giving you a much too-brief summary of the 3 major theological positions on these beasts and their meaning so that you can see how the same Scriptural passages can conjure up vastly different speculations in the minds of theologians. The Post-Millennial viewpoint is that these 4 beasts represent Babylonia, Media-Persia, Macedonia-Greece, and Rome. They see the eleventh horn, the little horn on the 4th beast's head that speaks blasphemy, as either the Roman Catholic Papal system or the Pope himself. The "saints" or the "holy ones" spoken of in verses 21, 22, and 25 who are attacked by the beast are believed to be the Church in our present age, just as we commonly think of the Church today.

The 10 horns represent 10 kings and or kingdoms who ruled more or less at the same time in the Roman Empire. These 10 kings have come and gone already; they are in our distant past. Further, the Messianic Kingdom of glory is thought to be currently underway, existing now in our present age, gradually achieving greater power and greater purity, and it will reach its peak when Christ returns.

Amillennialists agree with the Post-Millennialists that the 4 kingdoms represented by the 4 beasts are Babylonia, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome. But the beast that has the 10 horns are said to symbolize are essentially 3 distinct stages of the progression of the Roman Empire over time. They believe that the 1st stage lasted from the Roman Empire's birth around the 1st century B.C. until it collapsed in the middle of the 5th century A.D. Therefore the 10 horns on the head of the beast represent some number of kingdoms that survived the fall of the Roman Empire and they will rule at some point in history. The little horn is therefore the final king (a gentile king), and it is his kingdom that shall be destroyed at the return of Messiah. The "saints" or "holy ones" are the New Testament Church who will suffer tremendous tribulation at the hands of the little horn as the time of our Lord's 2nd coming becomes imminent.

The Pre-Millennial doctrine (the one most of you are familiar with, and by far the most popular one today, at least among Western Christians), agrees with the first two doctrines on the identities of the 4 empires represented by the 4 beasts. But that's about the only point of agreement. The Pre-Millennial belief is that the 10 horns represent 10 Roman kings who are yet to come as part of a revived Roman Empire. And that these are the same kings as depicted in the 13th chapter of Revelation (I'll have more to say about this later). Thus the 4th beast of Daniel 7 is the same as the strange and dreadful beast of the Apostle John's vision as recorded in Revelation 13.

The little horn is typically held to be the Anti-Christ, a gentile who will appear at the end of the so-called Church Age, and become master of the world for a relatively short time before he is destroyed by Yeshua upon His return. Now, while this is not universal within Pre-Millennialism, one widely held view is that the "saints" or the "holy ones" who are persecuted and killed by the little horn are Israelites who will, at end of the Church Age, finally inherit the kingdom of God that was

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promised to Abraham, Moses, and David. And the Jewish Christ will, of course, be the Israelite king of this kingdom of Israelite Believers.

Among some strains of Pre-Millennialism is the alternative identification of the “saints” and “holy ones” as generally gentile Christians, perhaps including some Jews who have given up their Jewishness and thus have become Christians. This theological viewpoint is mostly held by denominations that adhere to Replacement Theology. Under Replacement Theology God is done with the Jews and so has turned everything over to the New Testament Church that at one time (namely in the OT) He had promised to the Hebrews. Thus essentially the OT represents God’s original promise, and the NT represents His change of mind and in some denominations, a change of His nature.

And lastly, the kingdom of God is the same as the Kingdom of Christ, which is also known as the Millennial Kingdom. This is a future kingdom that is yet to happen, its center will be Jerusalem, and this new kingdom is brought about when Christ returns in the clouds.

It is fair to say that the Post-Millennial position that the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of the Messiah is already present on earth, has lost much steam mostly due to World Wars I and II. It’s pretty difficult to establish that the world of the 20th (and now the 21st century) is “perfected” and more pure as compared to the world of the 1st century.

So here we have the 3 most prominent End-Times theologies in a nutshell, but in reality there is a 4th that has taken hold and gained broad acceptance. It is that there is no End-Times. And that is because the secular humanist academics who now run perhaps the majority of our Seminaries and Bible Colleges insist that because Daniel is the basis for practically all End-Times prophecy, and because Daniel is a book of fantasy, and because predictive prophecy is itself impossible and the idea of a spiritual sphere is not to be taken seriously, then there is no reason to be thinking in terms of a divinely orchestrated “end of the world”.

With that information at hand, let’s return now to more of what Daniel has to tell us about his vision. As verse 9 opens, Daniel sees thrones (plural) being set into place and upon one of these thrones sits the Ancient One also known as the Ancient of Days. This Ancient One is God. In the context of the Trinity Doctrine we would say that this is God the Father. Judaism agrees that this is the God of Israel. What follows for the next several verses is a description of the final destruction of the entire gentile-based world government system as we know it today, and that has been in place in one form or another for eons. It is the various government systems that are represented by those 4 beasts. And while the place that God sits is called a throne, it is also what we can rightly call the Judgment Seat because from this seat He is finally going to righteously judge the world system and bring it to a close, forever.

Why is God here called, and then envisioned as, the Ancient One? Is God really an old man with snow-white clothing and hair the color of wool? The reason for this majestic imagery is that in the biblical times an extremely old person was highly venerated. This is one way to explain why the mysterious Melchizedek is so known and honored in Abraham’s day. The elderly were seen as possessing wisdom that younger people could only aspire to. They were honored, and treated with

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humble respect if not awe at times. Living a very long time was seen as a sign of favor from God. This is so unlike today where the elderly are seen as out of touch, useless, an impediment to progress and an unneeded burden to family and society. Rather it is the youth who are smart and needed and who have the most value. So is it any wonder that God the Father and His “Old” Testament are often seen as archaic primitive remnants that are no longer relevant in the 21st century Church, while the youthful Son of God, the Christ, is the newer God who represents His progressive “New” Covenant?

Verse 10 continues with the explanation that Daniel saw rivers of fire coming from the Lord and His throne, and thousands upon thousands were serving Him, with millions upon millions standing before Him. Then, solemnly, a court was convened and the books were opened. What better picture of the purpose of God’s visit than this; He came to act as judge for all those who stood before Him and then to destroy some with fire for their rebellion. More specifically, He is going to judge and destroy those 4 beasts and the little horn, and all who follow them.

Biblically, fire is used for two basic purposes: to purify or to annihilate totally. To perfect what is good or to destroy what is evil. And often the idea is to destroy what is not wanted in order to separate out what God wants to keep. Let’s notice the words that the “court sat”, and connect that with the previous verse that thrones were set. It seems obvious that there were a number of thrones, and therefore there were many members of the court that was being convened. Who might the other members of the court be? One of the members will be introduced to us shortly. But as for the others, at this point we’re not told. They might be angels, they might be the souls of the martyred or simply deceased Believers; at least these are the two options usually set forth by bible academics.

The actions of those standing before God the Judge are said to be recorded in books. Therefore the books of the actions of the humans represented by the kings and their minions, and of the little horn and his minions, are recorded in a heavenly book.

CJB Revelation 20:12 *And I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened; and another book was opened, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to what they had done.*

CJB Malachi 3:16 *Then those who feared ADONAI spoke together; and ADONAI listened and heard. A record book was written in his presence for those who feared ADONAI and had respect for his name.*

Verse 11 explains that for some reason God determined that only the 4th beast should be condemned to utter and final destruction. The first 3 beasts (lion, bear and leopard) were spared with their punishments being that their rulership over their empires was removed. Further their lives were prolonged for what is usually translated in English bibles as a time and a season. The Aramaic words used are **zeman** (for season) and **iddan** (for time). **Zeman** points to a divinely ordained event or time, or a specifically called out occasion such as a festival, or a literal identifiable season like summer or fall. **Iddan** is a word that is generic for time. It is an unspecified time, not unlike our asking what time it is, or saying that we’re going to be gone for a time and then

we'll return. Amount of time is not present within its meaning. I think the best way to understand this verse and the phrase "a time and a season" is expressed by the wonderful Christian bible commentator C.F. Kiel; he says this:

"The first 3 beasts also had their dominion taken away one after the other, each at its appointed time; for to each God gave its duration of life, extending to a season and time appointed by Him."

So a time and a season are here used as expressions and not meant to be deciphered as precise amounts or bracketed with predetermined dates. They are also not meant to be mysterious terms, just indefinite. Now, stay with me; I'm not explaining this to you just to give you some interesting bible facts. This is building a foundation to help us understand what is coming in the next few verses.

Let's now take a short detour to look at something that we can't get as deeply into as I would prefer (at least not for the time being) but it is as good a time as any to point it out while the images of the 4 beasts of Daniel's vision are fresh in our minds.

Turn to Revelation chapter 13 and follow along with me. By the way, because of the way this chapter was divided (wrongly), the last words of chapter 12 should have been the first words of chapter 13. So I'm going to read them and then continue into 13.

18 Then the dragon stood on the seashore;

CJB Revelation 13:1 ***and I saw a beast come up out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads. On its horns were ten royal crowns and on its heads blasphemous names.***

2 The beast which I saw was like a leopard, but with feet like those of a bear and a mouth like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its power, its throne and great authority.

3 One of the heads of the beast appeared to have received a fatal wound, but its fatal wound was healed, and the whole earth followed after the beast in amazement.

4 They worshipped the dragon, because he had given his authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who can fight against it?"

5 It was given a mouth speaking arrogant blasphemies; and it was given authority to act for forty-two months.

6 So it opened its mouth in blasphemies against God to insult his name and his Sh'khinah, and those living in heaven;

7 it was allowed to make war on God's holy people and to defeat them; and it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

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⁸ Everyone living on earth will worship it except those whose names are written in the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb slaughtered before the world was founded.

⁹ Those who have ears, let them hear!

As I mentioned earlier, the Pre-Millennial viewpoint is that the 4th beast of Daniel chapter 7 is the same beast as spoken of here in Revelation 13. Is it? Maybe, but I have real doubts about that. Listen again to the description of the 4th beast of Daniel 7:

Daniel 7:7 CJB

⁷ After this, I looked in the night visions; and there before me was a fourth animal, dreadful, horrible, extremely strong, and with great iron teeth. It devoured, crushed and stamped its feet on what was left. It was different from all the animals that had gone before it, and it had ten horns.

Notice the beast description of Revelation 13: this beast has 7 heads (our beast of Daniel chapter 7 is not said to have 7 heads). The Revelation 13 beast is like a combination of a leopard, bear and lion. The 4th beast of Daniel chapter 7 is given no likeness to any animal at all and in fact is said to be entirely different from the first 3. And further, while in Revelation 13 this single beast is specifically said to be a hybrid of the lion, bear and leopard beasts, in Daniel chapter 7 each of these animals (the lion, bear and leopard) represents a separate and distinct beast and kingdom.

Pre-Millennialist scholars wave their hand at this and say: no problem. This is progressive revelation at work. So what if the 4th beast now has 7 heads? But a major problem is that the first 3 beasts seem to have become combined into one particularly terrible one in Revelation 13. And there is no mention in the Revelation 13 beast of a little horn that sprouts from among the 10 horns as it is in Daniel 7. While I can't definitely rule out anything since this seems to be unfilled prophecy, a plain and straightforward reading of the Revelation 13 beast compared with the 4th beast of Daniel 7 sounds like entirely different beasts even if some of the things they do are quite similar. If these two are indeed the same beasts then I see something that is closer to Darwinian evolution than biblical progressive revelation. (I told you we'd stick a fork in some sacred cows today!)

So here is something to consider as an alternative to the prevailing and popular view among the modern evangelical church that the Revelation 13 beast comes from the revived Roman Empire. Notice that in the 4 beasts of Daniel's dream, the TOTAL number of heads for ALL the beasts combined is 7. First beast has 1 head, the second beast has 1 head, the third beast has 4 heads, and the fourth beast has 1 head for a total of.....7! Notice now that the beast of Revelation 13 is said to be a combination of a lion, bear, and leopard, but with the 10 horns of the 4th beast. And, it has 7 heads. So it seems to me that the Revelation 13 beast is NOT a souped-up version of Daniel's 4th beast, but rather is a hybrid of all 4 of them. So whatever this Revelation beast in the End-Times is, it will bear characteristics and attributes and probably have some kind of historic if not also ethnic ties to all 4 of the gentile kingdoms represented in Daniel's and Nebuchadnezzar's visions, as

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opposed to simply being ONLY representative of that 4th beast and legs of iron. Bottom line: here I've presented to you a reasonable interpretation that says that the final Revelation beast of the End-Times is NOT from a revived Roman Empire, but rather contains elements from each of the Babylonian, Media-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires.

Am I correct? Only time will tell. But that is the nature of dealing with unfilled prophecy.

Let's return to Daniel chapter 7. Verse 13 is not only pivotal in this chapter, it is pivotal in redemption history. Daniel suddenly sees clouds coming from heaven and "One like a son of man" was coming upon those clouds. This unidentified being is then brought to the Ancient of Days. And then in verse 14 this "One like the Son of Man" is given (by the Ancient of Days) dominion and honor and sovereignty over ALL peoples, nations, and tongues (meaning languages). This dominion is forever, and it will never pass away (unlike what happened to the 4 gentile kingdoms). This is speaking of dominion over the entire earth and over the entire human population, gentile and Hebrew.

Now it is close to universal in Christianity that this being coming on the clouds, this "One like the Son of Man" is Jesus Christ, and thus this is a messianic event of profound significance. However Judaism doesn't see it that way. It might astound you to learn that the Rabbis interpret the being who is the "One like the Son of Man" as national Israel. So for Judaism it is Israel that is coming on the clouds, and Israel that is being seated on a throne next to God, the Ancient of Days. It is Israel to whom the kingdom is being given over, and Israel who will have dominion over the entire earth.

I want to break here and take a pretty major detour to discuss the super-critical term "One like the Son of Man" because knowing who or what this being symbolizes is key to End Times prophecy as well as to identifying the Messiah. And the first thing I want you to notice is the "like a" terminology is applied to this mysterious Son of Man in the same way it was applied to the 3 beasts ("like" a lion, "like" a bear, "like" a leopard). So we have the contextual idea established in Daniel 7 that just as the 3 beasts who are "like" a lion, bear and leopard, they also aren't actually or fully a lion, bear, and leopard because they either don't exhibit all the characteristics of those animals, or perhaps they do exhibit all the characteristics but to them are added additional unnatural characteristics for their species that now substantially changes their nature to the point that we can no longer reasonably think of them as a typical lion, bear and leopard. So this being coming on the clouds is like a son of man, but is not fully a son of man or perhaps is more than a son of man. This is meant to be mysterious to Daniel. Like all prophecy, we'll have to wait until it comes about and then in hindsight we'll understand it to its fullest. And yet I think we can make a good case that we have far more understanding about this son of man than Daniel did.

The son of man is a concept that is developed throughout the Old Testament, but here in Daniel is the first place where the concept is given an official title: The Son of Man. In Hebrew "son of man" is *ben adam*, in Aramaic it is *bar enash*. Since Daniel 7 is in Aramaic, then we read *bar enash*. In the early part of the Old Testament son of man is the equivalent of saying "human being". But by the time we reach the era of the Kings, the term seems to begin to blur and transform. The place where we first see this transformation, or perhaps dual meaning, of the term son of man is in the

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Psalms.

Turn your bibles to Psalm 80.

READ PSALM 80 all

Look especially at verse 18 (if you have something other than a CJB, it might be verse 17).

CJB Psalm 80:18 *Help the man at your right hand, the son of man you made strong for yourself.*

Here the meaning of the son of man begins to blur. On the one hand this seems to be about a human being (an Israelite) or a nation of human beings (Israel), but on the other hand this son of man is at God's right hand and is made strong for God. It is acknowledged by Jew and Christian that this Psalm has messianic implications because Israel is in trouble, needs salvation from an entire world that seems to be against it, needs to have God's favor restored, and this son of man seems to be the key to it.

Thus it is that Daniel chapter 7 and the mention of the Son of Man as a title for a being who comes in the clouds and is seated on throne next to the Ancient of Days, is progressive revelation about this son of man that we hear about in Psalm 80.

But there is much more to this story and how it so greatly impacts our understanding of Yeshua and what we read in the New Testament. And we'll explore that further as we meet again next week.