

“Power and Dominion”  
Daniel 7:1  
(Preached at Trinity, July 20, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we arrive at **Chapter 7** we find the midway point in the Book of Daniel and this chapter serves as a bridge between the two halves. It also closes the Aramaic section of the Book and returns us to Hebrew. In the last chapters of the book Daniel reports a series of visions describing events that were yet-to-be. It reminds us undeniably that God rules over the events of history.
2. Tonight I want to open **Chapter 7** as well as give an introduction into the remainder of the Book of Daniel. It is important for you to pay close attention so that you will be equipped to understand what is to come.
3. There is a great interest today in what will happen in the end-times. The “Left Behind” series of books have sold over 70 million copies and resulting movies have been viewed by millions. Because of this there is great interest in certain prophetic books in the Bible, in particular, Daniel, Ezekiel, and the Book of Revelation. Along with these books of the Bible there is also great interest in the Olivet Discourse of Jesus.
4. These passages form the primary basis for every view of eschatology. Eschatology is from the Greek word ἔσχατος which means “last” or “final.” Eschatology deals with the end times.
5. In seeking to have a proper view of eschatology or any other doctrine of the Bible we must have a proper understanding of hermeneutics. The approach we take to understanding the meaning of Scripture is called hermeneutics.
6. It isn’t enough to just have a high view of Scripture. There are many who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the authority of Scripture and the infallibility of Scripture who fail to properly interpret the Scriptures.
7. There are several basic rules we must follow if we are to properly interpret the Bible.
  - A. One rule is we must recognize the genre of literature into which the passage falls. The Bible is written using several categories or classes or genres of literature. Let me give you a brief introduction to some of the basic genres of Scripture:
    - The most common is the Narrative sometimes called Historic Narrative. Narrative simply gives an account of specific stories, events, and participants – usually with a beginning and an end. Although OT narrative involves actually historical events the reader must also consider what the message for the contemporary church is. Caution must be exercised against simply moralizing every narrative.
    - Wisdom literature – these books include Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. They express the wisdom one gains from reflection upon and obedience to God’s ways. Wisdom literature isn’t meant to express doctrinal themes or unbending rules or absolute promises but wisdom to be applied to particular situations.

- Poetry – the best known is the Book of Psalms but most of the books of the OT contain poetry in some form. Biblical poetry is rich in parallelism and challenging grammatical forms. Biblical poetry is also rich in imagery, figures of speech and other rhetorical devices. One doesn't build absolute doctrinal truths from poetic books.
  - Prophecy – messages from God to His people involving particular situations. They are historical and yet enigmatic or mysterious containing many figures of speech, allegories, parables, and symbols.
  - Gospels – contain both historical narrative as well as theology. But they also contain parables which fall into a different genre type. And many details are left out.
  - Epistles – letters, yet they are not simply personal letters. They present instruction and theology for the church with apostolic authority. They must be read as historical but interpreted with an eye upon the culture of the day.
  - Apocalyptic – from the Greek word Αποκάλυψις which means a revelation, disclosure or uncovering. Some older versions of the NT refer to the Book of Revelation as the Apocalypse of John. Apocalyptic contains visions in need of interpretation. It is rich in symbolism.
    - A. Leon Morris - This type of literature abounds in beasts and seals, in rivers and mountains and stars, in personages celestial and infernal. The symbols may change in bewildering fashion. Sometimes the meaning of the symbolism is fairly plain. But unfortunately more often the modern reader can make neither head nor tail of it. The apocalyptists did not always (or even usually) think it necessary to explain their symbolism."
    - B. For the ancient readers there may have been a generally accepted symbolism that was widely understood that we no longer understand. There is a widespread use of beasts and of numerology.
8. Daniel, Chapters 7-12 fall into this apocalyptic category, although we also find aspects of historical narrative as well as prophecy. Many hold that the Book of Daniel actually began the genre of apocalyptic literature. This means we need to approach it with particular caution. But it doesn't mean that somehow the meaning is sealed and beyond our reach.
9. Many in our generation have taken Daniel and Revelation and fashioned their interpretation into a bizarre scheme that leaves many bewildered. Iain Duguid writes: "These complicated end-times scenarios tend to combine *dissimilar* elements of the biblical text into a single piece, ignoring the fact that the end result cannot be harmonized with a plain reading of any one of the individual parts." He further describes the end-time scenario of some as, "a cocktail of two parts Daniel, three parts Revelation, and a dash of Ezekiel.
10. As we open this chapter right away we find it rich in apocalyptic symbolism. **Chapters 1-6** are given in chronological order as Daniel served under three kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. Now we skip back to a vision Daniel saw while serving under the second of these kings. We find a vision of four beasts so terrifying that we might classify it more as a nightmare.
- The first is a lion with eagle's wings. The wings are torn off and then it is lifted up so that it stands on two feet. Daniel adds that it is then given a human mind.
  - The second animal looks like a bear. It is a fearsome animal with three ribs in its mouth and is commanded: "Arise, devour much meat!"

- The third beast is like a leopard, except it has wings like a bird. It has four heads and it is given great dominion.
  - The fourth beast is described as dreadful and terrifying and different from any of the others. It has great iron teeth and ten horns. It crushes and devoured its victims. From it then arises another smaller horn that has the eyes of a man and a mouth that utters great boasts.
11. At this point the Ancient of Days takes his seat and the beasts are destroyed. Then the Son of Man approaches the throne and is given “dominion, glory, and a kingdom.” We are told that His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.
  12. Great energy has been devoted to interpreting the exact identity of each element of this vision, particularly of the ten horns and the one little horn.
    - A. The text does not clearly give us the identity of these beasts, only that they represent four mighty kings and their great kingdoms.  
**Daniel 7:17 NAU** - "These great beasts, which are four *in number*, are four kings *who* will arise from the earth."  
      1. We should most likely interpret the beasts in line with the statue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in **Chapter 2**.
      2. Historically, these kingdoms have been identified as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire.
    - B. And the identity of the ten horns and the little horn are also not clearly identified. This suggests to us that perhaps the proper interpretation does not depend upon knowing precisely the identity of these beasts. Daniel was not able to dogmatically identify the symbols.
    - C. God was setting before Daniel particular themes that would characterize future history. He was revealing to Daniel the mysteries of His purposes, the horrible conflict and brutality that characterize history, God’s omnipotent sovereign reign over the evil kingdoms of this world, and the victory of God’s Kingdom and His people.
  13. This is the key to understanding the second half of the Book of Daniel. We need to focus on the important themes. The purpose of Daniel is not to provide a written history of the world in advance. Rather, it is to declare to us that we live in an evil world marked by beastly kingdoms and that the history of the church will always be marked by suffering due to these evil forces.
  14. As we go through **Chapter 7** and then through the remainder of the Book of Daniel we’ll look at these basic themes. Hopefully they will encourage us and strengthen us as we go through this present age.
  15. The first great theme is the overwhelming power and sovereignty of God over the kingdoms of this world.

- I. The first thing we see is this world's kingdoms are in constant chaos
- A. Daniel sees a picture of four winds stirring up a "great sea" – **Verse 2**
1. The sea conjures up images of a chaotic churning; winds blowing and waves roaring upon the shore.  
**Isaiah 17:12 NAU** - "Alas, the uproar of many peoples Who roar like the roaring of the seas, And the rumbling of nations Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!"  
**Psalms 89:8-9 NAU** - "O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. <sup>9</sup> You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them."
  2. The nations of the world are in a constant pulsating convulsion, always lusting for power and always fighting against the dominion of God  
**Psalms 2:1 NAU** - "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"
  3. God is telling Daniel that history would be characterized by nations rising against nations, each seeking dominance. One kingdom would fall and another would take its place, each more dreadful than the one before.
  4. God reveals clearly the beastly character of evil as nations deny God His legitimate authority.  
**Psalms 10:4 NAU** - "The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*. All his thoughts are, "There is no God."
- B. But notice the winds blow from heaven a possible reference to God's sovereign direction over it all.
1. Even though the nations are in a constant state of chaos they are not outside the sovereign providence.
  2. The kings of the earth are under God's power  
**Proverbs 21:1 NAU** - "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."  
**Psalms 65:5-7 NAU** - "By awesome *deeds* You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation, You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea; <sup>6</sup> Who establishes the mountains by His strength, Being girded with might; <sup>7</sup> Who stills the roaring of the seas, The roaring of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples."
  3. Every movement of every nation is by the hand of God. Every kingdom rises and falls at the command of God.  
**Daniel 1:1-2 NAU** - "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand"  
**Daniel 2:21 NAU** - "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding."

- II. God is able to reveal the four beasts because He has decreed it to come to pass.
- A. God has determined the end from the beginning  
**Isaiah 46:9-10 NAU** - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, <sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'"
1. The nations of the earth do not really have autonomous power. God's power and authority continues to reign upon the earth.
  2. This is a great source of comfort for us. While the nations and individuals battle in strife and conflict we never forget that God reigns over all.
- B. It is amazing the accuracy of this prophecy
1. These beasts seem to parallel the great statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in **Chapter 2** which symbolized the great kingdoms of this world. As we saw in **Chapter 2** most identify the four kingdoms as Babylon, Medo/Persia, Greece, and Rome.
  2. As the head in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we should identify the first beast with Nebuchadnezzar who we saw in **Chapter 4** humbled and stripped of his wings, so to speak, but later his mind returned to him and he was able to once again stand.  
 Jeremiah and Ezekiel refer to Babylon as a lion and an eagle.
  3. The second beast, a bear, represented the Medo/Persian Empire  
 It had three ribs in its mouth. Too much significance should not be given to numerology in apocalyptic literature. The point is the savagery of the beast and the lust to build the empire. Babylon was crushed in the teeth of the Persians.
  4. The third beast was a leopard that had four wings of a bird and four heads.
    - a. Again, the numerology must not be pressed. Perhaps the number four, as in the four winds of **Verse 2**, suggests universality. This third beast represents the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. It is true that there were four divisions of the Greek Empire after the death of Alexander the Great.
    - b. The leopard characterizes fierceness, which characterized Alexander. He also moved with speed as with the wings of a bird. In **Chapter 8** Alexander will be described by the additional symbol of a ram.
  5. The fourth beast was the most dreadful of all. Daniel describes the beast as "dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong" It had iron teeth to break and devour its adversaries and then trampled what remained. This beast represented Rome.
    - a. Once again, we must not be over dogmatic with regard to the numbers. The number 10 could be a symbol of completeness. Some, particularly Dispensationalists, make much of this number. Some go so far as to declare emphatically that it represents a 10 nation European confederacy of the revived Roman Empire.
    - b. The point here is of a dreadful, fierce, terrifying kingdom that is all encompassing ruling over other kingdoms.

## Conclusion:

1. Daniel is given a peek into the future. It is a terrifying vision. **Chapter 7** closes with: **Daniel 7:28 NAU** - "At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself."
2. This is a terrifying world with mighty kings who pursue wicked schemes. We are reminded of Antiochus Epiphanes, Nero, Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin, Kim Jong-Il, Sadam Hussein, and on and on.
3. Notice the power and dominion of the "Ancient of Days"  
**Daniel 7:9-10 NAU** - "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, Its wheels *were* a burning fire. <sup>10</sup> "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened."
4. We will see next week in **Verses 13-14** that He has given all power and dominion to the Son of Man.  
**Ephesians 1:20-21 NAU** - "He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."
5. There is nothing for us to fear—our God reigns. This is the central theme of this entire section of Daniel. In the context of the chaos of this world's kingdoms God is seen as sitting on His throne.  
**Daniel 7:9 NAU** - "And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat"
6. While other kingdoms vie for power, always at war, always fearful of being overrun, God sits calmly upon His throne. He is never taken by surprise. He is never caught off guard. He rules with sovereign power and dominion.
  - a. Notice there is an element of judgment in this passage.  
**Daniel 7:9-10 NAU** - "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, Its wheels *were* a burning fire. <sup>10</sup> "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him"
  - b. There is also an element of supreme triumph  
**Daniel 7:10 NAU** - "Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened."
7. And while other kingdoms rise and fall, but God is the Ancient of Days, from everlasting to everlasting.  
The whole world is in turmoil. God's people can rest in perfect peace. Our eyes are continually drawn upward—upward to the throne of God.  
**Colossians 3:1-2 NAU** - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
8. Since God has ordained all things and sits in absolute power and dominion no enemy, no hardship shall ever do more than God has ordained – and none is capable of separating us from God. We are never alone. Our lives are never left to chance.  
May God grant you to see Him as the Ancient of Days sitting upon His glorious throne.  
May He grant you to rest in perfect peace.