

WILD BEASTS ON THE PROWL

Daniel 7

People are anxious to know what the future holds.

If we announce that a prophet will be here who can accurately predict what you can expect next year, we'll pack the place!

[One wish: see stock market pages 3 mos. from now—notice obits on back!]

Desire to know future opens door for all kinds of deception and delusion

- * 1989—(after “89 Reasons”) —warned kids: expect more in ‘93–7 yr. before end of millennium.
- * In July 1994, we warned people: 2000 would be a critical year => expect predictions of Lord’s coming between now and end of millennium.
- * 1999—“Y2K isn’t going to happen” at least as popularly predicted!—Dobson’s panel
- * Prospects of war/peace treaty in Middle East makes all familiar with prophecy, perk up our ears,

People want “inside track” on what future holds.

In light of excesses, it’s hard to maintain balanced perspective.

We have plenty to keep us busy being people God wants us to be *today*, without worrying about next year!

Excesses have produced skepticism about prophecy.

Satan’s tool to create cynics concerning “those looney crackpots” who go around preaching doom & gloom

—“They’re always wrong!”

People overreact: “No one knows!” “Prophecy addicts are quacks!”

“Forget about this prophecy business!”

Don't let quacks scare you off!

God has spoken about tomorrow!

Warning: Don't say more than God says!

DO watch for signs God *has* promised.

We want to see **what light Daniel gives on our future,**

Avoiding trap of those who, like newscasters, want to tell you:

"You heard it here first!"

DAN: THE FAITHFUL TRIUMPH IN THE END!

6 HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

=> God's control, even under pagan governments 1-6

7-12: PROPHETIC PROMISE

—function *for us* much like 1-6 did for Dan.'s day

1-6--exx. from past of how God protected His people in scary times, so people would trust Him in future uncertain times

Majority of prophecies in 7-12, have *already* been fulfilled.

Looking back: how God carried out plan in 7-8 'til present, gives *us* confidence to apply prophecy in *our* times.

Dan. 7, looking back,

identification of empires is obvious.

In Dan.'s day, it would've been impossible to show leopard pointed to Greece.

Prophecies demonstrate God is in control; help people expect coming kingdom;

but don't tell who's coming, or when!

We have to handle prophecy that way. People living in time of fulfillment recognize specifics.

In meantime, we *can* identify trends

Problem with prophecy: when we don't understand details, we're scared off!

Don't let unclear details frighten you!

Major lessons lie in part you *can* understand, not in vague details.

We're going to focus on what you *can* understand. We want to look beyond curiosity-satisfying focus of many prophecy conferences, to see how they spoke to God's people in Daniel's day.

What lessons did God want them to learn?

What does He want US to learn about living in uncertain times?

With insecurity around US about OUR future, what CAN we expect with certainty?

Ch. 7-8--

God's Program for Pagan Nations

Dan. 7 = VISION OF 4 BEASTS.

= SUMMARY of future for Gentiles

=> From Babylonian Empire
to millennial kingdom.

Rather than get lost analyzing details, we need to observe BIG IDEA

More important than understanding details, we need to get the point--

We want to try to experience what Daniel went through as he saw vision with his own eyes!

7:1-14 Dan. describes Vision of 4 Beasts

7:1-8 4 GREAT BEASTS arise

7:1 Introduces vision:

During 1st yr of Belshazzar--before feast

553 B.C.--14 years before Persians overthrew Babylon.

Dan. living in Babylon--but fall is approaching. ***What will future hold?***

7:2-3 7:3 *"Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea."*

God stirs up nations;

4 great beasts emerge.

Daniel saw "4 winds of heaven stirring up the great sea."

"4 winds" => normally indicates movement from all 4 directions.

Winds "churning up" great sea—creating a storm (Mediterranean or nations).

Dan. observes international storm brewing.

International turmoil ahead!

What will future hold?

Know the feeling?

What will OUR int'l. turmoil produce?

What will terrorists do?

How will it affect our retirement?

4 frightening beasts arise out of international storm brewing

Fighting each other—to take control of the world powers

Lord sends vision of future, during Times of Gentiles.

Parallels statue Nebuchadnezzar saw (Dan. 2).

7:4 *"The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it."*

1st Beast = Lion with eagles' wings

= Babylonia FIERCE

Fierce lion becomes like a man.

Lion = image of Power–strength–the *fiercest* among all the beasts.

It had Eagles' wings = speed & efficiency

After a while, his wings were clipped

=> he was made like a man.

Is this a good change or a bad one?

Tempted to answer based on man-centered view.

What's better than for a beast to be-come manlike—a superior creature!

*If you're alone in jungle, which would you rather be?
Lion or man?*

He loses characteristics of lion & eagle.

He receives characteristics of a man

=> He's **weaker** than before.

Lion with wings: symbol of Babylonian empire

Description not new;

New part: transformation to man

No one expects *Babylon* to end up like *other human empires!*

Everyone *assumes* its greatness will last forever.
Sound familiar?

7:5 *“There before me was a 2 beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on 1 of its sides, & it had 3 ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up & eat your fill of flesh!’*

2nd Beast = Bear, lop-sided
= Medo-Persia STRENGTH

Strong, lop-sided bear devours 3 other nations.

Image conveyed by the bear is ***brute strength***

Babylonia was overthrown by Medes and Persians.

Always 2 sided, 1 stronger than other:

First, MEDIA-persia then, media-PERSIA; always uneven.

Bear devoured much meat

=> carrying 3 ribs between its teeth:

–Remains of other animals it devoured

3 major nations defeated in Persia’s rise to power:

546 = Cyrus attacked LYDIA—took Asia Minor.

539 = Cyrus conquered BABYLONIA
 —Belshazzar’s feast

525 = Cambyses II, son of Cyrus, conquered EGYPT

7:6 *“There before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. & on its back it had 4 wings like those of a bird. This beast had 4 heads, & it was given authority to rule.”*

3rd Beast = Leopard = Greece SWIFT, SPEED

Swift leopard, ruled by 4 heads.

Not as strong as first 2; leopard deserves respect because of *speed*.

If normal speed not enough, this leopard comes equipped with 4 wings!

No one could escape attack of this adversary!

Speed with which Alexander the Great took world.

4 heads => 4 generals took over after Alexander's death.

Divided empire into **4 mini-empires**:

2 fought over top of Israel for 150 yrs!

301-(198)--**Ptolemies**--Egypt/Palestine vs.
Seleucids--(198-143)--Syria/Iraq

7:7-8 *"After that, in my vision at night I looked, & there before me was a 4th beast--terrifying & frightening & very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed & devoured its victims & trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, & it had 10 horns.*

"While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; & 3 of the 1st horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being & a mouth that spoke boastfully."

4th Beast Incomparable, TERRIFYING = Rome

+ Terrifying, incomparable beast tramples other beasts

10 horns => 10 kings form alliance, create new empire.

(Cp. Rev. 17)

Little horn comes out from 10,

pulls up 3 others in rise to power

2 notable characteristics:

Human eyes = observes every-thing going on

Mouth--speaks boastfully.

Arrogant/self-centered– exaggerated idea of importance.

thinks he's as important as God. (Rev. 17)

attempts to take control of God's throne (2 Thess. 2:4)

Suddenly events on earth are interrupted.

From loudspeakers of heaven:

“Now for a word from our Sponsor!”

7:9-12 Ancient of Days sits on throne to judge empires

Not just earthly conflict;
consequences controlled
from God's throne.

God's about to interrupt => destroying scary beast
with big mouth!

7:9-12 *“As I looked, “thrones were set in place, & the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, & its wheels were all ablaze. ¹⁰A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. 1000s upon 1000 attended him; 10,000 times 10,000 stood before him. The court was seated, & the books were opened. ¹¹“Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain & its body destroyed & thrown into the blazing*

fire. ¹²(The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

God sits down to judge

Multitudes before Him, some serve; others just enjoy
His presence

Judge sits on His throne; books are opened.

Judgment is coming; God Himself is Judge

7:11 Beast is killed

Little horn continues to talk big,
until God intervenes.

Whole beast destroyed;

horn (=final manifestation),

AND system represented.

7:12 Other beasts lose authority,
but continue to exist.

Only 4th beast totally wiped out!

7:13-14 *“There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days & was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory & sovereign power; all nations & peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, & his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”*

Son of Man

–given authority over all people

–given eternal kingdom

All people serve Him

–all races and nations!

Whatever opponents attempt,
 He wins battle. Opposition is futile.
 Let heathen rage.
 God will set His King on His holy hill.
 Once 4th beast is destroyed,
 kingdom of Son of Man is established.
 God gives Him authority over all peoples of the earth.
 His authority is eternal;
 no one takes it away from Him.

INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION 7:15-27

Daniel seeks meaning of dream

15-16 *"I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. ¹⁶I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this."*

God's servant troubled by what he sees; wants to know what it means.

He knows God's in control, but fears developments—doesn't *look* good!

Would God be able to keep this under control?

Doesn't understand everything; just enough to provoke fear.

7:17-18 Interpretation

However vague details seem.

Hear this!!! –his main thought!

God's people in each generation, as they live through these troubling times, need reminding of main idea.

Stated twice:

7:17-18

“The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.”

26-27

“The court will sit, & his power will be taken away & completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power & greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, & all rulers will worship & obey him.”

What’s Daniel trying to tell us?

Troubling times ARE coming! Count on it!

But in worst of times, don’t lose sight of main idea:

remember 2 things:

1) They’re temporary

2) There’s a better future ahead. *THE BEST IS YET TO COME!*

4 kingdoms arise, but God’s people receive an eternal kingdom.

Human kingdoms come and go—however frightful they may seem, ***ALL FALL!***

Contrast to temporary kingdoms:

God’s people possess eternal kingdom!

SUMMARY--there *will be* period of control by pagan kings.

BUT, God’s in control!

Eternal kingdom conquers them all!
 No matter how frightening circumstances seem,
 God's people can trust Him! If we remain
 faithful, we participate in His victory.

4 Frightening Kingdoms
Come and Go
but God's Saints
Receive an Eternal Kingdom!

7:19-22 PROBLEM OF 4th BEAST

Interpretation satisfies Daniel;

one thing still bothers him:

4th beast is *worse!*

What does *it* represent?

–esp. concerned about **little horn**

*What's Daniel's problem? **7:21-22** “This horn was waging war against the holy people & **defeating them**, until the Ancient of Days came & pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, & the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”*

–the horn wages war against the saints and overpowers them (NIV--he was defeating them)

Dreadful beast is allowed to defeat God's people!

Sometimes it LOOKS LIKE opposition is winning! –though
 it's only temporary--it bothers Daniel.

7:23-28 EXPLANATION TO DANIEL

7:23 4th beast will be strongest kingdom that ever existed.

4th empire has world-wide authority

He devours the whole world.

He tramples everyone!

Previous 3 ruled limited sphere;
this king rules the world!

7:24a Out of this kingdom, **10 later nations emerge**—control old empire

Hordes from N. conquered Rome in 5th C., didn't form empire.

Later nations emerge out of old empire.

7:24b-25 One king will take over from 10 others, subduing 3.

Final king takes charge

– **overthrows three**

– **defies God**—*dares to speak out against God Himself!*

– **defeats God's people**

– establishes his laws in place of God's laws.

– oppresses God's people ("wears them out" as friction wears clothes or sandals).

Doesn't cut them off at once;

wears them out by oppression/constant hardships.

Protracted persecution more effective than moment of anguish--long-term, nagging affliction.

Authority of little horn will last for a time,
times and 1/2 a time.

Hebrew has 3rd category for number: sg, pl, & dual (like “pairs”).

He rules for 1 time + pr of times + $\frac{1}{2}$ time = $3\frac{1}{2}$ times (periods of a year)

Numerous parallels:

12:11 speaks of approximately same period, describing it as 1290 days ($1260 = 3\frac{1}{2}$ yr) Cp. 12:11 & 12:6 Rev. 12:14 & 12:6; $\frac{1}{2}$ week of Dan. 9:26-27.

After $3\frac{1}{2}$ yrs (= last $\frac{1}{2}$ of tribulation),...

Then, the court sits! 7:26-27

“The court will sit, & his power will be taken away & completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power & greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, & all rulers will worship & obey him.”

Dreadful beast’s power is destroyed

God’s people are given everlasting kingdom

All peoples serve & obey Him.

In spite of frightening dominance and strong words against God, he can’t hang on to his authority!

God’s in charge! He takes away king’s dominion.

God’s people given eternal kingdom

How does Daniel respond to this vision? 7:28

Daniel is alarmed – but keeps it to himself. He’s emotionally drained--

It wasn't time to call a prophecy conference!

He's not out to satisfy curious—giving them all this juicy information.

Daniel thinks about it—trusts Ancient of Days

Who controls it.

What clues does that give us about proper response when we discover God's plan?

HOW DOES THIS OVERVIEW RELATE TO MODERN HISTORY?

First 3 empires already lost their authority, as Daniel predicted:

Babylonia, Media-Persia, and Greece

—have all come and gone!.

Roman Empire has also come and gone; but hasn't yet been demolished.

10 nation confederation hasn't yet developed.

Son of Man has come;

but hasn't yet demolished pagan kingdoms

So what can we deduce from all this?

Jesus' coming to establish His kingdom is still future.

He will destroy alliances that set selves up as God & brag about how great they are

Though we can see the wild beasts roar, . . .

Though they oppose God and persecute His people, . . .

We can rest confidently because God is in control.

We've already read the last chapter.

We know how the story ends!

God wins.

God's people win with Him.

Scary kings & kingdoms lie ahead, but **God wins the battle**; we win with Him!

Ours is an eternal kingdom that none will overthrow!

Cp. 1 Pet. 1:6-7; *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Pet. 5:10-11 *"& the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

We're on the winning side!

Hang in there!

Don't throw in the towel!

Sometimes the situation will look hopeless.

Remain faithful! Don't give up!

*However bad things may look, we can trust Him, because **we're on the winning side!***

No matter how great turmoil becomes,

God's people WILL receive an everlasting kingdom => 7:27

"The sovereignty, power & greatness of all the empires under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will last forever, & all rulers will serve & obey Him."

THE FAITHFUL TRIUMPH IN THE END!
How should we then live?