

# WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DREAM MAKES

DANIEL 7:15-28 FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Yesterday was Lincoln's birthday, right? I learned something new about our 16th President this week: His law partner, friend and bodyguard Ward Hill Lamon wrote that, only a few days before his assassination, Lincoln told a small circle of friends that, in a dream, he had what can be described as a premonition of his own death. In the dream Lincoln saw the body of 'the President', on display in the East Room of the White House, after having been assassinated.<sup>1</sup> It seems, though, he hadn't been worried about his dream at all. It's reported that Lincoln assured Lamon it was some *other* fellow who had been killed.<sup>2</sup> But a few days later, Lincoln had been shot and was, in fact, put on display in the East Room.<sup>3</sup>

We've been moving through Daniel chapter 7, where our hero has had an amazing dream. It's a overview of God's prophetic plan for mankind, culminating in the overthrow of the Antichrist and the establishing of the Millennial Kingdom, with Christ reigning forevermore. But, unlike Lincoln, Daniel is *extremely* concerned and distressed by what he saw unfolding in his vision. In our text this evening, he will seek out an explanation of what these things mean.

We pick back up in verse 15 of chapter 7.

**Daniel 7:15 - <sup>15</sup>"I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me.**

I don't know if you're the type to have bad dreams. Maybe you can think back to a time where you had a nightmare and woke up in a sweat. The scare of the dream usually passes quickly. Daniel won't be so lucky. He's not even *awake* yet and he describes himself as grieved and terrified.

There's a nice piece of language that scholars will bring out here. When he says, "within my body," the words mean "in the sheath."<sup>4</sup> It's a lovely reminder that it is your *soul* and *spirit* that makes you who you are. Your body is simply the sheath that holds the sword. As Christian author and minister George MacDonald once said: "*Never tell a child, 'you have a soul. Teach him, you are a soul; you have a body.*"<sup>5</sup>

**Daniel 7:16 - <sup>16</sup>I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:**

God loves it when we turn aside to seek wisdom. It was when Moses turned aside to examine the burning bush that God spoke. It was when the disciples came asking that Jesus explained the parables. When we come asking God for answers and for wisdom, He doesn't furrow His brow and say He's too busy to meet with us. We see here, we also see with John in the Revelation, that when these guys turn aside for wisdom, the Lord has *provided* a tutor and a tour guide to walk them through what they're witnessing. And it's not just for prophetic visions. James says:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.history.com/news/did-abraham-lincoln-predict-his-own-death>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cheatsheet.com/culture/did-abraham-lincoln-dream-of-his-assassination.html/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/washington/other-government-buildings/east-room-president-lincolns-funeral/>

<sup>4</sup> John Walvoord Daniel: The Key To Prophetic Revelation

<sup>5</sup> <https://mereorthodoxy.com/you-dont-have-a-soul-cs-lewis-never-said-it/>

**James 1:5 - <sup>5</sup> If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.**

There's a lot we don't know and the Bible encourages us to be people who are humble enough and bold enough to *ask* for understanding. God doesn't want to hide away. In fact, He makes provisions for those who come seeking wisdom.

**Daniel 7:17 - <sup>17</sup> 'Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings *which* arise out of the earth.**

Wait just a second! I thought we said that the 4 beasts are 4 *kingdoms*, not just kings! Well, the answer is yes and yes. The same pattern we saw in the vision of the Great Image in chapter 2 is found here. The kings and their kingdoms are connected. With each successive empire there *is* an individual ruler who is particularly associated. Daniel said back in chapter 2: "Nebuchadnezzar, you *are* the head of gold." But in the very next verse he went on to say, "But after you shall arise another *kingdom* inferior to yours." Here in chapter 7, the beasts are identified with individual kings, but also we'll read in verse 23 "the fourth beast shall be a fourth *kingdom* on earth."

This isn't unusual. We don't think of the Soviet Union without Stalin or Stalin without the Soviet Union. Hitler and Nazi Germany. Mao and Communist China. The same thing is happening here.

**Daniel 7:18 - <sup>18</sup> But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'**

This angel that Daniel is speaking to gives very little thought to the 4 beasts. He wants to get to the *end* of the story, with the rightful King on the throne.

There are several points of interest here. First, we should note that the kingdom is *received* by the saints, it is not *built* by the saints. We talk about doing "Kingdom work" in the here and now, and that's fine, but we are not the ones who *build* the Kingdom. It is God who does the work and then *gives* it to us. And that is the more important point: You and I don't just get to *visit* it or *vacation* in it or take a tour. We *receive* this incredible gift as our own. The term there means to hold occupancy and have royal authority. God *gives* His Kingdom to us. Imagine you were going to take a vacation to Disneyland, which would be great on its own, but upon arrival there is a delegation who stops you and says, "You're an owner now. It's all yours." "But, I didn't do anything! I don't have the money to pay." "No, no, it's all taken care of. Enjoy." And yet, the King of heaven and earth has done this to an infinite degree! What a stunning thing to think about.

Unfortunately, Daniel wasn't able to marvel at this promise. He's still quite upset at what he'd seen:

**Daniel 7:19-22 - <sup>19</sup> "Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; <sup>20</sup> and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows. <sup>21</sup> "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.**

This is a rehash of what Daniel reported earlier, with a few additional details added in. Daniel is understandably bothered by the vision. He's a captive, hoping that the ancient promises to Israel would soon be realized. Instead, he's just learned that there will be, maybe *centuries* of delay before the ultimate restoration of God's people. And, in the mean time, God's people were going to be brutally persecuted. It's not a criticism of Daniel. He's receiving all of this at once, without the benefit of the other passages we have to study. It makes sense that he's so troubled.

A couple of items for us here. First of all, it's important that we see just how *different* this fourth beast and the little horn are. 3 times in these verses we're going to be told he's *different*, he's *different*, he's *different!* This matters because there are some who try to say that the fourth beast was Greece. Or the fourth beast was the historic Roman empire. Or the little horn was this guy Antiochus Epiphanes during the Maccabean period. But Daniel wants us to understand: This is *different*. Unlike any other empire, any other ruler the world has ever known.

Second, throughout this vision we see a very clear flow of events. There's a succession of empires. The fourth empire has a succession of 10 rulers followed by 1 ruler. The final ruler will do some things, *then* heaven responds, and *then* the Son of Man begins His reign and the saints are given a Kingdom forever and ever. We see again and again this step-by-step process. "*Then* this happened," "*then* this time came." There's a timeline.

The third note from this section not only speaks to God's sovereignty over all things, but also God's *justice*. In this world, it sometimes seems like might makes right. Sometimes it seems like the bad guys overpower and steal what doesn't belong to them without consequence. But, in the end, justice *will* prevail. The Ancient of Days *will* make His judgment, and righteousness will repay.

The difficult part of this equation is: "Well, what about *right now*?" I thought God's people were safe in His hands? If you're Daniel, or if you're us reading this tonight, it's not a far leap to say, "Wait a minute, what about all the Bible verses that talk about God *protecting* His people?"

**Psalm 138:7 - Though I am surrounded by troubles, you will protect me from the anger of my enemies. You reach out your hand, and the power of your right hand saves me.**

**Psalm 34:19 - The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time.**

This is a topic we talk a good amount about here at Calvary, because the reality is that God's people are *not* always saved from pain or persecution or loss. There are a lot of reasons why people suffer and aren't always, immediately rescued. If you want to get into that, I'd recommend you head to our website, type "suffering" into the search bar and see some of the studies we have there from the Psalms, from Colossians, other passages that get into this topic in depth.

For our text this evening we're reminded that a significant part of this issue is that God has an ultimate goal He is working toward. Because of His *longsuffering*, we will *live* suffering. But, in the end, every single one of God's people *will* be rescued into heaven, where all will be made right. We talked about that idea of being *given* ownership of Disneyland. In one sense, suffering is the traffic you have to endure on the way down. I don't say that to make light of suffering, but that's sort of how Paul characterized it.

One more quick note on verse 22 before we move on: The Kingdom is not delivered until *after* the Antichrist is gone from the scene. We're not in the Kingdom now.

**Daniel 7:23 - <sup>23</sup>“Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces.**

The empire on display here is, by definition, *different* from any other the world has ever known. And, we're told it will cover the whole earth. This simply cannot be said of the Ancient Roman empire or the Ancient Grecian empire. In fact, historically speaking, they're not even at the top of the list. The largest contiguous empire in history was the Mongol empire, which covered 16% of the world's landmass and governed about 25% of the world's population. History's largest empire, as far as land is concerned? The *British* empire. Which covered 22% of the earth and over 20% of the world's population.<sup>6</sup> Those were the 2 biggest. But this final beast, ruled by the Antichrist, will hold the *whole earth* in its sway. That's a size and scope nothing's ever come close to.

**Daniel 7:24 - <sup>24</sup>The ten horns *are* ten kings *Who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first *ones*, And shall subdue three kings.**

Here we not only see how the Antichrist will rise to power, we note that the 10 kings must be ruling *together* at the same time. If it were just a succession of 10 rulers, the Horn wouldn't be able to uproot 3 at once. So, this revived Roman empire will be, at some point, ruled over by 10 individuals. Notice again the use of the word 'different' when describing the Little Horn.

**Daniel 7:25 - <sup>25</sup>He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.**

First, let's address the suggestion that this Little Horn was actually a Syrian king named Antiochus Epiphanes, who back in about 170B.C. made war with the Jews, desecrated the temple, brutally persecuted God's people, until they were miraculously delivered.

We're going to learn a lot about this guy in chapter 11. But we can say with confidence that he was *not* the Little Horn. For one thing, his persecution against the Jews was *terrible*, but relatively small in scale, compared to others. 2nd Maccabees records that 80,000 Jews died in his fury. In the mean time, 1.1 million Jews dies in Auschwitz alone. You can't make a historical case that Antiochus was different than any other anti-Semitic world ruler.

More importantly, Jesus Christ said in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 that the abomination of desolation was an event that hadn't happened yet. Antiochus lived close to 2 centuries before Christ, so he's disqualified from being this Little Horn.

The Little Horn, we're told, will intend to change times and law. Meaning he will follow the example of Jeroboam back in 1 Kings 12, and try to establish counterfeit rituals and a counterfeit calendar, in relation to Israel. And we're told that the saints are given into his hand for time, times and half a time.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-10-greatest-empires-in-history-2011-9>

This is a term that's used a few times in Daniel. Over in chapter 12 it's used and then we're told it's a period of 1,290 days. It's the 3 and a half years of the Great Tribulation, beginning with the setting up of the abomination of desolation, when the Antichrist breaks his treaty with Israel, goes into the temple and demands to be worshiped, and ending at the second coming of Christ to earth. In Revelation 11 and 13 we're told it's 42 months (again, 3 1/2 years). 'Time' here means a year. So *time* (1 year) plus *times* (2 years) plus *half a time* equals 3 1/2 years.

**Daniel 7:26-27 - <sup>26</sup>'But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy *it* forever. <sup>27</sup>Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'**

So, again, this simply isn't the reality we find ourselves in. For those who hold to the idea that we're in the Kingdom now, why is it, then, that so many dominions of man *do not* serve and obey the Lord? It's because these events have not fully unfolded. They will, but they haven't yet.

In the mean time, the angel ends where he began, proclaiming the wonder of the King who shares His Kingdom.

**Daniel 7:28 - <sup>28</sup>"This *is* the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart."**

The weight of this vision actually showed on Daniel's face. He wasn't glib about what God had revealed. David Guzik points out that Daniel, obviously, believed these prophecies would be *literally* fulfilled<sup>7</sup>, and that meant a lot of profound suffering for real people. And Daniel's heart was tender to that fact. He wasn't happy about it, he was deeply concerned.

Now, as we come to this passage, we're at a much better vantage point than Daniel was. We've got the cross references he didn't have. It sort of reminds me of the first *National Treasure* movie. At the beginning the heroes only have a bit of information on a little pipe. Then they see a little more in the Declaration of Independence, which leads them to some letters written by Ben Franklin, which leads them to find these glasses which provide the special lenses necessary to see what's *really* written on the Declaration. Daniel received this vision and had very little else to go on. From where we sit we've got Ezekiel and Zechariah and the Olivet Discourse, all of Revelation. Specifically speaking, when you read Daniel 7, you should read Revelation 13 and 17, because they speak about the same things. They give additional layers and insight to this Old Testament vision. We don't have to feel disheartened about what's coming, because we can see it in full frame. In the mean time, there *is* a lot of discouragement and suffering that we face. And prophecy reveals that things aren't going to get better and better, the world is going to follow worse and worse into sin. So, knowing that, what are the lessons we can apply to ourselves from Daniel's example in this passage?

Well, first of all, we should allow the angel's message to encourage us. The King is coming! Everything wrong *will* be made right one day and we get to enjoy and experience all that the Lord will do. Heaven is coming for us. Be encouraged.

Second, be like Daniel there in verses 16 and 19. When he was troubled, when he was confused, he *asked* for understanding. We need to continually develop an honesty before God in our prayer lives

<sup>7</sup> <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/daniel-7/>

and in our minds, recognizing that we don't know everything and that we can, humbly, go before the Lord and say, "Lord, I don't know what's going on here, but I want You to give me the wisdom You want to give." I know that sometimes I'm too proud to pray a prayer like that, but I shouldn't be. Daniel wasn't, and we're all the beneficiaries of his humility and openness before the Lord.

Third, Daniel *endured* and *pressed on*, despite the intense distress. He didn't quit. This was in the first year of Belshazzar. And we know that, through and after those years, Daniel was *still* a man of prayer. *Still* a man who studied God's word. *Still* a man who was willing to serve. *Still* a man who hoped in the Lord. Despite his incomplete understanding and the discouragement that he faced. Despite these shocking developments, Daniel trusted in God and remained faithful to him. Don't quit. Even when suffering comes in like a nightmare. Remember the end of the book. Remember the inheritance that is coming. Any amount of traffic is worth enduring if they handed you the keys to Disneyland at the end of the trip.