

## **I want the truth!**

Daniel 7:15-28

July 18, 2021

*Purpose statement: The end is coming and God controls it; he will defeat human rebellion and set up his everlasting kingdom.*

**Attention Getter:** People are in search of truth. In the popular movie, *A Few Good Men*, Tom Cruise plays a young military prosecuting attorney trying to find out if the commanding officer of a Marine unit played by Jack Nicholson ordered an illegal “Code Red” that resulted in the death of a young Marine. In the dramatic courtroom scene, the young captain confronts the veteran colonel. Nicholson demands to know what Cruise wants, he responds, “I want the truth!” to which Nicholson shouts, “Truth! You can’t handle the truth!”

The desire for truth isn’t anything new. In today’s text, we see Daniel wanted the truth. I suppose that’s also what we want. The question to is “Can we handle the truth?”

**Introduction:** Daniel 7 is regarded by most scholars as the most important chapter in Daniel, if not in all the OT!<sup>1</sup> Chapter 7 is the hinge-pin of Daniel. Everything that comes before is important to understanding it; and it is important to understanding everything that comes after it. Although written in apocalyptic genre (end-time prophetic literature) there’s no reason to fear studying it.

As mentioned last time, there are two dangerous extremes with apocalyptic genre. One danger is to ignore it and pretend like it doesn’t exist. The second danger is to attempt to come up with one’s own interpretation apart from

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<sup>1</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 191)

the rest of Scripture. As we always strive to do, our text will be considered in light of other Scripture and what we know to be historically true. In the last half of chapter 7, Daniel is provided the truth concerning the vision he had.

**Read: Daniel 7:15-19a** *“Then I desired to know the truth...”*  
(Dan. 7:19a).

**Background:** Chapter 7 begins the prophetic half of Daniel. Chapters 1-6, while containing some prophecy, were basically historical in their content. The remainder of the book is prophetic. Daniel recounts four prophetic revelations in the remaining chapters. Although these revelations overlap what came before they are in chronological sequence. Chapter 7 was in the first year of Belshazzar; chapter 8 in the third year of Belshazzar; chapter 9 in the first year of Darius the Mede; and chapters 10-12 the third year of Cyrus.<sup>2</sup> Apparently the balance of the book is from Daniel’s personal journal as we see he began writing in the first person.

The dream in chapter 7 came to Daniel between chapters 4 and 5. Daniel dreamt of four unusual beasts. These four beasts arose out of a great sea, the troubled sea of humanity, **7:3**. The four beasts represent four Gentile world empires that will rule the earth from Daniel’s time until the end of the *Times of the Gentiles* spoken of by Jesus. Let’s look at the truth concerning this time.

## I. **The truth concerning the end of the *Times of the Gentiles* (7:15-18)**

To put it mildly, what Daniel saw was unsettling. He said as much, **Dan. 7:15**. Daniel had a vision of four beasts that

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<sup>2</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 193)

arose out of the turbulent sea of humanity: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and an indescribable and terrible fourth beast.

The first beast was a winged lion, **7:4a**. The lion represents the **Babylonian** Empire. The second beast was a bear, **7:5a**. The bear represents the **Medo-Persian** Empire. The third beast was an unusual leopard with four wings and four heads, **7:6**. The leopard represents the **Greek** Empire. The fourth, and final creature was indescribable and couldn't be compared to any beast Daniel was familiar with, **7:7a**. The indescribable beast represents the **Roman** Empire.

In an effort to understand, Daniel asked a being *who stood there* for the truth, **7:16a**. This being was apparently the angel Gabriel, as identified later in chapters 8 and 9. Daniel asked for the *truth*. He was in search of truth. God is truth and God tells the truth.

To better understand the context of Daniel's dream we must remember that we are dealing with prophecy that concerns what Jesus termed the "*times of the Gentiles*." The *Times of the Gentiles* is that portion of world history when the world is ruled by **Gentile** powers. It began in 605 BC when Babylon became the first of four Gentile world empires. Babylon was followed by the Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires (recall Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2).

While today there is no one ruling empire it's clear the world is under Gentile control. Ever since 605 BC the Jewish people have been mistreated, but a final military assault on Jerusalem will bring to an end "*the times of the Gentiles*," **Lk. 21:20-24**.

The angel responds and gives the interpretation to Daniel; **Dan. 7:16b**. The short answer is that these are four human

kingdoms, **7:17**. These empires will come to an end and dominion will be given to the saints of God—*forever, forever, and ever*, **7:18**.

It's important to note the saints **receive** the kingdom and will reign **eternally**. This speaks inclusively of the millennial and eternal reign.<sup>3</sup> Note that Daniel sees these four kingdoms rising one after the other without a break. The mystery of the *Church Age* Paul speaks of in Ephesians was not revealed to Daniel. We'll look more closely at the mystery in chapter 9.

That's the short answer. There will be four kingdoms and God's people will receive an everlasting kingdom. Daniel wasn't satisfied. His attention was drawn to the fourth beast, he wanted to know about this terrible beast.

## II. **The truth concerning the fourth beast (7:19-25)**

The fourth beast intrigued Daniel. He described it as a terrifying and indescribable beast. It devoured and crushed as it moved and eliminated everything in its path. This beast was different not only in appearance, but in power. Daniel wanted the truth about it, **Dan. 7:19**. He was further intrigued by the ten horns that protruded from its head and the single horn that came up, knocking off three of the ten, **7:20**.

This *other horn* might sound familiar with its eyes and a mouth that spoke great things. It is the Little Horn, described earlier as coming up among the others and having human characteristics, **7:8**. The eyes of this Little Horn indicate intelligence. Yet it was arrogant, indicated by *a mouth speaking great things* against the *Most High God*. Daniel

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<sup>3</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 211)

provides further detail saying this Little Horn warred against the saints, and was winning the war, **7:21**. That is until the *Ancient of Days* passed judgment on the horn, **7:22**.

Hence, we see three specific things Daniel wanted to know the truth about: (1) the fourth beast; (2) the ten horns; and (3) the Little Horn. These three areas of concern mark three stages of the Roman Empire.

The first stage was the **ancient** Roman Empire that conquered the Greek Empire. This is described in the next verse, **7:23**. As we discussed in a previous sermon, Rome's empire was split between an Eastern and Western empire. In fact, in AD 364 there were two capitals Rome and Constantinople [modern day Istanbul]. In 395 the empire split. Rome, in the West, dominated the world from 146 BC to AD 476. Constantinople, in the East, continued until AD 1453.

The second stage consists of the ten horns, **7:24a**. The second stage is the **ten-nation** confederation stage. This describes a yet future revived Roman Empire (*out of this kingdom*) that will have ten rulers of a ten nation confederation. These ten horns or ten kings are likely represented by the ten toes on the image Nebuchadnezzar saw. Therefore, it seems there will be an alliance of ten nations that will make up the last world empire. Never has there been a ten-nation confederation leading the Roman Empire, hence, we understand this to be a future stage.

Recall in Nebuchadnezzar's dream the image had legs of iron that represented the Roman Empire, and its feet were a mixture of iron and clay. We understand the iron to be connected in some way to the ancient Roman Empire. But it's also made up of clay that doesn't bond with iron.

Therefore, while it has military power, it's not a unified power as was ancient Rome. In fact, we find it's divided and both strong and weak.

So it seems that this revived Roman Empire will be a mix of the old Roman Empire (the iron) mixed with others that are weaker (the clay), nevertheless this weaker confederation of nations will rule with the fierceness of the original.

Finally, we come to the **Little Horn**, the third stage, **7:24b**. The Little Horn will come from among the others that are already in place, will uproot three, and will come to dominate. This Little Horn, who is a specific man, will be the last human ruler. He will set himself against God and God's people, we know him as the *man of lawlessness*<sup>4</sup> or the *Antichrist*<sup>5</sup>.

There are three specific things the Little Horn will do, he will (1) **blaspheme** God; (2) **persecute** the saints; (3) attempt to **change** the calendar and law, **7:25a**. What do these three things mean? The first two are rather evident. We understand what blaspheming is and persecution of the saints mean. Blasphemy is an act of disrespect or contempt towards God. Persecution is unwarranted violence against God's people. But what does it mean to *change the times and the law*?

Although scholars agree this means to change religious holidays and observances, there are various views of what exactly is meant. Does it mean eliminate all religious holidays to a purely secular calendar? Or does it mean to change calendars?

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Thess. 2:3

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 2:18

For over 400 years we have been reckoning time by the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory XIII. This calendar allows for 365 days in the year and adds one day every four years. The main reason for this was to keep Easter in the spring when the First Council of Nicaea decided it should be. Catholic countries quickly adopted the calendar, followed by Protestant and Eastern Orthodox countries. Greece didn't adopt the calendar until 1923. This calendar is also known as the Western or Christian calendar. How will the world leader attempt to change the calendar and laws that have been accepted worldwide for centuries? Will he attempt to go to a purely secular calendar or attempt to change over to another religious calendar?

Secondly, what *law* will be changed or what new law will be implemented? Will it be secular law forbidding all religious activity or will it impose one religion on all?

The saints will be given into the hand of the Little Horn...for a time, **7:25b**. The only way anyone has power over God's people—or any power for that matter—is if God allows it. This is what we see here. But it will be for *a time, times, and half a time*. One OT scholar reads this as *time, two times, and a half of time*.<sup>6</sup> Essentially all scholars agree this refers to 3 ½ years as supported by both the context and other Scriptures.

The Apostle John also describes this final empire in Revelation, especially in chapters 13 and 17. While things look bleak for the saints of God, the truth is judgment is coming.

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<sup>6</sup> (Baldwin, 1978, p. 162)

### III. **The truth concerning judgment (7:26-28)**

After the 3 ½ years of extensive and prolonged persecution of the saints, judgment will come to the Little Horn and his kingdom, **Dan. 7:26**. We understand the demise of the Little Horn will come at the hand of Christ, at his **Second Coming**. This is the stone described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It's the beginning of the reign of the promised Messiah who will give his kingdom to his people, **7:27**.

The saints of God will rule with his Messiah.

**Conclusion (7:28):** Daniel was given the truth and the truth was hard to handle. It disturbed him greatly, **Dan. 7:28**. The revelation of the fourth beast with its horns and especially the Little Horn disturbed Daniel. He knew God's people are in for a time of **tribulation** as no one could imagine.

Chapter 7 is the hinge-pin of Daniel. Everything that comes before is important to understanding it; and it is important to understanding everything that comes after it. Chapter 7 parallels chapter 2. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of an image of a man made of various metals. Each metal represented successive world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and a revived Roman empire. The image was destroyed by a stone cut without hands, a divine empire that would rule forever.

Chapter 7 gives a divine perspective of human history. Daniel dreamt of four beasts coming out of a troubled sea. These are the same four empires, the last of which will be judged by God, *the Ancient of Days*. In Daniel's dream we have a more detailed description of the fourth kingdom. We realize it comes in three stages, ancient Rome, a ten-nation Rome, and the rule of the Antichrist.

Paul, writing about the end-times to the Thessalonians, writes words of encouragement, **1 Thess. 5:1; 9-11—  
SALVATION!**