

(Daniel) a Survey of Five World Empires

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon explores the prophetic visions in Daniel chapter 7, highlighting God's sovereignty over the rise and fall of world empires.

Duration: 55:27

Scripture: Daniel 7:1, Daniel 7:9-10, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the interpretation of Daniel's vision in chapter 7 of the Bible. The vision describes four beasts that arise from the sea, each representing a different kingdom. The fourth beast is particularly significant as it devours the whole earth and has ten horns, symbolizing ten kings. One of these kings will rise to power and persecute the saints, intending to change laws and oppose the Most High. The preacher emphasizes that while Daniel's account provides some details, there is likely more to the prophecy than what is recorded.

Transcript

Let's get into it tonight, Daniel chapter 7. I think sometimes we are not as amazed as we should be when we consider the phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy. It's absolutely staggering to consider what's really basic, this is just theology 101, that God knows what's going to happen. But when he makes it so plain, so evident to us, it should really blow our mind.

And tonight we're going to see another amazing example of fulfilled prophecy that we should really grab a hold of and take seriously. Daniel chapter 7, let's begin here at verse 1. In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

And Daniel chapter 7 begins a new section in the book of Daniel. You can divide the entire 12 chapter book into two halves. The first six chapters are a historical story.

It tells us the account of Daniel and his companions as they come into the land of Babylon, having been taken captive from the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, and trained in the Babylonian civil service. And Daniel had a long and illustrious career in Babylon, spanning some 50 years. Nevertheless, in the second half of the book, we have a collection of Daniel's visions.

Actually, there are four separate visions described for us in chapters 7 through 12. We're going to deal with the first vision tonight, contained in chapter 7. And it happens in the first year of Belshazzar. This is after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, but before the Babylonian empire was conquered by the Medo-Persian empire.

I guess if you were to go back chronologically, the vision that Daniel had in Daniel chapter 7 happened somewhere between Daniel chapter 4 and Daniel chapter 5. And there's sort of a phrase here in verse 1 that personally drives me crazy. Do you see that at the end of verse 1? Telling the main facts. He says, then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

In other words, there's a lot more to this that Daniel's not even telling to us. He's just given us the main facts and you kind of want to say, Daniel, why didn't you tell us more? Why didn't you go into greater detail? But of course, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote down what he should write down. I guess the Holy Spirit didn't want us to have more detail, but there's certainly more to this than Daniel reports to us here.

Now, verse 2, Daniel spoke saying, I saw in my vision by night and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea and four beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. Now, when it speaks of the great sea there, it's almost certainly the Mediterranean Sea. This was the ocean as far as Daniel and his compatriots considered.

They really had very little knowledge of the Pacific Ocean. They had no knowledge, I should say, the Pacific Ocean, a very little knowledge of the Indian Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean. For them, the Mediterranean Sea was the great sea.

By the way, he's going to mention for us in this prophecy, four different world empires and each one of the empires that he mentions bordered upon the Mediterranean Sea. What he sees in his vision, the four winds of heaven, just heaven is somehow stirring up the Mediterranean Sea. And the idea behind that phrase stirring up has the idea of chaos and tumult.

There's something chaotic going on in the Mediterranean Sea. It's being stirred up. It's being whipped up by the great winds.

And then four beasts emerge from the sea. Now, when we think of beasts, you don't think of something like a Sasquatch or the abominable snowman. These are wild animals, ferocious animals as we would know them, yet with a twist, as we're going to find out in the text as we go along.

You should know that each one of these beasts or ferocious wild animals are different from the other. So let's take a look at the description here, beginning at verse four. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings.

I watched till its wings were plucked off and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man and a man's heart was given to it. And suddenly another beast, a second like a bear. It was raised up on one side and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.

And they said to it thus, arise, devour much flesh. After this, I looked and there was another like a leopard which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads and dominion was given to it.

Well, of all these beasts that Daniel mentions, the first three, we're going to leave the fourth for a little bit later because it is unique among the other four. So the first one that comes up to us is like a lion. Now, I don't know about you, but I'm always interested in old books and old artwork.

And there's a famous work by a fellow named Clarence Larkin. Clarence Larkin was a Bible teacher from around the turn of the century. And Clarence Larkin liked to make depictions of prophetic things and some of the more exotic things pictured for us in the Scriptures.

And he comes up with a series of drawings about these things. And you can kind of consider these drawings of Clarence Larkin as you take a look at each one of these. By the way, Clarence Larkin wrote a book sort of summarizing all of his teaching on prophecy.

I'm always amazed by the title of the book. It's very humbly titled *The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World*. I've always been fascinated by that title.

In any way, Clarence Larkin gives us a vision of these beasts. And the first one was like a lion, but it's different. It has eagle's wings upon its back.

And this is very interesting because yet you have in your mind is a very majestic beast. Of course, lions, we would consider the king of beasts. Eagles, you would consider the king among the birds.

And so you have a very noble, a very majestic beast upon it. But this majestic beast is humble. Did you notice that in verse four? It says, I watched till its wings were plucked off and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man.

And a man's heart was given to it. And so here's the idea here. It's that simply that this beast has its wings taken off.

It's humanized, if you will. And given a human heart. Now, a little bit later, if you just want to go down to verse 17 of this chapter, he'll tell you that these great beasts, which are four, are four kings or kingdoms which arise out of the earth.

You know, we get a little answer from the beginning. We don't have to guess what these beasts represent. And so the first kingdom represented here, very obviously, is what we would call the Babylonian Empire.

This Babylonian Empire was the empire covering the earth when Daniel here spoke in the reign of Belshazzar. It might be interesting to you to know that one of the great emblems of the Babylonian Empire was a winged lion. You can go to the British Museum today and see the winged lion that represents the Babylonian Empire.

It's done on reliefs and different sculptures and such. And so this is the first of the of the beast that comes out. Now, this also fits very well with the whole idea of what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, who was, of course, the great leader of the Babylonian Empire.

He was humbled before God. And if you will, a human heart was given to him and he was made less like a lion and more like a man in his humility and brought before God in this humble state. Now, the second empire that comes along is mentioned for us in verse five.

It's described as a bear, a bear raised up on one side. And the bear doesn't have the majestic bearing of either the lion or the eagle. A bear is slower, stronger and more crushing than a lion.

By the way, it's also said the bears have a voracious appetite for conquest. We had some friends who went up north to start a church in Homer, Alaska and a couple of years ago, they sent me a book called Alaska Bear Tales and it contains all these incredibly vivid accounts of people being attacked and mauled by Alaskan grizzly bears. The bears would grasp the person's skull within its teeth and shake it all around and, you know, just rip off the scalp and all the rest of these people would somehow desperately survive.

And bears are pretty nasty animals. There's no doubt about it. Well, there was an empire that succeeded the Babylonian Empire and it's what we know as the Medo-Persian Empire.

Now, it's interesting that it declares that the bear was raised up or higher up on one side than another. And it's very appropriate in describing the Medo-Persian Empire because the Medo-Persian Empire started out and it continued even more so as it went on as an unequal partnership. There was the Medes and there was the Persians aligned together in a unity.

Yet the Persians were always the stronger partner. And people wonder, well, what are the three ribs in their mouth? Perhaps it has to do with the three great conquests that they made in coming to power. The kingdom of Babylon and Egypt and Lydia because this Persian or Medo-Persian Empire covered a lot of territory, much more than the Babylonian Empire.

And so here you have the bear represented to us in the succeeding kingdom that comes along. Well, then there's a third beast, isn't there? Did you notice this? It's in verse six. After this, I looked and there was another like a leopard.

Now a leopard is known for its sudden unexpected attacks. It's a very quick animal. And this one is especially swift.

It has four wings and it's especially clever. It has four different heads. I think what's interesting about the first three animals as we consider them is that each one of these animals is mighty, but they dominate their prey in a different way.

I mean, the lion devours its prey. The bear crushes its prey. The leopard springs upon its prey.

Each one of them attacked differently. And the character and the ascent to power of each one of these kingdoms was different. Well, what kingdom succeeded the Medo-Persian Empire? Well, it was the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great.

You know, Alexander the Great conquered the civilized world very quickly. In a span of 12 years, he went all the way from his native Macedonia all the way over to the kingdom of India and conquered it all in 12 years. And so Alexander the Great died by the time he was before he was 30 years old and he conquered the world very quickly, just like a leopard.

And you ask, well, what's the deal with the four heads of the leopard? Well, you should know that after the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided into four parts. That is no doubt a representation of the four heads demonstrating the four generals of Alexander that his kingdom was divided unto. Now, I want you to think about this just for a moment.

Let's pause for a minute before we consider this fourth beast. When Daniel gave this prophecy, the Babylonian Empire was in power. So does it take any great predictive ability to talk about a winged lion as a beast dominating the earth as a kingdom? No, not at all.

Daniel's just reading the newspaper in his day. It's no big deal. Who cares? I mean, it's nothing.

The second empire that he indicates, this empire of the Medes and Persians being an unequal partnership and all the rest of it and conquest over three great powers represented by the three ribs in its mouth. This had not yet happened when Daniel had made this prophecy, but you might say that it could have been predicted. I mean, after all, they knew who the up and coming world powers were in Daniel's day, right? He could read the newspaper and look at the trade figures and the gross domestic output and the increase in armaments and army size of the Medes and the Persians.

And he might even figure that it would be an unequal partnership. I guess what I'm trying to get at is there's nothing remarkable that Daniel would predict the rise of the Medo-Persian empire. But how could he know that the Greek empire would come next? Now, you might say he doesn't say it's the Greek empire.

He just says that it's a leopard. Well, how could he know that this third empire that would come up would conquer the world quickly and swiftly like a leopard? And then more specifically, how could it know? How could he know that it would have four heads exactly like Alexander the Great divided his kingdom among four heads? And I think we just have to stop right here and be amazed. Be amazed at the fact that God knows the future and that God reveals or shows certain aspects of his future plan to his prophets.

Now, that was true in Daniel's day. It's true in our day as well. There are events yet to come that God has told us about in preview, as he told us everything that our curiosity would like to know about those events.

Absolutely not. But has he given us enough to gain some kind of understanding, some kind of prediction of what will happen in the future? Well, absolutely. He has.

He hasn't given it to us perhaps in specific detail, but in broad outline. Look, this shows us something very important about God. It shows us that God lives outside of our time domain and he can see the future as well as he can see the past.

Listen, let me let me describe a scenario for you. If there was an extraterrestrial being who wanted to communicate with the people on planet Earth and if this extraterrestrial being lived outside of our time domain and if he could see the events of the future as well as the events of the past, if this being was of such eternal character and presence and being that he could actually do these things, how could this being communicate with the people of planet Earth and tell them that this was a being from outside of the time domain? This was a being that was eternal in his nature and character. Well, he could do that by telling them things that would happen in the future and when those things were fulfilled, you could have confidence in the revelation of that being knowing that it came from outside of this time domain.

But that's exactly what God has done. God has given us a message from eternity and he's told us things that will happen in the future and some of those things have been fulfilled, some of those things are yet to be fulfilled, but on the basis of previously fulfilled prophecy, we can have every bit of confidence in the word of God. Just like Peter says in 2 Peter 1, he says that we have the prophetic word confirmed.

I like what it says in the Old King James. It says we have the prophetic word more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart. Do you get the point here? You can have greater confidence in God's word because you know that prophecy is fulfilled.

Now, let me comment on that briefly and just sort of give you an understanding of how this can be detailed and this is an illustration that you may have heard before. If you have, I'd be a little patient with me. Perhaps there's some among us who have been able to picture it this way, but it's like human history is a parade going down the street.

Now, have you ever been to a parade? And when you're on the parade, there you are. You're sitting there right on the street and here's the parade and here comes the marching band in blue uniforms and behind them and the horses and behind them are the people cleaning up after the horses and then behind them are a bunch of clowns and then there's a drill team coming with flags and all of that business. And here you are.

You just watch it, but right in front of you is the marching band. Then all of a sudden your cell phone rings and you answer it and you say, well, who is this? And you go, well, you know, it's me. I'm your best friend.

And it's another fellow who's just an absolute wonderful friend of yours. And he tells you, well, you'll never guess where I am. He's, well, where are you? He goes, you'll never guess.

You guess a few times. You can't guess it. And finally says, I'll tell you where I am.

I'm in the Goodyear blimp overseeing the whole parade. And you look up and you see the blimp up there. You go, no way.

My friend's not up there. Come on. He's pulling my leg.

And so you tell him, well, I don't believe you're up there. Well, how could he prove to you that he's in the blimp? He could prove to you that he's in the blimp by telling you what's behind in the parade that you can't see. And so he says, look, I can see right where you're at.

You know, you've told me the corner that you're at and that blue colored marching band is right in front of you right now. Well, let me tell you who's behind you and who's behind them and who's behind them. And when they come and they come right in front of your place on the parade and you see them perfectly, it's evidence to you that your friend had a perspective on the parade that you do not have.

And then when the clowns in their cars crash into one another, you know, right before you and all that, your friend says, well, I saw that too. And he tells you that he can see what's in front, what's behind, what's right in front of you. He proves to you that he has a perspective that you do not have.

Well, this is exactly what God has done for us in the phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy. And friends, might I say that this is something that should give you more confidence in God's word than ever. Listen, if you ever find your heart or your mind just becoming kind of dull towards the word of God.

No, it shouldn't be like that, should it? But let's face it. I mean, we're sinful people and sometimes we just don't appreciate God's word to us as we should. Sometimes we look at it and it's just kind of blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I mean, God forbid, it should never be like that. Well, you know, things like this can really help us to gain a greater excitement about God's word for us. Although I will tell you this.

The greatest thing you can do to get excited about God's word is to know the author. When you are in close relationship with the author, you're interested in the book. Absolutely.

You are. There's no doubt about it. It's interesting.

I've been meeting with the widow of this great man who's passed on, J. Edwin Orr. And so I enjoy speaking with her about her life and her experiences in the past and such. And she met or heard of J. Edwin Orr when she was a very young lady.

And, you know, she heard because he was in South Africa touring around and it was quite a quite a, you know, a great thing among the churches. People were very excited that J. Edwin Orr, this young man, had come to South Africa to preach. And somebody had bought one of the books, his first book called Can God.

And everybody was very excited about J. Edwin Orr being around. But she was a little bit tired about hearing the guy. And so the book was lying around the house, but she never read it.

And then a year or so later, J. Edwin Orr, after meeting her and she developed a little bit of relationship with her, he decided that he wanted to meet her. And so he sent a telegram all the way from Norway, saying, I'd like to come down. And I'm interested in having you come back with me to London and be married and such.

Well, she gave a reply. It wasn't yes, it wasn't no, it was, well, come on down and let's talk about it. And so he started making the trip down to South Africa.

And this is before widespread travel by airplane or anything. But, you know, as soon as the guy made a marriage proposal, basically to her, isn't it interesting how she got interested in his books? And he runs over and she starts reading the book that the guy wrote. Well, a marriage proposal by an author won't do that to you, won't it? You're suddenly interested in this book.

Well, you know, you're the espoused bride of Christ, aren't you? And when you have a love relationship with Jesus Christ, you're interested in his book. There's a great story about a man who who had just come to Christ and he was a businessman and he wanted to to just learn about the Christian life. And so what he did was he would have his secretary at the office type up the letters of Paul, except every time where it said you or the or anything like that, he would have a secretary write in his name in the place of it.

And so, you know, it would be as if it was a letter just addressed to him. And then he would have the lady, the secretary, you know, type it all up just like that and then put it in the envelope and mail it to him. And he would go in and open up his mail.

Well, here's a letter from God right here. And he'd open up. It's just addressed right to him.

Wasn't that a great thing to do to realize that it's written to me? Well, listen, anything we can do to have a greater confidence, a greater passion about the word of God, it's worth doing. And the phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy really helps us to understand this. And we can see this just from knowing that Daniel could see specifically the nature and the character of a kingdom that had not even arisen when he spoke these things and would not even rise for more than 100 years after he spoke this.

Well, now we come to verse seven, speaking about the fourth beast that Daniel saw, because he saw four beasts and we've only talked about three of them. So here we come. Verse seven.

After this, I saw in the night visions and behold, a fourth beast dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth. It was devouring, breaking in pieces and trampling the residue with its feet.

It was different from all the beasts that were before and it had 10 horns. I was considering the horns and there was another horn, a little one coming up among them before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking pompous words.

Well, you know, it's very hard to think of what this fourth beast would look like. And people have given their own speculation. I don't think you can get a good artistic depiction of it.

Any of the depictions I've seen just look kind of goofy of what this fourth beast would look like because nobody can really give you any kind of picture of it. But, you know, this fourth beast is really indescribable. But what it does is easy to grab ahold of.

It's horrific in its power and its conquest. It's different from the other beasts in that it has 10 horns and in the ancient world, horns express an animal's power and fearsomeness. And this fourth beast is so strong, it has 10 horns.

I mean, if you think of a bull, it's strong enough with two horns, right? I mean, you're scared of a bull's two horns. What if it had 10 horns? You'd be five times more afraid of it. And then something different happens with this fourth beast.

Among those 10 horns, one comes up and it's a mouth speaking pompous words and it plucks out three of the horns and it emerges as a as a prominent horn among them. And then it has boastful words and pompous words. And the horn is characterized by that.

Well, this very plainly, this fourth beast, at least in its beginning stages, speaks to us of the Roman Empire, which was the largest and the strongest and the most unified and the most enduring of all of these kingdoms. You know, the Roman Empire was absolutely amazing in its size and strength. I mean, when you think about it, it was an empire that basically stood for a thousand years.

Can you imagine that a thousand year mighty empire ruling over the civilized Earth? But something very interesting. The phenomenon that Daniel speaks about with the 10 horns rising up and then three of them being taken away and one pompous, arrogant, blasphemous horn coming up in the midst of that. To be honest, there's really nothing like that analogous in the history of Rome.

We don't have the kingdom of Rome being divided up into 10 smaller kingdoms and especially you don't have what takes place in verse nine. Take a look there with me. I watched till thrones were put in place and the ancient of days was seated.

His garment was white as snow and the hair of his head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame. Its wheels a burning fire, a fiery stream issued and came forth from him.

A thousand stood before, excuse me, a thousand ministered to him. Ten thousand times, ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated and the books were open.

Now, this is significant because in the midst of this fourth beast and apparently all of its destruction and the blasphemy and the pompous words of this little horn, the apostle, excuse me, the prophet Daniel. I'm

thinking of the apostle John because he saw so many similar things. It's absolutely amazing.

The similarity between the book of Revelation and these chapters in Daniel. But in any regard, the prophet Daniel in the midst of all this vision that he saw, all of a sudden then he sees the glory of God present and thrones and the ancient of days being seated. Now, who is the ancient of days? Well, of course, it's God.

People try to narrow it down to God the father or God the son. I would have to say on balance, I would say that it's God the father if you wanted to attribute. Any one person in the Godhead to this, as we would discuss a little bit later on, there seems to be a distinction between the ancient of days and the son of man.

But you see this brilliant manifestation of God's splendor in the fiery flame of his throne and the wheels which speak of perpetual motion and activity of God and the thousands of angels surrounding his throne. It's a scene here in verses nine and 10 of incredible majesty and glory and the court is seated and books are open. It's a time of judgment and for the world to come before and answer before God.

So what's going to happen? Well, it's time for this little horn to be called to account. Verse 11. I watched them because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking.

I watched till the beast was slain and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beast, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I was watching in the night visions and behold, one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven and he came to the ancient of days and they brought him near before him.

Then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. You see, this great passage describes the transition from human dominion on this earth to divine dominion and it happens as the son of man comes and exercises dominion over all the earth.

It's the son of man that succeeds the reign of the fourth beast. He comes in glory and majesty. Now, here's sort of a challenge for us here, isn't it? Because Daniel describes first four world empires.

The Babylonian empire, the Medo-Persian empire, the Grecian empire and then the Roman empire and then he says after the Roman empire concluding its reign the son of man will come in glory and be given an everlasting dominion over the earth. Now, we look around our world and to most people it doesn't appear that the son of man has dominion over this earth like it's described here in Daniel chapter 7. Most people would say that this just hasn't happened. There isn't this kind of dominion over the earth.

Now, what's interesting about this is we have to ask the question what happened then between the fall of the Roman empire and this establishment of the dominion of the son of man that we haven't seen yet? By the way, you should know that many people would tell you no, there is a dominion by the son of man. He does rule and reign right now and he does so through his church. This dominion that it speaks about speaks about the establishment of the church on the earth.

Well, I don't know if that is. To be honest, I feel kind of cheated. I mean, when you read verse 14 where it says then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him.

His dominions is everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom, the one which shall not be destroyed. I don't see that kind of dominion. I certainly don't see every nation and tongue and language serving Jesus Christ.

I don't see that on the earth today. Now, maybe people would say, well, it happens over time in a process. Well, maybe so.

It certainly doesn't seem so by looking here at Daniel chapter seven. Well, what we have here is a very interesting consideration that Daniel is going to detail to his beginning here in verse 15. It says, I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body and the visions of my head troubled me.

I came near to one of those who stood by, apparently an angelic being and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things. Those great beasts, which are for our four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

But the saints of the most high shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. Then I wish to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was exceedingly different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured broken pieces and trampled the residue with its feet. You get the point here.

Here he's talking about these great beasts, but there's something different about these four beasts. There's something different about this number four animal or beast which arises up. It's different than the rest of them.

And he's particularly interested in this one. And as Daniel wants to know about this, he doesn't just want to know about the beast, but about the horns. Look at it there in verse 20.

And about the ten horns which were on its head and about 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. I was watching. And again, the same horn was making war against the saints and prevailing against them until the ancient of days came and judgment was made in favor of the saints of the most high.

And the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. Now, Daniel wants to know about this fourth beast and in particular about its horns and in particular about the horn that had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. Friends, this will all be explained here for Daniel, beginning at verse 23.

So let's take a look at verse 23 through verse 27, and then we'll spend some time explaining and understanding these things. But let's let Daniel explain it to us first. 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 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. 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 time and times and half a time. But the court shall be seated and they shall take away his dominion to consume and destroy it forever. 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 dominion shall serve and obey him. Now, as we come towards the end of Daniel chapter seven, we see a greater detailed description of this fourth beast and the initial description of the fourth beast that we've seen already fits in very well with the Roman Empire that we know from ancient history. That Roman Empire really did devour the whole civilized earth, as Daniel says here in chapter seven, and it did completely dominate it for about a thousand years.

But then we have a detailed description of Daniel that what happens of this kingdom as time goes on. It speaks there of ten horns that come up. Now, again, we saw these ten horns before, but now we're specifically told that the ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom and another shall arise after them.

He shall be different from the first ones. Now, again, as we made brief mention of before, these ten kings do not have a literal fulfillment in the Roman Empire of history. As you chart out the history of the Roman Empire, you see that there was no clearly marked time when the reign or the territory of the Roman Empire was divided up into ten different kingdoms that was ruled over, nor is there any clear cut succession of ten kings that served one after another.

There's just no adequate historical explanation for these ten kings. Now, I'm not saying that you can't find commentators who try the very best they can to cram it in in one way or another. But I have to say that on balance, none of it seems to fit.

These ten kings do not have a literal fulfillment in the Roman Empire of history. If they are literal, they're still in the future. Now, there's a whole segment of prophetic understanding, the Book of Daniel and other prophetic passages of the Bible that say that all of this has been fulfilled in the past.

And how they accomplish that is they take away the literal meaning of these words and they spiritualize the prophecy, taking away its plain sense. In other words, you're not talking about ten kings anymore. You're talking about ten eras or ten this or ten that or maybe not ten of anything, but you're just spiritualizing it to a large degree.

Many people like John Calvin approached the text this way. He merely spiritualized it. He insisted that what happened in this chapter of Daniel chapter seven was completely fulfilled in history up to the time of Jesus's first coming.

And he supposes that the ten horns representing ten kings merely represents a bunch of kings. There again, spiritualizing instead of taking the ten for a literal ten. And again, back in verse ten, where it describes the books being opened, John Calvin would tell you that that's simply referring to the gospel being preached.

Well, those aren't the books that are being opened. The gospel isn't preached in heaven. And that's what's described for us in Daniel chapter seven, verse ten.

It's remarkable for us that not only are there ten horns mentioned here in Daniel chapter seven, but these ten horns are also described for us in the same sort of prophetic scenario of an end times government. The ten horns are described for us in Revelation chapter 13, in Revelation chapter 17, Daniel chapter two describes ten toes as a component of a final world empire. Again, so if we have this repetition of the

number of ten, why should we spiritualize what God has chosen to say in at least four different places that there will be ten rulers or ten aspects or ten components, ten kings to this final world government that Jesus Christ will conquer over in his triumphant return.

Now, again, we find that though these ten rulers exist, there is one among them who is particularly conspicuous. It says again, verse 24, 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.

Now, again, we made mention before of the Antichrist. And this conspicuous horn, this one who comes from the ten, yet lifts himself up above them is the emergence of this final, last days great world leader. And I mean great in terms of his magnitude, certainly not in terms of his morality.

This great world leader, this final world dictator who will hold sway over the world not only politically, not only militarily, but also economically and culturally and even spiritually, this end times leader who is popularly known today as the Antichrist. It's said of this final world leader, this conspicuous horn that shall raise itself up from the ten. Verse 25, that he shall speak pompous words against the most high.

This little horn speaks blasphemous, arrogant words. Perhaps it would go something like the fascist creed of Italy that was popularized in the 1920s and the 1930s in a fascist Italy under Mussolini. Let me read that to you and you can just see how blasphemous it sounds.

It says, I believe in Rome eternal, the mother of my fatherland. And in Italy, her first born who was born of a virgin womb and by the grace of God, who suffered under the barbarian invader, was crucified, slain and buried, who descended into the sepulcher and rose from the dead in the 19th century, who ascended to heaven in her glory in 1918 and 1922 by the march on Rome and who's seated at the right hand of mother Rome, who will come then to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the genius of Mussolini, in our holy father fascism and in the communion of its martyrs, in the conversion of the Italians and in the resurrection of the empire.

Well, clearly based on the apostles' creed, it's a political modern twisting of it to make the state and its ruler supreme and preeminent. It's speaking blasphemous and pompous and arrogant words against God in heaven. Now, that would be bad enough for this one prominent leader who emerges from this confederation or this assembling together of ten nations.

It would be bad enough for him simply to be a pompous blasphemer, but it gets even worse than that. It says in verse 25 that he shall persecute the saints of the Most High. This speaks of a cruel and systematic pressure coming from the word to wear away or to wear out.

The idea of persecution here has the idea of the kind of friction that wears down your clothes and makes a hole in your clothing and puts a hole in your shoe from constant rubbing and friction. The idea here is that this final world leader will persecute the saints. He'll harass them continually so that their life becomes a wretched existence.

It's not just the quick, cruel strike, but it's the long-sustained pressure. It calls for the kind of commitment to God that can last more than just a critical moment, but can hang in there against a sustained attack. This final world leader will not only speak blasphemy against God, he'll not only persecute the saints, but he'll seek to disrupt everything that God has established.

It says he shall intend to change times and law. Now, again, this perhaps will be an attempt to radically transform the calendar such as was done during the French Revolution far more than 200 years ago. When they attempted to institute a 10-day work week and when they declared the year 1792, the year of the revolution, as year one, it didn't succeed.

And perhaps this final world leader will not succeed. It doesn't say that he'll accomplish it. Verse 25 says, he shall intend to change times and law.

And then it says at the end of verse 25, then the saints shall be given into his hand for time and times and half a time. And there's a couple of very important things for us to point out here. First of all, this is the second or third mention we've seen in this passage of the saints being given over to this final world leader.

And there are many people who think that this is absolute evidence that the church will be in this great tribulation and that God's great catching away of the church that's dramatically described for us in the book of First Thessalonians and the book of Second Thessalonians in its own way. That will not happen until this great time of persecution and tribulation. God's outpouring of wrath on this earth has happened.

Well, you should know that that's not demanded by this text in Daniel chapter seven at all. Because saints doesn't necessarily mean the church who could already be and I believe absolutely will be raptured into heaven by this time. It simply means those who are faithful and followers of God in the absence of the church that has already been caught up into heaven.

In any regard, it says that the saints shall be given into his hand. The Antichrist or this final world leader will seem to exercise complete victory, complete dominion in his efforts to persecute and destroy the work of God on earth. In that period of crushing the saints that are left on the earth after the rapture of the church, it'll happen for a three and a half year period.

Did you notice the mention of that three and a half year period at the end of verse 25, where it says for a time and times and half a time that sort of biblical prophetic terminology for a three and a half year period times is in the plural referring to two years. Time refers to one year and half a time is half a year. So one plus two plus a half equals three and a half.

And we're back to this familiar three and a half year period, making one half of this final seven year period, the 70th week of Daniel that's been spoken about so many times in the book of Daniel, in the book of Revelation, as this final period of human history before the coming of Jesus Christ. We know an awful lot in the scriptures about this final seven year period. We don't know exactly when it'll happen, but we know about the political leadership of it.

We know about God's judgment upon it. We know about how the saints will suffer under it. But they who endure to the end shall be saved.

We know an awful lot about this final seven year period. And here is another reference to it here in verse 25. I would say that perhaps the most important thing to remember about this final seven year period is that it comes to an end.

Verse 26 says, but the court shall be seated and they shall take away his dominion to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom of the whole heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom and his dominions, excuse me, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

You see, this must describe, my friends, something that is yet future. If all that we have seen in this fourth beast is described in its entirety by the Rome of history, then we have to stand here and look at verse 27 and scratch our heads and say, I don't see the dominion of God over this earth the way that it could be. I don't see that Jesus' rule and reign on planet Earth today is exercised as it really ought to be.

You see, friends, this must describe the millennial earth, not our current age, or not even heaven precisely. The kingdom and the dominion of the earth certainly does not belong to the righteous now. And if it describes the eternal state, then what are the dominions that shall serve and obey him? No, you see, my friends, this is a description of Jesus Christ returning to the earth, overcoming the final world empire, which is a restoration of the fourth beast.

The ten-horned continuation of the fourth beast with that little conspicuous horn raising himself up from the midst of it and making himself conspicuous with his blasphemous words and his pompous speech. One other thing to notice here. In verse 27, it says very plainly that the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.

We notice that the kingdom and the dominion shall be given to the saints. It is something received, not achieved. The church does not convert the world to Jesus' kingdom and then give the kingdom to Jesus.

No, he gives it to them. The saints receive the kingdom. They don't achieve it.

We receive it as the gift of Jesus Christ unto us. Well, this is a spectacular prophecy detailing for us the span of four great world empires. And might I say, five great world empires because we started with the empire of Babylon.

Then we saw the empire of Medo-Persia. Then we saw the empire of Greece. And finally, we saw the empire of Rome, but saw how this prophecy appears to be incomplete in the sense that what was promised to happen in the days of Rome was not actually fulfilled.

Perhaps we could say that it was begun certainly, but not fulfilled. And that's why we and many other Bible students and scholars look for a restoration in some way or another of the Roman empire in the final last days. And friends, if you want any likely candidate for this, simply look to the European community as it stands today.

You know, in today's political world, we see the gap growing between the United States and the community of Europe. That gap is growing wider all the time. Europe sees itself as distinctively European and America sees itself as distinctly American.

And friends, that's been very much brought to the forefront in the latest crisis in the Middle East surrounding Israel and her terrorist neighbors. It seems as if all of Europe just about sides with the terrorists against the only democracy in the Middle East that is the nation of Israel. Well, to me, it's fascinating.

It's both tragic and compellingly interesting to see how the world is dividing. And perhaps if Europe were to rise in ascendancy into great power, which friends could happen very quickly. We see the groundwork and the developments of being set all the time with the establishment of the Eurodollar and closer and closer economic and social and cultural links.

Friends, if Europe were to quickly rise to its great potential, it could leave the United States as a second rate power. Well, some of that is speculative, but friends, we know with great certainty that there will be a revived Roman Empire. It may not go by that name, although it's interesting to see the links that the current European community has to the ancient idea of Rome.

The treaty that originally founded the current European Union was called the Treaty of Rome. The group of nations was originally called the Club of Rome. And very much as Europe is the inheritors of the Roman Empire and all of its thinking and all of its ideas and all of its groundwork of culture and institutional establishment, friends, we can expect that Europe and the European community will once again arise and out of that community will arise a conspicuous leader, a final world leader that we would know as the Antichrist.

People want to speculate if this man is alive on the earth today. Well, if you were to ask me if I was a betting man, I would say yes, I believe he is. I believe the time is that short.

He may be a popularly known political figure right now or he may not be. He may be somebody who's making his career. He may be somebody behind the scenes.

Of course, there's no way to know right now because he won't be positively revealed perhaps until the church is gone and he signs this covenant with the nation of Israel that begins the clock ticking on the final seven years of human history before Jesus Christ returns in glory. Now, if verse 27 ended with the great glory and dominion of the Savior coming back to earth, then we have some questions about verse 28, which concludes the chapter. Let's look at it together.

Daniel says, 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. Now, again, if verse 27 seemed to end on such a note of triumph for the kingdom of God, then why was Daniel troubled? Well, we might say that Daniel was greatly troubled because he considered the ferocity of the attack to come against his people from this conspicuous horn, this final world leader.

And as Daniel saw what he saw in his vision and perceived what he perceived spiritually, it changed his countenance. Daniel was so convinced that this was true and so convinced that it was the Word of God that his very facial appearance changed when he considered what would happen. Friends, we have before us tonight a great evidence.

A great evidence of the truth of God in prophecy fulfilled. But we also have before us great evidence of the plan of God in prophecy that still awaits its fulfillment. What an important evening for us to take a close look and say, am I ready for the return of Jesus Christ? I see that the stage is set politically and spiritually and economically and technologically for these things that the Bible predicts to happen.

We don't know if it will happen very quickly. We don't know if God would withhold it in His mercy so that more people would come to Him and it might be delayed in a number of months or years or whatever. But seeing the stage is set so precisely should give us a tremendous urgency to get right and to walk right with God right now.

If Daniel took this so seriously that it troubled him and the very expression of it in his face changed, then we should take it seriously too. And God willing, we will. Lord God, help us to do that.

Help us to receive your word as you would want us to. As the very word of God, as it is in truth, prophecy fulfilled. Demonstrates it.

Prophecy yet to happen. Motivates us to take your word seriously. We love you and praise you here this evening.

We say, come quickly, Lord Jesus, and make us ready for your return. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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