

## *Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

### *Bible Study Notes: Book of Daniel*

*10/5/16*

#### *Daniel Chapter 7*

##### **Daniel's Dream of Four Beasts - Verses 1-9**

<sup>1</sup> In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. <sup>2</sup> Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. <sup>3</sup> Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. <sup>4</sup> "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. <sup>5</sup> "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!' <sup>6</sup> "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. <sup>7</sup> "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup> "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully. <sup>9</sup> "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and 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, and its wheels were all ablaze.

**7:1** Chronologically, this chapter takes place before chapter 5. At this time, Belshazzar had just been given a position of authority (553 B.C.), and Daniel was probably in his late sixties. The first six chapters of Daniel present history; the last six chapters are visions relating mainly to the future.

**7:1-28** Daniel had a vision of four great beasts, each representing a world empire. This was similar to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar's dream covered the political aspects of the empires; Daniel's dream depicted their moral characteristics. These nations, which would reign over Israel, were evil and cruel; but Daniel also saw God's everlasting, indestructible kingdom arrive and conquer them all.

**7:4-8** The lion with an eagle's wings represents Babylon with its swift conquests (statues of winged lions have been recovered from Babylon's ruins). The bear that ravaged the lion is Medo-Persia. The three ribs in its mouth represent the conquests of three major enemies.

The leopard is Greece. Its wings show the swiftness of Alexander the Great's campaign as he conquered much of the civilized world in four years (334-330 B.C.). The leopard's four heads are the four divisions of the Greek Empire after Alexander's death. The fourth beast points to both Rome and the end times. Many Bible scholars believe that the horns correspond to 10 kings who will reign shortly before God sets up his everlasting kingdom. These 10 kings had still not come to power at the time of John's vision recorded in the book of Revelation (Revelation 17:12). The little horn is a future human ruler or the Antichrist (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). God is illustrating the final end of all worldly kingdoms in contrast to his eternal kingdom.

**7:7** In the book of Revelation, John also recorded a vision of a scarlet beast that had 7 heads and 10 horns (Revelation 17:3). The angel told John that the 10 horns were 10 kings (Revelation 17:12). Most likely these would be 10 rulers who will rule under the Antichrist. The number 10 may be literal, or, more likely it symbolizes the totality of the powers on earth that will serve the Antichrist and war against Christ. In John's day, Rome was the world power, but would be followed by other powers. Whoever the 10 kings are, they will give their power to the Antichrist and will make war against Christ and his followers.

**7:9** Here the prophecy shifts to the end times. This judgment scene is similar to one that was seen by the apostle John (Revelation 1:14-15). The Ancient of Days is almighty God, who assigns power to kingdoms and who will himself judge those kingdoms in the end.

#### **Verses 10-14**

<sup>10</sup> **A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.** <sup>11</sup> **"Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.** <sup>12</sup> **(The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)** <sup>13</sup> **"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.** <sup>14</sup> **He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.**

**7:10** The book of Revelation records a similar picture of God with angels surrounding his throne. John recorded that there were "thousands upon thousands" (Revelation 5:11-12). In other words, too many angels to count surround God's throne and minister to him. Created by God, angels are spiritual beings who help carry out his work on earth.

**7:10** The phrase "the books were opened" refers to judgment. Revelation refers to this final judgment where "books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" (Revelation 20:12). The book of life is the heavenly registry of those who have accepted Christ's gift of salvation (Revelation 3:5). All believers' names are written in the book of life and they need

not fear judgment. Unbelievers, however, will be judged according to their works—but their works, no matter how good, will not be able to save them.

**7:10** Daniel saw God judging millions of people as they stand before him. We all must stand before almighty God and give an account of our lives. If your life were judged by God today, what would he say about it? How would he measure it against his will for you? We should live each day with the full awareness that we must appear before God to give account for how we used our lives. How will you measure up?

**7:11-12** The slaying of the beast represents the fall of Rome. While this beast was destroyed, the other beasts were allowed to live for a period of time. The kingdoms (or their cultures) continued to be recognizable in some form; history did not end when God intervened with his judgment.

**7:13-14** This "one like a son of man" is the Messiah. Jesus used this verse to refer to himself (Matthew 26:64; Luke 21:27; John 1:51). The clouds of heaven portray the Son of Man as divine; throughout the Bible, clouds represent his majesty and awesome presence. God's glory appeared in a cloud in Exodus 16:10 and 19:9 at the giving of the law at Sinai. Revelation also records Christ coming with the clouds of heaven (Revelation 1:7).

#### **The Interpretation of the Dream - Verses 15-28**

<sup>15</sup> "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. <sup>16</sup> I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this. "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: <sup>17</sup> 'The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. <sup>18</sup> But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.' <sup>19</sup> "Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. <sup>20</sup> I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. <sup>21</sup> As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. <sup>23</sup> "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. <sup>24</sup> The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. <sup>25</sup> He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time. <sup>26</sup> "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. <sup>27</sup> Then the sovereignty, power and 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, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' <sup>28</sup> "This

is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

**7:18** The "holy people of the Most High" are the true Israel, the people ruled by the Messiah. Jesus Christ gave the kingdom to the new Israel, his church, made up of all faithful believers. His coming ushered in the kingdom of God, and all believers are its citizens (see also 7:22, 27). Although God may allow persecution to continue for a while, the destiny of his followers is to possess the kingdom and be with him forever.

**7:21-22** This "horn" that wages war against God's people is also described in Revelation as the beast who is "given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them" (Revelation 13:7). For a while, the "horn" will defeat God's people. Yet, in reality, those who die for the faith will be the ultimate overcomers, for they will receive great rewards. In the end, however, the horn will be defeated by the Ancient of Days himself.

**7:24** The 10 horns, or 10 kings, are also mentioned in Revelation 17:12. There were also 10 toes in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (2:41-42). While all do not agree concerning the identity of these 10 kings, we are reminded in Revelation 17:12-14 that these kings will make war against Christ, but, as the King of kings, he will conquer them. The other king mentioned here in verse 24 is the future Antichrist (the "man of lawlessness") of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

**7:25** The exact meaning of the phrase "a time, times and half a time" is debated. Many scholars believe that "a time" means one year; "times" means two years; and "half a time" means half a year. Thus, this would refer to three and a half years. God's people will be placed under this king's control and the persecution will continue only a relatively short time. God has promised to give his kingdom to his holy people, the saints.