

# The Four Beasts and the Son of Man

📖 Daniel 7:16-28

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📅 August 7, 2016

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If you will turn with me to Daniel 7 we'll review the dream and visions and finish up a few things about the Son of Man, then we'll look at the interpretation of the dream given by the angel and finally we'll peek ahead into future prophecies that grow out of Daniel so that we see how Daniel controls how we should interpret later prophetic revelation.

To review we said that Daniel 7, the four beasts, is parallel to Daniel 2, the four metal statue. Both teach that the times of the Gentiles will progress through four successive Gentile kingdoms followed by the kingdom of God. The four Gentile kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Daniel 2 looks at these four kingdoms from the human view point as a beautiful construction of man whereas Daniel 7 looks at them from the divine view point as four ferocious beasts. The point is that these kingdoms are not all man crops them up to be. They are all sub-human and oppressive in their rule. But they will be followed by a kingdom that is ruled by the Son of Man and He will rule with honor and integrity and that respects the image of God in man.

In 7:1, it was the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, 553BC. In the dream Daniel would see a great sea and wind from the four points of the compass stirring up the sea into a giant storm. This depicted the satanic and demonic influence that stirs up Gentile kings and kingdoms into a dangerous chaos. Then Daniel would see a winged lion-like beast rise up out of the sea, after a while its wings were plucked out and then after a while it was lifted up and made to stand on two feet like a man and a human mind was given to it. This was Nebuchadnezzar in his early reign, his period of zoanthropy and in his latter reign. Then Daniel would see a second beast, a lopsided bear-like creature rise out of the same tumultuous sea raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth. This was Medo-Persia. It was a lopsided kingdom because Persia was stronger than Media and the three ribs represent Lydia, Egypt and Babylon, the three major kingdoms they conquered. Then Daniel would see a third beast, a four-winged, four-headed leopard-like creature rise up out of the sea and it ruled. This signified Alexander the Great and his lightning fast campaigns to establish the kingdom of Greece and then it's four-fold division to his generals Cassander, Lysamichus, Ptolemy and Seleucid. Then Daniel would see a fourth beast. It was a composite of the other three beasts that rose up out of the sea, it was dreadful, terrifying and extremely strong, it was very unnatural, it had iron teeth and it crushed, devoured and trampled the prior three

beasts. That is historic Rome which ruled over 500 years. Then we have future Rome, and of course, no one could see that there would be a split in this kingdom. But now we see this prophecy opens up and there is a future Rome which will come into focus when it has ten horns or kings. While Daniel was thinking about the ten horns an eleventh horn came up among them, a little one, it pulled out three of the horns by the roots and this horn had eyes on it and a big mouth, it started making a racket. The ten horns are ten kings of the future who form a confederacy, the eleventh horn that begins small but grows large is the anti-Christ and he defeats three of the ten kings and makes himself out to be God. At that point Daniel would see a heavenly courtroom appear and the Ancient of Days presiding on his fiery throne, the books were opened and myriads and myriads of angels were attending Him. As he kept looking, this fourth beast was slain and thrown in the burning fire. Future Rome will be destroyed and the other three kingdoms that were incorporated in that kingdom were also destroyed simultaneously. As Daniel kept looking he saw One like a Son of Man coming up to the Ancient of Days and the Ancient of Days gave Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, a dominion which is everlasting and a kingdom which will not be destroyed. We ran out of time here last week so we want to take note of the title **Son of Man** in 7:13. This is a very significant title. In the NT Jesus uses this title of Himself over 80x's. Its roots are here in this kingdom context so that the significance of this title is that it relates to His kingdom rule. The name has two emphases. First, as Son of Man He is a son related to mankind, that makes Him a true human. But second, He is also *like* a Son of Man. The word *like* indicates that He is not merely man. He is more than a man. He is also God. So the Son of Man title means that He is God and man. And you see Him come up to the Father and the Father gives Him the kingdom. So the one who rules the kingdom is both God and man. He has to be man. Why? Gen 1:28, Adam man was given the original mandate to rule the created order for the glory of God. Adam failed to fulfill that mandate and all in Adam have also failed to fulfill that mandate. The created order was handed over to Satan. That is why he is consistently viewed as the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air. He is stirring up the nations to rebel against God in their dominion. So the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, came in order to fulfill that original mandate and He does so as the God-man. He does so in the kingdom of God which follows these four kingdoms. We have never seen this. A lot of theologians and denominations hold that the kingdom is now. There is no kingdom now. Hebrews 2 says "But now we do not yet see all things subjected to" Jesus. So there is no kingdom now but the kingdom will be in the future when the ten-nation confederacy forms and the anti-Christ comes on the scene and makes a big racket and Jesus Christ returns and stops the racket. He does so as the Son of Man and He reigns on the earth until dominion for the glory of God is accomplished. Verse 14, **That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.** His kingdom is an eternal kingdom and it's very important to catch that it replaces the four prior kingdoms on earth. The kingdom is an earthly kingdom that once established is everlasting. Your final destiny is not in heaven, it's in an earthly kingdom that merges into the eternal state where you dwell in a new heavens and new earth. Verse 15, **As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.** This

scared Daniel to death. He saw four wild beast-like kingdoms arise and obviously his people Israel have to live through these kingdoms. This was very **alarming**.

In verse 16, Daniel is still in the vision in his mind, and he's going to approach someone in the vision, which is one of the characteristics of a vision that distinguish it from a dream; you can participate in a vision but not in a dream. It seems that the dream woke him up! So he says, **I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this**. Who did he approach? In verse 10 there were "myriads upon myriads standing" before the Ancient of Days. We said these were angelic beings standing in the heavenly court and he approached one of them and he **began asking him the exact meaning of all this**. This is another characteristic of apocalyptic literature. It often has angelic interpreters. So we don't have to guess the meaning of the dream because the angel explains the meaning. Daniel did not know what the four unnatural beasts that arose out of the great sea being stirred up by the four winds represented. So he asked, And **he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things**. So the angel knew what it meant. Angels already know the plan of God for history because apparently God reveals it to them and they study it. So now the angel is going to communicate it to Daniel.

Verse 17, **These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth**. What are the **beasts**? They're **kings**. You see this is not hard. But in verse 23 they are four kingdoms, similar but different Hebrew word. So are they kings or kingdoms? So now it's hard. But in reality a king and his kingdom are not that different from one another. The king is the ruler; the kingdom is the sphere over which the king rules. So at times there will be a little ambiguity between a king and his kingdom but this is on purpose. Another thing the angel says is that **the four kings...will arise from the earth**. But in verse 3 they "were coming up from the sea." So which is it? Well it's both. The sea meant they arose out of Gentile chaos; the earth means their character is earthly and not heavenly. The only kingdom that is heavenly in character is the kingdom of the Son of Man, what Daniel and Matthew refer to as "the kingdom of heaven."

Now on to verse 18 and here we see the fifth king and kingdom. **But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come**. This, of course, is the Son of Man we just saw in vv 13-14. **But the saints**, who are they? They are critical to identify because they are mentioned again in vv 21, 22, 25 and 27. So let's work with the **saints**. **Saints** simply means "set apart ones." It's a general term that can refer to believers of any dispensation. There are four reasons these are Jewish saints. First, because there was no concept of Church saints until the NT epistles and you can't read that later concept back into the OT. We allow for the progress of revelation and read later revelation in light of the OT revelation, but we never read later revelation back into the OT revelation. These texts have a stable meaning in their original context. So for now the context is Israelite saints. Second, because God covenanted the kingdom to Israel in the Abrahamic Covenant. Therefore, it can only be fulfilled to Israelite saints. Third, because in verse 21, the little horn is waging war with these saints and we know from Rev 12 that he is waging war with Israelite saints. Why does he hate the Jews so

much? Because Israel has to call on Him to return. So if they are all destroyed they can't call on Him and return. Fourth, in verse 25 the little horn is said to speak out against the Most High God and to wear down the saints for a set period of time, namely a time, times and half a time. This also refers to Rev 12, the anti-Christ's abomination of desolation and his persecution of Israel for the second half of the Tribulation. The point is that the saints in view in all these verses are Israelite saints and they will possess the covenanted kingdom because God is a covenant making and covenant keeping God.<sup>1</sup> This is more evidence that premillennialism is the correct eschatological picture because Jewish saints in no way could be said to have received the kingdom at the First Coming of Christ since the Son of Man is not reigning and Jewish saints have not received a kingdom but they are still in dispersion and just in our time returning to the land in preparation for these things. And the kingdoms of this world are still raging and have to be crushed. So there can be no kingdom now, Daniel forbids it, despite the fact that NT studies are dominated by kingdom now theology.

Now Daniel in verse 19 had peculiar interest in the fourth beast, not the first, second or third. **Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, 20and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates.** This turned out to be historic and future Rome, though for Daniel the two stages of this kingdom were blended. He could not see that Rome would come in two stages. It all appeared as one picture. His question about it is mostly repeated from the earlier vision but he did add two new details. First, the fourth beast also had **claws of bronze**, whereas before he only mentioned the **teeth of iron**. This adds to the terror of the fourth beast. Second, the eleventh horn was **larger in appearance** than the other ten, whereas all we knew before was that it started off smaller than the others and grew. So now we know that it grew **larger in appearance** than all the others so that it is the largest of all the horns. We said this horn is the anti-Christ.

In verse 21 more detail is added by another vision, **I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.** Here the anti-Christ is **waging war with Jewish saints**. The anti-Christ does not wage war with Church saints because the Church is removed from the planet before he comes on the scene. Zech 12:2; 13:8, 14:2; Rev 12:13 all agree with this picture of anti-Christ waging war with the Jewish saints during the second half of the tribulation. And this continues until verse 22 **until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the Jewish saints**. So **until the judgment** looks back to vv 9-10 and is paralleled in Rev 11:15-18. At the mid-point of the tribulation God will set in motion a rescue of the Jewish people from the anti-Christ and they will take **possession of the kingdom.**<sup>2</sup>

In verse 23 the angel begins to explain the meaning of the fourth beast and the additional vision Daniel saw.

**Thus he said: “The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.** The fourth turned out to be Rome and it is the most dreadful of all four Gentile kingdoms. The angel says it **will be different from all the other kingdoms.** I think it is different in two respects. First, in that it combines all the contributions of the three prior kingdoms; fractional reserve banking, globalism, human rationalism and adds military might so that it is the most subversive and corrupt kingdom the earth has ever seen. Second, in that it will be a truly global kingdom. The angel says it **will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.** One could try to argue that the expression **the whole earth** is limited to the boundaries of historic Rome which basically were Europe and try to find the ten kings or confederations in Europe and the anti-Christ arising and defeating three European kings. But it’s more likely that it refers to a global kingdom. Future Rome will be a global empire. This definitely makes it different from all prior kingdoms and sets us up for other prophetic passages. In the future the earth will be divided into ten divisions that form a confederacy so that there is one kingdom with one world currency, one world religion and one world government.

Verse 24, **As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise;** these are the ten contemporary kings, not successive kings. This can never be linked to historic Rome because Rome never had ten contemporary kings. These ten kings all arise out of the same kingdom at the same time and that kingdom is the global future kingdom of Rome. Once this ten-division confederacy forms then **another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.** So the eleventh little horn that grew up among the ten horns and then pulled out three by the roots is also a king. And just as the fourth kingdom is different from the prior three, so the eleventh king will be different from the **previous ten and will subdue three kings.** He **will be different from the ten.** I take it that this man is different in that he has two careers or two stages to his career; stage one is his natural career and stage two is his supernatural career. Stage one is his natural rise to power during the first half of the Tribulation. The energizing force for the natural rise will be his own human abilities. Stage two is his supernatural reign of power during the second half of the Tribulation. The energizing force for the supernatural reign will be Satan. Rev 13 fills in here to explain that when Satan is kicked out of heaven at the mid-point of the Tribulation he will indwell the anti-Christ to rule through him. This gives him a supernatural career that makes him **different from the ten.** In that career he will **subdue three kings.** This is looking ahead to Rev 17, seven of the ten will give him their power but three of the ten will refuse and so the anti-Christ will conquer them. Then the remaining number of kings will be seven and anti-Christ will be an eighth.

Verse 25, and **He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time.** There’s a whole lot packed in here. Let’s look at it piece by piece. First, **He will speak out against the Most High.** The Hebrew for **against** means “at the side of” and means that he will elevate himself to

be at the side of God, that is make himself equal to God. 2 Thess 2:4 says he will take his seat in the Temple of God and display himself as being God. So this guy will be the embodiment of all Gentile arrogance against God. He utters great boasts and he does so right in the Temple of God in Jerusalem. Second, He will **wear down the saints of the Highest One**. The **saints** are Jewish saints throughout the chapter. There was no such thing as Church saints so you can't read back the Church in here. That's not how you read Scripture. You read forward not backward. The anti-Christ will tire out the Jewish saints as he continually pursues them, arrests them, imprisons them and executes them. This is elaborated in Rev 12 and 13. Third, **he will intend to make alterations in times and in law**. This is alterations of Jewish times and Jewish law. Because anti-Christ will have by this time taken his seat in the Temple of God and claimed to be God, enthroning himself in his new capital city of Jerusalem as the object of the world's worship, he must make alterations to the Jewish worship system and law so that the new religious system revolves around himself who is to be worshipped as God. And this looks ahead to elements in Matt 24, pray that your flight be not on a Sabbath, etc.... Fourth, **and they**, the Jewish saints, **will be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time**. This turns out to be the second half of the Tribulation or Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. We get there by understanding Dan 9:27 to be referring to a week of years which is seven years and seeing that the week is divided in half, with the anti-Christ exalting himself as God in the Temple at the mid-point. It's at that time that he will go after the Jews for a **time**, singular, **times**, plural and **half a time**, half a singular unit of time. So from that alone we could decipher that the Jewish saints would be persecuted by anti-Christ three and a half years. And we have confirmation in Rev 12:6 and 14 which use the same expression and refer to it as "one thousand two hundred and sixty days." Since one thousand two hundred and sixty days is three and one half years of 360 days each then we have confirmation that **time, times and half a time** refer to three and a half years. Jeremiah 30:5-6 refer to this as "the time of Jacob's trouble" and Jesus refers to it as "a great tribulation." So the anti-Christ will pursue the Jews to destruction for the last three and a half years of the Tribulation or Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

Verse 26, **But the court will sit for judgment**, that's the court of verses 9-10 with the Ancient of Days presiding, it's a heavenly court, thrones were set up, angels were attending, the books were opened. Evidently anti-Christ's works are being considered by the court and the judgment is that **his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever**. Not only will the little horn be defeated but **his dominion**, the rule that he held will be taken away **forever**; no Gentile king will ever assume rule after him. All of his offspring, his dynasty, will be destroyed so there will be no heir to his throne.

In place of him and his kingdom verse 27 tells us a whole new kingdom will come. **Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him**. The **Highest One** is the Son of Man who Daniel saw in vv 13-14 receiving the kingdom from the Ancient of Days. His kingdom **will be given to the people of the saints**. Those are the Jewish saints again and they will be given three things; first, **the sovereignty**, they had sovereignty but lost it to the four

Gentiles kingdoms but will regain it when the Son of Man comes in His kingdom; second, **the dominion**, the Jews will be restored to having **dominion**. They will be the central focus and power on earth. The kingdom has a Jewish flavor to it; third, **the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven**. The remaining kingdoms and nations in the kingdom will come up to Jerusalem and bring their glory into it. So the big picture is that a major turn of events is coming in the future and the Jews will have a kingdom that surpasses all kingdoms on earth and Israel will be the central nation on earth and there is only one theology that accepts that and it is traditional dispensational theology. Only we admit of all theologies on the planet that the future kingdom will have a strong Jewish flavor. The Church is a different story and we will have to learn that story later to see how it fits into this picture.

Daniel says the Jewish Son of Man will rule this **everlasting kingdom and all the dominions will serve and obey Him**. Of course, the Son of Man is Jesus. He will be the King of this very Jewish kingdom and He will rule this kingdom forever in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. The last phrase **and all the dominions** indicates that there will be various divisions in His kingdom and all who are in these divisions **will serve and obey Him**. One King will rule them all and He will rule them in a humane, respectful and noble way.

Verse 28, **At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself**. Daniel you can see was blown away by the **revelation**. He just saw the entire times of the Gentiles unfold in four successive Gentile kingdoms and in particular a fourth one that was dreadful and terrifying and led by a powerful king who would persecute his people Israel, followed by the victory of his people who are brought into an everlasting kingdom ruled by the Son of Man who restores sovereignty, dominion and greatness to the Jewish people. All the thoughts running through his mind were **greatly alarming, his face grew pale**, by the way, that was the same Hebrew word used of Belshazzar when he saw the writing on the wall. But Daniel says, **I kept the matter to myself** meaning he didn't tell anyone. He was in a state of shock.

The last thing we will do is show that Daniel is the key to later prophecies and we will just mention a few directly so you get a taste for how interpretation works. Turn to Dan 11:36. Here's a peak ahead into things to come in the Book of Daniel. There's much more about this figure called anti-Christ even in the Book of Daniel and we find him in 11:36, "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods;" so there he is spouting off his mouth. That fits with Dan 7 who set us up to understand that this is referring to the same figure.

To see another one turn to 2 Thess 2:3. "Let no one in any way deceive you," the Thessalonians were being told by false apostles that their view of prophecy taught by Paul was wrong. Paul says, don't let them deceive you for it," what's it? It is in verse 2, it is the day of the Lord, which is the Tribulation time, "it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, which I take to be the rapture, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes

his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." So this figure is the anti-Christ and it's the same picture as Dan 7, Dan 11, he is spouting off his mouth, exalting himself, sitting in the temple of God, displaying himself as God. So you see how Daniel is the key that sets us up to understand these later prophecies and actually in 2 Thess he is explaining why they should not be stirred up because those people were part of the Church and they would not see the anti-Christ, the rapture comes first.

Let's do some more. Turn to Matt 24. Matt 24-25 are known as the Olivet Discourse because it was given on the Mt of Olives. Matt 24:4-14 is the controversial portion. Is this happening now or is this future in the tribulation? Let me just show you from 9-14 that this is in the future tribulation, and in particular the second half known as the great tribulation and the time of Jacob's trouble. You can see that it is a time of trouble, there is persecution and hatred of the Jews. This is not general persecution and hatred because Daniel 7 says the anti-Christ will wear down the Jewish saints for a time, times and half a time which we said was three and one half years and vv 9-14 are describing those same three and one half years. In other words, you can't get this right without Daniel. V 9, "Then they will deliver you [Jews] to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name." Those who are hated by all nations are the Jews and in particular Jews who area called by My name, that is believing Jews. So this is a persecution of Jewish saints in the future great tribulation but so many go wrong here because they don't go back to the roots of this in Daniel 7. Verse 10, "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another." That's division and betrayal between the Jews. Jews falling away, Jews betraying Jews and Jews hating fellow Jews. Why? Because some Jews believe Jesus is the Messiah and others don't. Zechariah 13:8-9 fills in saying 2/3 of the Jews in the land are going to side with the anti-Christ and 1/3 with Jesus Christ. So the divisions there are 2/3 and 1/3 and the issue is the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. Verse 11, "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold." By the way, do you see that word lawlessness? What was one of the names of anti-Christ we saw in 2 Thess 2? "the man of lawlessness." So the main reason lawlessness increases during this second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is because the world is being ruled by the man of lawlessness. What kind of lawlessness is it referring to? Daniel 7 defined it as the anti-Christ making alterations to times and law, changing the Jewish times of worship, changing the Jewish law, he'll make himself out to be God in the Jewish Temple and when he does the people who worship him will start taking on his character, their love will turn cold. Verse 13, "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved." That's the 1/3 that come through according to Zechariah 13 again. Verse 14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." That's the end of the tribulation. And then what verse 15 is doing is backing up to the mid-point to tell the Jewish saints when to escape because of anti-Christ's persecutions, the main sign is when the anti-Christ commits the abomination of desolation. But if we didn't have Daniel 7 as a key do you see how hard it would be to unlock vv 9-14 as the persecution of the Jews during the last three and one half years? But with it it falls into place very nicely.



I hope you get the idea of how to do this properly. The difficulty is there are so many pieces in the prophetic puzzle and there are four-dimensions to the puzzle and to put it together into the right picture requires you to understand the shape of each piece (which is the individual interpretation of each text) and then how each piece fits with every other piece. So it's on a high order of complexity and I don't want you to think that any one person by themselves can put it all together. I can't put all this together by myself. This puzzle has been worked on for generations and sometimes they were putting it together the wrong way and other men said, hey, that's not the shape of that piece, and they made stronger arguments and the pieces got understood and put together right but there are still some of these weaker ideas around and what I am trying to do is show you what I think is the best arrangement of the pieces based on the best arguments and how they fit together in the best way with the least number of problems.

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<sup>1</sup> This does not imply that Church saints will not enter the kingdom but simply that in this context Church saints are not in view.

<sup>2</sup> An amillennialist could read the Church back into the picture by including them in the saints and the result would be a post-tribulational rapture. I just point that out because you can see the kind of trouble you get into when you start making exegetical leaps and reading the NT back into the OT. We're maintaining that the saints in this chapter are Jewish saints and the kingdom in this chapter is a Jewish kingdom. There's nothing about the Church here.