

(Opening PP Slide) I have really enjoyed the book of Daniel up to this point

I have enjoyed studying the stories many of you grew up learning about in Sunday School

- Things like the fiery furnace, the writing on the wall and the lion's den

I have also enjoyed learning more about Daniel the man of prayer and faith

But as I mentioned at the very outset of Daniel, things change after chapter 6

The first 6 chapters are more historical in nature

- They tell the story of the life of Daniel as a captive in Babylon
- They tell of God's moving through the pages of history, establishing kingdoms and tearing them down
- They tell the story of God providing for His people in miraculous ways

But now in the last 6 chapters the emphasis changes to the prophetic

- It is still set in a historical setting but now Daniel shares these visions he has been given and he puts them together in the second half of the book

I have heard several stories and sermons on the first 6 chapters of Daniel, but very few from the last 6...

Now I know why...

- This chapter is hard to understand...
- *Just look at the picture behind me that someone drew trying to explain it*

Some people skip this part of the Bible because they find it too hard to understand

- Others don't read it because they find it too frightening and unsettling

But let me tell you this morning

- This section of Scripture is in the Bible for a reason
- It is not to be skipped over or avoided
- This is God's Word for His people of all ages

As we go through this today remember what 2 Timothy 3:16 says: **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,**

That verse is speaking specifically of the OT, of which Daniel is a part

- So God wants us to know what it says
- He says it is profitable for us to study

And if it makes you feel any better, Daniel himself was troubled by what he saw in these visions

- Right here in chapter 7 in verse 15 he says: **As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me.**
- And verse 28 says: **Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.**

But even though this chapter is difficult and alarming

- It also tells us how we should approach apocalyptic literature and prophecy in the first place
- Verse 16 tells us the approach Daniel took: **I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.**

Daniel didn't know what it all meant so he asked one of the angels standing beside him to help him understand it

- Now I don't know too many angels on a first-name basis...
- But I can ask the Lord for help and ask His Spirit to guide me in truth
- I can meditate on His Word
- I can use solid principals of Biblical interpretation
- So that's what we're going to do

Daniel 7-12 will be difficult, the preaching may even be different

- But since it is God's Word we are going to study it and apply it
- *Amen?*

OK, this chapter and vision are broken down into four sections so all I know to do is study it in the way it is given

In this first section Daniel begins by telling us when all this took place

- Verse 1 says: **In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.**

Now notice that we have gone back in time to when the Babylonian empire was in power and Belshazzar was king

- He is the one who took the name of the Lord in vain and who saw the writing on the wall
- He is the one who died the night his kingdom was taken from him and given to Darius the Mede

At the time those events were taking place Daniel was also receiving prophetic visions from the Lord

- It's just that the way he records the book for us he divides it in two halves:
- First half historical and second half prophetic

Let's read now what the actual content of his vision was

- **This is the first of the four sections of this vision**
- **Verses 2-8**

Daniel sees a vision of the four winds of heaven stirring up in the Great Sea

- They represent the winds of change and the fact that trouble is brewing from all directions
- Four kingdoms will soon be rising in prominence from among the nations

Now right off the bat you need to know why God is recording these visions for us

- These visions are God's way of reassuring Daniel that God is in control of the world
- Even when the sea rages and the waves rise
- Even when one kingdom falls and another takes control, God is in control

That's why God gives us books like Daniel and Revelation in the first place

- It's not so much for us to have a detailed diagram of the future as much as the peace to know that He is in control

Psalm 89:9 gives us a word we need to remember in times of unrest and turmoil

- It says: **You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.**

God's in control of the literal waves and literal seas

- And He is in control of the figurative ones as well

He was in control of Babylon, Greece and Rome back then

- And He's in control of America, North Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan today

That's why Jesus walked on water and stilled the storms during His ministry

- To show us that He rules the physical seas and makes the waves still
- And he rules the hearts of man and gives us peace

Don't get so lost in fantastic visions of the apocalypse that you miss out on what this is all about

- It's to build our faith and remind us that God is in control

So in verse 3 God begins telling Daniel about these four great beasts coming up from the sea

- He says: **And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.**

Now hold that verse in your mind, and as you do I'm going to give you another verse as well

I told you earlier that there were four sections in Daniel 7

- The first section that we are looking at now is the vision but the fourth section is the interpretation of the vision

It's just like one of those textbooks that has the answers in the back

- Daniel chapter 7 gives us an interpretation of the vision
- So as we read it let's read the interpretation as well

I'll put the picture back up also that I showed you earlier so you can get an image in your mind of what this may have looked like for Daniel

Verse 17 tells us what these four great beasts represent: **These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.**

That's simple enough isn't it?

Now most interpreters see these four beasts as representing the four kingdoms we studied in chapter two when we learned about the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream

Do you remember when we studied his dream of a statue with four sections?

- This vision seems very similar to that dream
- That explains the picture you're looking at

Now if you go with this understanding

- The lion represents Babylon, and the wings being "plucked off" represent the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar.
- The bear represents Medo-Persia, with the stronger Persian component being the side that was "raised up"
- The leopard represents Alexander the Great and his speedy conquest of the civilized world, and the "four heads" represent the division of his kingdom into four parts after his death.
- The final, terrifying beast then represents the Roman Empire

But there's something different about this fourth beast isn't there?

It's not described as an animal like the others

- It's much more powerful and it is represented by these different horns

It has to mean more than just the Roman Empire of Jesus' day

- It seems to represent all earthly kingdoms that set themselves up against God

Daniel is told as much in the fourth section when he receives the interpretation of the vision

- In verses 19-20 it basically repeats verses 7-8 and describes again what this fourth beast looks like

But then this is what it says in verses 21-22

- **As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, ²²until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.**

Now most say this is talking about the antichrist

- A world-wide ruler in the last days who will attack the people of God leading up to the time of the Return of Christ
- Verse 21 says he will oppose the saints of God
- Verse 25 says he will blaspheme and arrogantly oppose God
- It says he will oppose the Law of God

But the way Scripture is written makes me think God is warning us here not only of **the** antichrist

- But the **spirit** of antichrist coming in the last days

The reason I say that is because the Bible says there is a spirit of antichrist that is already in the world working against the things of God

1 John 2:18 says: **Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.**

1 John 4:3 says: **and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.**

2 John 1:7 says: **For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.**

Are you still with me?

God is warning us that there will be a final antichrist who this passage is alluding to

- But He's also warning us of the spirit of antichrist that is already in the world

God is telling Daniel and us all of this so that when we see evil men rising to power and prominence we will not lose heart

- We will remember the words of these prophecies and take to heart the truth that God is in control

In fact, that's why immediately after telling Daniel about the rise of antichrist, the text takes a very interesting turn

- We go from learning about these four rising kingdoms to being transported into heaven to witness God speaking and judging the nations
- We see God putting an end to all the earthly kingdoms and announcing His judgment on all those who have rejected Him

The reason I believe the text makes such an abrupt shift in direction is because God is reminding Daniel that even though these nations will rise in power

- God will one day judge the nations and the antichrist
- God alone will reign forever

So this leads us now to the second of the four sections of the vision

- **Let's read now verses 9-12**

What we are blessed to read here is about God Himself, the Ancient of Days, seated in the throne room of heaven

We see that His clothing is white and His head like pure wool, representing purity and perfection

- Fire pours out from before Him
- His chariot-throne reminds me of something similar from Ezekiel's vision

But so much of this second section reminds me of the Book of Revelation

- In chapter 1 of Revelation we read this about Jesus
- **The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.**

It's just an awesome thing to even consider

- The majesty of God
- The captivating power and presence of God

Isaiah saw a similar vision to this in Isaiah 6:5 when He was allowed to see into heaven and this is how he responded

- **"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"**

Isaiah was arrested by the holiness and grandeur of God

- When he saw God he was that much more aware of his own sinfulness and his desire was to fall down before Him and worship

When we are in heaven and are in the presence of God, nothing else will matter...

I hear people talking about heaven sometimes and what I hear them talking about is family, friends and fun

- Frolicking through heaven like a child running through a field on a spring day
- Spending the day pursuing all your favorite hobbies
- Seeing all your old friends and family...

I don't want to rain on anyone's parade...

- But heaven will be about the Lord
- Being in His presence
- Worshipping Him

I think we're going to be so overwhelmed by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit that we're not going to think as much about family, friends and fun

I think God is telling us all this so we will make Him the focus of our lives down here

- Because He sure will be the focus of our lives up there

You see, the point of this passage in Daniel is that God is Almighty, He is Holy!

- He will put an end to all those nations and kingdoms that reject Him
- He will put an end to the antichrist and all those who follow him

Heaven will be filled with people who have overcome the antichrist

- People who have overcome the world and who worship Christ
- People who served Him here on earth

Philippians 2:9-11 comes to mind here...

- **Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Are you still with me?

Well verse 10 says the multitude of believers in heaven is innumerable and they are serving God and standing before Him

What we see are millions of people who have repented of their sins and trusted in God

Look again with me here at the text

- **A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.**

They are around the throne of God in heaven because they know Jesus

- They have been forgiven of their sins and have eternal life

But Daniel gives us one more detail of what will take place in heaven

- This heavenly scene that Daniel describes is similar to a courtroom
- It says books were opened containing the deeds of everyone who has ever lived on earth

If the vision itself hasn't frightened you yet maybe that thought will

Those who do not know Christ will be judged based on their deeds

- Every word of gossip
- Every sin that was committed when you thought you were alone
- God is recording all these things and will one day present them back to us

Again, it sounds so much like Revelation 20:12: **And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.**

Friend, I hope you have an advocate with the Father

- I hope you have One who will stand in your defense
- I hope you know Jesus, the One who died for sins at the cross and rose again
- The One who lives, the Bible says, to intercede on behalf of the saints

But verse 11 goes on to talk about one person who will not know Jesus

- He will not have an advocate on this Judgment Day
- He is the person from the vision that we are calling the antichrist

Verse 11 says: **I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.**

Verse 26 gives us the interpretation and offers more insight saying: **But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.**

God is telling us this so we will know that no earthly kingdom will stand forever

- A day is coming when God will right every wrong and give to everyone their due

God is telling us all this so we will know that only one Kingdom will stand forever

- The Kingdom of His Son

And it's at this point that the vision takes yet another turn...

We've seen now the first and fourth sections that told us about the rise of these nations in opposition to God

- We've seen in the second section a vision of heaven and the final judgment

Now, verses 13-14 tell us of the Coming of Jesus

- They tell us how God's Son and God's Kingdom will crush this satanic rebellion on the earth

Let's read now the third section in the vision which we will close with today

- **Verses 13-14**

When I read this passage I try to remember that God was giving Daniel a vision of the future 600 years before the First Coming of the Messiah

- He was telling Daniel about the rise of all these nations opposing God
- He was telling Daniel about a Final Judgment when all these nations would be judged

So what I see Him talking about here is the Messiah

- Announcing that through the coming of the Messiah God would judge the world and bring salvation

What Daniel 7 is teaching us is that as these earthly kingdoms are ascending

- There will be a Heavenly Kingdom and a Heavenly Savior ***de-scending***

This beast will rise up out of the sea

- Many people will follow him
- But the Son of Man will descend from heaven to do battle with Him
- Many people will also follow Him and He will ultimately prevail
- Because of their faith in Jesus they will inherit eternal life and even be able to judge the nations

Are you with me?

Let me put all this together for you as we begin wrapping up...

Think of it like this...

- All mankind has followed the beast and fallen into sin
- That's what happened when Adam and Eve fell into sin
- We have all followed them and sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

So what it will take for our salvation is one who can come from heaven

- One who can wrap Himself in flesh and become like us to save us

So Jesus came to earth and was born to a virgin so he did not have the problem of original sin as we do

- He then lived a perfect life and fulfilled the Law of God
- He was able to die for our sins at the cross to be our Savior
- He was able to rise again from the dead to be our Lord

1 Corinthians 15 explains it like this: **For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.**

So what we have here in Daniel chapter 7

- Wrapped up in all these visions of future kingdoms and future judgment
- 600 years before it was to happen
- Is a promise by God that He would send His Son, our Savior into the world

I think it's fair to say that in this vision in chapter 7 it pictures not only His First Coming but His Second Coming as well

- It even looks ahead to the time when Christ will rule the nations during the time of the Millennial Kingdom

In this incredible vision that we are still able to read today

- Daniel has seen the vast sweep of history, beginning with the Babylonian Kingdom in 600 BC
- Explaining the coming of Jesus into the world ushering in the Kingdom of God
- And closing with the return of Christ, the Final Judgment and the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

Now see, the reason God gave this vision first of all was to comfort and strengthen the Jewish exiles as they were living in captivity in Babylon

- But then secondly it was to encourage us as we see the rise of wickedness on the earth and as we wait for the return of Christ

My only question for you today as we close is what you will do with this knowledge?

God has given you a clear vision of the future

- *What will you do with it?*

People often joke that they would like a glimpse into the future

- *How will my life end?*
- *Who will I marry?*
- *Who will win the big game so I can bet on it?*
- *What stock will do the best so I can get rich?*

But God has prospered and blessed you with the greatest of all visions by giving you a vision of His Son

My prayer for you today is that you don't miss Him

- That you see Him clearly
 - That you come to Him and are saved
 - That you turn from sin and turn to Christ
 - That you love Him and serve Him and worship Him
- Because that's why He's revealed this to us today...

Let's pray...