

Main Idea: It makes a difference when you know what’s coming. That’s a lesson Daniel learned in Daniel 7 when the Lord gave him a dream. We’ll be looking at his response to the dream in the second half of Daniel 7, as we consider three things.

- I. Consider the request (15-16).
 - A. He was troubled.
 - B. He asked for help.
 - II. Consider the revelation (17-27).
 - A. We see the big picture of the outcome (17-18).
 1. The kingdoms of men will rule for a time.
 2. The saints of the Most High will rule forever.
 - B. We see the details of the outcome (19-27).
 1. Several characters will participate in future events (19-22).
 - The Fourth Beast
 - The Ten Horns
 - The Other Horn
 - The Saints
 - The Ancient of Days
 2. There will be a ten-king confederation (23-24).
 3. A powerful ruler will arise (24-25).
 - He will slander God.
 - He will oppose the saints.
 4. God's kingdom will prevail (26-27).
 - The saints will rule.
 - All rulers will worship the Most High.
 - III. Consider the reaction (28).
- A Question to Ponder: Am I ready for what’s coming?

Intro Series this Evening: Appreciating the Cross—Five Key Words (& Communion)
Scripture Reading: Daniel 7:1-14

Do you remember the first time you saw the movie *The Wizard of Oz*? I was a young child. It’s the story, of course, of a young girl, Dorothy, who had a dream in which she found herself living in the magical land of Oz. Dorothy's consuming desire was to return to her home in Kansas, and the story line involves her adventure in that pursuit.

As a child I found myself anxiously wondering, "Will she ever make it?" And my heart raced as she met foes like the wicked witch of the west and her flying band of monkeys who tried to eliminate her. And then, my heart skipped a beat when she finally made it to the mighty Wizard of Oz, only to discover he was a powerless quack who made big claims but lacked the means to back them up. Finally, when he promised to use his hot-air balloon to escort Dorothy home to Kansas, I breathed a sigh of relief, only to find myself anxious when the rope broke and Dorothy was left behind, stranded again.

That’s how it was when I first saw the movie as a child. Twenty years ago, however, Sherry, the girls, and I watched the anniversary edition of the same movie on television, and it was quite different. Oh, the characters were the same, the plot was the same, the dream was the same, the foes were the same, but I was different. My heart didn't race this time. My palms didn't sweat when the wicked witch screeched at Dorothy in the crystal ball, and I didn't lose my breath when the monkeys carried her away. And instead of

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For an earlier development of this passage, see the Daniel series at WBC in 1996.

sitting on the edge of my seat when the hot-air balloon broke loose without Dorothy, this time I reclined in comfort.

What made the difference? Sure, thirty years didn't hurt. But the real difference was that this time, I already knew the outcome. I knew it was just a dream and that in the end, Dorothy would make it home safe and sound. Oh, there would be obstacles along the way, but I knew she'd make it.

You know, it makes a huge difference when you know the outcome. There's no need to be anxious when you know the outcome. There's freedom from fear when you know the outcome.

My friends, when it comes to drama of world events, we already know the outcome. Just think of it. As we face setbacks and disappointments and obstacles in life, we already know the outcome. For the child of God, facing the future is sort of like watching a re-run on television. We know what's going to happen in the end. We know where we are going, and what's going to happen when we get there.

Of course, if you don't know, then you live life on the edge of your seat. That's what this series in the book of Daniel is all about. The Lord wants us to know what's coming, and then to live in light of it. Trusting Him, preparing to meet Him, and helping others get ready to do the same.

So yes, it makes a difference when you know what's coming. That's a lesson Daniel learned in chapter 7 when the Lord gave him a dream. We'll be looking at his response to the dream as we come to the second half of Daniel 7.

In our last study of Daniel, we investigated the dream itself in the first half of the chapter. I mentioned then that the first six chapters of the book are narrative and focus on the past, whereas the final six chapters are prophetic and focus on the future.

We've just moved into the prophetic section. In Daniel 7-12, God gave the prophet Daniel a series of visions towards the end of his life. They had to do with, from Daniel's perspective and in some cases even from ours, *what's coming*.

Daniel's first vision came during Belshazzar's first year as king of Babylon. Daniel, now well into his eighties, had a reputation as a man of God who could interpret visions, as he did for King Nebuchadnezzar in chapters 2 & 4. It's ironic that in Daniel 7, the prophet himself had a vision, but he wasn't able to interpret it.

Let's consider three movements in today's text.

I. Consider the request (15-16).

You'll recall the vision itself consisted of four bizarre beasts that successively came up out of the sea, the fourth of which had ten horns and was dreadful and terrible. In verse 8 a little horn entered the scene and caused a raucus until the Ancient of Days sent one like the Son of man who came and established an eternal kingdom.

That in essence is the dream. What kind of effect did the vision have on Daniel? He tells us in verse 15, "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me."² Notice a twofold response.

A. He was troubled. Why? Granted the vision was strange, but what about it promoted Daniel to be grieved and disturbed? Was it because he saw something he didn't

² AV, "I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me."

understand? Or was it because he sensed the gravity of what he saw yet did not fully comprehend?

I remind you that Daniel was a godly Jew. As such, the delight of his heart was to see God's kingdom come to Israel, with the Messiah ruling the world from Jerusalem. That's what the prophets before him had predicted.

So Daniel longed to see peace and prosperity for his Jewish people, a people at that time in exile in Babylon. But now in the vision, he began to realize there was coming a long, dark future for the Jewish people, and that disturbed him.

It was what Jesus would later call "the time of the Gentiles." The glory days under David and Solomon and Hezekiah were long gone for Israel. Yes, a restoration to the land was coming for the Jews, but even then the land would be under Gentile rule. Four pagan world powers would dominate the world, and Daniel realized that the Messiah's kingdom was a long way off.

No wonder he was troubled.³ How would you respond if you received a message that indicated that, as bad as things are in the world now, there were still three more God-defying world empires to come?

Here's what Daniel did.

B. He asked for help. Daniel explains in verse 16, "I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things."

Daniel was confused, so he did what many of us find difficult to do. He asked for help. Anybody have any unfinished projects at the house, and the reason they're unfinished is because you've been resisting the need to admit you need help?

"Ah, I can figure this out by myself. I just need more time."

Daniel admitted he didn't have all the answers. He approached someone standing there, and asked for help in interpreting what he had just seen.

Let's not be afraid to ask honest, sincere questions, of God and of others. May we not be so proud that we get to the place where we refuse to be taught. James 1:5 states, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."

With his troubled heart, Daniel turned to one standing nearby. Who was this potential counselor? Was it someone in the vision or an angel in the room with Daniel? Perhaps it was one of the millions Daniel saw at the throne scene in verse 10.

We're not told. Whoever it was, Daniel asked for help, and an interpretation was given. Now we move from the request in verses 15-16 to the revelation in verses 17-27.

II. Consider the revelation (17-27).

The interpretation of the vision was given to Daniel in two phases. First, we see the panoramic view in verses 17-18, sort of the shortened version of the outcome. This is followed in verses 19-27 by the longer, more detailed version.

A. We see the big picture of the outcome (17-18). Notice verses 17-18, "The four great beasts are four kingdoms [KJV "four kings"--the terms are interchangeable for there is no kingdom without a king] that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever."

So here's the big picture of future events. We can sum it up in two statements.

³ See Strauss, 219.

1. *The kingdoms of men will rule for a time.* Four kingdoms, in fact. These will arise and control the world for a period of time.

And they did. In the sixth century BC the Babylonians ruled the world under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. The Medo-Persians came next under Darius in the latter part of the sixth and fifth centuries. Then came Greece under Alexander the Great and his successive generals in the fourth, third, and second centuries. And finally, there was the Roman empire under Caesar, Nero, and the rest beginning in the first century BC.

There's something here we must see, for we tend to lose heart and hope when we ponder the atrocities in the world. Why doesn't God do something?

The truth is, He is and He will. God is allowing the world to reap the consequences of the fateful decision Adam made in the beginning when he rebelled against God in the garden. And so the descendants of Adam are choosing to do, generation after generation, going their own way, under the control of successive powerful world rulers.

But one day God will say, "Enough is enough." For now He is allowing the kingdoms of men to rule. For a time. But a drastic change is coming.

2. *The saints of the Most High will rule forever.* Listen again to verse 18, in the ESV, "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever."

Who are *the saints* mentioned here? The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* suggests these are believing Jews. J. E. Smith says they are the true people of God whether Jew or Gentile.⁴ Walvoord suggests that the term seems to refer to the saved of all ages, as well as the holy angels (which may be described as "the holy ones").

The saints are mentioned again in verse 22 ("...until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom"). We see the saints again in verse 25 and learn they will be "handed over to him for a time, times and half a time." And again in verse 27, which says, "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High."

There's the identity of the saints. They are *the people of the Most High*, the ones who will be oppressed by the little horn for a three and a half year period (25), who will then receive and reign in the everlasting kingdom (28).

So think about this. Who will one day receive and possess the kingdom that will last forever and ever? If you answered, "Jesus Christ will," you are certainly right, as 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 explains. Yet it's interesting that we find another perspective here. According to verse 18, who will receive and possess the kingdom?

The saints will. The saints of the Most High (another title for God) will receive and possess the kingdom forever.

Now we know that Christ will rule His kingdom, but why here does God highlight the position of the saints? What was happening in Daniel's day? The same thing that's happening in our day. The saints are marginalized and taking it on the chin. The people of God are living in an ungodly, hostile world. The hymnwriter asked the question, "Is this vile world a friend to grace?" The answer is "No."

Yet God gave Daniel a vision that says to us, "Your day is coming!"

⁴ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Da 7:15–18). Joplin, MO: College Press.

Followers of Jesus, what a great day to be alive! We are seeing history move before our very eyes towards the climax of God's sovereign plan for the world. Daniel saw the prophetic vision. We are seeing the historic fulfillment.

The formation of the secular state of Israel in 1948, the Israeli/Arab tensions, the increasing hostility towards Christians, the search for a world leader to save the day. Are these merely coincidence? I believe we're seeing the fulfillment of the prophetic plan God revealed through Daniel 2,500 years ago.

The big picture of the outcome is this. The kingdoms of men will rule for awhile, but the saints of God will enjoy the reign of God forever!

You say, "I want to know more about this. I've got questions." You're in good company, for so did Daniel, in verse 19, "Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast..." And verse 20, "I also wanted to know about the ten horns...and about the other horn that came up."

I'm encouraged by Daniel's questions. What he saw confused him, as it does us. Thankfully, in verses 19-27 God's messenger expanded the interpretation for Daniel, and for us.

B. We see the details of the outcome (19-27). The messenger clarified four details.

1. Several characters will participate in future events (19-22). You'll see them mentioned as Daniel rehearses the vision he saw in verses 19-20.

"Then I wanted to know the true 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.²⁰ 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."

Stop there and notice these unusual characters that captured Daniel's attention.

- The Fourth Beast—which was different from the others
- The Ten Horns—on the head of the fourth beast
- The Other Horn—before which three of the other horns fell. Interestingly, this character is no longer referred to as the "little" horn as Daniel described him in verse 8, for he has become an imposing figure.

Then in verses 21-22, Daniel gives us additional information from the vision concerning the activity of the other horn. "As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom."

So two more characters enter the scene. Daniel refers to:

- The Saints—against whom the other horn waged war
- The Ancient of Days—who pronounced judgment in the saints' favor

Here then is the outcome Daniel saw. He said a fourth kingdom, represented by the fourth dreadful beast would arise and dominate the world. It would consist of ten horns, representing ten kings.

But suddenly, another horn would enter the scene, and not only defeat the three horns, but exhibit oppression against the saints of God. In the end, the Ancient of Days would come to the rescue of the saints and establish His kingdom.

So those are some of the important characters that will play an important part in the unfolding drama of God's plan for the world. What does all this mean? According to the messenger...

2. *There will be a ten-king confederation (23-24).* Verses 23-24, "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.²⁴ 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.'

So, Daniel learns, there's coming a fourth kingdom, out of which will arise a ten-king confederation, followed by another king who will enter the scene and put three kings in submission.

Who are these ten rulers? The text indicates their reign is simultaneous because three of them will be disrupted by the little horn. There is endless speculation as to the identity of these ten kings. Critical scholars have tried to find these ten kings in the history of the Grecian empire or to find them in the later Roman empire. But the apparent reality is, according to the Bible, you won't find these ten kings in the past, but in the future.

This ten-king confederation will be in place, Daniel is told, at a time in the future when the Ancient of Days gives the signal for the Son of man to come and rescue His saints. And not just rescue His saints, but according to verse 22, give possession of His kingdom to His saints.

The apostle John saw a similar vision which he records in Revelation 17.

Verse 3 "Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns."

Verses 12-14 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.¹⁴ They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

So these ten kings are in the future, not only to Daniel, but also to John in the first century. And I believe to us too.

Personally, I'm inclined to agree with such conservative Bible teachers as John MacArthur, John Walvoord, Gleason Archer, and others, who teach that the ten-king confederation refers to a revised Roman Empire. There will be a ten-ruler, ten-nation alliance (perhaps similar to the European Common Market) that will dominate the world scene.⁵

Next Daniel gives us a third detail.

3. *A powerful ruler will arise (24-25).* We read about him at end of verse 24, "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."

Back in 1969 Lehman Strauss wrote a commentary on Daniel and made an interesting observation, "At the turn of the twentieth century this prediction of a world ruler seemed

⁵ I read another option this week that suggests, based on Psalm 83, these are Middle Eastern kingdoms surrounding Israel. "These ten nations are generally of an **Ishmaelitic stock** of peoples. They are also mostly adhering to the **Islamic faith** and finally, they are united by the **Arabic language**." <http://www.hope-of-israel.org/10kingsofrevelation.html>

to many to be fantastically unbelievable. However, modern communication systems, jet travel, and destructive weapons of warfare have erased all doubts as to its possible fulfillment. Our modern world has shrunk."⁶

And it has continued to shrink in the four decades since. Today we think in terms of global. Global warming. Global history. Global economics. Global politics. Global communication. And it's not much of a stretch for us to think about a global ruler.

Who is this powerful ruler that shall arise? Daniel reveals he is someone who will come to the scene and subdue three of the ten rulers in this coming confederation.

Paul apparently has him in mind when he refers to a person he calls the "lawless one" in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9, the one known as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," the man the Bible calls the "Anti-Christ."

Listen to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9: "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers,² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and **the man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.⁵ Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?⁶ And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time.⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.⁸ And then **the lawless one** will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.⁹ The coming of **the lawless one** will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders."

Daniel learns that this final world dictator will subject three of the ten kings and then apparently subordinate the other seven states to his rule. It resembles what Hitler did when he subjected Norway, Holland, Hungary, and the Balkan countries to a leader of their Nazi party. In theory, they were separate nations, but in practice they were subservient to Hitler.⁷

Notice what this powerful ruler will do, two atrocities mentioned in verse 25. "He will *speak against the Most High* and *oppress his saints* and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time."

- He will slander God.
- He will oppose the saints.

So this vicious ruler will seek to "wear out the saints" (as the AV puts it) during a period of persecution unlike the world has ever seen. It will be "for a time, times and half a time," says verse 25, or "for a year, two years and half a year," as the NIV footnote suggests. In other words, three and one-half years of God-defying slander and oppression of His people.

This coming leader will apparently impose a new legal system based on totalitarian principles with no regard for the good standards of God's law. He's even going to revise

⁶ Strauss, 224-5.

⁷ Archer, 93

the calendar in his attempt to eliminate God, according to the end of verse 25. No more BC and AD.

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we can conclude all this will happen during the time called *the tribulation*. Daniel will have more to say about this time period in 9:27 and 11:31 and 12:11. Jesus Himself talked about it in Matthew 24:15-21:

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁷ Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house.¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”

The fact that all this is coming raises an important question for us. Why will God allow His saints to suffer like this? Why will He allow them to be oppressed and killed? This of course is not just a future question, but a present reality. So why?

The answer is, in part, because God is not interested solely in the here and now. His goal is to put the glory of His grace on display, through saving undeserving people, and He uses suffering to accomplish the outcome He desires. First, the suffering of His Son, followed by the suffering of His Son’s people.

I want you to see another parallel passage. It’s a vision John saw at the end of the first century AD, recorded in Revelation 13:1-7:

“And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?’”

“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”

So why is the beast hostile towards God's people? What have they have done? It's not what we've done per se, but who they represent and what He's done and what they are doing to make Him known to a world that is blinded to its desperate need for Him.

Jesus the Son of God gave His life to make a ransom payment for sinners. He died in their place, then conquered the grave. God now offers salvation to any sinner who will repent and acknowledge that Jesus is the only Savior, indeed their Savior.

This message is offensive to a world that believes there are many ways to God. And so it attacks such messengers. And God uses that unjust attack to put the glory of His grace on display as His people respond with gracious resolve to the suffering.

So when the enemies of God now, and the coming Ruler then, attack Christ's people, what are they supposed to do? Defend themselves? Fight back? Tone down their message?

No. Here's the counsel given in Revelation 13:10, "If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for *patient endurance and faithfulness* on the part of the saints."

There's the response that pleases God. In the ESV, *endurance and faith*.

So what enables God's people to endure and faithfully fulfill their mission in the face of such opposition? A fourth and final detail that Daniel learned.

4. *God's kingdom will prevail (26-27)*. Verses 26-27 tells us what will ultimately happen to this rebel ruler, "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey Him."

Indeed, God's kingdom will prevail. Which means two things, by implication.

- The saints will rule. The kingdom of men will be handed over to the saints.
- All rulers will worship the Most High. That includes Belshazzar, Alexander the Great, and Nero, for they will bow before the Most High. So will Napoleon, Mao, Churchill, JFK, Kim Jong-un, President Obama, and every other ruler.

These leaders have one thing in common with each other. They will all bow down one day before the Lord Jesus Christ. And so will you and I.

The question is, when we bow before Him, will He be our loving Lord or our sentencing Judge?

III. Consider the reaction (28).

Verse 28, "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."

I love the way the KJV captures Daniel's reaction, "My cogitations much troubled me." It's pretty tough to think seriously about the things Daniel just witnessed and not have our cogitations troubled!

So now that you know the outcome, I invite you to ask yourself a question.

A Question to Ponder: Am I ready for what's coming?

Are you ready? The truth is that God's plan will unfold regardless of whether we are ready or not. Are we living in light of what we know?

Years ago, when I was just an eleven year old boy, God used a series of messages on the end times preached by Pastor George Fissel to stir my heart. The Spirit of God opened my eyes to the fact that I was not ready for what's coming, but could be ready if I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.

And by God's grace, that's what happened. Are you ready for what's coming?

I think it's significant that after seeing this vision from God, Daniel didn't hop up and go eat lunch, but rather went through a period of deep exercise of his soul. Let's do some contemplation ourselves, first by praying, and then by singing a hymn of response.

Hymn of Response: #234 "Crown Him with Many Crowns"