Daniel’s First Vision: God’s Sovereignty in Times of Trouble Part 2

Daniel 7:11-28

**Introduction**

 This morning we are continuing our look at the first vision Daniel had when he was serving as a prophet to the people in Babylon during their exile. As we said last week the book of Daniel is both historical narrative and prophecy. Starting in chapter 7 Daniel is recording the visions that God is giving him, which are providing a look into the future and encouraging the people by reminding them that He is always going to be with them. Let us quickly review the main ideas from last week. The first three beasts that Daniel saw in his vision represented the kingdoms of Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire and then the Greek Empire under the rule of Alexander the Great. Each of these kingdoms usher in another which will eventually result in the final earthly authority coming to power that will ultimately be defeated by the Kingdom of God.

 Not only was Daniel shown these kingdoms, but he also was given a vision of the throne of God. We saw that God was described as the Ancient of Days who wore a white garment showing His purity, the fire flowing from His throne showed His wrath and judgment which is always at work and finally the court serving Him in the execution of justice over all the people on earth. God is always at work bringing about His perfect will and purpose. Today we will look at three additional parts of the vision that will show us the role Jesus Christ has played in history as well as what will take place at the end times. Let’s read together Daniel 7:11-28:

 **“11 Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was killed, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.**

**13 ‘I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a son of man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. 14 And to Him was given dominion, Honor, and a kingdom, so that all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one**

**which will not be destroyed.”**

**15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. 16 I approached one of those who were standing by and began requesting of him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 17 ‘These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. 18 But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and take possession of the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’**

**19 “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, 20 and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three of the horns fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates. 21 I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and prevailing against them, 22 until 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.**

**23 “This is what 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 trample it down and crush it. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will humble three kings. 25 And he will speak 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 handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time. 26 But the court will convene for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 27 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 empires will serve and obey Him.’**

**28 “At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face became pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”**

**Satan will be Defeated/Purpose of Kingdoms (vv. 11-12)**

Starting in verse 11 Daniel sees in his vision the fourth great beast that has the teeth of iron as well as the ten horns. The smallest horn that appeared began to speak very boastful words, but after that happened the beast was killed. We see the death of the beast in verse 11 telling us that Satan will be defeated and that he will be thrown into the lake of fire. This is the good news of the return of Christ that after He has taken hold of the kingdom that God the Father has given Him, He will wage war against the beast and defeat him. Not only does Daniel have a vision of this eventual defeat of Satan, the Apostle John sees this as well and records it in chapter 13 of the book of Revelation. **“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten crowns, and on his heads were blasphemous names” (v. 1).** This beast, therefore, represents the final kingdom that will come at the end of the age representing the man of sin, which is referred to as the antichrist. John speaks of the dragon, who is Satan, and then also speaks of the beast who in Revelation 13:2 is given power and great authority on the earth by him.

 In verse 12 Daniel then refers to the kingdoms that we discussed last week. The kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece are all eventually defeated, but they were allowed to have authority on the earth for a particular period of time. Daniel mentions this because the main idea he had shared with King Nebuchadnezzar and what God is teaching us in this book is that God is the One who guides all things on this earth choosing who to give power and authority to. When Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged this fact that was when God gave the kingdom back to him. Therefore, every kingdom that existed back during those times as well as every kingdom since then has been permitted to exist according to the plan of God.

**The Son Man (vv. 13-14)**

 Immediately after the defeat of the beast and the statement regarding the kingdoms Daniel then has a vision of the appearance of the Son of Man. Starting in verse 13 the Son of Man is presented to the Ancient of Days. To this figure was given dominion, honor, and an everlasting kingdom that would never end. Now who is the Son of Man in this vision and what does this tell us about Him? The Son of Man in this vision is the Lord Jesus Christ who has fulfilled all of the prophecies that were written about Him. Not only did Christ do everything written about Him, but He has been given authority by the Father to judge and to rule over God’s Kingdom. How do we know this is referring to Jesus? Let’s look at the words of Jesus during His trial before the Sanhedrin. In Matthew 26:64 after they asked Him if He is the Messiah, He responded with the words of Daniel 7 **“Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”** Very clearly and confidently Jesus confirms that He is the promised Messiah. By quoting Daniel Jesus made Himself equal to God, which is why the Jewish authorities sought to murder Him. They believed that He spoke blasphemy because they could not accept Him as the Messiah. The kingdom established by Christ will never end and will not be able to be destroyed by Satan.

**Daniel is Troubled and the Angel’s Explanation (vv. 15-22)**

 After seeing all of the beasts, the Ancient of Days as well as the Son of Man Daniel is frightened and desires to know what all of this meant. So, he approaches one of the angelic being standing near him and asked what all of this meant. The angel tells him that each of the beasts represent a kingdom that will rise on the earth and have dominion for an appointed period of time. But then in verse 18 the angel says something profound and powerful. He tells Daniel that the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and take possession of it forever. What we are being told is that all who place their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior will have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and will also rule with Christ in the coming Kingdom of God. This is powerful because followers of Christ will be given a marvelous gift of being in His presence for all eternity and witnessing the power as well as the majesty of God. We who proclaim and live in the light of God will experience an eternal reward for faithfulness that should cause us to look forward to this time, not dread physical death. There is a reward for faithfulness!

 After this encouraging reminder the angel begins to discuss, in specific detail, the fourth beast that appeared with the horns. The last horn to appear, which we have already said represents the Antichrist, will wage war against the saints of Christ and will have much success in that war. This means that when the antichrist comes, He will demand allegiance to himself and anyone who does not cooperate with that demand will be punished by being put to death. The Apostle John explains it this way. **“It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority was given to him over every tribe, people, language and nation. All who live on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slaughtered” (Rev. 13:7-8).** Therefore, those who have not been sealed with the blood of Christ will be drawn to this Antichrist figure and will worship him.

 Even though the world will be deceived by this demonic figure, those who trust in Christ and are His people will not be deceived. In verse 22 Daniel records that the Ancient of Days (God) will come to judge in favor the saints so that they will inherit the kingdom prepared for them. This promise of restoration is given to God’s people to let them know that even though the days will seem dark and overwhelming they still have hope because God will defeat this man of sin and will usher in an eternal kingdom where there will be no more death or weeping.

**The Final Kingdom and Victory of the Saints (vv. 23-28)**

In verse 23 we are reminded that from the beast will arise ten more kingdoms that will rule over the earth. After those kingdoms there will be a single ruler who will arise from them who will be unique. This single ruler is what we have come to know as the Antichrist who will then take over the entire world as leader by defeating three kings. This Antichrist will speak against God by making himself to be a god on earth. Not only will he claim to be God, but he will demand worship and punish those who do not comply. He will wear down the saints through persecution and will perform signs that will make those who do not trust in Christ marvel winning their devotion to him. At the end of verse 25 Daniel states that the authority to rule over the earth will be handed to him for a time, times and half a time. Daniel is explaining, once again, that for a specific amount of time the Antichrist will be allowed to rule on the earth. Very similar to what he said regarding the kingdoms we discussed last week. Once the appointed time of the Antichrist has been fulfilled God will bring his kingdom to an end when He calls the court together to pronounce judgement (v. 26).

 We see that once the Antichrist has been overthrown by Christ then the kingdom will be given to the saints and those who trust in Christ as Savior. This new coming kingdom will never end and will usher in a new world where everyone will hear and obey the voice of God. This promise of restoration and future hope is what the Apostle John will speak of as the new heaven and the new Jerusalem. We will look at this description in just a few moments.

 In verse 28 Daniel says that vision had ended leaving him in a state of shock. This shocked him so much that he kept all of this to himself. This is definitely understandable because many people have described having visions or dreams that shocked them so much that they did not know how to process it. Even though this vision shocked him, his faith in God is what comforted him and allowed him to share these with his readers.

**What Does This Mean for Us?**

 As we conclude our time together today let us take a few moments to share what God’s Word has to say regarding the future and the hope we all have. As I mentioned earlier the book of Revelation provides for us a glimpse into the future showing what God will do when the history of man has been played out. Please open with me to chapter 21 of Revelation where the Apostle John describes the new Jerusalem. We will look specifically verses 22-27. After providing the dimensions of the city and describing the beautiful stones that make it up, John tells us the great news regarding the presence of God and His Son Jesus Christ. **“22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”**

This description of the new Jerusalem that will come down to earth from heaven shows us how God will restore the earth so that it will return to its original perfect glory. Our God will serve as the light, Jesus Christ is the lamp, we will be in the presence of God for all of eternity and He will be the source of our happiness.

 In addition to the glory of the Lord lighting up the earth, the new earth will be filled with the perfect conditions that God has established in the original creation. In verse 27 we have provided for us the ways in which God will destroy the sin and the corruption that have taken over this world. Firstly, there will be nothing unclean found in the new Jerusalem. This world we live in today has been corrupted by sin because the things that God has created have been changed into what man thinks is appropriate. One such example is the way in which God has created humanity. Rather than allowing the Word of God to instruct us regarding sexuality we have seen that male and female have been corrupted into the sinful idea that there are more than two genders. God made both man and woman to reflect His glory as well as His likeness. To attack the dignity of either men or women is an assault on God. When the new Jerusalem arrives the dignity of God’s created order will be restored.

 John also says that those who practice abomination and lying will not be found in the new city. What is meant by abomination? An abomination is anything that is done that is detestable or unholy in the eyes of God. Some examples of this includes idolatry (the worship of false gods or anything else other than God alone), sexual immorality (including adultery, alternative lifestyles or anything that goes against God’s creative order) and anything else that violates the holiness or moral law of God. Nothing like this will be present in the new city.

 Finally, John says that only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life will be permitted to live in the city. The gate of the city will be open at all times because there will never be darkness of night. The gate is open to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and have lived their lives to reflect Him in this world. This speaks again of the exclusivity of Christ in the fact that only those who accept Christ as Savior may enter the city. No other manmade religion, moral code or teacher will allow man to approach the throne of God. Two Scriptures from the New Testament confirm this. **In John 10:7-9 Jesus says “Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All those who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”** Therefore, Jesus is the gate by which all will enter the city. There is no other way in to the new city.

 Where is the hope in all of this? Our hope is built on the promise of God that those who believe in Christ, accept His sacrifice as payment for sin and who live to bring glory to Christ in this life will share in the kingdom that has been established from the very foundation of the world. Every week as we gather together let us encourage each other with these words. Daniel’s vision shows us that even though the future is uncertain, we worship the God who is in complete control and will see to it that those who trust in Christ will receive a crown of righteousness as well as citizenship in the new kingdom. May we always do what we can to show God our appreciation for this grace and freedom He has given through His Son. Amen.