

**Daniel 7:1-8**  
*Even the Wind and the Sea Obey Him*

NKJ Daniel 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

2 Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.

3 "And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

4 "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

5 "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'

6 "After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

7 "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

8 "I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

With the beginning of Chapter 7 we finish with the narrative portion of Daniel, that portion of the book that tells the story of the life of Daniel and his friends and the major events in the history of God's faithful remnant in captivity in Babylon, and from this point on the book of Daniel is concerned exclusively with the prophecies given by God to Daniel. This is the first of these visions, and chronologically it takes us back in time, because the vision itself is between the end of Daniel chapter 4 and the beginning of Daniel chapter 5.

Now this isn't the first time we've seen prophecies in the book of Daniel of course. We've had prophetic messages in the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar in chapters 2 & 4, and a handwritten prophecy on Belshazzar's wall in Chapter 5 and all of these prophecies we have seen interpreted by Daniel and then fulfilled in the course of the narrative. But now we will see Daniel not acting as the interpreter of prophecies sent to kings in the middle of a narrative, but a man relating the "main facts" of the his own terribly important prophetic visions and dreams and messages.

But while the literary genre of the book changes from narrative to prophecy, the overall theme of the book remains the same, and that is the sovereignty of God over the affairs of kings, and nations, and men, and that as I have mentioned in an earlier sermon, *history is the stage upon which God's drama of redemption is being played out.*

Now I can't overstress the importance of your remembering that as we begin to look at these prophetic sections, because I don't want you to make the same terrible mistake that so many worldlings make. What is that mistake? Well many unbelievers are interested in prophecy and predictions. Even as pagan, I was interested in books like revelation, because I wanted to hear about what was going to happen in the world in the future.

I wanted advance information about future world events. I wanted to know where wars were going to start and who would win them, I wanted to know which nations and leaders would come to power, which empires would fall, where natural disasters would happen, where and when diseases and

epidemics would break out. Why? *Because my interest was with the material world.* So I read biblical prophecy the way someone reads the astrology section of the paper. Now I've never met anyone who is interested in astrology primarily because they are interested in the positions of stars and planets. They read astrology because they are desperate to find out what is going to happen next here on earth, so that they can make a killing in the stock market, or something like that.

Now brothers and sisters, believers can do the same thing, we can look on biblical prophecy as heaven's "tip-sheet," so to speak, on what is going to happen next in the world. So we'll read sections like this one, and the thing that will occupy most of our attention is trying to figure out who the little horn is. Is it Ahmadinejad? It can't be Saddam because he's gone. Maybe it's Pope Benedict? When we do that, often what we are doing subconsciously is acting as though what is going on in nations and amongst world leaders is most important, and all that heaven does is look ahead and see what will happen here on earth and then tell us via prophecy. *That's entirely wrongheaded!*

What Daniel has made clear to us, is that what happens here on earth, nations rising and falling, kings coming to power and being overthrown, is not foreseen by God, *but determined by God according to His good pleasure.* And that in fact, none of these nations or kings is of any real importance when compared to His Kingdom, and His Son who is the King of Kings. And that our concern should be to gain a spiritual insight into the events on earth, that will help us as we make our way through this world as pilgrims seeking the heavenly country. *In other words, prophecy should make us look up to heaven, not down to the earth.*

Ok, so what does the vision mean? Well Daniel sees a vision of the Great Sea, that is the Mediterranean, and that is important because all of the empires that are symbolized by these beasts are empires of the Mediterranean world – Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. But the symbolism here is more than literal.

The sea in the bible often represents evil and chaos, and in this case it represents fallen humanity, the nations of the world opposed to God, his Kingdom, and the Saints. The realm also of the Devil and His minions. That is why for instance in Revelation 13:1 the beast comes out of the Sea. It is a place always full of rage and tumult, a place of wind and wave, storm tossed.

But even over this sea of the nations, God is sovereign it is God who can hold back or send forth the four winds of heaven, and here they are stirring up the sea so that individual nations, empires come forth, that will ultimately fulfill his designs for the progress of redemption, and bring about God's good ends even though that is not their desire. The four beasts, as we will see, also correspond to the various parts of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chapter 2.

These fact that these nations and empires are symbolized in the vision as beasts and that too is very significant. Because cut off and estranged from God, men are beastly. Though they are created in His image, they rebel and fall into animal behaviors, base desires, and fail to look up. Paul summarized it well in Romans 1 when he says of fallen man: *"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man -- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."* We no longer worship the creator, but become base and idolatrous, worshipping the creation.

1) *The first of these beasts is like a lion with eagles wings.* This is Babylon. In the ruins of Babylon by the gates archaeologists discovered that the royal symbol of Nebuchadnezzar was a Lion with Eagle's

wings and the head of a man. In the Word, Jeremiah calls Nebuchadnezzar a lion, and Ezekiel called him a great Eagle. The Lion body symbolizing the nobility of Babylon and its military strength, and corresponding to the head of Gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The Eagle's wings symbolize the unprecedented speed with which Babylon conquered her enemies.

Then in the vision something interesting happens to this beast, the wings are plucked off and it is lifted up to stand like a man, and a man's heart is given to it. This refers to the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar. While he was still proud and autonomous, rebelling against God, he was like a beast. Indeed when God humbled him by striking him with madness in chapter 4 we read ***“his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.”*** Then he is converted, he has a new heart and finally becomes like a man.

Brothers and sisters, remember this lesson. It is only as we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and enter His kingdom that the dignity of men is restored.

2) Suddenly though, in a single night, the kingdom of Babylon disappeared, and another kingdom appears on the scene. Now remember when Daniel was writing down this vision, the fateful night of the Belshezzar's banquet and the Writing on the Wall had not yet happened, and yet here is God showing Him in advance what would come to pass shortly. *This kingdom is the Medo-Persian empire symbolized by a hungry bear, raised up on one side, indicating that the Persian part of the kingdom was much mightier than the kingdom of the Medes* . It has already consumed several other nations symbolized by the ribs still in its mouth. But the command of God goes forth for it to rise up and devour still more, and of course we know that this included Babylon.

3) *The next Beast on the scene is Alexander the Great's Greece, symbolized by the Leopard, the swiftest of the hunters.* It has four wings on its back, two more than Babylon to show how quickly Alexander moved and won his victories. One author pointed out that Alexander did not bother to wage war against nations, as that would have taken too long, he simply conquered them. Josephus writes that after Alexander destroyed Tyre and was moving on to Jerusalem, he was met by the High Priest who carried with him a scroll of the book of Daniel. Alexander, it is said, recognized himself as the Lion and the Ram in Daniel's prophecies and accepted the submission of the Jews and left the city unharmed. The Beast had four heads symbolizing the four Generals of the empire who took over after Alexander died at the age of 33.

4) *It is of course the fourth beast who attracts the most attention, this is the most fearful, exceedingly strong, with huge iron teeth. This is Rome, the feet of Iron and Clay in Nebuchadnezzar's dream with Ten Toes.* But this kingdom is more than just the Roman empire, as we shall see later on and as we compare this beast with what is written in Revelation 13:1 we shall see that this is also the world system that will continue on until the Return of Christ and the consummation of His Kingdom. This kingdom will have elements of the other kingdoms but we also see in this kingdom the particular embodiment of the spirit of anti-christ.

The horns speak of power, while the little horn with eyes speaking pompous words or blasphemous things is the personification of anti-Christ. We will see that in particular this empire wages war directly against the saints, persecuting them and seeking to destroy the kingdom, and we will examine it in greater detail in the next two sermons.

Now as for applications. Let me give you one with three parts:

Why was Daniel given these visions, why were we?

1) ***To prepare God's people for what is to come and so that they might persevere under persecution***  
 Daniel as he wrote this was aware that the 70 years of exile were close to coming to an end, God's people might think that they were about to come into a golden age of peace and prosperity were they no longer had to deal with those who hate the saints or the kingdom. That when they got back to Jerusalem, that that would be the inauguration of the Kingdom. God wants us to avoid an unwholesome triumphalism, and rather to be ready to bear persecution and that not just at the end but throughout the history of the church.

***Thus there is a progress in culture; but this is not a progress necessarily in man's truest dignity, namely, union and likeness to God. Nay, it has led him farther from God, to self-reliance and world-love.***

2) ***Our conflict is Spiritual:*** Remember what Paul wrote - Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

What we see in history is the extension into the material world of the conflict the spiritual battle that has been going on since the Devil and his angels rebelled –

***Daniel 10:13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.***

1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

1 John 4:3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

3) ***To remind us that God is in control of the Kings and Nations:*** The world is scared silly of the Ahmadinejads and Nasrallahs and Osamas and all the other tyrants and empires that rage against God and his people and try to destroy them, but you need not.

He is the one who can still the tempest or direct it to His ends. We saw that as we studied Psalm 65 last Wednesday which spoke of God as ***Psalm 65:7 You who still the noise of the seas, The noise of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples.***

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Mark 4:38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"