

DANIEL 7



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Daniel 7
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Cover art: Rembrandt, *Daniel in the Lions' Den*

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Daniel 7: Introduction

New revelations to Daniel enlarge our understanding of the coming Kingdom of God, and of the world tumult which must precede its coming.

God's is an eternal Kingdom, and it will replace and overcome all earthly dominions once it has made its appearance on earth.

But that dominance will not come without a struggle.

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1 Four Kingdoms

Introduction

Daniel steps back a bit in the chronology of his account to report a dream and its interpretation that were given to him before the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians. Chapter 7 is the pivotal chapter of Daniel's book. Everything prior to this chapter builds up to it, and all that follows issues from it as further elaboration and clarification. We recall that Daniel wrote his book just prior to Israel's being returned to her land to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Rather than consider this repatriation their final *shalom*, however, Israel should be advised by Daniel that more tumult would come before the *eternal* Kingdom appears.

Review Daniel 2.

Read Daniel 7.1-8.

Think it Through

1. We have seen that, through Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, God drew attention to His Kingdom and rule, to encourage and embolden the people of Israel for the work that lay ahead of them as they returned to their land. It's a bit curious that Daniel recounts this dream at this point, since it took place *before* chapters 5 and 6. Can you think of any reason why he might have rearranged the chronology of his book, to put this pivotal chapter here? We see this disrupting of chronology from time to time in Scripture, as in Genesis 2, all of which occurred historically prior to Genesis 1.31, and at some points in the gospels. Chronology is not as important as whatever God wants to emphasize. We also note that Daniel wrote down the dream, to include it in the rest of his prophecy. Why was it important to write this down? Why did God lead His prophets and apostles to write down what He revealed to them? If it was important enough for them to write it down, what should that imply for us?

2. These four images represent four kingdoms and repeat the vision God gave to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2. Thus, the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are to be understood. In what ways do the images of this dream differ from those of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? Which dream seems the more glorious and magnificent? Which seems the more terrifying and horrible? Why? Why the difference between them? Daniel's dream focuses on the power, ferocity, and destructive force of these earthly kingdoms – born, as they were, from the raging tumult of the sea – as well as their impermanence. The reference to the four winds stirring up the sea and causing it to bring forth these beasts should cue us to the sovereign power of God behind all this. Why? Meditate on Psalm 135.5-7, Psalm 104.24-26, and Psalm 107.23-32.

Meditate

“The four winds of heaven I supposed to have been angelic powers to whom the principalities have been committed. ... The sea signifies this world and the present age, overwhelmed with salty and bitter waves, in accordance with the Lord's own interpretation of the dragnet cast into the sea.” *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Revelation 13.1

Lord Jesus, we must through many tribulations enter Your Kingdom. But once we have entered there, and are seeking Your Kingdom daily, then You will empower, guide, and protect us so that nothing can keep Your Kingdom from coming on earth as it is in heaven, as we...

Pray Psalm 107.1-9.

Pray for God's people all over the world, that they may remember His grace to them and declare His praises

to the people around them. And pray that, out of the tumult of the nations and times, many may find satisfaction for their souls in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 107.1-9 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

Lord, You are good, we give thanks and we praise You!
Your steadfast love will forever endure.
Let the redeemed, who from trouble You rescue,
Gather and say that Your mercy is sure!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!
We who from east and west, north and south gather,
Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

Wand'ring in deserts, no city, no dwelling,
Hungry and thirsty and faint in our soul –
Lord, when we cried, all our misery telling,
You brought us home and in grace made us whole!

Refrain

2 Ancient of Days

Introduction

Daniel's dream turns from earthly portents to heavenly realities. He is given a glimpse into the unseen realm, where, in majestic images, God makes it clear, as He did to the apostle John, where ultimate power resides.

Read Psalm 33.8-19.

Read Daniel 7.9, 10.

Think it Through

1. Daniel saw "thrones" set up. Why "thrones" rather than just one throne? We note that the throne of the Ancient of Days has "wheels" – as in the vision Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel 1. Why would the throne have wheels? What does this suggest about the rule or dominion of the Ancient of Days? What is the meaning of "Ancient of Days"? How does this King compare with those suggested in the vision of verses 1-8?

2. Why does the Ancient of Days reveal Himself in whiteness? What does this suggest? How is fire used in this image? What does the presence and use of fire suggest about the Ancient of Days? Describe the assembly of those who stood and ministered before Him. How do you suppose they were "ministering"? For what purpose was this heavenly court convened? Look at the description of Jesus in Revelation 1.12-15. How does it compare with what Daniel saw? What are we to conclude from that comparison?

Meditate

"And so the many thrones that Daniel saw seem to me to be what John called the twenty-four thrones. And the Ancient of Days is the one who, according to John, sits alone on his throne." *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.
Revelation 4.2, 3

Lord, You have appointed me as part of Your royal priesthood, an ambassador of Your Kingdom, that I should follow Your commandments and seek the progress of Your Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Today, this will mean that I...

Pray Psalm 107.33-43.

The psalmist expresses the power and rule of God according to its reach and impact. Give thanks to God for each of the ways His sovereignty is described in these verses.

Psalm 107.33-43 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

You make the desert a river o'erflowing;
You make a wasted life fruitful and strong!
You bless the hungry with fields for the sowing;
Bless and increase us who to You belong!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!
We who from east and west, north and south gather,
Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

When we are low, are oppressed and in sorrow,

Daniel 7

You pour contempt on our fierce, angry foes.
We will rejoice at the hope of tomorrow:
He shall be wise who Your steadfast love knows!
Refrain

3 The Kingdoms of This World

Introduction

Daniel spent considerable time and detail describing four kingdoms that were or would be coming to the world. These were portrayed as ferocious and fearsome. Now we learn that they would also be flimsy and fleeting, because of what Daniel would see next.

Read Psalm 2.

Read Daniel 7.11, 12.

Think it Through

1. Daniel reported that the primary horn of the final beast was boasting “pompous words”. Since this beast represents the Roman Empire, what do you suppose was the content of those words? What did the Romans require of all their citizens, from the time of Augustus on, when it came to their religious convictions? Do the words of Psalm 2 seem appropriate to summarize this boasting? Explain. Do we see anything like this kind of boasting on the part of nations today?

2. Why would such boasting be offensive to God? According to Psalm 2, how does God respond to such boasting? The kingdoms from Babylon to Rome were fierce and fearsome, but they could not endure. Why? Even the last and most powerful kingdom would have “its body destroyed and given to the burning flame”. Why? Like the failed kingdoms of Israel and Judah, these four great earthly kingdoms would prepare the way for the coming of God’s Kingdom (vv. 13ff). How? How do *failed* kingdoms, be they ever so grand, large, and fierce, prepare the way for the coming of a Kingdom that is without end? Do the kingdoms of the world today in any way prepare us for entering, seeking, and living in the Kingdom of God? Explain.

Meditate

“In the one empire of the Romans, all the kingdoms at once are to be destroyed, because of the blasphemy of the antichrist. And the [succeeding] empire shall not be an earthly empire at all, but it is simply the abode of the saints, which is spoken of here, and the advent of the conquering Son of God.” *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” Revelation 11.15

Lord, thank You for making the kingdoms of this world the Kingdom of our Lord and Christ, and for making me an ambassador in Your Kingdom. Today, help me to fulfill my calling by...

Pray Psalm 107.17-22

In Biblical terminology, fools are people who do not believe in God (cf. Ps. 14.1). You may have some “fools” like this in your Personal Mission Field. Let these verses guide you in praying that the fools of the world may be convicted of their sin and need for forgiveness, and turn to Jesus for salvation.

Psalm 107.17-22, 1-3 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

Foolish and sinful, afflicted and dying,
All of our ways with iniquity fraught –
You hear our tears, our laments, and our crying,
You sent Your Word and to us mercy brought!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!

Daniel 7

We who from east and west, north and south gather,
Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

4 An Everlasting Dominion

Introduction

The psalms refer to and describe the exaltation of Christ to His eternal throne and Kingdom (cf. Pss. 2, 47, 93, 110). In these verses, Daniel glimpses the exaltation of Christ and the giving of God's Kingdom to Him. Let's see if we can fit this part of Daniel's dream into events relating to the life of Christ, and bring a little more light from Scripture to bear on what's happening here.

Read Isaiah 9.1-7; Psalm 47.

Read Daniel 7.13, 14.

Think it through

1. Acts 1.9 records Jesus being taken up in His ascension by a cloud. How does Daniel 7.13 connect with this? Meditate on Zechariah 3 (from a bit later than Daniel) and Psalm 47 (from a bit earlier). How do these help us fill out the picture of what Daniel saw in verses 13 and 14? Why did this "One like the Son of Man" come before the Ancient of Days (cf. Ps. 110.1, 2)? Why are these heavenly events so significant?

2. The "One like the Son of Man" received a Kingdom from the Ancient of Days. How would you describe that Kingdom? What kind of Kingdom is it? Where does it come to power? How great is its extent? How does it compare with all earthly kingdoms? What is the purpose of this Kingdom? Why are "dominion and glory and a kingdom" connected as one continuous idea? To what does this Kingdom compare in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2.44, 45? Where is this Kingdom now?

Meditate

"What, I ask, is more obvious than these words? 'And all the peoples, tribes and tongues will serve him.' See how he embraced every nation of the world. See how he took the judge's seat and power. Lest you should think that this is temporary, he says, 'These things will not pass away, and his kingdom will not perish' but will stay and remain." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 1 Corinthians 15.24, 25

Lord, You are subduing every enemy to Yourself, and that includes those parts of my own soul and life that yet rebel against You. Help me, Lord, to fight Your good fight, and to submit always to Your rule, so that...

Pray Psalm 107.10-16

Let the Lord search your soul as you pray, to bring to light any areas of lingering rebellion against Him, so that you may cry out to Him from your trouble and know His mercy, saving you from your distresses. Give Him thanks and praise!

Psalm 107.10-16, 1-3 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

Though we in darkness of death and affliction,
Pris'ners of sin and rebellion were bound;
Though we Your Word denied, You brought conviction,
Crying to You we deliverance have found!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!
We who from east and west, north and south gather,

Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

5 Time for the Kingdom

Introduction

Daniel's dream is interpreted to him within the dream itself. This is a further elaboration of what he has understood previously, in chapters 2 and 4. We should also remind ourselves that this dream comes chronologically before the story of the lions' den, and undoubtedly helps to explain why Daniel was able to keep his perspective and practices fully intact against the threats of the bear-king (Dan. 7.5). It's instructive to see how much power for faithful living can be realized by focusing on and seeking the promised Kingdom of God.

Read and meditate on Daniel 2.36-45 and 4.31-35.

Read Daniel 7.15-22.

Think it Through

1. Daniel saw the visions, including the revelation of the Ancient of Days and the One like the Son of Man. He says he was "grieved" and "troubled" by the visions, and that he sought to learn the truth conveyed in them. Here is a good example to follow in our own reading and study of divine revelation. He asked questions about specific aspects of the vision (v. 19), and he kept "watching (v. 21) for more revelation. Do you ever puzzle over passages of Scripture that you can't quite understand? Can you think of one? Are you grieved and troubled to learn more? Do you plead with God to teach you, and do you search the rest of Scriptures (Acts 17.11; 1 Cor. 2.12, 13) to discover how they can help you understand the passage that's troubling you? How can you improve your reading and study of Scripture, so that it consistently yields more of God's truth for your walk with Him?

2. Notice the promise of verse 18. This refers to the Kingdom mentioned in verses 13, 14. Who are the "saints"? How do they "receive" this Kingdom? How should receiving this Kingdom affect the way they live? The fourth beast in this vision is the Roman Empire, which subjugated the people of God in the years prior to Jesus' coming, and would persecute the Church for nearly 300 years following His ascension. The "time" for the Kingdom mentioned in verse 21 refers to the promise of Luke 12.32 and Acts 1.7, 8. Explain. At that time "a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High". What was that "judgment"? Are we still living in that judgment at present (cf. Rom. 1.18-32)? How should knowing that an irrevocable judgment on our behalf has been made in the highest court of heaven affect the way we live? Like Daniel in chapter 6? Elaborate.

Meditate

"These kingdoms will be wiped out and the true, eternal kingdom will be handed over to the saints of the Almighty. Thus, while waiting for that eternal kingdom, count the kingdoms of this present age to be as nothing, which will soon enough come to their end." *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12.32

Lord, You have called me to Your Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12). Why would I seek anything other than that? Help me today and every day to...

Pray Psalm 107.33-43.

How powerful and transforming are the effects of the Kingdom of God! Give thanks and praise to Him for the evidence of His Kingdom that you see all around you, and pray earnestly that more of His Kingdom might come on earth as it is in heaven.

Psalm 107.33-43, 1-3 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

You make the desert a river o'erflowing;
You make a wasted life fruitful and strong!
You bless the hungry with fields for the sowing;
Bless and increase us who to You belong!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!
We who from east and west, north and south gather,
Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

When we are low, are oppressed and in sorrow,
You pour contempt on our fierce, angry foes.
We will rejoice at the hope of tomorrow:
He shall be wise who Your steadfast love knows!

Refrain

6 Then? When?

Introduction

Daniel's vision is firmly focused on historical events. We may safely identify the fourth beast/kingdom with the Roman Empire and its succession of emperors. We know that Rome persecuted the Church for over 200 years, mainly because the Christians refused to recognize the emperor as ultimate law and god – just as Daniel and his friend had done before them. But persecution only strengthened the Church; and the Kingdom of God, which was given to the saints at the first Christian Pentecost, continued to expand and increase. Rome, meanwhile, went into a period of decline and dissolution, until the empire finally disappeared at the beginning of the Middle Ages. And Daniel saw it all, and the implications of these events.

Meditate on Psalm 33.

Read Daniel 7.23-28.

Think it Through

1. Let's locate this vision in time. The "Then" of verse 27 does not intend to say that only after the fourth beast/kingdom has been destroyed will the saints receive the Kingdom. Rather, it refers us back to verses 18 and 21, with the implication that the events of verse 23-28 occur within the framework of time in which the Kingdom has already been received and is advancing. The fall of the Roman Empire occurred in stages, but it accelerated rapidly during the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Rome persecuted the Church until early in the fourth century when Constantine, at the beginning of the century, and then Theodosius, at the end, gave Christians full freedom to worship. But in many respects, those emperors were only recognizing what had become a *fait accompli*: Without imperial sanction, and in the face of imperial hostility, Christianity had spread throughout the empire, and Christians and their churches were established in every place and level of society. What does this suggest about the *power* that drives the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 4.20; Acts 1.8)? How should we expect that power to work in us, who have received this Kingdom (Phil. 2.13; Eph. 3.20)? Keeping in mind the example of Daniel and the Church in the Roman Empire, that power seems to operate most pointedly in the face of adversity and opposition: What does that mean for you? How should you expect the Kingdom of God to advance most fruitfully in and through you?

2. There is no need to discern literal meanings in such aspects of this vision as the ten kings, the three kings, and "time and times and half a time." Kings are empires – and Roman emperors subdued many kingdoms – and the reference to time implies an extended period, albeit one fixed by divine decree. Verse 26 reminds us, following Psalm 33, that none of this catches God by surprise, and none of it occurs outside the scope of His decrees and power. We are seeing in this vision events that happen *beyond* the time of the New Testament, *into* the epoch of history in which we live. Sometimes people think that God acts one way within the pages of Biblical history, but that He doesn't act the same way *beyond* the pages of Scripture, in the normal course and flow of history as we participate in it. We are to understand from this passage that the same God Who put down Babylon, Persia, and Greece during the period of the giving of Scripture, put down Rome during the course and flow of history *beyond* the time of Scripture. He has not ceased being sovereign, and it pleases Him now to exert His sovereign power in the world through the vehicle of His Kingdom. What is the Kingdom and dominion of God (v. 27)? Can you offer a succinct definition of the Kingdom? According to verse 27, what expectations should believers hold for the progress of the Kingdom? What does it mean to pray for this Kingdom to come, and to seek it as our highest priority in life (Matt. 6.10, 33)? Does it "trouble" you at all (v. 28) that we see so little evidence of this in our day? Explain.

Meditate

"In other words, this is the end of the end of all affairs of this life, all the empires of earth coming to a close

and the eternal kingdom being given to the holy ones of the Most High, with those in charge obeying and devotedly serving him, since his kingdom is eternal and does not come to an end.” *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. 1 Corinthians 4.20

You have called me to Your Kingdom and glory, Lord (1 Thess. 2.12), and I have received Your Spirit and power (Acts 1.8). Let Your power be at work in me today, willing and doing of Your good pleasure, exceedingly abundantly beyond all I have ever thought or asked, and help me to...

Pray Psalm 107.33-43.

Ask God to give you new measures of His power today, so that the Kingdom comes in and through you for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18).

Psalm 107.33-43, 1-3 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

You make the desert a river o’erflowing;
You make a wasted life fruitful and strong!
You bless the hungry with fields for the sowing;
Bless and increase us who to You belong!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!
We who from east and west, north and south gather,
Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

When we are low, are oppressed and in sorrow,
You pour contempt on our fierce, angry foes.
We will rejoice at the hope of tomorrow:
He shall be wise who Your steadfast love knows!

Refrain

7 Telescoping the Kingdom

Introduction

The book of Daniel can be likened to a telescoping spyglass, like you can see in Captain Billy Bones' hands in [N. C. Wyeth's famous illustration](#) from *Treasure Island*. Daniel is pointed at God's sovereign rule over all things – His Kingdom. As we keep looking through the glass, and pulling out each section – chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – the image we're focusing on becomes increasingly clear. And what we're seeing is unlike anything we've ever seen before.

Read Psalm 72.

Read and Meditate on Daniel 7.

Think it Through

1. How can you see that Daniel 7 is an extending and elaborating of Daniel 2.31-45? Taking these two passages together, what do we learn about God's Kingdom? Factoring in chapters 3-6, how would you describe the relationship between God's Kingdom and the kingdoms of the world? What seems to be the place of the saints – believers like you and me – in that Kingdom?
2. As we see consistently throughout Daniel 1-7, the exertion of God's sovereign rule and the coming of His Kingdom have ramifications for things on earth. Explain. According to Daniel, when should we expect to begin seeing those ramifications? So, when we pray Matthew 6.10, and when we take Matthew 6.33 as the defining priority of our lives, what are we praying for and seeking? Is this the way you organize your life?

Meditate

“The divine word says that our God is ‘a consuming fire’ and that ‘he draws rivers of fire before him’; no, that he even enters in as ‘a refiner’s fire and as a fuller’s herb,’ to purify his own people. But when he is said to be a ‘consuming fire,’ we inquire what are the things that are appropriate to be consumed by God. And we assert that they are wickedness and the works that result from it and that, being figuratively called ‘wood, hay, stubble,’ God consumes as a fire.” *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2.9-11

You are Lord, Lord Jesus, and You rule all things according to Your good pleasure. Let me know Your good pleasure at work in me today as I submit to Your rule and...

Pray 107

Give thanks for the many ways God's sovereign grace reaches lost sinners and brings them into His Kingdom and pleasure. Rehearse your own testimony before the Lord with thanksgiving.

Psalm 107 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

Lord, You are good, we give thanks and we praise You!

Your steadfast love will forever endure.

Let the redeemed, who from trouble You rescue,

Gather and say that Your mercy is sure!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,

We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!

We who from east and west, north and south gather,
Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

Wand'ring in deserts, no city, no dwelling,
Hungry and thirsty and faint in our soul –
Lord, when we cried, all our misery telling,
You brought us home and in grace made us whole!
Refrain

Though we in darkness of death and affliction,
Pris'ners of sin and rebellion were bound;
Though we Your Word denied, You brought conviction,
Crying to You we deliverance have found!
Refrain

Foolish and sinful, afflicted and dying,
All of our ways with iniquity fraught –
You hear our tears, our laments, and our crying,
You sent Your Word and to us mercy brought!
Refrain

You make the desert a river o'erflowing;
You make a wasted life fruitful and strong!
You bless the hungry with fields for the sowing;
Bless and increase us who to You belong!
Refrain

When we are low, are oppressed and in sorrow,
You pour contempt on our fierce, angry foes.
We will rejoice at the hope of tomorrow:
He shall be wise who Your steadfast love knows!
Refrain

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. How has this chapter enlarged your understanding of the Kingdom of God?
2. What is the relationship between Jesus Christ – that One like the Son of Man – and His saints or followers? What does He give us? What does that do for us? What should we expect as those who have received this?
3. God is Lord of history – all history, not just what we read in the Bible. What are the implications of this for the world today?
4. What does it mean to pray for the coming of the Kingdom, and to seek it as your highest priority?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.