

Daniel Chapter 7 v 1 - 17

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[0 : 00] Well, the reading Brian's chosen today is Daniel chapter 7. We'll have a look at that. It's page 893. Daniel chapter 7.

We'll read verses 1 to 18.

In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

Daniel said, In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off, and it was lifted from the ground, so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.

[1 : 16] And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.

It was told, get up and eat your fill of flesh. After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard.

And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. After that, in my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast, terrifying and frightening and very powerful.

It had large iron teeth. It crushed and devoured its victims, and trampled under the foot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them. And three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being, and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

[2 : 28] As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was white as snow. The hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him.

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking.

I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.

In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man. Coming with the clouds of heaven, he approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

[3 : 30] He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. All nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this.

So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things. The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth, but the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever.

Yes, forever and ever. I've loved being with you for the last couple of Sundays, and particularly enjoyed the lunch today when you obeyed the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to greet one another with a holy quiche.

Plenty of those. So if you could turn to Daniel chapter 7. Lots of preachers preach on Daniel chapters 1 to 6, but fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and not many go on into chapters 7 to 12.

[5 : 11] But I want to have a quick look at part of chapter 7 this evening. The reason why a lot of preachers don't handle it is because it's in an unfamiliar style.

It's in a style of literature which biblical scholars call apocalyptic. Try and say that three times fast. Not now, but when you get home. Apocalyptic.

And apocalyptic was a style of literature that was popular amongst the Jewish people for three or four hundred years, mainly between the Testaments, between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There were quite a lot of Jewish apocalypses written. But it begins in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and there's a Christian apocalypse. It's called the book of Revelation that ends the Bible.

It's actually sometimes called the Apocalypse. Apocalypse. And it's all written in this style of writing. Apocalyptic literature usually describes visions and dreams.

[6 : 23] It consists of pictures and symbols and what to us appear to be rather bizarre sometimes images. There's lots of dramatic pictures, mysterious symbolic numbers.

Those of you who read newspapers will know that some cartoonists, some political cartoonists, over the years have developed images of nations, symbols of nations.

For instance, the Russian bear, the Chinese dragon, the American eagle, the British bulldog. And you can actually say a lot in a cartoon just by picturing the British bulldog and the American dragon and the Russian bear.

And you can get quite a lot across through a picture, a dramatic picture. And then, quite a lot of people today like fantasy literature.

literature like The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe, where Aslan stands for Jesus and The White Witch stands for the devil.

[7 : 35] And Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbits and so on. It's all the rage. Some people like it. I, to be honest, I'm not struck.

I've attempted The Hobbit five times. I actually finished it about two years ago on the fifth attempt. I just have something missing in my brain when it comes to fantasy literature, I'm afraid.

But, if you like that sort of thing, you should like apocalyptic literature. So, that's what we've got here. And Dandu describes a dream that he had towards the end of the reign of Belshazzar, the last king of the Babylonians.

And, it's a dream about what's happening on earth and about what's happening in heaven. And he sees successive scary beasts, monsters, coming out of the sea.

And then the final figure is not a monster. It's a man. So, that's the dream. Four monsters and a man.

[8 : 47] The monsters come out of the sea. Now, in apocalyptic literature, the sea stands for that which is threatening and dangerous and uncontrollable.

That which threatens to swamp and overwhelm God's people. The sea. I assume some of you have moved to Whitby because you like the sea.

They wouldn't have moved to Whitby in Bible times. They kept as far away from the sea as they possibly could. The sea was full of strange creatures.

They weren't romantic about the sea. It was dangerous. And it was dangerous. I mean, the Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 that he'd been shipwrecked three times.

That's not bad going, is it, for one lifetime? Three shipwrecks. And that was before he was shipwrecked on his way to Rome in Acts 28. So that's a total of at least four shipwrecks in one lifetime. So you thought twice before you went on the sea journey in biblical time.

[9 : 50] And the sea became a picture of the chaos of human life under sin and under Satan. The wicked are like the tossing sea, says Isaiah.

And those of you who came to Whitby because you like the sea so much will be disappointed when you read the end of the book of Revelation and you find that in the new creation there will be no more sea. There'll be something better probably but it says there'll be no more sea.

But it means it in this symbolic sense. So, the sea and four winds from the north, the south, the east and the west churning up the sea.

There's trouble ahead. That's what that means. The sea is being churned up by all winds from every direction. And out of the sea come four ferocious creatures.

And we're actually told in verse 17 that these creatures stand for four kingdoms and four kings that will arise from the earth.

[10:59] You must remember that the tiny nation of Israel was wedged between superpowers Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt to the south, Persia.

They surrounded this tiny nation of Israel. And so these monsters here stand for these empires, these kings, these kingdoms.

The first is like a lion with the wings of an eagle and it probably represents Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. Archaeologists have actually dug up the symbol of a winged lion as a symbol of Babylonia.

The lion is the king of beasts, the eagle is the king of birds. So here you have a king and it's probably in Nebuchadnezzar and there's a strange little bit about its wings being torn off and standing on two legs and being given the mind or the heart of a human being and that's probably a reference to something that happened earlier in the book when Nebuchadnezzar wanted to be worshipped as if he was God and Daniel had to tell him that he wasn't and to prove that he wasn't he became like an animal and that happened until he repented and acknowledged the God of heaven and to a certain extent was humanized and that's just a brief reminder that God's people can actually humanize some of these monstrous kingdoms to an extent not to a great extent but to an extent they can be humanized by the presence of God's people as salt and light people like Joseph in Egypt people like Daniel in the book of Daniel so the first is probably

Babylon and this one is followed by a beast like a bear and it's ready to pounce on its prey it's got three ribs in its mouth that's the remains of its last dinner but it's still hungry and it's about to pounce again and this is probably the empire that followed the Babylonian empire the Medo-Persian empire the next superpower that came along led by a man called Cyrus and that was an even bigger empire than the Babylonian empire and Israel became part of that kingdom and then the third beast probably stands for the Greek empire which defeated the Persian empire and took over and that was led by a man called Alexander sometimes called Alexander the Great and it's pictured as being like a leopard with four wings in other words it's twice as fast as that lion with two wings and it's got four heads in other words it can look in all directions at the same time it covers the four corners of the earth and it swiftly conquers the world and that's probably a picture of

[14:00] Alexander the Great who died when he was 33 years of age and apparently he died in tears because there was nothing left for him to conquer so those are the first three beasts and that brings us to the fourth beast and we haven't seen anything yet because those first three beasts are all beasts that are to a certain extent familiar to us we know what lions are we know what eagles are we know what bears are we know what leopards are but the fourth beast is in a class by itself it's like nothing known to man it's a monster the passage uses words like terrifying frightening very powerful there's iron teeth that tear its prey to pieces and crushes and devours its victims and tramples on whatever is left and its feet have bronze claws this is a monstrous beast with ten horns and horns in the bible speak of power you know when a rhinoceros raises its horn or one of those buffaloes raises its horns you know it's going to charge and you know you're in trouble and the horn therefore speaks of strength and power this animal has ten horns and the word ten is the number ten is probably a symbol there for totality for completion and this probably stands for the mighty power of Rome and then arising from this fourth monster and arising from the ten horns there's one little horn an eleventh horn a little horn that arises from the ten horns remember this is cartoon this is pictures don't try and describe it it's impossible it's a little horn covered with eyes and with a human mouth that spews boastful blasphemy and it overthrows three of its rival ten horns and it seems to be this little horn the embodiment of human evil the embodiment of rebellion against God and hostility to God's people and it oppresses the people of God and persecutes the people of God and wages war against God's holy people

Daniel said and it takes divine powers to himself it overturns the laws of God which have been established for generations look at verse 25 we didn't read that but verse 25 he will speak against the most high and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the law things that have been taken for granted by everybody for centuries he will try and change them he knows better than God he's a blasphemer he takes divine honour to himself just as Nebuchadnezzar did earlier in this book and he defeats God's people it appears that he's triumphed over the people of God according

to the rest of the chapter now Christians differ about this and there's a lot we haven't time to go into tonight there are some people who think that this figure is a figure from the past some people think it's describing a man called

Antiochus Epiphanes who reigned about 170 years 165 years 165 years before Jesus he was a Syrian king and he called himself Epiphanes which means manifestation and he actually said he was a manifestation of the divine and he persecuted the Jewish people and he for three and a half years they couldn't worship God and he insisted on a pig being sacrificed in the Jewish temple and he was eventually overcome by the Jewish people some people think Daniel is describing Antiochus Epiphanes but if he is then there's more to it than that Antiochus Epiphanes is a foreshadowing of something to come and I'll tell you why I know that turn over to

Revelation chapter 13 the book of Revelation chapter 13 Revelation chapter 13 page 1243 sorry 1242 Revelation chapter 13 verse 1 I saw a beast coming out of the sea have you heard something like that before he had ten horns and seven heads with ten crowns on his horns 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 those of a lion so this is a kind of combination of all those kingdoms in Daniel chapter 7 the dragon that's the devil 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 worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast and they also worshipped 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 42 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 the 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 John there in his apocalyptic vision seems to envisage a future figure just like this figure that we've been reading about in Daniel chapter 7 who will be worshipped by the whole world apart from those whose names are written in the lamb's book of life and you might say to me well this is symbolism this is apocalyptic it's not normal literature but if you just turn to what 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 which is on page

[21 : 18] I'm assuming you're with the same page numbers as me it's on page 1189 1189 verse 3 chapter 2 verse 3 2 Thessalonians Paul says don't let anyone deceive you in any way for that day that's the day of coming of Jesus will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed the man doomed to destruction he will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped so that he sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you those things that's interesting isn't it I mean would you tell a new church these things he planted the church in Thessalonica he was only there for three Sabbath according to Acts chapter 17 but amongst the basic teaching he gave to this new church there was teaching about this coming rebellion which would take in and deceive the whole world and would be head up by somebody he calls the man of sin he's not talking about the devil he's talking about a man the man of sin ok well

Christians differ as I say and some Christians over the years have identified him with Hitler or Stalin or Mao Zedong or Pol Pot or Kim Jong Un and in my youth people used to tell me that it was the EU especially when there was only ten nations in the EU they used to say that that's what the beast was it was the EU but there's more than ten nations in the EU now so that's a problem so some people think well there's always a beast like this there's always this is a symbol of something that is always there something that the church is always going to contend with there's always going to be Hitlers and Stalins and Maos and people like the leaders of modern China who I'm told are insisting that churches take down the ten commandments and the crosses from the walls of their churches and replace them pictures of the present leaders of the nation there's always going to be people like that and basically what you've got here

I think is that when human beings in rebellion against God take power to themselves you end up with something cruel and monstrous somebody said all power tends to corrupt absolute power corrupts absolutely when human beings when a human being or a human system achieves absolute power because it is fallen because it is against God it is monstrous and that's true of all these individuals all these kingdoms you might say well surely you're not including the British

Empire in that are you well ask the hundreds of thousands of slaves who were transported from the west coast of Africa and those who were sick were thrown overboard and then when they got to America they were sold sometimes separate from their wives or husband and their children to different masters to work themselves to death in the sugar cane and the cotton fields of America or the West Indies maybe the British Empire isn't as bad as some but it's a monster all human power turns out to be monster okay and it would seem to me that the book of Revelation and Paul in 2 Thessalonians seems to teach that this this

God hating church persecuting system will have a final form at the end as John says in 1 John the Antichrist will come but there are many Antichrists there are foreshadowing of the coming Antichrist so we've always got to be in the lookout for this kind of thing and we've always got to be willing like Daniel to go to the lion's den if necessary or like Shadrach Meshach and Abednego to go to the fiery furnace if necessary that's the point of apocalyptic to encourage God's people to keep going okay so it's a bit of a nightmare isn't it a bit of a nightmare Daniel chapter 7 but there's a second part to the dream you'll be glad to know and

Daniel describes scene 5 and you might think well what is it next what what can come after this love is it is it the fifth monster the fifth beast no verse 9 as I looked thrones were set in place and the ancient of days took his seat his clothing was as white as snow the hair of his head was white like wool and so on and then verse 13 in my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man the contrast couldn't be greater here is the ultimate throne here is the ultimate empire Daniel moves from the chaos of earth to the calm of heaven here is the throne says Daniel that really matters and he describes the occupant of the throne as the ancient of days white hair now again this is symbolism picture language

[28 : 11] Daniel knew that God is not a white hair old man he's talking about God's eternity God has been around a long time he's seen it all before white hair speaks of age but also I like to think speaks of wisdom and Daniel is saying earthly kingdoms come and go but God is permanent totally unimpressed totally unfazed by it all before the mountains were born before you gave birth to the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting you are God the mountains are unchanging aren't they they just don't change they're just there and we come and go and history changes but those mountains are just the same and they remind us of

God your throne oh God was established from above you are from everlasting and these other thrones appear for a while and then they disappear but here's a throne that will never change and the one seated on the throne will always be seated on the throne and the dazzling whiteness speaks of his holiness his purity and the fire also speaks of his purity consuming or refining or punishing sin burning against sin and the clouds speak of the presence of God fire in the bible particularly associated with clouds as well often speak of the presence of God the burning bush mount sinai the fire and the cloud on the mountain top the pillar of fire by night the pillar of cloud by day so this is God this is the presence of God and we're in the awesome presence of God here and not only is this throne an eternal throne it is also a throne of judgment a throne of justice it's a judge's throne verse 10 the court was seated and the books were open so there's a record of all the blasphemy all the rebellion of mankind the books are open verdicts are about to be passed sentences are about to be given handed down some are about to be condemned others are about to be vindicated and a mere decision a mere word from this judge and this beast this little horn is effortlessly destroyed all his boasted pomp and show come to nothing his pride and his power worthless his words are silenced

God is on the throne and then in the very presence of the eternal God amazingly Daniel sees another figure and the figure is not a beast he's not a monster he is one like a son of man and this son of man receives this kingdom verse 14 he was given authority glory and sovereign power all peoples nations and men of every language worship him his dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed and he shares this kingdom with his people with his saints and he's there in the presence of God one like a son of man how can he be there what is a man doing in the presence of God what is a man not a sinful man what is a man doing in the holy presence of God surely humans must expect to be destroyed and punished at this ultimate judgment see but no this man comes to God in the clouds of heaven and receives the kingdom would it be nice to know more about this man

I'm sure Daniel would have loved to have known more about it Daniel didn't have the new testament you have to wait for a few hundred years to find out more about this man and when you come to the

gospels in the new testament you find the favourite title that Jesus had for himself he was constantly using it the son of man constantly referred to himself as the son of man and he even spoke of the coming of the son of man in the clouds of heaven referring to himself but there are many passages where the son of man about the son of man where it's not his glory that is emphasized and his kingdom it's his suffering in the new testament the son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost the son of man foxes have holes birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head the son of man didn't come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many the son of man must go to Jerusalem and be rejected and spat upon and crucified and rise again so Jesus God's man the new Adam the head of the human race the head of the church Jesus the head of the new humanity the man the true Israel he came and he gave himself for our sins he gave himself for the sins of his people he took the curse of sin upon himself the head of the church for all his members he was trampled by the beast on the cross of Calvary but at his trial when the high priest asked him to tell him straight whether he was the Messiah he said I am and you will see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven and sitting on the right hand of God I'm going to be vindicated [35 : 05] Jesus said even at his trial I'm going to come in the clouds of heaven and you will see it so it's probably referenced not just to his second coming but to his ascension coming in the clouds of heaven you'll see it's going to happen in your lifetime says Jesus to the high priest you'll see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven and as we know Jesus on the third day was raised from the dead and forty days after that he ascended into glory he ascended into heaven where he is enthroned in the presence of God and one day he will come with the clouds of heaven he will come from the clouds of heaven to judge the world and to consummate his kingdom and to utterly overthrow all the beastly kingdoms of the world and to share his kingdom with the people for whom he died I think that in verses 9 to verses 13 to 15 13 and 14

Daniel Daniel telescopes the future as the Old Testament often does Daniel didn't realise that there was going to be an interval between coming to God in the clouds of heaven and coming from God in with the clouds of heaven he didn't realise there was going to be a long interval the age of the church what's the purpose of that interval if Jesus has been raised and exalted if he's king now which he is if he's received the kingdom now which he has why this interval before he comes again in glory well the simple reason for that is that the only reason for that is to give men and women all over the world all the nations of the world the opportunity to hear about the king to hear about the kingdom that's the reason for the delay that's the reason for the interval that's why we're here if we're the church of Jesus Christ to tell the world about the king and to command people to submit to his rule one day every knee will bow to him and confess that he is Lord and that's why after his resurrection and before his ascension just before his ascension at the end of Matthew's gospel he brought his disciples to him and he said all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me go to all nations preaching making disciples by baptizing and teaching people to observe all that I have commanded them I'm the king he's there the kingdom has come there's got to be this time for people to be invited to come into the kingdom to be commanded to be urged to come into the kingdom to submit to Jesus and then one day he will come in his glory and the beasts will pass away and all the nations will worship him and serve him forever his dominion an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom one that will not be destroyed this is the kingdom that is worth living for and this is the kingdom that is worth dying for Jesus is king so the purpose of this strange kind of literature apocalyptic is not to scare people it is to encourage God's people and that's the purpose of this passage let's sing about the king the risen king at your feet we fall mighty risen lord it's number 143 143 clear we thank you that the lord jesus christ has risen he has defeated death thank you that you have raised him to glory to the clouds into the very presence of god thank you that while in heaven he stands no tongue can bid us thence depart our name is written on his hands our name is graven on his heart we know that while in heaven he stands no tongue can bid us thence depart keep us looking to jesus it's so easy lord to look at the world around us it's so easy to be discouraged as we see as we've already referred to this evening your laws being deliberately absolutely deliberately blatantly reversed ignored reversed it's so easy to look at the growing amount of persecution throughout the world things things are getting harder and harder for your people but lord we pray that you help us to believe that the monsters are coming to an end the monster is coming to an end and he's going to be replaced eternally by a man that man who you have appointed our lord and saviour jesus christ we thank you for him keep us faithful to

him this week give us opportunities to witness for him in word and deed keep us from sin part us
with your blessing we pray in jesus name amen