

Daniel 7:1-12

The End of the Matter

Reading books by George Orwell is a right of passage for American high school students. George Orwell is probably best known for his book *1984* (written in 1949), in which he introduced the idea that "Big Brother is watching." Today it seems strangely prophetic of the ability of big government to monitor your phone and e-mail.

But the Orwell book that I liked best was *Animal Farm*, written in 1945. It was a story about how the farm animals took over an English farm and established "equality" only to discover the pigs became "more equal" and used the new structure to become fat and wealthy. It was a blatant political satire about the failure of Russian Communism.

With the Fall of the Soviet Union we were finally able to see the lavish Crimean summer mansions of the Soviet communist leaders while much of the rest of the country looked like a third world nation. Once again, Orwell was prophetic. That's what we have in Daniel 7, a dream of four animals, and much of it is about political and military power. The corruption and misuse of power. You might call it "God's Animal Farm."

The first half of Daniel, which we finished up last week, is the personal section. Chapters 1-6 deal with personal stories about Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, Nebuchadnezzar, and the writing on the wall.

The Second half of Daniel (chapters 7-12) contains the prophetic section. There are four visions contained in these last six chapters: The vision of the four animals (here in chapter 7); the vision of the Ram and the Goat (chapter 8); the vision of the Seventy weeks (chapter 9); and a vision of the End Times contained in chapters 10-12.

I'd like us to begin this morning with an important statement in Daniel Chapter 12. **Daniel 12:9 pg 871**

In other words, some of the prophecy of Daniel won't be fully understood until what the Bible calls "the time of the end." That phrase "the time of the end" is used 5 times in the Bible, all in the Book of Daniel. When it's used with any time markers, like in chapter 8 or chapter 11 we can see it refers to the final time of

tribulation before Christ institutes His Messianic kingdom. So we won't understand all the details yet.

There there are two warnings here.

First, don't become obsessed with Bible prophecy. I've known some Christians who've gone overboard when it comes to prophecy. It becomes their only biblical interest. That's because it really is interesting to hold the newspaper in one hand and Bible prophecy in the other and say, "Yep, that's what God said would happen."

David Dykes writes, "...some have become so obsessed with prophecy they... sweat and strain to figure out the meaning of some horn growing from the foot of some symbolic animal that they never use their feet to take the gospel to people who need Jesus.

They become so preoccupied with the tiny details that they miss the larger picture."

Not only that, but over the years many well meaning Christians have made Christians seem foolish by identifying every current event as spoken of in the Bible. And this is not a new phenomenon. Christians have been identifying individuals as the anti-christ since the Roman Emperors and they've all been wrong. Be careful. So warning number 1 :Don't become obsessed. We won't understand it all.

Warning number 2: Don't be afraid of Bible prophecy. We will understand the general plan of God for the last days. Some people read these prophecies and consider them to be kind of a tangled knot beyond their ability to unravel. God has put these prophecies here for a reason. All scripture is profitable.

The second passage of Scripture I'd like us to look at this morning is Isaiah 45:18-21 pg 702 (also) 46:10

If there's one thing you get out our study of the prophecies in Daniel I hope it's this: a realization of the sovereignty of God in human history. History is "His story". God is in control. Evil will flourish, but God will triumph. God will work all according to His good pleasure. He is God and there is no other.

Ronald Wallace says of prophetic passages, "Scholars debate, more fanciful

minds revel in speculation, and ordinary readers tend to look quickly the other way."

I think that's so true when we look into the prophetic or apocalyptic sections. They are hard to understand: there are visions, etc. So when we come across these passages, we often look ahead and quickly go to the next section. Of course, I think it's better to do that than to put the wrong interpretation on it. But trying to understanding it accurately is greatly beneficial for us.

Let me give you three reasons why I believe we can benefit from this part of Scripture.

1. We can't understand all the details, but we can understand the trends of the things being predicted. As we read this section of prophecy, we may realize that evil will increase. Times may get worse. Satan will work. We can understand the trend. Without prophecy, we wouldn't understand that. We'd wonder how it is if God says He will rule, the world is getting worse? But this section of prophecy helps us understand the prediction until it suddenly comes to an end when Christ returns.
2. We can't identify all the events that are predicted, but we can understand some events to help us. There are some main events that are coming. We can't understand everything that is coming; even scholars have different perspectives. But for example, the establishment of Israel as a nation after 1900 years of being scattered is obviously prophetically significant.
3. The heart of the message will help us in our daily lives. In reality, as we live in this world, we are concerned about school, marriage, paying the bills, our future.

Well, although we are concerned about these things, the reality that should dominate our lives, our feelings, and our circumstances is the plan of God. We must look at what is happening in this world. God is showing us His plans through sections of prophecy such as these.

Therefore, don't be distracted by the confusion of a few details. They may confuse us; they confuse me, too. If we focus too much on the details, we will probably have an imperfect understanding of these prophecies. But rather we should look at what we can know for sure and the main message of this section.

Even the author, Daniel, after seeing the visions, admits that even he does not understand. But one message we're gonna keep getting is that God wins!!! He is victorious and powerful, and we are on the right side.

With these thoughts in mind let's turn to **Daniel Chapter 7. Pg 864 Read vs 1**

Up until this chapter each chapter of Daniel was in chronological order. In other words we were given events in the order that they happened.

Now we're taken back to the "first year of Belshazzar," or 553 BC. Daniel had a dream from God and wrote down the main points for us. This was a troubling dream. **In fact look over at vs 15 (read)**

Daniel was troubled because he didn't have the interpretation yet and as we read the dream you'll see why he was troubled. This was like a nightmare.

I. The Rise of the Kingdom of the Anti-Christ
Read 2-3

Winds have been given by God for our benefit. From sailing ships to weather patterns that are crucial to our existence, winds have been given by the hand of God. But the sovereign God who controls the winds can also use them for judgment. Here a storm arises that stirs up the great sea.

In Hebrew usage "the great sea" is a proper noun and means the Mediterranean. It's used 13 times in Scripture and can clearly be identified. The first reference is in the Book of Numbers, coming from 1400 BC. Five of those references are from Ezekiel and Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel. Over 800 years later the term "the great sea" was being used for the Mediterranean.

That's important because we want to identify the kingdoms that Daniel sees in his dream. Now we have a geographical reference. They are to arise in the Mediterranean area. A common interpretation of these kingdoms is that they are the same as the ones in Nebuchadnezzar's image.

I want to challenge that thinking this morning. Go back with me for just a moment to **Daniel 2 Read vs 37-40**

When we studied Daniel 2 we identified those kingdoms. Babylon, Medio-

Persia, Greece, and the coming kingdom of anti-christ. The identifying factor wasn't just history but a prophetically important aspect of geography. Their capitals were the city of Babylon.

Just to go back to the actual message from Daniel 2, I want to read from my notes:

Think about this. Babylon existed since the days of Nimrod in Genesis 10 but it wasn't until Nebuchadnezzar made Babylon the center of a world empire that it mattered prophetically.

The Medes and Persians had a long history but it wasn't until Cyrus made Babylon the center of his rule that the second kingdom of prophecy appeared.

The Grecian states had been developing for centuries before Alexander but prophecy takes no account of this. It wasn't until Alexander made Babylon his world-center that the third kingdom of prophecy became present. Alexander died in Babylon.

With that in mind, what would you think would be the identifying mark of the fourth kingdom?

See, we're not interested in every kingdom that's significant politically. We're interested in every kingdom that's significant prophetically.

The prophetic significance revolves around Babylon. And as far as Rome goes not only was there never a time when Babylon was it's capital, Rome never even controlled Babylon at the height of its power.

I believe without question that Rome has nothing to do with Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The fourth kingdom hasn't risen yet. The fourth kingdom will be centered in the middle east with it's head in the rebuilt city of Babylon.

Now back to Daniel 7. Each of these kingdoms rises from the Mediterranean. The common interpretation of this "sea" is a sea of people from over the earth. Amazingly that interpretation comes from the same people in our camp who would stress a literal interpretation of the Bible.

The four beasts are to arise in the Mediterranean area; they “came up from the sea, the Great sea.” Babylon was 500 miles from the Mediterranean. It worked its way there but it didn’t arise there. Persia was still further. It arose east of Mesopotamia.

What were these beasts like? **Read 4-8**

One writer said, “Sounds like Daniel ate pepperoni pizza, drank buttermilk, and then rode a roller coaster before he went to bed!”

Thankfully God explains it. Skip down to the last part of verse 16, **Read 16 b-17.**

NKJV translates this “four kings which arise out of the earth.” Actually the verb “arise” is a future in Hebrew. That’s why the KJV says “four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.” NIV says “will arise.”

Babylon had already risen to world supremacy and was about to fall.

So these are future powers that were going to arise out of the Mediterranean area. These four beasts all came up during one tempest, each struggling for supremacy, only to be vanquished by the last.

G. H. Lang writes, “No such terrific tornado has ever swept the Mediterranean region. The conflicts between Rome and Carthage or Caser and Anthony were mere passing whiffs, with long intervals between, as compared with the tempest described by Daniel. Nor have four such powers in rapid succession ever struggled for supremacy. History shows nothing that at all answers to these features.”

It’s been said, “The control of the Middle East is the key to world influence.” I believe we need to keep our eyes on the Middle east. We think The US or Europe is the center of the world. They’re not. It’s always the Middle East. All geographical directions are given from the middle east. Armageddon, the Messianic Kingdom, everything involves the middle east. God has used Europe and the US in wonderful way. The concept of world missions and most of the missionary work of the last century has come out of Europe and the US. But that doesn’t make us the center prophetically.

Today Europe's post-Christian and we're following on the fast track.

Who are these Mediterranean powers? We only know their characteristics: at least for the first three.

The first will be majestic, strong, lion-like, and quick until its wings are plucked.

The second will be ponderous, slow, but destructive. Verse 5 says, "they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'" I take it that's God's angelic messengers. God is orchestrating the final events of world history.

The third beast is a Leopard with wings and four heads. Sleek, quick, and a confederacy of 4 powers.

Then there is the fourth beast. Different than all the other beasts before it.

Since he was a teenager Daniel had witnessed the power and strength of kings and kingdoms. But he had never seen any thing like this. This is the coming anti-christ and his kingdom being described here. We're going to talk about anti-christ and his kingdom in more detail in two weeks (That will make a nice Father's Day message). Right now though we begin to see just what this Satanic world power will be like.

Since Adam's fall in the garden Satan has been working to overthrow the kingdom of God. There's been an evolution and development of the evil that resides in the human heart. In this final world power all that evil comes together. It focuses in the rule of the anti-Christ.

Talking about the evil that dwells in the human heart isn't a real popular subject these days. It sounds so negative. "God is in you" sounds a whole lot better doesn't it? "The fullness of human potential just needs to be tapped" sounds a lot more pleasing.

But if we're going to be honest with the Biblical record and the record of history (to say nothing about the 6:00 o'clock news) we're going to have to admit the truth.

It doesn't matter whether you're talking about ancient history or modern history.

It doesn't matter whether you're talking about the ancient Assyrians who were known for skinning their enemies alive or the modern rebels in Sierra Leone who hack the arm and legs off of children. Down inside the human heart is a Satanic evil.

In this final world power all that evil comes together. It focuses in the rule of the anti-Christ.

Owen Bourgaize writes, Daniel used the imagery of his day to describe the beast - I wonder what he would have used today? Perhaps a beast with eyes sending out laser beams and its mouth breathing out nuclear poison, its limbs dispatching intercontinental ballistic missiles. Nothing changes for the better as mankind progresses in knowledge - pagans merely become educated pagans.

Now hold your place here in Daniel and turn with me to **Revelation 13 pg 1183**

Like Daniel, The Revelation is a book filled with prophecy. It's visions that God gives the Apostle John so that he could write them down for us. It's a blue print for the end times.

Read 13:1-2

This should sound familiar to us. Here's a vision very similar to Daniel's only it focuses on Daniel's fourth kingdom. The beast comes up out of the sea, has ten horns, and notice: he is like a leopard, has the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion. This fourth beast has all the characteristics of these other Mediterranean kingdoms with one difference. The end of verse two says, "And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority."

Who is the dragon? **Look back at preceding chapter (12) vs 9**

Satan has always been active in our world. He's sought to corrupt governments all down through time. But in this government he's in the driver's seat. He's in direct control. This is the kingdom of the anti-christ.

Now go back to Daniel 7

G H Lang lists a series of things we know about the anti-christ's kingdom from Daniel's dream:

- 1) *It is "dreadful and terrible."* He writes, "It acts to the full upon the maxim that a war is soonest won by ruthless terrorizing of the enemy people, that they may the sooner submit."
- 2) *It is "exceedingly strong."* It has the power, it has the materials, it has the resources.
- 3) *It has the "power to break in pieces."* No one's going to stand before it.
- 4) *It doesn't leave any opposition still standing.* It "devours." It's like the Nazi war machine in it's early days only a thousand times more powerful.
- 5) *What it doesn't annihilate it crushes and subjugates.* It "tramples the residue with its feet." All organized resistance is put down.
- 6) *In size, appearance, strength, cruelty and greed it will bear no resemblance to any kingdom that has preceded it.* It may have their characteristics but they won't even compare.
- 7) *The extent of its power* **Read vs 23** Some Bible interpreters say all of Daniel's prophecies have been fulfilled in history. No empire has yet to fulfill this prediction! The anti-christ will rule the world. He'll be given his throne by ten kings. Their territory will become his empire. But he will be so strong and so pervasive that all the rest of the world submits to him.

Pretty bleak picture we have so far, isn't it? What's our hope in all of this? Remember although this kingdom rises and evil seems to have full sway;

II. *God is on His Throne!*

Read vs 9

Let me introduce you to the Ancient of Days. This is probably where most people get the idea that God is an old man with a long white beard and long white hair. "Ancient" doesn't mean "old" here. It means eternal, ageless. The Bible says, "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God." (Psalm 90:2) Jesus said it like this, "I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . I am the First and the Last." (Revelation 1:8, 17). He is everything from beginning to end and in between.

The Ancient of Days is a reference to the Triune God. His white clothing speaks of His purity. His white hair has nothing to do with age, it pictures His Holy, sinless nature. This description of God sounds exactly like what the Apostle John saw in Revelation 1:14, "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire."

Let's keep reading. **Read vs 10**

Here's the deal: like Daniel we must not be distracted by the beasts so as to fail to look at what is set high above the beasts. It is from this throne that these kingdoms are being controlled. All the time Daniel gazes at this heavenly vision he can hear the distraction in the background of the mouth of the little horn speaking "pompous words.". But 'the Ancient of Days' is seated upon the throne reigning over everything. From this throne he is head over all things - including those beasts. He is like a divine lion-tamer, and it is when he gives permission that the beasts are allowed emerge. When Daniel takes his eyes off that throne the world around him is in a state of turbulence, but when he looks up there is the glorious peace of an unshakeable throne.

Finally then, he sees the what the beast's end is. **Read vs 11**

Revelation 20 gives us even more details. Christ returns and defeats the anti-christ and his armies. Satan is bound for a thousand years. Christ rules from the throne of David in Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom. Satan is loosed for a short time, and then comes the final judgment.

We read there, And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth...

This is the final judgment of the lost. Christians won't be there, only the unsaved, those who are spiritually dead without Christ.

Now just imagine that I'm not saved - and that I will be there. I might have been

a wicked person who never regarded God - or maybe I was a very good, moral, honest person - but I just never believed you had to trust Jesus Christ - after all there are all those religions - who knows which one is best?

Or better yet, let's imagine that I'm a church member. I filled out some paper and even got dunked in the baptistry. I gave money to the church and even did some work for God and felt pretty good about it. I just was never born again, I was a participant in the Christian Religion, but I never had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Whatever the case, I'm standing there. What books will be opened before me? I believe that there will be at least three:

1. Books of Works

Every evil thought, every wicked deed, and every corrupt word that I have ever spoken will be recorded in the book and revealed at judgement. Jesus said in Matt. 12:36, "But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken." I think, "Uh, oh." But it won't just be my evil works and evil word but all my "good works" will be recorded as a testimony as well. Even if I filled up ten times more pages with good works than bad, fifty times more pages of good thoughts than wicked, a hundred times more pages of good words than evil words, still I will be lost. There are not enough good works in the history of the world to allow someone to earn their way into heaven. Another book that will be there is:

2. The Bible

In John 12 Jesus said, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me—the very words which I have spoken will condemn him at the last day." That means that the Word of God, the Bible will be Exhibit A at the judgement. It will be there as a testimony that I did not heed it. You see, this book, the Bible, will either be "words of life" that lead me to God or they will one day stand in judgement against me.

But wait, there's still a chance, because I see another, large book over to the side, it is

3. The Book of Life

When you trust Jesus alone for salvation, your name is written down in the Lamb's Book of life. Now the book of life will be there at this final judgement.

Now, once again, take a moment and imagine that I'm are there, lost without Christ. Now, I'm expecting my name to be there, after all I was religious. I was a

church member, I gave money for the Lord's work. So I'm there before God and he says to his stenographic angel, "Is his name written in the Book of Life?"

The angel takes a moment to search. "No, Lord his name isn't there." I imagine I'm going to say, "Objection, your honor! Look again! Here's my church membership card, here's my baptismal certificate, and here's my contribution record. Surely there's a mistake!"

The angel looks again. "No, Lord. His name is not there." I say, "Lord! Lord! There must be some mistake!!" The Lord looks at me and says, "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven... Depart from me, I never knew you."

The most important question that you or I can ask ourselves is, "Is my name written down in the Lamb's Book of Life?" You say, "Nobody can know for sure." Oh yes you can. That's why Jesus said to "rejoice because your names are written down in the Lamb's Book of Life." He wouldn't be so cruel to tell us to rejoice over something that you can't be sure about. Is your name in the Book of Life? Are you sure?

Now let me give you a different scene because I know I won't be at the Final Judgment. You know how I know? Because a number of years ago I settled my case out of court.

I realized I was a sinner and I could never save myself. I knew one day I would face judgment. I personally went to the Judge. I admitted that I was guilty and I deserved the very harshest punishment. Do you know what this Judge did? He stepped down off the bench, wrapped me in the robe of His righteousness then He became my advocate, my defense attorney.

But He did more than just plead my case. He took my punishment.

He became my substitute in the execution chamber and when I put my trust in the Judge, Jesus, my name was written down in the book of heaven's court. The Judge wrote, "not guilty beside my name."

The anti-christ and his kingdom are coming. It's part of God's final plan for the end. Believers won't be here for that time. We'll be taken in the rapture. But remember ultimately judgment is coming. And you will either be judged in Jesus or you will be judged by Jesus. The choice is yours.

Daniel's vision of the future is amazing. But for each of us, it should be a solemn reminder that God is in control. And one day all of those who don't know Him will be sentenced at the Great White Throne Judgement. Do you know Jesus?