

Future Seen
February 20, 2022
Allen Power

Daniel 7:1-14

Opening: *“Why do I need to study this?”* Did you ever say that when you were in school? Hasn't every student said it? Perhaps the struggle was with understanding Shakespeare, physical science, or higher math. Some loved interpreting the “Bard” and others got by thanks to Cliff's Notes. Some loved the precision of math and others just wanted to know how to balance a checkbook. Some saw no point in learning history; others couldn't get enough of it. [Personal story: Physical science in college: *“I just need the grade to graduate.”*]

Why do they make kids learn all these different things? What's the benefit?

In chapter seven of Daniel's “journal” the book takes a definite turn. We go from stories about God's faithfulness to Daniel and his friends to Bible prophecy. When confronted with Bible prophecy with its cryptic visions, beasts, and timetables, we might ask, *“Why do I need to study this? It's all so confusing!”*

Here's the truth that should change our minds about Bible prophecy: When we see how Old Testament prophecy has been accurately fulfilled so far in history, it gives us confidence in Bible prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled. It also reminds us God has always been in control of events, past, present, and future. Finally, Bible prophecy points to Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

We think of prophecy as God giving warnings and instructions to a prophet saying, *“Go tell them this.”* In Daniel, the prophecies come as visions that he wrote down verbatim from God. They are written as ‘apocalyptic’ [literature] — “which means that it ‘reveals’ what is going on behind the scenes of history.”¹ Let's begin reading what 68-year-old Daniel saw in this vision from God:

Daniel 7:1–14 (ESV) — 1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. **2** Daniel declared, “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 out of the sea, different from one another. **4** The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. **5** And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ **6** After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. **7** After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and

exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. **8** I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

- Those are some strange beasts! What in the world could they represent?
- Verse 17: The four beasts are *“four kings who shall arise out of the earth.”*ⁱⁱ
- Scholars debate the identity of these kings/empires.
- The Life Application Study Bible summarizes the consensus:

*“The lion with eagle’s wings represents Babylon with its swift conquests (statues of winged lions have been recovered from Babylon’s ruins). The bear that ravaged the lion is Medo-Persia. The three ribs in its mouth represent the conquests of three major enemies [Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia.] The leopard is Greece. Its wings show the swiftness of Alexander the Great’s campaign as he conquered much of the civilized world in four years (334–330 B.C.). The leopard’s four heads are the four divisions of the Greek Empire [four generals] after Alexander’s death. The fourth beast points to both Rome and the end times. Many Bible scholars believe that the horns correspond to 10 kings who will reign shortly before God sets up his everlasting kingdom. These 10 kings had still not come to power at the time of John’s vision recorded in the book of Revelation (Revelation 17:12). The little horn is a future human ruler or the Antichrist (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). God is illustrating the final end of all worldly kingdoms in contrast to his eternal kingdom.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

- We see two important points here:
- First point: Hundreds of years later, those empires rose and fell in the same order and number as in this vision. The vision was very accurate! Fulfilled Bible prophecy gives us confidence in prophecy yet to be fulfilled.
- David Jeremiah said, *“Studying prophecy fulfilled in history gives me confidence to believe every single word in this book. If God said it, He will do it, and you can count on it.”*^v
- Second point: Evil empires have come and gone yet God is still on the throne. What happened to Babylon, Medo-Persia, the Roman Empire?
- Our lesson writer: *“People should not place their ultimate hope in the kingdoms or rulers of this earth. The beasts Daniel saw frightened him, yet they only ruled by God’s authority.”*^{vi}

Back in **Daniel 2:20–21 (ESV)** — **20** Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. **21** He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

- With verse nine, the scene in the vision changes to God’s courtroom.

9 “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. **10** A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

- When do you think this courtroom scene takes place?
- Who is the Ancient of Days taking the seat of judgment?
- White clothing - holiness and purity. White hair - the wisdom of age.
- Fire may represent the refining fire of God’s judgment of sinful humanity.
- Thousands stand before God and “the books were opened.”

Revelation 5:11 (ESV) — 11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

Revelation 20:12 (ESV) — 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

11 “I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. **12** As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

- It is believed that the “little horn” represents the coming antichrist.

Revelation 20:10 (ESV) — 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. **14** And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

- “*One like a son of man*” – Jesus called Himself the Son of Man. In Matthew 26:64 He said “...*you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.*”
- **Daniel 7:27 (ESV) — 27** And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.’
- **Revelation 11:15 (ESV) — 15** Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world

has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

- The point: Jesus will reign on earth again and evil will be defeated forever!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- First, here are two words of caution for two types of Bible students:
- Some students: *"I don't enjoy studying prophecy! What's the point?"*
 - Caution: Don't throw the babies out with the bath water.
 - God put this in scripture for a reason; look for the reason.
- Other students of scripture: *"I absolutely love studying prophecy!"*
 - Caution: Don't let speculation on interpretation overshadow revelation. Focus on the point not the particulars.
 - Don't get so caught up in interpretation of the images and symbols that you miss the real point God wants to reveal to us.
- What IS the point from Daniel 7? Let's review four of them:
 1. God has always been in control of events, past, present, and future.
 - a. No matter how dark things seem in this world, God is orchestrating events for our good and His glory! We can REST in that truth!
 2. Fulfilled Bible prophecy gives us confidence in prophecy yet to be fulfilled.
 - a. The best proofs of the accuracy of scripture are fulfilled prophecy.
 - b. Steve Lawson said, *"100 years before Cyrus assumed the throne, his name in Isaiah 45 verse 1 is recorded. Would you like to predict who the President of the United States will be 100 years from today? It's impossible. But here is the Bible giving name and country of these rulers long before they're even birthed and come onto the scene."*^{vi}
 - c. Want even more proof? Just look at the prophecies about Jesus!
 - d. *"Conservatively, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His earthly ministry."* <https://www.gotquestions.org/prophecies-of-Jesus.html>
 - e. The Old Testament prophecies about Jesus that He fulfilled exactly are proof that we can believe our Bible!
 3. Evil empires have come and gone yet God is still on the throne.
 - a. Any late breaking updates on what's going on with the Roman Empire or Alexander the Great?
 - b. They've come and gone but we're still studying scripture!
 4. The major point: Jesus will return to reign on earth and evil will be defeated forever.
 - a. We've heard it said, "I've read the back of the book and WE WIN!"
 - b. We win because JESUS WINS!
 - c. Daniel said it well in verse 14: *"And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*
- THAT is something to celebrate every day. It's a why we study prophecy!

ⁱ Knowles, A. (2001). [*The Bible guide*](#) (1st Augsburg books ed., p. 347).

ⁱⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Da 7:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 156043-156047). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

^{iv} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VetuFxLG6Po> 17 minutes and 40 seconds

^v Explore the Bible Leaders Guide – Lifeway 2021

^{vi} <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/fulfilled-prophecy-demonstrates-divine-inspiration-scripture>