

Abide in Me

John 15:4

*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



Volume 9 - Number 9

The Week of December 10, 2023

The Hinge of History
The World Before Jesus
Daniel 7:1-27

Welcome to the second week of Advent. It is no exaggeration to say that Daniel 7 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. In this chapter, Daniel has visions of things to come. It is a panoramic sweep of the history of the world. It depicts four empires that behave like beasts and predicts their eventual destruction. The central truth in this epic picture is a kingdom that shall never end that is given to the Son of Man and inherited by the saints of the Most High.

OBSERVATION (*What does the passage say?*)

Before meeting with your Growth Group, read through the passage at least twice and perform the following prompts:

- In the left margin of verses 1-14 write, *The Vision of the Sea Beasts*.
- In the left margin of verses 15-27 write, *The Explanation of the Sea Beasts*.
- Double underline the word *first* in verse 1. Above the opening phrase write, *Forty years after chapter 2*.
- Read through the whole passage and circle all uses of *saw*, *look[ed]*, and *behold*.
- In the left margin of verses 4, 5, 6, and 7 list the animal to which each beast is compared.
- In the left margin of verses 9-11 write, *The Throne Room of Heaven*.
- In verse 13 place a box around *one like the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days*.
- Double underline both occurrences of the word *came* in verse 13.
- Place a Δ over all references to the *Most High*.
- Circle all six references to *saints* in verses 18-27.

¹ "You saw, 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.

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.

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.

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.

¹⁵ "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. ¹⁶ I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. ¹⁷ 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'

¹⁹ "Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, ²⁰ and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. ²¹ As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

²³ "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast,
there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth,
which shall be different from all the kingdoms,
and it shall devour the whole earth,
and trample it down, and break it to pieces.
²⁴ As for the ten horns,
out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise,
and another shall arise after them;
he shall be different from the former ones,
and shall put down three kings.
²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High,
and shall wear out the saints of the Most High,
and shall think to change the times and the law;
and they shall be given into his hand
for a time, times, and half a time.
²⁶ But the court shall sit in judgment,
and his dominion shall be taken away,
to be consumed and destroyed to the end.
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.'

Opening Discussion: Think about the nations or powers in the headlines today. What kind of beasts do they remind you of?

INTERPRETATION (*What does the passage mean?*)

1. When you think of kingdoms or nations, what images come to mind? What is behind Daniel's depiction that they are like beasts?

2. Describe the impact these visions had on Daniel. What depictions in his dream seem to worry him the most?

3. How is the Ancient of Days described in verses 9-10? What does this tell you about the nature of God's judgment?

4. Why is Jesus described as *one like a son of man* (v. 13)? What does this tell us about His identity, who He is, and the nature of His rule?

APPLICATION (*How does the passage apply to our lives?*)

- How are you affected when you think about the brutality of the nations or the future of our world?
- Think about God's character in verses 9-10. What aspect of God's character do you long to know about more? How will you seek out more of God in light of His character?
- How does knowing the Most High will deliver His saints from trouble and accomplish His purpose for the world encourage you?
- What do you long for most when Jesus returns?

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