



Date: Weds, Sept 20, 2017

Text: Daniel 7

Prophecy

With this chapter, we change from a book of history to one of “apocalyptic” prophecy. Although there were prophecies regarding major world rulers in chapters 2, 4, and 5, the first 6 chapters were historical in their approach. “Apocalyptic” means a prophetic revelation, generally regarding the ultimate triumph of good by the destruction of evil.

To understand this type of prophecy, we must have a grasp of symbolism. We will cover this in greater detail in the introduction to Revelation (lesson 10-11). However, in order to understand this and some of the upcoming chapters, we need to give some consideration now to how we understand the symbolism.

Symbolism 101

Consistency — The first thing we must do is be consistent in how we interpret symbolism. We cannot make *part* of it representative and *other parts* literal. This is a common mistake made by those wishing to support Premillennialism. (For example, in this chapter, they will acknowledge that the 4th beast *symbolizes* Rome, but then insist that the 10 horns is a *literal* number, rather than this also being symbolic.) We cannot pick and choose — it is either a symbolic vision or it is not.

Historical Context — Understanding to *whom* the book was written, and what was happening in their history at that point in time, is also critical. The writings would have to have meaning to the original recipient, *as well as to us*. **Think, “How would this be understood by the original reader?”**

Theme of Book — Try to understand the major overall theme of the book and keep this in mind when interpreting difficult passages. **Ask, “How does this relate to the overall message of the book?”**

Bible Teaching — The meaning you assign to a prophetic passage *must be in harmony with the rest of Bible teaching*. If a teaching on a difficult passage contradicts other passages in the Bible, the teaching cannot be correct! **Consider, “Does this fit the overall theme of the Bible, and harmonize with all other Bible teaching?”**

Symbolism 201

Here are some of the symbols used in this chapter, and hints to help understand the meanings.

- **Four Winds** — Often used to represent *in general* the forces that God uses to control or destroy (see Jer 49:36, 51:1 - compare NKJV to NIV or NASB.)
- **Seas** — Generally represents the mass of humanity, or human society (see Isa 17:12, Rev 17:15)
- **Kings** — Remember that a king can easily *represent* an entire kingdom or people. This is true in this chapter. Compare Dan 7:17 & 23.

- **Ten** — a number representing “completeness.” It suggests a “total”, either large or small, depending on the circumstances.
- **10 horns** — Much ado has been made by premillennialists and others (including the “70 AD” doctrine) regarding the horns in this section. Premillennialists claim that Christ will return to establish his kingdom at a time when the Roman Empire has regained its world-dominant strength, and when there are 10 kings within this kingdom (a “ten nation revival”) all reigning at the same time. A common “conservative” viewpoint is that these represent the first 10 Roman Caesars, and then to count to Domitian as the “little horn.” **However, based on the use of “ten” in apocalyptic prophecy, do not these 10 horns merely represent the totality of power of the Roman emperors, and not necessarily 10 specific rulers?**
- **Little horn** — Many ideas have been promoted on this topic. The premillennialists see this as the beast of Rev 13, who they say is yet to come even today. Other ideas promoted, *on the assumption this points to one specific ruler*, is Antiochus Epiphanes (more on him next lesson!), the Papacy of Catholicism, Domitian (as noted above), the Anti-Christ, etc. **Consider the comments on “10 Horns” when you answer question 4.**
- **Times, Time, half a time** — Add this up, and you get 3 ½! Differing phrases are used for 3 ½, but they are **always** used in some relation to *temporary* hardship, persecution, trial, or suffering. Seven (as we will later learn) is the symbol of perfection, completion, or fullness. Three and ½ is half of seven — *or a broken seven* — and it represents something incomplete.

Historical Context

Questions

As noted above, to understand the prophecy we need to know the historical setting in which it was given. Keep in mind that the Jews were nearing the end of 70 years of Babylonian captivity. They undoubtedly wonder what the future of their people and their religion is.

God is preparing them for events that are yet to happen! They will return to their land, and the Messiah will come, but followers of God will continue to be opposed by evil rulers led by Satan.

1. Draw a rough time-line showing the main events so far from each chapter of Daniel. Put on this time line when the vision in Daniel 7 appeared to Daniel.

2. **A.** Describe Daniel’s vision of the beasts.

- B.** What else did Daniel see after the beasts (vss 9-10, 13-14)?

- C.** What happened to the beasts (vss 11-12)?

- D.** What did the “little horn” do, and what eventually happened to him (vss 21-27)?

3. Consider the image from Nebuchadnezzar's vision of chapter 2. Label each nation on the left. On the right describe the corresponding beast from chapter 7.



4. What do you think the 4th beast, its ten horns, and the little horn with the eyes and the mouth, are representative of? (See the comments above on the 10 Horns, and the Little Horn, above. It might help you to think through what things are clearly NOT being represented.) [This isn't necessarily easy – if you're not sure that's OK – we'll discuss it in class!]
5. Chapter 2 (written in Aramaic, the official language of the Babylonians) represented the nations in power as an idol or statue, & the vision was given to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 7 (written in Hebrew) represents the same nations as beasts, & this vision was given to Daniel.
Why might this information have been given twice, & represented so differently?
6. How do verses 9-14, 18, 22, & 26-27 tie this vision together with the general theme of Daniel that we have been discussing?