

Last time, we covered the first part of Daniel's chapter 7. There, we read about Daniels's dream of the four beasts coming up out of the sea. Another version of this dream is found in chapter 2 where it was dreamt by King Nebuchadnezzar. They essentially are the same dream, just shown in different ways; Daniels' dream is much more vivid, containing greater detail. These dreams, although they seem to be forever apart, are actually only 41 years apart. God is showing Daniel the future here, maybe not spelling out the names but explaining how things are going to go down. So, we see this as the past, but to Daniel, this is all the future. Have you ever had a dream that you could not understand? It just did not make sense. When I was little, like 5th grade, I had a dream; well, I thought I did.

My wife has the wildest dreams I have ever heard, she says it is because I drive her crazy, I think it is the boys not me but who knows. I do not have a problem understanding my dreams now, I simply do not remember them anymore. And that makes perfect sense to me.

Are you one of those people who think you control your dreams, or do you get mad at someone else because, in your dream, they did something you did not like? Those types of people are a little out there. I had nothing to do with the dream you had, and I did not kick your chicken, that in real life you do not even have.

Do you worry about your dreams, do they scare you, are you a worrier? God tells us not to worry, in 2 Timothy it says, "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control". We will see this in the scripture today.

Read,

The Worry, The Wonder, The Wisdom

The Worry

V15 In chapter two, we see the king was terrified over his dream; he did not understand it, and no one was able to explain it. It was so bad that the king threatened to cut up and destroy the house of anyone who was brought to him and could not tell him what the dream meant. Was it about him or someone else? Daniel of course was the only one who could tell the king what he inquired. Here, Daniel is troubled over the dream he has. He knows God has shown him something amazing, but he does not understand it either.

Isn't this exactly what we do? We do not understand something; it just does not make sense to us, and we instantly worry about it, and we go straight to being scared. Psalm 91:5 says "You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day" it goes on to say "you will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, "the Lord is my refuge" and you make the Most High you're dwelling no harm will overtake you, no harm will come near your tent." So, when we do not understand, or we are scared of something that doesn't make sense, where are we supposed to go? Billy Graham said, "If we trust in our worry more than we trust in God we are sinning by our lack of faith in God, who has given us the richness of His constant abiding presence, for those who put their faith in Him." So, where do you go when you are scared or worried?

V16-18 Daniel is scared of the images he has seen but finds someone to ask. So, who would have been standing there for him to ask, well remember the innumerable host of angels who were

attending God. Yeah, Daniel walks right up and says, “Um, excuse me... can you tell me what is going on here?”

Can you imagine that one just seeing an angel in person and two walking up and talking to them? He needed the truth about what he had seen. The angel gives Daniel a quick rundown summary of the visions. “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 the kingdom, yes, forever and ever. And then seems to try to move on, kind of like he was busy and had to get back to something.

We can reference the first dream and this one to put together a timeline. The four kings represent four kingdoms; if we go back to Chapter 2 and look at the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, it also represents four kingdoms. The head of gold is the first beast in Daniel's dream, and it is Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. Daniel said he saw a lion with the wings of an eagle; then he saw the lion's wings stripped away, then the lion was made to stand upright like a human and the mind of a human. If you ever go to the Louvre in Paris, you may find some representations of Babylonian artifacts. Some of which will include winged lions. It was even built into their gate. As for the removal of the lion's wings and making it stand on two legs and given the mind of a man is a picture of God humbling Nebuchadnezzar then restoring him to his right mind.

The next section of the statue is the chest and arms of silver, which is the bear in Daniel's vision. The bear was raised up on one side, which shows us one side of this united kingdom overshadowed the other. And we see this in the Medo-Persian empire. Together, this kingdom grew larger than the Babylonian empire, but it did not take long for the Persian half to outgrow Media in power. In Daniel's dream, the bear had three ribs in its mouth, indicating this kingdom's reigned over three other empires: where Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

Following the chest and arms comes the belly and thighs of bronze; this would be the Greek empire. In Daniel's dream, this timeframe was represented by a four-headed, four-winged leopard. What do you think when I say leopard? Fast! Alexander the Great conquered more territory quicker than anyone else in history. So, a leopard is a good animal to represent this kingdom. The leopard also had four wings on its back adding to the natural quickness of the animal. Alexander's rule was quick but short-lived; just four years after he started, Alexander the Great was not so great. He died at the age of 32. His empire was split between four generals, each covering one quarter. This is why the leopard had four heads.

The fourth portion of the statue is made of iron legs and feet, which are mixed iron and clay. What empire is this.... the Roman empire. In Daniel's dream, this was the beast that was indescribable. It was like nothing Daniel had ever seen. He could only describe some details about it, having teeth of iron and claws of bronze that crush and devour everything in its way. If you look at John's description in Revelation, he says it has attributes of the three before it. The body of a leopard, paws of a bear, and the head and mouth of a lion.

The Worry, The Wonder

V19 The final outcome, according to the angel, is God's people; under the Son of God, Jesus Christ will receive the kingdom! AMEN, this is amazing news, and for most people, that would be enough. But this was not enough for Daniel; he needed more information; he had to know more about the

fourth beast. So, Daniels, like, whoa, whoa, whoa, man, let's talk about that last one a little longer. I mean, I saw more than that in my vision, so there is more to be had here. What about the horns, especially the little one, and war on the saints?

V20-22 Remember there were 10 horns on the final beast's head, then another smaller horn comes up and three of the previous horns fell before it. This horn began to grow and ended up larger than the first 7. It starts waging war against the saints and overpowers them.

The Worry, The Wonder, The Wisdom

V23-25 This fourth kingdom we already indicated as the Roman empire was different than any other. We will split this kingdom into 2 parts; the first stage is the Roman empire that we know rose to power and conquered most of the known world of the time. But it did fall; it is no longer in power. But there is an influence of Romans in modern cultures today. We see it woven through our modern time, from architecture, books, and art to literature and law. Remember the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay? The Roman empire was the legs of iron, meaning we are still in the feet of iron and clay. The time of the ten horns is still in the future for us as it was for Daniel.

Then, there will be another stage when the little horn rises up and destroys 3 of the previous kings. This little horn has a few names; in 2 Thessalonians, he is called the man of lawlessness; in 1 John, he is called the antichrist; and in Revelations, he is called the beast. He rises to the top of all the others.

He speaks boastfully against God and turns away all that he can from following God. He will Blaspheme God and His dwelling, doing all he can to undo all God has done. He is going to bring persecution to God's people. He will have the power to deceive people, to make the things of God seem wrong and despicable.

He will hunt the people of God and wear them out. How many of you have some clothes that have holes in them? Not the ones you buy that are pre-destroyed, I mean clothes that you have worn, used, and abused. Clothes that you may call your work clothes, gardening clothes, or for me my garage clothes. I have some that I will not even wear into town to the parts store or Lowes because they are so bad. Have you noticed the different time zones of Lowes? If you go to Lowes in the morning, you will see hard-working contractors and blue-collar workers needing supplies for the day. If you go right after lunch you will inevitably run into every senior citizen who still has a license, if you go after 5 it looks more like a fashion show, people dressed up, shopping for smart gadgets for their homes and drinking from a Stanley cup, if you show at 8:50 right before closing you will definitely run into me rushing in to get something I should have picked up earlier but I couldn't care because my hands were full with my smart gadgets and Stanley cup.

Anyway, back to the worn-out clothes, why are they worn out? Because they have been beaten, mistreated, and used over and over. This will be the fate of the Christians of this time. Not only this, but this fourth beast will not only oppress God's people, but it says that he will try to change the times and the laws. He is going to attempt to change when we worship and who we worship. He knows how weak humans are; if he can get people thinking about something other than God, he will have them exactly where he wants them. He will not be the first one; others have tried to limit people's religious

choices. Stalin, Hitler, and others have pushed back against nations, cities and people who believed something other than what these leaders wanted them to believe.

Just as back then people including Christians thought they were in the end times, I can hear them saying things like “This has to be the end that Jesus told us about, look at what is happening to the Jewish people”, or “I know that was bad but look at how deceitful people are in these days, we have to be in the end times”, I’ve heard and thought this myself “if we are not in the end times then God owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology because the world we live in right now makes those towns look like Mr. Rogers neighborhood”. Why does it seem like we are always in the end times? Because even though the antichrist is not here right now, in 1 John 4:3 it says that “but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world”. He has been setting the stage for himself, and as we look around it is working, isn’t it?

V26-28 We see victory in this scripture; this is great for us believers. God limits the persecution that His people will endure to 3 and a half years. Then, the fourth beast’s power will be taken away, and he will be destroyed once and for all. Have you ever seen a bully laugh at the misfortune of his prey? Some little kid who was minding his own business until he fell into the bully’s sights. The bully laughs and mocks the victim while others gather around to point and laugh with him. I love it when the bully gets what he has coming to him; not that I am vengeful, but come on. This is exactly what will happen to the antichrist; he will run rampant for a season until God cuts him down, and then we will all get to gather around, point, and laugh.

I heard a story about an old boxer who had such a great career. He had enough knockouts and wins that all he needed to get into the Hall of Fame was one final match. He did not even have to win, just fight one last time. He was not as strong as he used to be, and he worried about how the fight would go. His trainer leaned over and told him, look, all you need to do is get in there and take the beating, 'cause whether you win or lose, the hall of fame is yours. So, what if your opponent is faster and stronger so the old boxer steps into the ring and takes the persecution, suffers the pain, but in the end, he is inducted into the hall of fame forever?

So, what type of dreams do you have? Are they dreams of persecution? Do they scare you? We know we will go round after round taking a beating, but if you put your faith in Jesus, you will be victorious. John tells us “Do not fear what you are about to suffer, you will have tribulation. Be faithful until death.

Pray