

Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts Interpreted

Our study this morning is the second one in the wonderful chapter of Daniel 7. The first study in this chapter is called “Daniel’s Dream and Vision of Four Beasts.” It is an overview of Daniel’s dream. This study now provides details of his dream. The chapter is almost divided in half. The first half is the dream; the last half is the interpretation of that dream. We will discover that Daniel’s dream parallels the dream that was given to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. But while the dream in chapter 7 parallels the dream in chapter 2, the dream in chapter 7 provides us with a lot of additional details of the dream first given to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel Wants to Understand His Dream.

Daniel 7:15 is where we are going to start. Here is verse 15,

“As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. Daniel 7:15 (NASB)

Daniel said that as a result of this dream he was alarmed and distressed. He said, “My spirit is distressed, my mind kept alarming me.” Perhaps the reason he said that was because the dream is about four unusual beasts, and the beasts are really strange and very different. One was a winged lion, which does not exist in our world. There was a humped bear—maybe you could find one. There was a winged leopard; we do not have those. Then there was a dreadful and terrible beast that had ten horns. There is no animal like that on our planet at all! Maybe that was the reason he said that it was distressful to him, and that his mind kept alarming him. The idea is that as he was watching this, he was reacting emotionally. Maybe you and I would have done the same. Then he talked about judgment in verses 9 through 11 and the kingdom in verses 13-14. So I can imagine his emotions were up and down, as he tried to understand what all this meant.

Verse 16 says,

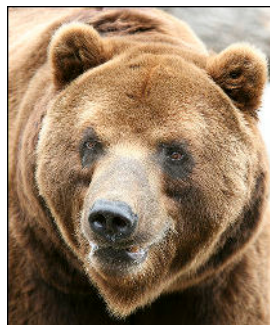
Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts

Daniel 7:4-7



Daniel 7:4

**Babylonian
Empire**



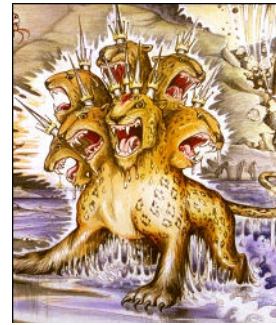
Daniel 7:5

**Medo-Persian
Empire**



Daniel 7:6

**Empire of
Greece**



Daniel 7:7

**Roman
Empire**

I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: Daniel 7:16 (NASB)

When he said, “I approached one,” we assume it was an angel. Now, some people have said the angel was Gabriel, but we do not know that. It is true that Gabriel appears in Daniel 8:6 and also in Daniel 9:21. Others have said, “Maybe it was Michael the archangel.” That might be true. He shows up in Daniel 10:21 and then again in Daniel 12:1. We can speculate who it was, but the Bible does not state. We can be confident it was an angel.

Four Beasts Are Four Kings. Daniel said, “And I approached one of those who was standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things.” Daniel asked this question because he wanted to know the exact meaning. He received the answer in verse 17 where we are told,

These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. Daniel 7:17 (NASB)

The answer the angel gave to Daniel is that the four beasts that he saw in verses 2 through 7 represent four kings. We made the point before that when you talk about a king, you are talking also about his kingdom. It is like saying Barack Obama was president of the United States. You can either refer to him as Barack Obama and understand that he was the president of the United States; or you can say that he was the president of the United States. The statements are interchangeable.

When Daniel was told that the four beasts are four kings, we are to understand that the winged lion is the Babylonian Empire; the humped bear is the Medo-Persian Empire and the winged leopard with four wings is the Grecian Empire. Then the dreadful and terrible beast that we see in verse 7 is the Roman Empire. We know they were all literal kingdoms - real, earthly kingdoms, empires or nations.

Verse 18 states,

But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come. Daniel 7:18 (NASB)

Here we are told that the saints are of the Highest One. By the way, the word “saints” in the Aramaic means “holy ones.” Some scholars have said it means to be set apart. I remember that as a child, I often heard in church that “you are holy,” “you are a saint,” or you are set apart. That means you set yourself apart from the world. You are not involved in the things of the world. Check out 1 Corinthians 15:9-13. There Paul says that he did not mean that we must leave the world, or that we are not to connect with people in the world. Otherwise you would have to go out from the world if you are going to be separate from the world. What he is talking about is being separate from sin.

So the saints are holy ones. That is, they are set apart from sin. We are told the saints or holy ones will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come. Actually, the idea is forever and forever or for all eternity.

Now it is possible that there were many details that Daniel did not give us. Look at the end of verse 1. Daniel said that when he wrote down the dream, he gave us only a summary. Even in the section of details, he does not give us everything. Some readers may not like all the details! But they are here for a reason. Do you think God gives us details for us to just ignore? No. God gives us details for a reason. Sometimes all we want is a top-level account. But you should ask, “Why did God not give us just the top-level stuff? Why does He go into so many details?” It is because they are important and are for our benefit. God provides details for a reason.

So the first question that Daniel asked was, “What is this dream all about?” The angel gave him a panorama from the beginning to the end. He said there are four beasts or kings in verse 17, and at the end the saints will receive the kingdom (v 18). He ignored all the details in the middle.

Details About the Four Beasts. Verse 19 now

introduces us to the second question. I said that this section is divided by or structured around two different questions. The second question begins in verse 19 and continues to verse 27. The question is about the fourth beast. Verse 19 says,

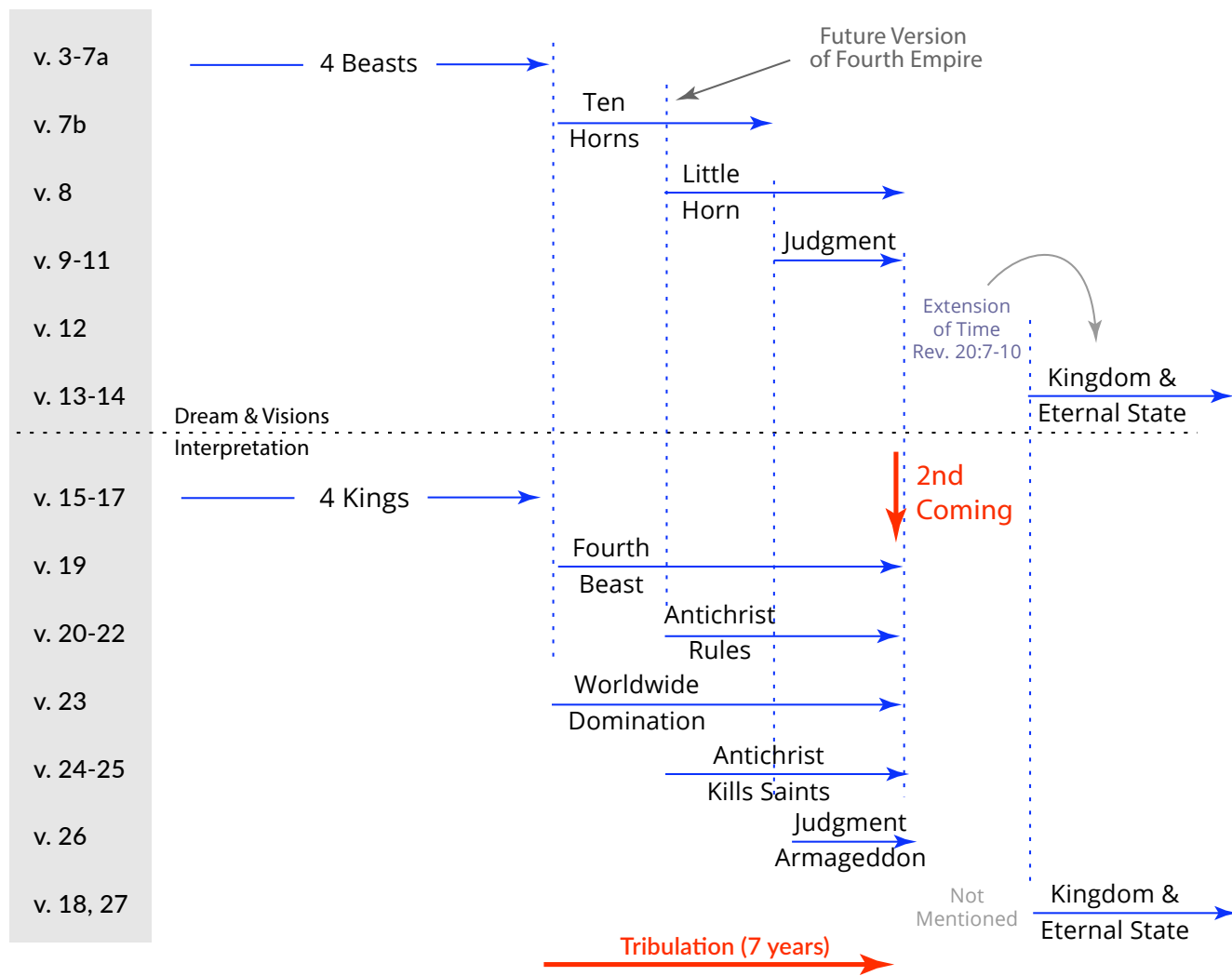
Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet. Daniel 7:19 (NASB)

The first thing we are told is that this beast is ugly and has iron teeth. Have you ever wondered why we are told that it has iron teeth? The idea is that this beast is very strong and very powerful. Therefore, it is able to crush the remainder with its feet.

Verse 20 states,

And the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates. Daniel 7:20

Dream of Visions in Daniel 7



(NASB)

Daniel said this beast has ten horns. We saw that in verse 7. There we were told that another horn will come up. In verse 8 we find this other horn is also called the little one. He comes up; he grows and becomes much greater. Then he rips out three of the other horns. Verse 8 says

And three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it. Daniel 7:8b (NASB)

The little horn rips out the others by the roots. In other words, they are now gone.

And behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a great mouth uttering great boasts. Daniel 7:8c (NASB)

This horn is a man with eyes and a mouth. The literal meaning is that he is a man. Daniel repeated the information in verse 20. He said the horn had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and was larger in appearance than its associates.

Then he adds in verse 21,

I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them . . . Daniel 7:21 (NASB)

The idea is that the saints, the holy ones, are at war with this one. Then verse 22 says,

. . . until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Daniel 7:22 (NASB)

Now the boastful horn wages war with the saints until the Ancient of Days comes and rescues them. The boastful horn is the Antichrist. In Matthew 24:2, we find that Jesus said, “unless the days were cut short, all of the elect would perish.” We are told the Ancient of Days will protect and

rescue the saints.

Now verse 23 is the reply to Daniel’s second question. In verses 19-22, the angel repeated a good part of the dream that we have already seen in our last study. Now Daniel’s answer is given in verse 23. The angel says,

“Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.’” Daniel 7:23 (NASB)

The angel said that the fourth beast is the fourth empire. It is a worldwide empire. It will expand and cover the whole earth. It will crush it. The idea is that it is very oppressive. I think it is referring to an oppressive dictatorship around the world, a global, worldwide government. The world will not welcome this empire. It will crush the opposition and take control of the world. That is the picture that is being painted for us.

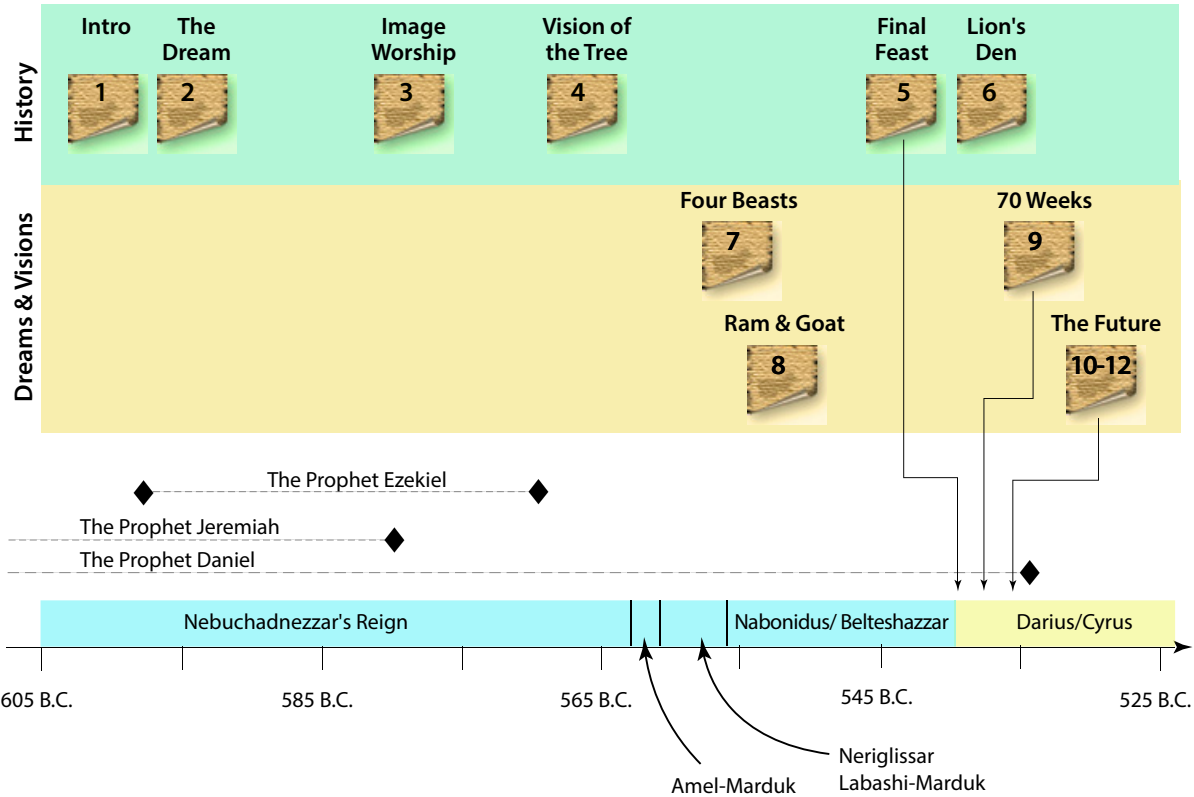
Details About the Ten Horns. Verse 24 states,

“As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.” Daniel 7:24 (NASB)

Notice that there are ten horns. We saw in the previous study that the ten horns are ten kings. So this detail is repeated. It is important for us to understand that these ten horns are ten kings. Today we do not think about the United States being an empire, although there are some who would say that we are an imperialistic empire. But in reality we are a nation. Using biblical language, every nation in the world would be considered an empire or a kingdom.

The ten horns are an alliance of ten nations. This alliance will emerge from the territory once controlled by the Roman Empire. I do not like the term “the revived Roman Empire” because that has the connotation of the Caesars coming back. Some previous ideas with regards to this concept is that the old Roman Empire returns, and the Roman Catholic pope is involved somehow. Some people have also

Outline of Daniel



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said that it will be the European Common Market or the ECU. Some more recent ideas are that this is an alliance of Arab nations, a worldwide caliphate.

We are simply told in Scripture that there is an alliance of ten kings (leaders of nations) that emerge out of the old territory of the Roman Empire. That will be the beginning of the tribulation period. The tribulation period will be a seven-year period. We will see that in Daniel 9. Jesus describes the latter part of the tribulation period referred to as the great tribulation in Matthew 24 in a summary fashion. If you want all the details about the great tribulation (the second half of the tribulation), go to Revelation and read from chapter 6 through chapter 19.

This alliance of ten nations will exist at the very beginning of the tribulation period. Now, if you believe that there is a rapture that takes Christians out of this world, you

are probably asking, "Where is the rapture? When does the rapture occur?" If you look closely, you will notice that the rapture is not mentioned here. Therefore, some people say, "The rapture was not in the Old Testament; so, it does not exist." We must remember that we need to consider all that Scripture says in both the Old and the New Testaments.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 describes the rapture and says it is a mystery. The Bible uses the word mystery to describe something that was not seen and understood before in the Old Testament. The rapture is called a mystery in 1 Corinthians 15:51-54. If you would like a description of the rapture, visit 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. The rapture was simply not included in the details in Daniel 7:8 and here in verse 24; but this is the time frame in which it will occur. So we have all the pieces together now.

Details About the Little Horn. Now I will

reread verse 24,

“As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.” Daniel 7:24 (NASB)

The one that arises is the little horn. He shows up in verse 4, verse 20, and here in verse 24. He is mentioned three times. Each time we are told he subdues three of the ten kings. If we do a little math, that means only eight horns were left.

Verse 25 says,

“He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.” Daniel 7:25 (NASB)

We are told here that he will speak against the Most High. He will wear down the saints—we have already been told that. He will try to change the times and laws. What does that mean? The Aramaic word for “times” means “appointed time.” The Aramaic word for “time” actually has the idea of “fixed time.” It appears to refer to the fixed dates on the calendar for the Jewish feasts. When we are told he will change the law, we should understand he will change the Jewish laws. He is going to try to change what God has told the Jews to do.

The phrase time, times, and half a time refers to three and one half years. In Daniel 4:16, we discovered that “time” refers to a year. Therefore, “time” refers to one year. “Times” is “two years; and “half a time” is a half year. So we understand it is speaking of three-and-a-half years. Look at verse 26:

“But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.” Daniel 7:26 (NASB)

We are going to leave this verse for a minute and come back. I want you to go now to Revelation 13. This is important. Revelation 13 connects to Daniel 7. Verse 1 says,

And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore.
Revelation 13:1a (NASB)

In our study of Daniel 7:2, we have already seen that the sea refers to or represents the people on the earth. (See also Revelation 17:15)

Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns. . . Revelation 13:1b (NASB)

That is interesting! Out of all the people on the earth, this one beast arises having ten horns.

. . . and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems . . . Revelation 13:2c (NASB)

Diadems are crowns and represent ten kings.

. . . and on his heads were blasphemous names.
Revelation 13:2d (NASB)

“And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion, and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.” - Revelation 13:2

Verse 2 sounds just like the four beasts of Daniel 7. Remember the first beast was a winged lion. Also, Revelation 13:2 says “the mouth of a lion.” The second beast in Daniel was a bear, and what do we see here? He has the feet of a bear. The third beast in Daniel 7 was a winged leopard. We are told here he is “like a leopard.” Then the fourth beast was “dreadful and terrible,” and that is the beast itself. Verse 5,

There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for

forty-two months was given to him. Revelation 13:5 (NASB)

Now you ask, “What is all this?” First of all, the beast here is really the Antichrist. Remember the little horn that grew up, had both eyes and a boastful mouth? Here in Revelation 13, this little horn represents all of the other kingdoms. He is the culmination of human history. He is the Antichrist who is against God. So when we are told “there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies,” he sounds just like the little horn. He is the boastful horn, speaking arrogant words. Then notice

“He has been given authority to act for forty-two months.” Forty-two months is three-and-a-half years. Take 42, divide it by twelve months, and you get three and a half years. In Daniel 7 we learn he has authority for “time, times, and half a time.”

Three-and-a-half years. Look at Revelation 12:6. The verse speaks of a the woman who represents the nation of Israel. It says,

Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Revelation 12:6 (NASB)

How long is 1,260 days? If you divide it by 30, which is the number of days in a biblical month, we obtain 42 months. Then we divide that by 12, and the result is three and one half years. Also look at verse 14. It says,

But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was nourished for . . . Revelation 12:14 (NASB)

. . . times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. Revelation 12:14b (NASB)

So when we connect all these terms together, “time, times, and half a time” is three-and-a-half years. It is really fascinating to discover that Revelation 13 is talking about the same events that occurred in Daniel 7, which are the

same events that occurred in Daniel 2.

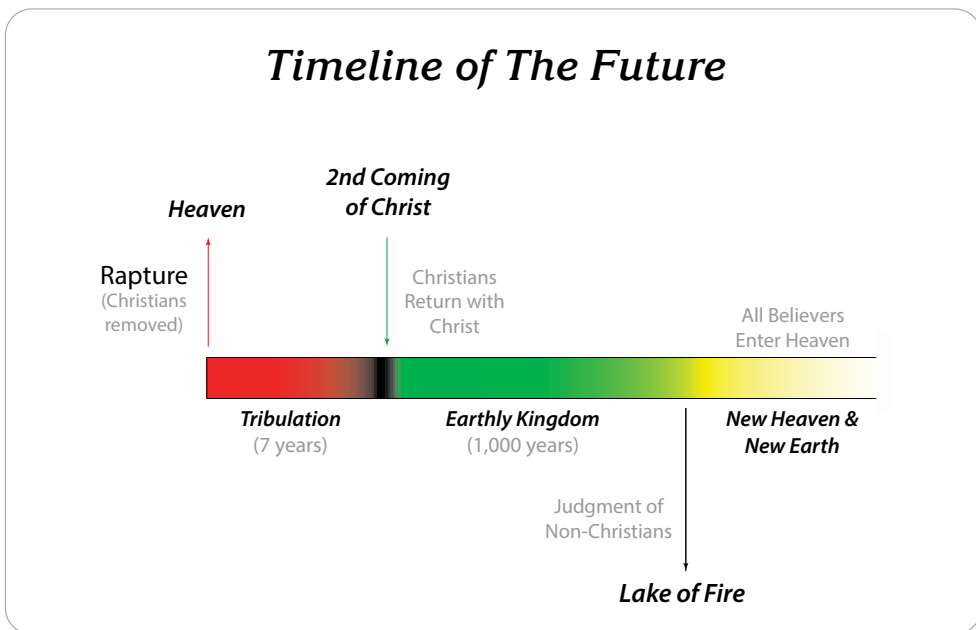
Now watch verse 6.

And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It

was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. Revelation 13:6-7 (NASB)

Now it does not matter what language you speak. It does not matter in which nation you live. It does not matter what your skin color is: the little horn, the Antichrist, will be against you and everybody. Verse 8 adds,

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has



been slain. Revelation 13:8 (NASB)

Now the Antichrist is at war. When will the saints be rescued?” Turn to Revelation 19:11 says,

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. Revelation 19:11 (NASB)

This is a picture of Jesus Christ. He is faithful and true. He is righteous when He judges and wages war. Verses 12-14 state,

His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. Revelation 19:12-14 (NASB)

Who is that army? The saints, the holy ones, the righteous ones.

From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Revelation 19:15-16 (NASB)

This is a picture of Jesus coming at His second coming. The saints are coming with Him, who have already passed away and their spirits went to heaven. Then look at verse 19:

And I saw the beast . . . Revelation 19:19a (NASB)

This is the beast in Revelation 13. He is the Antichrist.

. . . and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Revelation 19:19b (NASB)

That is what we saw in Revelation 13. We were told that they were going to wage war. Verse 20:

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet . . . Revelation 19:20a (NASB)

That is the religious leader.

. . . who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed . . . Revelation 19:20b-21a (NASB)

Now go to chapter 17. I want you to see that Revelation 17 parallels what you saw in Daniel 7. The Antichrist appears. He is a boastful horn. He makes war with the saints and tries to overpower them. We were told in Daniel 7:22 that the Ancient of Days came in favor of the saints and rescued them. The Ancient of Days is Jesus Christ, the Messiah who will come and rescue them. Remember in Daniel 2 that there was a stone that smashes the feet of the idol, and the whole statue then disappeared. That stone is Jesus Christ. He smashes all of the kingdoms of the earth. That is the second coming of Jesus.

Now go to Revelation 17 and read verse 11. The verse says:

The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth. Revelation 17:11b (NASB)

We read about an eighth before in Daniel 7. Remember that there were ten kings. Three were taken away by the little horn, the Antichrist, and eight were left. Here in this verse we are told that the beast is the eighth. He symbolizes the alliance of eight nations. Verse 12 adds,

The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom . . . Revelation 17:12a (NASB)

Watch what it says.

. . . but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. Revelation 17:12b (NASB)

These kings will receive authority with the beast for an hour.

These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them . . . Revelation 17:13-14b (NASB)

What is important in this passage are the ten kings who are contemporaneous. They reign at the same time together. This is not sequential. There are some today who want to teach that the ten kings were ten Caesars who ruled sequentially. But that is not the case. Just notice what it says. We are told that “they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.” That is, at the same time. They have one purpose.

They gave their power and authority to the beast. They wage war against the Lamb. But the Lamb will overcome them. So when Christ comes at His second coming, He defeats them at the same time. That would be a little difficult if they are sequential. So it connects back to what we just read in Revelation 19.

The last part of Revelation 17:14 states,

. . . and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful. Revelation 17:14c (NASB)

That tells us those clothed in white linen were with Jesus on His horse.

And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations

and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. Revelation 17:15-16 (NASB)

The beast again is the Antichrist. He makes war with the saints.

Details About the Kingdom. Daniel 27 tells us,

Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him. Daniel 7:27 (NASB)

The message is when Jesus comes at the second coming, He defeats the Antichrist, the world powers, and sets up His kingdom which will last forever. Now it is really important to realize what is described here. If we return to Revelation 20:4, we are told there is a millennial kingdom, a kingdom that lasts on the earth for 1,000 years. It is a real, earthly kingdom - not just a spiritual one. We must remember that the original four empires were real or literal empires. When Daniel says the kingdom will last forever, he is also referring to a literal kingdom. If the first four kingdoms were literal, why should we all of a sudden think that the next earthly kingdom is spiritual or figurative? Where is the clue that something has changed? It does not make any sense from a hermeneutic perspective to all of a sudden interpret the passage allegorically. If the first four kingdoms were literal, then the next kingdom should be literal too. There is no clue in the context that we should make any change to our method of interpretation.

In Revelation 20:4 we were told that there is a kingdom that will last forever. Look at the end of the verse. It says,

. . . and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4b (NASB)

The plain sense reading of the text implies it is a literal

kingdom.

Now notice that Revelation 20:3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 refer to a thousand years. Notice that “thousand years” is repeated five times. The number is important. If the length of time is not one thousand years, but a nebulous period of time, then another phrase should be used. It is very clear. The kingdom will last for 1,000 years, and then war occurs at the end. In Daniel 7: 12, we are told,

As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time. Daniel 7:12 (NASB)

Notice the phrase “extension of time.” That extension of time takes place or occurs here in Revelation 20:7, 8, 9, and 10. After the second coming, Christ will establish the thousand-year kingdom. At the end of the thousand years, a rebellion led by Satan against God and the saints will occur, and Satan and the deceived nations will be destroyed by fire. God will then destroy the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10).

Details About the Eternal State. Revelation 21:1 says,

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . .
Revelation 21:1a (NASB)*

Christians or believers are going to live through the millennial kingdom and then the old earth will be destroyed. God will give us a new earth and new heaven, and His kingdom will keep right on going into the eternal state of the new heaven and earth. That kingdom will be literal too! Revelation 22:1-2 describes life in that literal kingdom.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Revelation 22:1-2 (NASB)

We will have literal water to drink and food to eat! Both the millennial and the eternal phases of God’s kingdom are literal, physical kingdoms.

Conclusion. Now back to Daniel 7:28 where we read,

At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself.” Daniel 7:28 (NASB)

Notice that he did not share everything. We have learned important truths about the future from Daniel 7: the four beasts, an alliance of nations during the tribulation period, followed by a millennial kingdom. If you are a Christian, you will see and live in the kingdom and participate in it!