

The United Benefice of St Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield
with St John, Wall

Bible Study August 26th 2020

The Book of Daniel

Session 7: Daniel's Visions

Opening prayer

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace
and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Daniel 7 and 8

In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: ²I, Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, ³and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. ⁴The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. ⁵Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks in its mouth among its teeth and was told, 'Arise, devour many bodies!' ⁶After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. ⁷After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. ⁸I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly.

⁹ As I watched,
thrones were set in place,
and an Ancient One took his throne;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning fire.

¹⁰ A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousand served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.

The court sat in judgement,
and the books were opened.

¹¹I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹²As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. ¹³As I watched in the night visions,

I saw one like a human being
coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.

¹⁴ To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.

¹⁵ As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me, and the visions of my head terrified me. ¹⁶I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: ¹⁷'As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever.'

¹⁹ Then I desired to know the truth concerning 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; ²⁰and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and concerning the other horn that came up, and to make room for which three of them fell out—the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly, and that seemed greater than the others. ²¹As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them, ²²until the Ancient One came; then judgement was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

²³ This is what he said: 'As for the fourth beast,
there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth
that shall be different from all the other kingdoms;
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.

This one shall be different from the former ones,
and shall put down three kings.

²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High,
shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High,
and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law;
and they shall be given into his power
for a time, two times, and half a time.

²⁶ Then the court shall sit in judgement,
and his dominion shall be taken away,
to be consumed and totally destroyed.

²⁷ The kingship and dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High;
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

²⁸ Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale; but I kept the matter in my mind.

⁸In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after the one that had appeared to me at first. ²In the vision I was looking and saw myself in Susa the capital, in the province of Elam, and I was by the river Ulai. ³I looked up and saw a ram standing beside the river. It had two horns. Both horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up second. ⁴I saw the ram charging westwards and northwards and southwards. All beasts were powerless to withstand it, and no one could rescue from its power; it did as it pleased and became strong.

⁵ As I was watching, a male goat appeared from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. The goat had a horn between its eyes. ⁶It came towards the ram with the two horns that I had seen standing beside the river, and it ran at it with savage force. ⁷I saw it approaching the ram. It was enraged against it and struck the ram, breaking its two horns. The ram did not have power to withstand it; it threw the ram down to the ground and trampled upon it, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from its power. ⁸Then the male goat grew exceedingly great; but at the height of its power, the great horn was broken, and in its place there came up four prominent horns towards the four winds of heaven.

⁹ Out of one of them came another horn, a little one, which grew exceedingly great towards the south, towards the east, and towards the beautiful land. ¹⁰It grew as high as the host of heaven. It threw down to the earth some of the host and some of the stars, and trampled on them. ¹¹Even against the prince of the host it acted arrogantly; it took the regular burnt-offering away from him and overthrew the place of his sanctuary. ¹²Because of wickedness, the host was given over to it together with the regular burnt-offering; it cast truth to the ground, and kept prospering in what it did. ¹³Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one that spoke, 'For how long is this vision concerning the regular burnt-offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled?' ¹⁴And he answered him, 'For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.'

¹⁵ When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I tried to understand it. Then someone appeared standing before me, having the appearance of a man, ¹⁶and I heard a human voice by the Ulai, calling, 'Gabriel, help this man understand the vision.' ¹⁷So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, 'Understand, O mortal,* that the vision is for the time of the end.'

¹⁸ As he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance, face to the ground; then he touched me and set me on my feet. ¹⁹He said, 'Listen, and I will tell you what will take place

later in the period of wrath; for it refers to the appointed time of the end. ²⁰As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹The male goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king. ²²As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.

²³ At the end of their rule,
when the transgressions have reached their full measure,
a king of bold countenance shall arise,
skilled in intrigue.

²⁴ He shall grow strong in power,
shall cause fearful destruction,
and shall succeed in what he does.

He shall destroy the powerful
and the people of the holy ones.

²⁵ By his cunning
he shall make deceit prosper under his hand,
and in his own mind he shall be great.

Without warning he shall destroy many
and shall even rise up against the Prince of princes.

But he shall be broken, and not by human hands.

²⁶The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true. As for you,
seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.'

²⁷ So I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I arose and went about the king's business. But I was dismayed by the vision and did not understand it.

Questions to think about

1) If you follow the theme of Daniel's visions, that oppressive regimes do not last for ever, would this make you more or less likely to try to change or overthrow them?

2) How does the message that God is always present, behind the scenes, in all that goes on in the world, make you feel about oppression and atrocities in the world?

3) There have been a number of interpretations about which kingdoms or empires are referred to in Daniel's visions, usually ending with the Greek or Roman Empires. Is there still a message, from these visions, for us today?

Closing Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid
and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask
but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen