

Study 9

The Coming of the Son of Man

Daniel 7

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The focus of prophecy is never general information about the world. The focus is always on God's redemptive purpose through Jesus Christ and the redemption of His people.

Introduction: Daniel 7 parallels Daniel 2 and 3 in depicting four kingdoms that come on the world scene with God's kingdom bringing them to an end and establishing itself as a spiritual kingdom with this-world consequences. Daniel 7 adds additional detail to the manifestation of God's kingdom as the purpose and work of Christ becomes more clear: (1) The seating of the Ancient of days, (2) the establishment of His heavenly throne, (3) the attempt to thwart God's redemptive plan by the Little Horn, (4) the Coming of the Son of Man, and (5) the multi-national expansion of God's kingdom.

- I. In Daniel 7, the four great beasts represent empires.
 - A. Daniel's vision takes place during the reign of Belshazzar.
 1. The "stirring up" of "the great sea" (Dan. 7:2) as a description of the nations.
 2. Israel is "land" (*eretz*) (Rev. 13:11); nations are "sea" (Rev. 13:1).
 3. Jesus chooses fishermen as some of His apostles (Matt. 4:18).
 4. Jesus calms the sea (Matt. 8:23–27).

5. “The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind” (Matt. 13:47).
 6. The large catch of fish: the number 153 is the triangulation of 17 (John 21:1–11).
 - a. $7 + 10 = 17$
 - b. $7 \times 10 = 70$
 - c. The number 70 represents the nations (Gen. 10).
 7. “None of the priests, prophets, and kings of the Old Testament were fishermen. They were all farmers or animal husbandmen. By way of contrast, none of Jesus’ disciples was either a farmer or a husbandman. The most prominent of the disciples were fishermen. Nobody is shown eating fish in the Old Testament, but Jesus feeds the 5000 with fish, not with beef jerky. After His resurrection He eats a fish, not a piece of lamb. The disciples are almost never spoken of as shepherds; they are fishers of men. This shift in imagery indicates that Jesus’ new kingdom is going to go to the whole world, to the gentiles. (Significantly, Jesus combines shepherding and fishing right here in John 21, as Peter is told to ‘feed My sheep.’)”¹
 - a. “We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic” (Num. 11:5).
 - b. The men of Tyre sell fish to the “sons of Judah” (Neh. 13:16).
- B. The Four Beasts (general agreement on the first three beasts)
1. Lion with the wings of an eagle: Babylon.
 - a. Lion’s den (6:12).

¹James B. Jordan, “153 Large Fish,” *Biblical Horizons* (September 2000): <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-133-153-large-fish/>

- b. “Hair had grown eagles’ feathers” (5:33).
 - c. The conversion of Nebuchadnezzar: “lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human heart also was given to it” (7:4; see 4:34–37).
2. Bear: Medo-Persian Empire.
- a. The bear has three ribs in its mouth, and “they” (angels) say to it, “Stand up! Devour much flesh.”
 - b. This is usually taken to mean that the Persians conquered much of the world.
 - c. “Ribs” is an unusual way to speak—why not say three bones if all that is involved is eating—and the connection of “rib” and “flesh” takes us back to Genesis 2 where God took a rib from Adam’s side and closed up his flesh.
 - d. Is this a reference to Persia taking the Jews into itself?
 - i. Cyrus and the decree to allow the Jews to return to their land.
 - ii. Ahasuerus sides with the Jews against Haman.
 - e. Those who favor the Jews will be on the “standing side,” while those who attack the Jews will be on the falling side like Daniel’s accusers (Dan. 6) and like Haman in Esther, who seemed to stand for a while but then fell and was hanged along with his ten sons (Esther 3:1; 7:7–10; 9:24–25).
3. Leopard (Greece).
- a. It has four heads, which we shall see later on are four headwaters or beginnings: Alexander, Greek Egypt (the king of the South, Daniel 11), Greek Syria (the king of the North), and Hellenistic or Republican Rome.

- b. During this time, the Jews are taken all over the then-known world on the wings of Greek culture (the NT is written in Greek and the OT is translated into Greek, the Septuagint [LXX]).
4. “Dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong” (Rome).
- a. “Looking in the night visions” (7:7).
 - b. This fourth beast is undefined: All Daniel sees are feet, teeth, and horns.
 - c. The nations that are eaten and crushed are the former empires, which are taken over by this fourth one, which is why the book of Revelation pictures the Roman beast as incorporating all seven heads of these beasts of Daniel 7.
 - d. The trampling indicates just how total the rule of Rome was: Any nation that resisted being eaten into the Roman Empire was destroyed.

II. The Little Horn (a great deal of disagreement).

A. In the time of the Fourth Beast (Rome).

- 1. The Little Horn is an agent of the fourth beast (Rome) (Dan. 7:20, 24).
- 2. He utters great boasts (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25).
 - a. These “fell before the Little Horn,” that is, the Little Horn actually ruled in Israel.
 - b. The Little Horn was an “offshoot” of the Fourth Beast that had the effect of reducing the stump from which it grew up (see Dan. 4:15, 23).
- 3. Various candidates
 - a. Antiochus Epiphanes IV
 - b. Calvin argued that the Little Horn refers to the Roman Emperors.
 - c. The Papacy.

- d. An end-time antichrist who comes to power when the Roman Empire is revived. Requires a gap of time between the time of Christ and an event called the “rapture.”

B. The Line of Herods

1. The Herods were Edomites as well as circumcised Jews and were “kings of the Jews.”
2. They controlled who would serve as High Priest.
3. The Herodians are linked with the Pharisees as one cooperating group against Jesus (Matt. 22:15–16; Mark 3:6; 12:13).
4. The Herods are the face of Imperial Rome in the Holy Land.
5. **Under Augustus:** Herod the Great tries to kill Jesus (Matt. 2:1–16).
6. **Under Tiberius:** Herod Antipas has John the Baptist put to death (Matt. 14:1–12) and is involved in the sham trial of Jesus (Luke 23:11). He and Herod, once enemies, became friends (Luke 23:12; Acts 4:27).
7. **Under Claudius:** Herod Agrippa I killed James and persecuted the church (Acts 12:1–3), uttered “boatful things” (Acts 12:20–23), and was struck down by God.
8. Herod Agrippa II (AD 27–100), tetrarch of Chalcis who was described in Acts as “King Agrippa” before whom Paul of Tarsus defended himself.

III. The Coming of the Ancient of Days

- A. God as He appeared to Ezekiel in the Chariot (Ezek. 1).
- B. This scene appears again in Revelation 4 and 5.

IV. The Coming of the Son of Man

- A. Jesus is the Son of Man who “comes up to the Ancient of Days.”
 - 1. “One like a Son of Man” takes His seat with the Ancient of Days.
 - 2. “It is finished.” The earthly high priest never sat in the temple. His work was never finished.
- B. Jesus as the Son of Man in the NT.
 - 1. Not a description of the Second Coming (Matt. 24:30; 26:64).
 - 2. ‘For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to *this generation*’ (Luke 11:30).
 - 3. A depiction of Jesus’ enthronement.
- V. “For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt. 24:27).