

GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

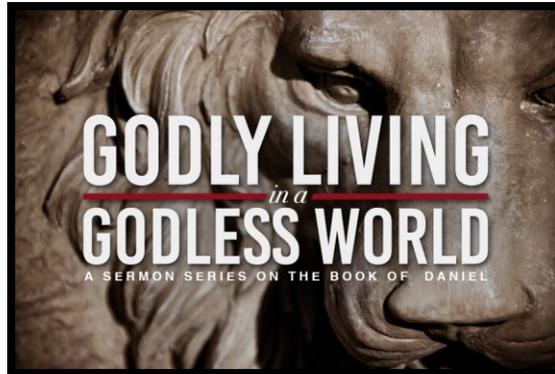
Expositional Study Of Daniel

Daniel 7:1-14

Written By

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There are some things you just don't do. My father, Al, who was not the most mechanically minded man to walk the planet, found out the truth of this statement the hard way one day while working on his pool equipment.

Walking into his backyard, I quickly noticed him standing over his four foot high pool filter. The stainless steel cover rested on the ground to his left, and the white filters stood erect in the exposed unit, forming a circular fan formation. One main bolt held them all together, and my father had his pliers on that bolt.

"Hey, dad, what are you doing?" I asked in a worried tone, I'm sure.

He confidently replied, "Well, I want to clean these filters but I'm having a hard time getting at them, so I thought I would just remove this bolt, pull out all of these panels, clean them individually, and then put them all back in place."

After surveying the situation, I gave him a little back-up counsel, "I wouldn't advise you remove that bolt, dad. It looks like if you remove it, all these panels will fall apart, and I think you will be hard-pressed to get them all back together again."

He didn't listen to me, thinking he knew better (because he was older, of course). After a few good turns, he removed that rusty bolt and then it happened. The panels fell all over the place. He never put them back together, even though he tried. He had to hire a pool company to do that for him. Once he removed that main bolt, everything just quickly fell apart.

Looking back at this funny episode now years later through the lens of our political and cultural setting, it is not so funny. As our culture and world has removed the protective bolt of Christ and Christianity from the filter, thinking they can replace it and hold it together with moral relativism and Statist power, the once protective filter panels have quickly fallen all over the place.

- The sexual panel is down, being replaced by any and all forms of sexuality.
- The spiritual panel is down, being replaced by any and all forms of religion . . . so long as it is not Christianity.
- The self-control panel is down, being replaced by people, regardless of their position, doing *whatever* pleases them (and I do mean whatever).
- The common sense panel is down, being replaced by illogic in *every* strata of society.
- The fiscal panel is down, being replaced by unchecked fiscal greed from the top of the government down.
- The national panel is down, being replaced by a blind zeal to accept anyone and everyone into your country, even if a certain number of them are committed to your destruction.
- The educational panel is down, being replaced by the purposefully dumbing down of students so they are no threat to the existing “order.”

We'll stop here because I'm sure you get the point. With the protective bolt of Christ and Christianity removed (and replaced by relativism, hedonism, atheism and the like . . .), the world as we knew it has suddenly and shockingly fallen flat in *all* sectors.

Just in case you are sitting there wondering, “What on earth is going on? Where did my country go? When did the world leaders become inept, illogical, and self-destructive?” This word picture, this pool filter story is a glimpse at the much needed answer, and from what we see from the divinely inspired book of Daniel this descent into cultural, national, personal chaos is no fluke. On the contrary, it is all part of God's sovereign political plan. No chapter underscores this truth more than Daniel chapter seven. Within these twenty-eight enlightening, educational verses, we encounter this encouraging motif:

Political Degeneration Is Headed For Supernatural Elevation (Daniel 7:1-28)

Daniel will develop and validate this over-arching concept and spiritual truth with five supportive statements given to him by the living God in a high definition vision of the final form and function of world governments prior the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Believe me, his panoramic picture of the rise and fall of the final world empires is the most intricate and precise of any prophecy in the entire Old Testament.

From this we can readily surmise two things. One, God doesn't want His people to *freeze up* but to get *fired up*. You might need to read that again, especially you who are frozen by wicked world events. We, His Church, are His kingdom representatives in the here and now, and our job is to live as such and to be salt and light to the decay around us (Matthew 5:13-16). We must be in but not of the world, and we must do what we can to promote righteousness and holiness as darkness descends. Withdrawing and withholding is not an option. Period. Daniel certainly didn't live by those two words. He enmeshed himself in the carnal, godless culture for maximum spiritual gain. Will you? Are you? Two, God desires to encourage His people. For the ancient Jews in Babylonian captivity, they must have concluded God had forgotten them and His kingdom promised to them (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89; Jeremiah 30-31) as the godless leaders

expanded their godless rule. The words of this detailed prophecy potentially encouraged them in the darkness; hopefully giving them the desire to hold on for the messianic king would come (Isaiah 9). They should encourage us too, for we can see from our historical vantage point how the majority of this kingdom prophecy has been literally fulfilled, which means we should expectantly await the final fulfillment with the appearance of the Lord Jesus as the long-awaited Davidic King of Kings.

Degeneration, like all those fallen pool panels, engulfs us, but from what Daniel learned from God in this powerful passage, this is the densely ordained flow of world events as the world stage is prepared for the glorious appearance of the Messiah. This theme is woven like a thread through the five sections we shall study in our ensuing lessons. Before we consider them; however, I need to make some opening observations.

One, the first six chapters of Daniel contained history, with a smattering of prophecy. The last six chapters contain a major focus on prophecy as it relates to history. Studying prophecy is thrilling for, as John tells us in Revelation, “And I fell at his feet to worship him [the angel]. And he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow-servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’” (Revelation 19:10). When you study prophecy you are really studying all about Jesus, who is the essence of prophecy. How exciting is this? Very. Remember this as we get into the thick of some very intricate words from God about the future.

Two, from I Bible study perspective, I will adhere to the historical-grammatical method. Ostensibly, this means nine things as Geisler denotes:

1. *Literal* means the literal meaning of the text, as opposed to a spiritualized or allegorized meaning.
2. *Normal* speaks of understanding terms and the context in its common, everyday fashion.
3. *Historical* denotes that sentences should be understood grammatically in their historical setting, and should not be divorced from the historical context.
4. *Grammatical* indicates how the authorial meaning is intrinsically wedded to the grammar and the sentence structure.
5. *Contextual* underscores how every sentence should be interpreted within its context, chapter, and books.
6. *Authorial* tells us the author had one intended meaning and it is up to us to discover it, not to devise it.
7. *Exegetical* speaks of how interpretation comes out of the text and is not read into the text (eisegesis).
8. *Singular* informs us that every text has but one meaning, not many.
9. *Objective* reminds us how the authorial meaning is fixed and not fluid.¹

Three, based on my Bible study method (viz., hermeneutic) I adhere to the dispensational/premillennial position. I see God working in definitive ways at various points of

¹ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005), 415-417. For a detailed discussion of the various prophetic interpretive schools, read pages 413-457 of this book.

human history in order to bring glory to Himself. I also conclude that since the 113 prophecies of Christ's first coming were literally fulfilled, it is only logical to look for the rest of the prophecies concerning the seven year Tribulation, His Second Coming, and His millennial kingdom to be literally fulfilled as well. Some hold views contrary to this, but I am convinced this viewpoint is the most consistent. We are all, however, are united in Christ, we are all His redeemed people, we are all His ambassadors, and we are all looking forward to enjoying His presence. Let us not forget these primary truths as we dig into eschatology with Daniel in the next six chapters.

With these foundational concepts in mind, we are now ready to take a hard, honest look at how worldwide political decay is all part of God's plan to usher in the messianic kingdom foretold in the Old Testament prophets (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 2, 45, 72, Isaiah 2, 11, Jeremiah 23, 30, 31, Ezekiel 34, 37).² And, no, God does not promote sinful disintegration. He permits it in order to accomplish His over-arching salvific/kingdom plan. Starting with verse 1 of chapter 7, we encounter the first supporting line of evidence.

Kings Will Go From Bad To Worse (Daniel 7:1-7)

By saying this we are not being pessimistic, but realistic. God tells us how world history will go so we are more than prepared to stand strong and true in the midst of societal destruction masquerading as societal construction.

¹ In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind *as he lay* on his bed; then he wrote the dream down *and* related the *following* summary of it. ² Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ³ "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. ⁴ "The first *was* like a lion and had *the* wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. ⁵ "And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs *were* in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' ⁶ "After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷ "After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

Ominous, but highly instructive words for earthy spiritual pilgrims. Let's sink our interpretative spade into them to extract the golden spiritual nuggets God wants us to have as we walk in tough, terrible times.

²For a fuller discussion of the kingdom motif, I would direct you to several books. Charles Feinberg, *Millennialism: The Two Major Views* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 107-158. Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, Indiana: BHM Books), 1987.

God tells us with verse one that He is going back in time in the flow of the book of Daniel. The first year of King Belshazzar was probably around 553 B.C., or some fourteen years prior to the fall of the nation when the Medes-Persian invaded under the leadership of King Cyrus. Interesting. Long before the supposedly bullet-proof nation super power fell in one evening, God warned them of what was coming, as He had done through a vision He gave King Nebuchadnezzar years before. Unfortunately, nobody wanted to listen because they were quite content with their godless worldview(s). Before judgment God always warns because He is loving and just and desires to see sinners come to repentance (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9). His warning stands strong and true for the nations today, as it did in Daniel's day. Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus spoke in great detail about the time of the end prior to His glorious coming in the clouds (Matthew 24-25). Wise people take note and turn to Him. Will you?

Unlike God's communication patterns in chapters 1 through 6, here He speaks directly to Daniel in the form of a dream and visions. It is a method God will employ four more times before the book closes (Daniel 8; 9:20-27; 10; 11). God made sure this believer, along with all other believers, had a firm handle on what was coming down the political pike so they could be hopeful and courageous for Him. This particular vision experience the aged prophet wasted no time recording it on a scroll. Wouldn't you act similarly? When God speaks profoundly and precisely it is a message you do not want to forget, and it's a message you want others to know. Aren't you glad Daniel took the time to write all this out? I am, especially since we live toward the tail end of this particular prophecy.

The vision God gave Daniel, interestingly enough, involves carnivorous, brutal, terrifying animals. These beasts come from the Great Sea, which is historically and biblically the name for the Mediterranean (Joshua 1:14; 9:1; 15:1). The winds, which God controls (Genesis 8:1; Exodus 15:10; Matthew 14:24-32), are described as churning up the waters of this vast body of water. The Hebrew for "stirring up" literally denotes a "bursting forth," highlighting how the waters are being pushed into a state of upheaval and turmoil. Since the sea typically stands for national power in the Scriptures (Isaiah 17:12, 13; 27:1; 57:20; Revelation 17:15), the winds merely describe how the nations are in a constant state of political turmoil, either by demonic design (Ephesians 2:1-3 where Paul explains how the Devil is the Prince and Power of the air), but most assuredly by divine permission. I'm sure none of us would argue this point. With ISIS murdering innocent people (especially Christians) all over the globe in the name of Allah the merciful, with the Chinese navy on the march in the Pacific rim, with Hamas and Hezbollah itching for the next incursion into Israel, and with Russia flexing its power (again) on the borders of Europe, our ally, with radicalized Iran moving quickly toward the possession of the bomb, with the turmoil of our own presidential nomination process, we can readily surmise the world powers are tossing and turning as if they are in a storm of all storms. From this storm tossed sea of political upheaval come four distinct beasts, or empires. Before we look at them in detail, we must offer some cursory observations.

One, they mirror, in some fashion, the vision of the final world empires given to King Nebuchadnezzar in chapter two. The difference, however, should not be missed. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar's massive stately image likened the final world powers to various metals in descending quality, Daniel's vision illustrates how the world powers will go from one degree of animalistic behavior to yet another, culminating in a shocking, grotesque monster. Simply put, Daniel 2 sees world empires from man's perspective, and they don't appear to be that "bad." From God's perspective, however, they are nothing short of animals in how they behave. They

are blood-thirsty, self-consumed, devoid of God, ruthless, brutal, and only interested in establishing their power and turf at all costs.

Two, the ordinal numbers in Daniel 2 and 7 demonstrate how these empires follow each other consecutively. One passes from the world scene, only to be replaced by the next in sequence.

Three, both culminate in a so-called ten nation confederacy which will arise and function at the same time. The first pictures the confederacy in the form of ten iron toes mixed with clay, underscoring its strength and brittle nature. The second vision pictures the confederacy with ten animal horns. Both visions culminate with the appearance of the messianic warrior who will definitively destroy all vestiges of wicked world power so He can erect His glorious and holy empire to end all empires.



The first beast Daniel encountered was a lion (vv. 4).

⁴ The first *was* like a lion and had *the* wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

The ellipsis of the verb “was” serves to draw strict attention to this powerful animal. As gold is the most precious of all metals, the lion is the most prestigious

animal of the animal kingdom. This lion, of course, readily represents the Babylonian Empire. One hundred and twenty lions adorned the main drag leading into Babylon through the Ishtar Gate. Lions carved into the walls of the gate historically represented the pride and swift power of the Babylonians. Winged lions guarded the entrances into royal dwellings, and winged, colorful lions were fashioned into the walls of the city. Scripture also draws a correlation between lions and the Babylonian Empire (Jeremiah 4:7; 48:40; 49:19-22; 50:17, 43-44; Ezekiel 17:3, 12). There is no doubt this first beast gives us God’s view of the Babylonian political machine. They saw themselves as golden, while God saw them as a powerful, fierce beast.

Daniel’s description of the lion having wings of an eagle (a concept also tied to Nebuchadnezzar, cf., Jeremiah 49:22; Lamentations 4:19; Ezekiel 17:3; Habbakuk 1:8) highlights the speed with which the Babylonians conquered the known world, and the loss of the wings readily coincides with Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling by God (Daniel 4:28-33). Further, transformation of the lion/beast into a man, naturally dovetails with the transformation Nebuchadnezzar experienced after God sovereignly humbled him through a terrible disease. From this more noble animal, world leaders would become more animalistic and debased.

The second beast Daniel describes represents a powerful bear (v. 5).

⁵ And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs *were* in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'

History shows the Medo-Persian Empire replaced the Babylonian in 539 B.C. As the inferior silver arms and chest represented the Medes and Persians in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Daniel 2:32, 39), the bear now represents them from an animalistic perspective. The one side raised up higher than the other represents the predominance of the Persians over the Medes. How exact is the prophetic Word of God.

In addition, while a lion is swift, a bear is slower and plodding but powerful. Such were their forces. When they fought Alexander the Great they fielded some 300,000 warriors. No wonder God likened them unto a big, hungry bear. They used their mere size to goggle up much of the known world. The three ribs represent the complete destruction of foes, possibly denoting the decimation of once mighty Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia.

Before we move to the next beast, we must make one salient observation. Daniel gave this precise political prophecy some fourteen years before the Medes and Persians became a world power to be reckoned with. The only way he could have known this was for God, who stands outside of time and space, to give him insight. No one could have, by pure chance, ever



been this specific about who kingdom would replace the Babylonians. As a sidelight, this is why the Bible stands head and shoulders above all other so-called holy books.

The third beast is a leopard, corresponding to the inferior bronze of Nebuchadnezzar's original vision (Daniel 2:32, 39).

⁶ After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on

its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

The leopard is not as majestic as the lion, and is not as powerful as the bear, but it is still a killing machine. From history we know the Grecian Empire under the leadership of Alexander the Great, defeated and replaced the Medo-Persian Empire in a blitzkrieg fashion. The four wings highlight the speed with which Alexander's army of 30,000 overran much of the known world with their superior forces. The 300,000 soldiers of the Persians were no match for the cunning and speed of Alexander's crack, courageous troops. The four heads also perfectly coincide with how Alexander's vast empire was divided upon his untimely death at age 32 in Babylon.³ Casander ruled over Greece and Macedonia; Lysimachus controlled Thrace and a large swatch of Asia Minor; Seleucus seized Syria; and Ptolemy ruled over Egypt. Interesting.

Again, we must point out the precision of the prophetic word. The world's leading empires did historically degenerate as one replaced the other. Knowledge of this is statistically improbable. Further, there is no way a mere man could have posited the precision of this political intrigue some 222 years before the fact. Why, your broker cannot even tell you which stock will be a major performer within the next month. Once more, the only way Daniel could have secured this information is for the living God to tell him, pure and simple. And you ask me why I trust the Bible as God's book? Based on the facts it seems to be the most logical think for a thinking person to do.

The fourth beast is, well, a monster of sorts. Since this vision corresponds with that of Daniel 2, we know this part represents the iron legs and iron feet mixed with clay (Daniel 2:33), or Rome and Roman power.

⁷ After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.



³Strange, he could control his army but he couldn't control his drinking. After a night of drinking with Admiral Nearchus, he contracted a fever and died in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar II.

This beast is not classified as a particular animal because it is a conglomeration of all the other animals which preceded it. This is how Revelation 13 applies this final beast and world empire. It possesses the strengths and weaknesses of all the former empires, while adding its own strengths and weaknesses to the political mix. This is what makes it a monster of a kingdom.

The wording Daniel carefully chooses easily relates to what we know of Rome and the Roman army. Terms like “dreadful,” “terrifying,” “extremely strong,” “devouring,”

“crushing,” and “trampling” readily educated us how Rome became Rome. They merely pulverized their opponents. Just their inexorable dedication to wipe out the last vestige of Jewish insurrectionists on Masada after Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D., serves to validate how these words describe their method of conquest and rule. The way Pompey overran the Seleucid’s in 63 B.C. and seized Jerusalem, showed they were one of the most ominous armies the world had ever



seen. In the ensuing years they gobbled up southern Britain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and a vast swatch of Germany. For over four centuries this monster dominated the world political scene in a way no other country had, nor since. Their power culminated in 117 A.D.; however, they didn’t pass from the world scene until 1453 A.D. when the last Roman ruler was killed in battle, resulting in Mehmed II taking over

Constantinople. They were, however, the most powerful and longest reigning empire the world has ever known, but they were known for holding onto their power like the menacing monster described by Daniel.

Once more, we must underscore the precision of Daniel. Prophesying in 553 B.C., he foretold the coming of the most menacing and powerful kingdom the world had ever known,

Rome. And the prophet foretold its arrival some 490 years before the fact. Are you still looking for proof to believe in the Bible as God's Word? Additionally, Daniel was also spot on regarding how the world empires would gradually degrade over the years, moving from being a majestic animal to being a monster of an animal. This precision is, by no means, a fluke. God makes sure His people know how world powers will degenerate prior to the revelation of His Son, and our Savior, Jesus, the Messiah.

What's wrong with our world today? A lot. Politically, however, they are merely acting just like God said they would before He judges them and erects His glorious and long-awaited Davidic Empire of peace and holiness. So, if you are saint right now, be encouraged. God has got this slide into sin as the monstrous governments become even more animalistic as their end approaches. Determine today to stand strong and true for Him, no matter the cost. And if you happen to be an unbeliever, a non-Christian today, I invite you to think on this statement. Since the final world empires rose and fell exactly as God said they would, then what He's going to say about the final world empire of the Anti-Christ in the ensuing verses at the end of time must assuredly be literally fulfilled to the letter. Since this final empire will be summarily destroyed by God, and replaced by His King and His Kingdom, whose kingdom are you in? Joining Christ's kingdom is but a prayer away for a repentant sinner.