

THE BOOK OF DANIEL KINGDOMS IN VISION

GROWTH GROUP STUDY 7

LEADERS NOTES - INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL CHAPTERS 7-12 +NOTES FOR STUDY 7 (CHAPTERS 7-8) WE'LL ONLY TREAT CHAPTER 7 IN THIS STUDY

Summary of what we've seen so far in chapters 1-6

At the end of Daniel 6 we reach the end of the narrative/unfolding stories of the book. We saw in the Daniel 6 study that in each of the stories, there are important recurring themes: (See the table from page 3 of the Daniel 6 study comparing what the different kings said about God).

- God's sovereignty
- His everlasting kingdom that will one day be established
- That He is a God who saves
- That God is the revealer of mysteries
- God is able to humble the proud

My growth group last week we had some big picture questions about how the above themes relate to each other. I've reproduced some of them here as they are useful in helping frame what happens in chapters 7-12:

- How does God's sovereignty relate to the idea that one day an everlasting kingdom will be established? (ie If God is sovereign already now, what will change in the establishing of the kingdom in the future?)
- If He is sovereign then why the need for any saving to happen?
- If God is sovereign then surely the knowledge of this would not need to be revealed - it would be evident to all?
- If God is sovereign then why would there be any proud to oppose him?

A question of method

As we continue to work through the whole book of Daniel, we're wanting to ask an important question:

- Are there new insights here in Daniel about God, his world and his plan of salvation that are not found elsewhere in the OT books?
or to put the question in another way -
- Is there a particular contribution that the book of Daniel makes in helping us the readers to understand God's unfolding plan of salvation?

Here are some tentative answers to the above question:

The thought world of Daniel and that of the synoptic Gospels

Jesus comes and speaks of the kingdom of God drawn near. Mark 1:15. These are his first words. There follows amazing acts demonstrations of the in-breaking of God's Kingdom into this world. We see sicknesses healed, demons cast out, sins forgiven, the dead are raised. Here is salvation lived out. God has come to rescue and save those who are under the power of the devil. The beastly, forces of Satan that hold people captive cry out against Jesus. But he won't let them speak.

This is the Daniel thought world. God's kingdom has come and is being established. Yes, we see pushback. We don't know how the story will end, at least, not in the early stages. But we're confident that God will establish his king in his kingdom. We also see much language about the revelation of mysteries. The parables of the kingdom where Jesus tells his followers about the kingdom. "The kingdom of God is like.....". "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom, but to those on the outside, everything is in parables....". We see the proud humbled and Jesus lifting up the lowly.

You can see immediately that all of the recurring motifs that we have identified Daniel 1-6 above are found the Gospels. Thus the book of Daniel helps us to read the Gospels with fresh eyes as Daniel points us to Jesus.

The book of Daniel gives us the language and the categories to understand Jesus in the Gospels.

Even though this is true of the OT as a whole, in that the whole of the OT points to Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection, there is something particular about Daniel's contribution to our reading of the Gospels. Daniel gives us a pointy edge to our reading.

And now for some tips to help you lead Study 7 in our series (covering Daniel 7-8)

Please print out copies of the handout (pages 4-5) for every member of your group so that you can work through it together to see the structure of the events described. You want your group members to see the major lines of the vision and to not get lost in the detail. We want to give them confidence as they have a go at understanding the vision and for this it will be important to dwell in the text itself to seek to “get” its dynamics rather than simply to speculate on the details.

CONTEXT NOTES (OPTIONAL)

In Daniel 7 we’ve skipped back in time to the time of king Belshazzar’s reign. Daniel receives this first vision sometime in the period of history taking place between chapters 4-5. This vision along with those that follow, are different from the previous ones. Up until this moment it was the Babylonian kings who had received visions. Daniel was their interpreter. From now on the vision are for Daniel himself.

Although from this point in the book there is a change in literary genre - Daniel 7-12 are filled with apocalyptic language and symbols. Despite this, chapter 7 is clearly connected to what has gone before as shown by the following table. Added to this, the whole section of chapters 2-7 forms a unit in that it is written in Aramaic as distinct from chapters 1 & 8-12, written in Hebrew.

A	A dream about four earthly kingdoms and God’s kingdom (ch. 2)
B	A story about the Jews being faithful in the face of death (ch. 3)
C	A story about royal hubris, which is humbled (ch. 4)
C ₁	A story about royal hubris, which is humbled (ch. 5)
B ₁	A story about the Jews being faithful in the face of death (ch. 6)
A ₁	A dream about four earthly kingdoms and God’s kingdom (ch. 7)

The above table is from: Lucas, Ernest., Daniel - Apollos Old Testament Commentary Intervarsity Press, 2002

NOTES ON THE DANIEL 7 HANDOUT (PAGES 4-5)

Step 1

Read through the handout page 4 (7:1-14) which presents the vision that Daniel saw as 2 events. ie Daniel 7 is not describing a chain of successive events but rather the same 2 events described in repetition.

Event 1 - the appearance of the 4 beasts

Event 2 - the beasts are judged and destroyed and the everlasting kingdom is given to the one like the son of man.

Event 2 is made up of 3 stages:

1. The setting in place of the heavenly court,
2. The judgement and destruction of the 4th beast with its boastful horn, while the 3 other beasts are allowed to live on for a time yet with no dominion
3. All authority is given to the one like the son of man

Hopefully the structure of the vision is clear. A couple of things to observe at this point are:

1. Beasts 1-3 seem to be each given things. v4, 5 & 6. (Buy whom?). The 4th beast is different and seems to take for itself rather than have things given to it.
2. The flow of stages 1 & 2 of Event 2 is interrupted by the boastful horn of the 4th beast. See verses 11 & 8

Step 2

Read through the handout page 5 (7:15-28) which gives the interpretation of the vision.

The 2 Event structure of the vision itself is also apparent in the interpretation section. Verses 17-18 provide a neat summary statement of the vision as a whole. Verses 21-22 and verses 23-27 follow the same lines of this summary interpretation filling it out with more detail.

Important :

1. I'm taking verse 14 of the vision (referring to the one like the son of man) to be speaking of the **same thing** when in verses 18, 22 and 27, Daniel writes about the saints receiving the kingdom and possessing it forever. It is all part of the one event as should become clear below.
2. The timing of the 2 events and in particular, the breaking of Event 2 into 3 different stages helps us make sense of verses 11, 21 and 23-25. The ongoing rebellion of the boastful horn (beast 4) and the consequent effect that this will have on the saints seems to take place between the setting up of the heavenly courtroom and the judgement that the Ancient of Days pronounces against the beasts (which signals the destruction of the 4th beast).

So where does all this take us? What does it all mean and what is it all pointing to?

1. There is no question, despite appearances to the contrary, that God's kingdom will prevail. The emergence of the beasts - the kings and kingdoms that arise on earth are not outside of God's control. This is made explicit for the first 3 beasts - (each one of them is given something). We may well have questions about this when we consider the fourth one, however by the end of the chapter it becomes clear that he is destroyed.
2. The time frame for when the events described in the chapter is not made clear to us. We can't be sure what the initial readers of Daniel would have understood. They probably lived post-exile which was a period of ongoing struggle, sometimes intense, for God's people, either those who had returned to the promised land or those still scattered among the nations. Clearly from verse 28, Daniel did not get it himself.
3. Read Mark 13:24-30 & 14:61-65 (Matthew 24:30-35 & 26:61-65, Luke 21:25-33 for parallel passages) and Revelation 1:7 to see how Jesus himself understands "the son of man coming with the clouds" passage from Daniel 7:13-14. These verses are often understood as pointing to Jesus' second coming. However the "this generation will not pass away until all this has taken place." and the "you will see...." verses have led many to see it pointing in the first instance, to the cross, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
4. Theologically Jesus receiving the kingdom - (Philippians 2) and the saints receiving the kingdom and possessing it forever speak of the same reality. God's people are now found to be in Jesus. He dwells with them and in them. Their rule is contingent on his rule as they share in his victory over Satan and death. We as believers now rule with Christ. This reality is currently understood through faith. One day it will be visible to all.
5. Even when given the interpretation of the vision Daniel does not seem to understand what he has heard and seen. We however living as we do on the other side of the cross do know that the vision is all about Jesus, risen and reigning.

Thanks for working hard together on a difficult part of the Bible to interpret. We pray that it has been rewarding for your group. Please invite your group to pray together about living in the light of Jesus' rule and reign. Pray for us as a church as we seek to make Jesus known. This is the point to which all of history is heading. Thank God that he has revealed it to us and pray that he would reveal it to more and more people.

The Vision that Daniel saw 7:1-14

EVENT 1

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. **2** Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. **3** And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. **4** The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. **5** And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' **6** After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. **7** After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. **8** I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

EVENT 2

STAGE 1 - COURTROOM SET UP

9 "As I looked, thrones were placed,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
its wheels were burning fire.

10 A stream of fire issued
and came out from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.

ONGOING REBELLION - PUSHBACK

11 "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking.


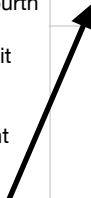
STAGE 2 - JUDGEMENT, WITH SOME ONGOING ISSUES

And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. **12** As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

STAGE 3 - ALL AUTHORITY GIVEN TO THE SON OF MAN

13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.

14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

The interpretation of the vision that Daniel saw in 7:1-14		
<p>15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.</p>		
EVENT 1		EVENT 2
Daniel - 7:17-18	Summary	
In answer to Daniel’s question in v16.	<p>17 ‘These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.</p>	<p>18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’</p>
Daniel - 7:19-22	More detail + Daniel sees a repeat of some vision material	
<p>Daniel asks about the 4th beast, the 10 horns and the other, boastful horn vv19-20</p>	<p>19 “Then I desired to know the truth about 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, 20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions.</p>	
	<p>Pushback</p> <p>21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,</p>	
Daniel - 7:23-27	Detailed interpretation	
<p>In answer to Daniel’s question in vv19-20</p>	<p>23 “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.</p> <p>24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.</p>	
	<p>Pushback</p> <p>25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.</p>	

28 “Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”