

LESSON 23

Daniel 7:13-14

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

At the end of this remarkable judgment scene, Daniel sees “one like a son of man” come to the Ancient of Days to be presented before him and to be given a kingdom. Two questions — *who* is this, and *when* is this?

First, *who* is this? We know that this son of man is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In fact, this is where the Messianic title “the Son of Man” came from. When Jesus used that title of himself what he was saying was that he was the Son of Man of Daniel 7! He was taking a Messianic title familiar to every Jew and applying it to himself. He was applying verses 13 and 14 to himself — that he would come before the Ancient of Days to be given dominion, glory, and a kingdom! We often read right past that

title, which occurs over and over in the gospels. After studying these two verses, we will never be able to skip over that title ever again! Jesus is the Son of Man!

Second, *when* is this? So far our time frame for this fourth beast has been the first century, and I see no indication of a change in these verses. Once again, as in Chapter 2, we see a fifth kingdom — one totally unlike the other four we have seen. This fifth kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed (verse 14), unlike the other four that were just destroyed! It is the same kingdom we saw in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2:44 — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.*

When? “In the days of these kings.” Who are those kings? The kings of the fourth kingdom. The eternal kingdom of Christ — his church — was established in the first century as described in Acts 2, just as Daniel told us it would be. Here in verses 13 and 14 we are once again being shown the same first century events that we saw in Chapter 2.

But when did Jesus come with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days? Not in Acts 2, but in Acts 1.

Acts 1:9 — *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

Verses 13 and 14 are showing us the ascension of Christ back to heaven following his resurrection from the dead. And once there, he was given the kingdom that was established shortly thereafter in Acts 2.

But why can't this be the end of all time? Because when that happens Jesus will **deliver** a kingdom to God, not **receive** a kingdom from God.

1 Corinthians 15:24 — *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.*

Jesus *receives* a kingdom in Daniel 7:14. When did that happen? That happened as soon as the kingdom was established — in the first century. The kingdom is the Lord's kingdom, the church.

And if verses 13-14 are showing us a first century event, then isn't that even more evidence that the great judgment scene we saw in verses 9-12 was also a first century event? Those verses showed us the judgment of Rome, just as Jesus used similar language in Matthew 24 to describe the judgment of Jerusalem. These verses aren't talking about Jerusalem (because the fourth beast is Rome, not Jerusalem), but Daniel will later talk about the judgment of Jerusalem. But we already knew that. Why? Because Jesus quotes Daniel in Matthew 24!

Acts 1 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those on earth. Daniel 7 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those in heaven — and what an incredible scene it is! The victorious Christ returns to the glories of heaven and is presented before the Father to receive the eternal kingdom that he purchased with his blood. And all of this is described after the judgment scene at which the earthly kingdoms of this world — including the fourth kingdom, which had put Jesus to death — are judged and destroyed to make way for the eternal kingdom of Christ — the church of Christ! Can anyone ever look at the church in the same way after studying these verses?

Daniel 7:13-14 — *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, **and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and **his kingdom** that which shall not be destroyed.*

The church of Christ is that kingdom! We are that kingdom! Do we believe it? Is that how we see ourselves? If not, then we need to spend more time reading Daniel 7!

Daniel 7:15-16

**15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.
16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.**

At this point we still have some unanswered questions — for starters, we haven't yet determined who those eleven horns are. Fortunately, Daniel was just as curious as we are, so he asks someone standing in the court what the vision meant, and he receives the interpretation. In fact, Daniel was more than curious — he was also troubled and grieved in spirit. He had just seen some incredible images, and he wanted to know what they meant.

Now here is a Daniel study tip: Be very wary of any commentary whose interpretation of this chapter disagrees with the inspired interpretation we are about to read! The same tip applies to the inspired interpretation in Revelation 17.

At this point we should pause to consider another question: why was Daniel given this vision? A cursory reading of Isaiah might have led some of the exiles to conclude that the Messiah would appear immediately following the Babylonian captivity. In fact, liberals today believe that Zerubbabel was a disappointing Messiah figure of Isaiah's prophecies.

But Daniel's vision says NO. The Messiah will not come until two other kingdoms have come and gone. The Messiah, Daniel tells us and told those exiles, will come during the fourth kingdom (Rome).

Paul dealt with a similar problem in 2 Thessalonians, not with Christ's *first* appearance, but with his *second*. Some Christians had quit working to await what they felt would be the immediate return of Christ. Paul told them that Christ would not return until the man of perdition was destroyed. I think that man of perdition is the little horn from Daniel 7, and Paul was simply saying that Jesus could not return until all that God had prophesied in Daniel had come to pass.

Some say that the New Testament authors were under the mistaken impression that Jesus' return was imminent. That is completely wrong. Paul said just the opposite in 2 Thessalonians. While we say (correctly) that Jesus can return at any moment, that was not true in the first century before all of the events in Daniel had come to pass.

And Daniel is being told here that it was certainly not true that the Messiah would come immediately after the return from exile because they were now living during the second kingdom, and the Messiah would establish his eternal kingdom during the fourth kingdom.

Daniel 7:17-18

17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

The first thing we are told in this interpretation is that, as we have been suggesting, these four beasts are kings or kingdoms. But what are they? Kings or kingdoms?

The terms “king” and “kingdom” are sometimes used interchangeably, and we have to look at the context to see what is meant. In ancient kingdoms, the king was the kingdom, and the kingdom was the king. The king was the embodiment of the kingdom. This is what we saw in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2:39 — *And after thee [King Nebuchadnezzar] shall arise **another kingdom** inferior to thee.*

The fourth beast is called a king here in verse 17 and is called a kingdom in verse 23. And verse 24 tells us that “the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings.” Those ten horns were on this fourth beast — so verse 24 confirms that the beast is a kingdom and the horns are the kings of that kingdom.

Another possibility is that the four kings in verse 17 are the four primary kings of these four kingdoms — where by primary I mean the four that are the focus of these visions and events in Daniel. If so, the four kings would likely be Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and Domitian — and they may be pictured in verse 17 as representatives of the four beasts. But I think the better view is that the word “king” in verse 17 means “kingdom.”

Should God’s people have been frightened of these four fierce beasts that had arisen from the earth? No. Why? Because of a little three letter word — “but.” Notice that small but crucial word “but” that begins verse 18. Things look bad, BUT we are going to win. Our kingdom (unlike these earthly kingdoms) will never pass away. It will outlast them all. Verse 18 is a message of comfort to Daniel, and to us as well.

Daniel 7:19-22

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Daniel skips quickly to the fourth beast, which in this vision was different from all the others.

What about the other three? Daniel does not ask about those or perhaps he does but does not give us the details regarding the answer he received. We will learn a great

deal about the third kingdom in the visions that occur later in the book, and also about the second kingdom.

Daniel repeats the details regarding the fourth kingdom and in doing so we learn more about the little horn. Notice that this little horn wages war against the saints. This clue casts serious doubt on the view of some that this vision is speaking about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. There, Rome was not waging war on the saints but was waging war on the Jews who had persecuted the saints. Jesus had told the saints what they needed to look for so they could escape the fall of the city. Any Christian who was in Jerusalem in AD 70 was there only because he or she had not heeded the warnings of Jesus! Daniel will have some things to say about the fall of Jerusalem, but that event is not being discussed here.

In verse 22 we see God *coming* in judgment. There are many comings of God in the Bible. We often speak of the “second coming of Christ” as if there were only two. But the phrase “second coming of Christ” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. The closest we get is Hebrews 9:28 which says that Jesus will **appear** a second time — an event that will occur at the end of the world.

While Christ did not literally appear in AD 70, he did come in judgment at that time. Matthew 24:30 describes a coming of Christ, and Matthew 24:34 tells us that that coming of Christ in judgment against Jerusalem happened in the first century.

We need to consider the context very carefully whenever we read of a coming of God or a coming of Christ in the Bible. While Jesus will come again literally at the end of the world, Jesus has come before figuratively in judgment against oppressors of God’s people. Matthew 24 speaks of his coming in judgment against Jerusalem, and Revelation speaks of his coming in judgment against Rome.

Note also in verse 22 that the saints are said to possess the kingdom. What that means is that the saints are in that kingdom, which confirms that this eternal kingdom is the church, the body of the saved.

And judgment is given to the saints in verse 22. What that means is that the saints are the reason for the judgment, and the judgment is their vindication. The judgment of Rome, which is described here and in Revelation, was motivated by the prayers of the saints. In fact, the entire book of Revelation could be seen as God's answer to the question in Revelation 6:10.

Revelation 6:10 — *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

Daniel 7:23

23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

Verse 23 is a completely accurate picture of the Roman empire, which grew from a dusty village on the Tiber River in the eighth century BC to control virtually the entire known world by the first century AD. This fourth beast is Rome, which was different than all the other kingdoms in its organization, in its unity, and in its power. This fourth kingdom breaks things into pieces, unlike Greece which was itself broken into pieces. This fourth kingdom is *not* Greece as the liberals would have us believe; this fourth kingdom is Rome.

Daniel 7:24-25

24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Here we once again meet the ten horns and the eleventh little horn, and now that we know they are kings, we will try to figure out who they are.

First, do these kings rule simultaneously? We wouldn't expect kings to rule simultaneously, but some commentators have suggested that the language used here requires that they do so, but that is not true at all. In Chapter 2, the statue was destroyed at one time yet the kingdoms it depicted did not rule simultaneously. Kings and kingdoms can be treated as a unit (as, for example, if they are judged at the same time) without requiring them to have existed or governed simultaneously in time.

So who are these eleven kings? Let's look at all of the evidence we have.

The Vision in Daniel 7

Daniel 7:8 — *I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

The Interpretation

Daniel 7:24-25 — *And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.*

The Vision in Revelation 13

Revelation 13:1-8 — *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, say-*

ing, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The Interpretation

Revelation 17:10-11 — *And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*

Additional Evidence

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 — *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

So what then do we need to find? Based on that evidence, here are the clues we need to match up with the kings:

- From Daniel 7, we are looking for eleven kings, three of which are uprooted and one of which persecutes God's people and claims to be a god.
- From Revelation 13 and 17, we are looking for seven kings (of which, at the time the book was written, five had fallen, one was presently reigning, and one would reign only a short time). These seven will be followed by an eighth king who will persecute God's people and claim to be a god. (When we determine the king "who is," we will know when Revelation was written.)
- From 2 Thessalonians 2, we are looking for a man of sin who claimed to be a god — and this person had not yet arisen when 2 Thessalonians was written (likely around AD 52 to 54).

First Question: Who are the eleven kings in Daniel 7?

In Daniel 7, we have eleven kings who are associated with the fourth kingdom. We know from Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 that this fourth kingdom was in power when the eternal kingdom was established in Acts 2. Thus, the fourth kingdom must be Rome. Who then are these eleven kings of Rome?

If you look at the handout from Lesson 21 (available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com) you will see a list of the twelve Caesars from the book *The Twelve Caesars* by the ancient historian Seutonius. They are divided into four groups.

- Julius Caesar occupies the first group alone, and we will talk about him in a moment.
- The second group of five makes up the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and they take us from before the birth of Christ during the reign of Augustus up to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul by Nero.
- The third group are the three civil war kings who reigned and died in a single year, AD 69.

- The fourth group is the Flavian dynasty, consisting of Vespasian and his two sons Titus and Domitian. Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, and that dynasty continued until Domitian's death in AD 96.

Thus, between Augustus and Domitian we have the entire first century New Testament period. So it should not surprise us at all if these prophecies in Daniel end up focusing on Augustus, Domitian, and the kings in between those two — who together make up eleven kings — the precise number of kings we see in Daniel 7, written half a millennium earlier!

Second Question: But the list on the handout has **twelve** Caesars. Why are we ignoring the most famous Caesar of all — Julius Caesar?

For starters, Julius Caesar is outside the relevant time frame. He died nearly half a century before Christ was born. But more importantly Julius Caesar was *not* a king. He was *not* a Roman emperor.

As an aside, some argue that **none** of these men were *kings* — instead they say they were *emperors*. But what did the Jewish leaders say about Tiberius when Jesus was before Pilate? “We have no **king** but Caesar” (John 19:15). Was Tiberius a king? His subjects certainly thought so, and in fact, by any measure, Tiberius was a king, as were all of the Roman emperors.

Was Julius Caesar the first emperor of Rome? Modern historians say no. If you consult a list of Roman emperors today you will see Augustus listed first. Why? Because Rome was a *republic* under Julius Caesar, not yet an empire. But Julius Caesar was a dictator. How could a republic be ruled by a dictator? (Do we really need to ask that question today?) Simple — just write a law. The Roman republic originally entrusted the government to two consuls so that the citizens of Rome would be protected against the tyrannical rule of a single man. But it was soon felt that circumstances might arise in which it was important for the safety of the state that the government should be vested in the hands of a single person, who should possess absolute power for a short period of time, and from whose decisions there

could be no appeal to any other body. That person was called a dictator, and Julius Caesar held that office for five terms, eventually being declared “Dictator in Perpetuity.” Now, there may be a fine line between a Roman emperor and a Dictator in Perpetuity, but there is a line.

Also, if we include Julius Caesar on the list of Roman emperors, then why not include Crassus and Pompey? They ruled with Julius Caesar in the First Triumvirate. And why not include Lepidus and Marc Antony, who ruled with Augustus in the Second Triumvirate? And why not include Sulla, whose own dictatorship in 82 BC set the precedent for Julius Caesar’s dictatorship, and the eventual end of the Republic under Augustus? In short, if we open the door for Julius Caesar, others will try to push in with him.

And yes, it is true that some ancient historians include Julius Caesar on lists along with Augustus and his followers, but that points more to the fame of Julius Caesar than to his office. And yes, it is true that Suetonius included Julius Caesar on his list of twelve Caesars, but no one is arguing that Julius Caesar was not a Caesar! What we are saying is that he was not an emperor, and historians all agree with us on that point.

But is that the only reason to start with Augustus? No. I think an even better reason to use Augustus as the starting point is that the New Testament treats him as such. Augustus was the emperor who was around to welcome the King of kings into this world, and whether or not Augustus saw that star in the sky, after that date his empire would never be the same. In addition to being the *historical* starting point, Augustus is the *natural* starting point. And starting with Augustus causes the rest of the evidence to fit like a glove.

So the eleven kings are the first eleven emperors of Rome, starting with first emperor, Augustus, and ending with Domitian. This group covers two complete dynasties, as well as three very short lived civil war kings in between.

Question: Which kings are the three uprooted kings in Daniel 7? This question really answers itself when you look at the list of kings. You have two complete dynasties separated by three civil war kings who reigned and died in a single year. Who else could the three uprooted kings be other than those three civil war kings: Galba, Otho, and Vitellius? I think they would have been the first to agree with their description of being “uprooted”! One was hacked to pieces in the Roman forum, one killed himself, and the other was killed when Vespasian’s army entered the city — and that all happened in a single year! Can you imagine the turmoil in our country if we had four presidents in a single year? That is what happened to Rome in AD 69.

Question: Where are these uprooted kings in Revelation? For the most part, Revelation ignores them. Why? Two reasons, at least. First, they were uprooted in Daniel — and so they weren’t around to be considered in Revelation. Second, and more importantly, there is an important figurative reason we will discuss in a moment concerning the number 8. (Why do I say *for the most part*? It is possible that the three uprooted kings are included among the ten horns of Revelation 17:3. See my notes on that book for more information about that theory.)

Question: Who then are the seven kings in Revelation and the eighth king that follows them? Daniel saw eleven kings, with three uprooted. What is eleven minus three? Eight, and so the eight kings in Revelation correspond with the eleven kings in Daniel 7 after three have been uprooted. How do we know that? We know that because both Daniel and Revelation are looking at the same kingdom — the first century Roman empire. We know that from Daniel because that time period in the first century is when the eternal kingdom was established, and Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 both tell us that the eternal kingdom would be established during the days of that fourth kingdom and the days of those kings. We know that from Revelation because the kingdom that gave rise to these kings is pictured as a blood thirsty harlot, drunk on the blood of the saints, and seated upon seven hills. That can be none other than Rome, the famous city of seven hills. In fact, coins minted at

the time the book was written show the goddess Roma seated upon the seven hills that surrounded the city of Rome.

The best explanation turns out to also be the only reasonable explanation — the seven kings of Revelation are the ten kings of Daniel after three kings are uprooted, and thus the eleventh king in Daniel is the eighth king in Revelation.

So who are the five kings who have fallen? Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Who is the king who is? Vespasian, which means that he was reigning when Revelation was written. Who is the king who will come and remain only a short time? Titus, who reigned for only 26 months. And that leaves Domitian as the eighth king.

Question: So who is the eleventh king in Daniel? Who is the eighth king in Revelation? Who is the man of sin from 2 Thessalonians? They are all one and the same person — the final emperor in our list of twelve Caesars, Domitian. Do the descriptions of this king from the Bible fit with what we know about Domitian? Yes.

Was Domitian a braggart? Listen to what Suetonius had to say about Domitian in his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*:

From his youth he was far from being of an affable disposition, but was on the contrary presumptuous and unbridled both in act and word.

Did Domitian claim to be deity? Verse 25 says that he would think to change the times. In Daniel 2:21 we read that God changes the times. Thus, this little horn claims to be in the place of God. Suetonius wrote:

With no less arrogance he began as follows in issuing a circular letter in the name of his procurators, “Our Master and our God bids that this be done.” And so the custom arose henceforth of addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation.

William Barclay wrote:

But with the coming of Domitian there came a complete change. Domitian was a devil. He was the worst of all things — a cold blooded persecutor. With the exception of the mad Caligula, he was the first Emperor to take his divinity seriously, and to demand Caesar worship.

Was Domitian a persecutor of God's people? Domitian began an empire policy of persecution that did not end until 311 AD under the Edict of Toleration by Galerius and Constantine. Tertullian called him a “limb of the bloody Nero,” and that name was associated with him even into the third century. Eusebius called him “the successor of Nero.”

Why was it important in Revelation to depict Domitian as number *eight* rather than number *eleven*? Listen to what Milligan had to say about the number eight:

The number six itself awakened a feeling of dread in the breast of the Jew who felt the significance of numbers. It fell below seven just as eight went beyond it. [The number eight] denoted more than the simple possession of the Divine. As in the case of circumcision on the eighth day, of the great day of the feast on the eighth day, or of the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning in active power.

The Year of Jubilee when everyone got the chance to begin all over again, followed seven sevens of years. The leper who had been excluded from the congregation was given a new beginning on the eighth day (Leviticus 14:10). In early Christian literature, Christ was referred to as 888.

How does the number eight fit with Domitian? Nero was the first to actively persecute Christians. Tertullian wrote:

Consult your annals, and there you will find Nero, the first emperor who dyed his sword in Christian blood.

And as we just noted a moment ago, he later referred to Domitian as a “limb of the bloody Nero.” A rumor arose during the reign of Domitian that he was literally Nero, raised from the dead. How else would Domitian be described except by the number eight — the number of renewal?

How was Domitian “different from the former ones” as verse 24 says? He was the first to make it a policy of the empire that all who refused to worship him be persecuted. He began an empire policy of persecution against Christians that lasted for years after he died.

What does it mean in verse 25 when it says that the saints would be given into his hand for “a time, two times, and half a time”? This phrase denotes three and a half years, a period of time that is also found in Revelation 11:2, 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, and 13:5. In each case it denotes a state of affairs in which God’s people would be persecuted yet be sustained. It denotes a temporary state of affairs — something that would not last.

Why is the number three and a half used to denote such a temporary state of affairs? Because it is a broken seven, and seven denotes perfection — something that will last. Thus, a broken seven denotes something that is temporary. Another possible source is the drought that Elijah prayed for. It lasted three and a half years (James 5:17), and that period may have been the source for a period of time denoting a temporary affliction.