

INTRODUCTION

English writer George Orwell is perhaps best known for his work *1984* (written in 1949), in which he introduced the idea that “Big Brother is watching.” It is almost scary to read it today because it seems strangely prophetic of the ability of big government to monitor your phone and email. However, I think his best work was *Animal Farm*, written in 1945. It was a story about how farm animals took over an English farm and established “equality” only to discover the pigs became “more equal” and used the new structure to become fat and wealthy. It was a blatant political satire about the failure of Russian Communism. When I was in the Crimea and saw the lavish summer mansions of the Soviet communist leaders, I couldn’t help but think of Orwell’s book. You might say it was prophetic. That’s what we have in Daniel 7, a dream of four animals, and much of it is about political and military power. I call it “God’s Animal Farm.”

The first half of Daniel is the personal section. Chapters 1-6 deal with personal stories about Daniel, the three Hebrew amigos, Nebuchadnezzar, and the writing on the wall. The second half of Daniel (chapters 6-12) contains the prophetic section. There are four visions contained in these last six chapters: The vision of the four animals in chapter 7; the vision of the Ram and the Goat in chapter 8; the vision of the seventy weeks in chapter 9; and a long vision of the end times contained in chapters 10-12. It is important to understand during the next few weeks that some of the prophecy in this section has already been fulfilled, making it history for us. Much of it, however, has yet to be fulfilled; it is still in the future.

Daniel 12:9 says, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.” In other words, some of the prophecy of Daniel won’t be fully understood until what the Bible calls “the time of the end.” The study of end times or the end of the world is called eschatology; it comes from the Greek word *eschaton* and means “end.”

There are two warnings here. First, don’t become obsessed with Bible prophecy. I’ve known some Christians who “go to seed” over prophecy. It becomes their only biblical pursuit. That’s because it really is interesting to hold the newspaper in one hand and Bible prophecy in the other and say, “Yep, that’s what God said would happen.” But some have become so obsessed with prophecy they become repulsive. They sweat and strain to figure out the meaning of some horn growing from the foot of some symbolic animal and never use their feet to take the gospel to people who need Jesus. They become so preoccupied with the tiny details, they miss the larger picture.

Warning number two: Don’t be afraid of Bible prophecy. Some people read these prophecies and consider them a Gordian knot: Beyond their ability to unravel. The best tool to unravel prophecy is the Bible itself. One of the main interpretational principles I have followed for years is “Let the Bible interpret the Bible.” For many years I studied and preached from a *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*. I preached from it until I switched to the NIV and I still use it in my personal study. This is a Bible that links Bible passages together into a beautiful topical chain. If you want to know the truth about any topic, just read every verse in the Bible on that topic.

It's a lot what the internet search engines do. They provide links to other sites. That's what I'm going to be doing in this message. I'll be providing links to passages that clarify and support the prophecy we read in Daniel.

God's definition of prophecy: (Isaiah 46:10)

"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: my purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

Over the next few weeks I'll be serving up some heavy meals of Bible prophecy. Folks, this is biblical meat; it's not milk. I'm going to try to cut it up into bite-sized pieces and feed it to you, but I can't chew it for you and swallow it. You'd better listen hard, take notes and chew on it for a long time or you'll have a good case of spiritual indigestion! But if you will consume it, it will make you stronger.

One of the things I'll do today is to put these events in chronological or sequential order. A characteristic of apocalyptic literature (Daniel and Revelation) is it usually doesn't flow in neat, sequential order. In fact, in chapter seven, Daniel has several episodes of this vision followed by one interpretation. We will skip around the text to put it in order for you by looking at both the content of the prophecy and the interpretation together. Buckle your seat belt and return all tray tables to their full upright position, because here we go!

I. FOUR WORLD KINGDOMS (7:1-7, 17)

First, Daniel dreams of four world kingdoms.

Daniel 7:1-3. "In the first year of Belshazzar [the king who saw the writing on the wall], Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of the dream. Daniel said: 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the other came up out of the sea.'"

The wind, almost a tornado, symbolizes the constant turmoil that surrounds military conflicts. We aren't going to look at the details of each animal. "The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle...And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear...There before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard...After that, in my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns."

What a nightmare! Sounds like Daniel ate pepperoni pizza, drank buttermilk, and then rode a roller coaster before he went to bed. Thankfully God explains it. Skip down to the last part of verse 16, "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints [that's us] of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever." Folks, I've read the last chapter, and guess what? We win!

We have the advantage of standing 2,500 years after this dream, so we can consult history to identify these kingdoms. Three have come and gone and the fourth is the one of the focus of this vision.

1. Lion/Eagle: Babylonian

Daniel uses the national symbol of Babylon, the winged lion often depicted on ancient Babylonian sculptures. But as Daniel describes this lion, he indicates its feathers will eventually be plucked and its power diminished. At the height of his success, Nebuchadnezzar’s mental or emotional breakdown crippled his power and influence.

2. Bear: Medo-Persian

The lopsided bear, leaning on one side, appears next, representing the dual kingdom of Media-Persia. One side is stronger. The Persians were stronger than the Medes. The three ribs in the bear’s mouth represent the three major conquests of Persia: Lydia in Asia Minor, Babylon under Nabonidus, and Egypt under Psamtik.

3. Leopard: Greek

The leopard or panther is known for its speed and Daniel used this animal to symbolize the rapid conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great. In less than ten years, Alexander of Macedon conquered Asia Minor, Babylon, Egypt, Syria, all of Persia and part of India. But in 323 B.C. at age 33, he died of a fever in Babylon on his way home from his great conquests. Greek historians blamed his premature death on his excessive drinking after he was wounded in India. Alexander died without an heir to his throne, his infant son having died in India. We’ll say more about Alexander and the four generals (four wings on the back of the leopard) who assumed his kingdom next week.

Now some scholars disagree with these identifications. Some say they don’t represent ancient empires, but modern governments that will lead up to the end times. Some have identified the lion as Britain, the bear as Russia, and the leopard as Israel or even China. That may be true, but I’m not going to get sidetracked by that discussion, because the main point of the vision is the fourth animal, and it’s easy to identify.

4. Scary Beast: Roman (Past and Future)

Daniel’s dream in chapter seven parallels the dream Nebuchadnezzar had in chapter two of the image made out of four different metals. The golden head was Babylon, that’s the lion here. The silver chest symbolized the Medes and Persians, like the bear here. The hips of bronze symbolize the Greek Empire, like the Leopard in this chapter. So why did God repeat this dream to Daniel? (1) To reinforce the importance of these kingdoms and (2) to give many more specific details, especially about this fourth animal.

Following the same pattern as the vision of the statue in chapter two, the vision of chapter seven points to a fourth, unnamed kingdom: Rome. This is truly amazing, because in 550 B.C., Rome was an insignificant village on the Tiber River. The fourth beast is identified as having iron teeth (military power) and conquering all the territory of the previous Gentile powers. At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from Britain to India. It was the greatest empire in human history, encompassing what today would include Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and half of Asia. Amazing? Edward Gibbon, a historian who was not a Christian, wrote in his classic work, *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "The four empires are clearly delineated; and the invincible armies of the Romans are described with as much clearness in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the histories of Justin and Diodorus."

In Daniel 2, there was a "second phase" to the fourth kingdom. There were feet of iron mixed with clay and ten toes representing ten nations. This vision has the same idea. There is a second stage to this kingdom and the ten nations are symbolized here as ten horns. This coincides exactly with the prophecy of Revelation. Compare it to Revelation 17:12-14 and decide for yourself. But Daniel notices there is a "little horn" that rises up and takes control of all ten.

II. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ANTICHRIST (8, 11, 21-25)

Daniel 7:8, 11, 21-25. "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully... Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire... As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgement in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will arise, different from the earlier ones; he [now the "it" has become a "he"] will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.'"

Read that to mean "one year, add two years, add a half a year, the result: three and a half years." That's exactly 42 months, by the way. This is exactly the same person spoken of in Revelation 13, the Antichrist. Read it for yourself, but keep that three-and-a-half years (or 42 months) in mind as I read a portion of it from Revelation 13:5. "The beast [Antichrist] was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty two months." Verse seven says, "He was given power to make war against the saints to conquer them."

Now, let me summarize for you what I believe is going to happen next on God's prophetic clock. Remember this is my interpretation and I won't stop loving you if you don't see it exactly the same way, but men I respect, like W.A. Criswell, Billy Graham, Stan Toussaint, and Chuck Swindoll all share this position:

Jesus is going to come to rapture those of us who are born again. Arising out of the turmoil following that event, a one-world government will be established. It will originate from the old Roman Empire area, the European community, which is roughly ten nations. When I preached on chapter two last month, there were 12 nations in the European Coalition, but Austria has since removed itself from membership. This time of political turbulence is often called the Seven-Year Tribulation. Just wait for Daniel 9. There will also be one individual who takes control. At first he seems to be the true man of peace (the first half of the seven years), but his true nature is revealed during the last half of the seven-year period.

He conquers three of the ten units or sectors of the old Roman Empire (perhaps England, Germany and Italy). He will be a political and military genius. His "eyes" refer to his incredible human intelligence. He will be one of the most brilliant men ever to live. His "mouth" refers to his dynamic ability to speak and persuade others. He will be a great orator. Here is Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Saddam Hussein, all rolled into one! I do not know if the Antichrist is actually alive today, but I do know this 1 John 4:3 says, "The spirit of antichrist ...even now already is in the world."

Now, lest you think I am some kind of a wild-eyed fanatic wearing a sandwich board sign saying "THE END IS NEAR" listen to what others have said about this idea:

Sir Winston Churchill once said, "The creation of an authoritative, all-powerful world order is the ultimate aim toward which we must strive. Unless some effective world super-government can be brought quickly into action, the proposals for peace and human progress are dark and doubtful."

Jeanne Dixon: "A child born somewhere in the Middle East shortly after 7:00 a.m. on February 5, 1962, will revolutionize the world. Before the close of the century he will bring together all mankind in one all-embracing faith. This will be the foundation of a new Christianity, with every sect and creed united through this man, who will walk among the people to spread the wisdom of the almighty power. Mankind will begin to feel the great force of this man in the early 1980s and during the subsequent years the world as we know it will be reshaped and revamped into one without wars or suffering. His power will grow greatly until 1999, at which time the peoples of this earth will probably discover the full meaning of the vision.

Even Bishop Fulton J. Sheen wrote, "The Antichrist will come disguised as a great humanitarian. He will talk peace, prosperity, and plenty...He will explain guilt away psychologically and make men feel ashamed if their fellow man saying they are not broadminded and tolerant. He will spread the lie that men will never be better until they make society better."

If you want more information about this man, just read 2 Thessalonians 2. As it says in Daniel 7, this man is totally defeated by the next event:

III. THE RETURN OF JESUS AND HIS KINGDOM (13-14, 26-27)

Daniel 7:13. "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led

into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

That is also reported in verses 26 and 27, the interpretation.

"But the court will sit, and his power [that's the little horn, the antichrist] will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints [that's us when we reign with Christ on the earth for 1,000 years], the people of the Most High. His Kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him."

Standing on this side of the New Testament, who do you think the son of man is? It's Jesus! This speaks of the time at the end of the seven-year tribulation when Jesus returns to defeat the Antichrist and his armies that have gathered at Armageddon. Then Jesus establishes his Millennial Kingdom on earth (1,000-year reign), which is just like the "first day" of the eternal kingdom we will enjoy.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two, Jesus is represented by a symbol of a "stone not cut with hands" that crushes the kingdoms of the world. Here in verse 13, He is more clearly identified as the "son of man." Why do you think Jesus most often referred to Himself as "the son of man?" This was a title every good Jew should recognize from the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel.

Ray Stedman wrote, "When history reaches its lowest ebb, when the sin of man breaks forth in its most vulgar and most evil forms, then God intends to intervene once again. Jesus will return to set up His kingdom on earth. This is not a mere vagary of Scripture; it is the central teaching of the Word of God. We have as authority to teach this, not only the prophets who spoke of old, but also the apostles of the New Testaments and, even more importantly, the direct testimony of Jesus Christ himself." He quotes the book of Daniel and enlarges upon these things.

But maybe you don't agree with me or Ray Stedman or Billy Graham. Let me quote someone more reliable than all of these. On the evening before Jesus was crucified, He stood before the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. The High Priest demanded, "Are you the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" At first, Jesus didn't reply. He was asked again and finally Jesus looked into the face of the High Priest and He quoted Daniel 7:13. It's recorded in Mark 14:62: "I am," said Jesus. "And you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Daniel 7 says the Son of Man will return in the clouds and will defeat the Antichrist. Take some time and check out the link to Revelation 19:11-12, 19-20.

IV. THE FINAL JUDGEMENT (9-10)

There is another event prophesied in verse 9. "As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze."

May I introduce you to the Ancient of Days? "Ancient" doesn't mean "old" here. It means "eternal, ageless." This is probably where most people get the idea God is some old man with a long white beard and long white hair. Psalm 90:2 says, "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God." Jesus said it like this, "I am the Alpha and the Omega ... I am the First and the Last." (Revelation 1:8, 17) He is everything in between.

The Ancient of Days is a reference to the Triune God. It's God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. His white clothing speaks of His purity. His white hair has nothing to do with age; it pictures His holy, sinless nature. This description of God sounds exactly like what the Apostle John saw in Revelation 1:14, "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire."

Keep reading in Daniel 7:10 to see what's happening in this vision: "A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him [probably angels]; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court [or literally "judgement"] was seated, and the books were opened."

This is a vision of the Final Judgement linked to Revelation 20:11-15. "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books...If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire"

Let me explain this final judgement Daniel and John saw. This is the final judgement of the lost. Christians won't be there, only the unsaved, the "dead," which refers to those who are spiritually dead without Christ.

For the next five minutes, imagine I'm not saved and I will be there. I might have been a wicked person who never regarded God or maybe I was a very good, moral, honest person but I just never believed you had to trust Jesus Christ; after all there are all those religions—who knows which one is best? Better yet, imagine I'm a church member. I walked an aisle, filled out some paper and even got dunked in the baptistry. I gave money to the church and even did some work for God and felt pretty good about it. I just was never born again, I was a participant in the Christian religion, but I never had a personal relationship with Jesus. Whatever the case, I'm standing there. What books will be opened before me? I believe there will be at least three:

1. Books of Works

Every evil thought, every wicked deed, and every corrupt word I have ever spoken will be recorded in the book and revealed at judgement. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, "But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have

spoken.” I think, “Uh, oh.” But it won’t just be my evil works and evil word but all my good works will be recorded as a testimony as well. Even if I filled up ten times more pages with good works than bad, fifty times more pages of good thoughts than wicked, a hundred times more pages of good words than evil words, still I will be lost. There are not enough good works in the history of the world to allow someone to earn their way into heaven.

2. The Bible

In John 12:48 Jesus said, “There is a judge for the one who rejects me—the very words which I have spoken will condemn him at the last day.” That means the Word of God, the Bible will be Exhibit A at the judgement. I will be reminded of every time I heard a Bible verse, or read the Bible. It will be there as a testimony that I did not heed it. The Bible, will either be “words of life” that lead me to God or they will one day stand in judgement against me. But there’s still a chance, because I see another, large book over to the side.

3. The Book of Life

The scripture is clear the most important book at the Judgement Day will be the Lamb’s Book of Life. When you repent of your sins and trust Jesus alone for salvation, your name is written down in the Lamb’s Book of life. The Book of Life will be at this final judgement, and the fact that none of the names of the lost are written in it will be the “absence of evidence” of salvation.

Once again, imagine I’m there, lost without Christ. I’m expecting my name to be there, after all I was religious. I was a church member; I gave money for the Lord’s work. So I’m there before God and He says to his stenographic angel, “Is his name written in the Book of Life?” The angel takes a moment to search. “No, Lord his name isn’t there.” I imagine I’m going to say, “Objection, your honor! Look again! Here’s my church membership card, here’s my baptismal certificate, and here’s my contribution record. Surely there’s a mistake!”

The angel looks again. “No, Lord. His name is not there.”

I say, “Lord! Lord! There must be some mistake!!”

The Lord looks at me and says, “Not everyone who says ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven... Depart from me, I never knew you.” (From Matthew 7:21ff)

I fall to my knees and say, “Okay, I was wrong. I thought religion was enough. Now I confess that Jesus is Lord!”

But by then it’s too late, for the Bible says, “One day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11)

CONCLUSION

The most important question we can ask ourselves is, “Is my name written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life?” But can we know for sure? Yes you can. That’s why Jesus said to “rejoice because your names are written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” He wouldn’t be so cruel to tell us to rejoice over something you can’t be sure about. Is your name in the Book of Life? Are you sure?

Let me give you a different scene, because I know I won't be at the Final Judgement. I know this because a number of years ago I settled my case out of court. Let me tell you how I am certain my name is in the book of life.

When I was a child, I realized I was a sinner and I could never save myself. I knew one day I would face judgement. I personally went to the Judge (He actually invited me and I accepted His invitation) and I surrendered myself to Him. I admitted I was guilty and I deserved the very harshest punishment. Do you know what this Judge did? He stepped down off the bench, wrapped me in the robe of His righteousness then He became my advocate, my defense attorney. In fact, He did more than just plead my case. He took my punishment. He became my substitute in the execution chamber and when I surrendered to the Judge, Jesus, my name was written down in the book of heaven's court. The Judge didn't write, "not guilty," instead, He wrote "forgiven" beside my name. I settled my case out of court and you should too!

Judgement is coming. And you will either be judged *in* Jesus or you will be judged *by* Jesus. The choice is yours.

Daniel's vision of the future is amazing. But for each of us, it is a solemn reminder Jesus is going to return and one day all of those who don't know Him will be sentenced at the Great White Throne Judgement. Do you know Jesus?

OUTLINE

God's definition of prophecy:

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I. FOUR WORLD KINGDOMS (1-7, 17)

Eagle: Babylonian

Bear: Medo-Persian

Leopard: Greek

Scary beast: Roman (Past & Future)

Link to: Revelation 17:12-14

II. THE RISE AND FALL OF ANTICHRIST (8, 11, 21-25)

Link to: Revelation 13:5-7 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

III. THE RETURN OF JESUS AND HIS KINGDOM (13-14, 26-27)

Link to: Revelation 19:11-12, 19-20

"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." *Mark 14:62*

IV. THE FINAL JUDGEMENT (9-10)

Link to: Revelation 20:11-15

1. Books of Works

2. The Bible (John 12:48)

3. The Book of Life

Has your name been written in the Book of Life?



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes