



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Daniel 7:15-28

Daniel

"The Beast"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you Mark, and good morning. We are in a study in the Book of Daniel. Some of you are visiting; and we are now in chapter 7 of that study, which is a dividing point in the book. It's halfway through, and the character of the book changes at that point. We have a number of incidents in Daniel's life and the lives of his friends in chapters 1 through 6.

But chapter 7 begins especially the prophetic aspect of the book. And it is a very significant chapter for the study of prophecy. We began it last week. We looked at the first 14 verses in which Daniel has a dream in the first year of Belshazzar the king. He's the last king of Babylon.

And he sees this great sea, probably the Mediterranean, stormy, and out of it come four beasts. They represent the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. And the fourth beast, which is Rome, is unusual. It's unlike any animal that Daniel could compare as it compared to the others. He can't compare it to anything.

And there are aspects of it that are particularly unusual. It has horns, and one horn in particular. A small horn that has eyes and a mouth and is blaspheming. And then he sees heaven. It opens up and there is the Ancient of Days on His throne, and He destroys the beasts.

And then, one like the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days and receives a kingdom, and His kingdom is different from the four kingdoms. His kingdom, we're told at the end of verse 14, "will

not be destroyed." Well, that brings us to our passage. We'll look at the second half of the book, beginning with verse 15 through verse 28.

"As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 'These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.' Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates. I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting

kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together and ask His blessing upon this time.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for this time together, this opportunity to read the Scriptures as we've done and then spend time meditating on it, considering the meaning of the text. Just a great privilege, a great blessing for us. It's something we need every week. We need to be gathered together as your people and gathered in genuine fellowship, which is fellowship around your Word. We need to be considering the things that we have been considering in the Book of Daniel.

Every book of the Bible is of value to us in different ways. And, certainly, this book is important to us in a variety of ways. But in this particular aspect, in this particular aspect of the book, it's particularly important because it reminds us that we have a glorious future, that life has meaning. It's not aimless, it's not random, and it is all governed by you for a purpose. And kingdoms rise and fall according to your direction and in your perfect plan, which will lead, ultimately, to a glorious end, a great kingdom, an eternal kingdom.

And that's our future. We need to be reminded of that. We need to know that the things that we do now have some significance, have great purpose. We may not always see it, but it is true and it will have purpose for all eternity. So, Lord, these are some of the things that we will consider this morning.

I pray your blessing upon us, that the Spirit of God will teach us and encourage us and build us up in the faith as we consider this seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel. So guide us in our thinking, Lord. It's important that we be men and women who read and study the Bible and that we sit under the instruction of your Word. And it's

important that preachers and teachers of your Word spend time in study and preparation, and we choose to do that here. But, ultimately, Lord, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is what's definitive in all of this.

He is the one that illuminates our mind. He's the one that guides our thinking. He's the one that keeps us alert, and He's the one that shows us the application. And it will apply to us in subtly different ways I think. Generally, the same, but in different ways we need this applied to us individually.

And I know that He does that and will do that, and that's what we seek, Lord. Bless us with illumination and application to our lives. And bless us also materially, Lord. We are in need of that constantly. We have a short list, as Mark pointed out, in our bulletin of people who need our prayers. There are others besides that.

And the reality is we all need your blessings, Lord, constantly. We live and we move and we have our existence in you. Every breath of life that we take is a gift from you. Daniel even said that to his king, Belshazzar. "You're in God's hands," he said, "and every life-breath comes from Him." Every breath of life we take is your gift to us.

So, Lord, we're dependent upon you. We depend upon you for our daily bread. We pray that you'd provide that to all of us. We pray particularly, though, for those who are in distress or who are in need of employment or who are sick. There's some among us who are gravely ill.

We pray for your blessings upon them and pray that you give encouragement, and give encouragement to all of us and strength to all of us. And may our time together be to that end. Bless us, Father, to that end. And we commit our time to you now and pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Some years back, I think it was 1970, I was up East and visited Gettysburg. I toured the battlefield and then saw the Cyclorama, which is a large panoramic painting of the battle. It was done in the late 1800s by a French painter. These were very popular

at that time. They are 350-degree paintings that surround the viewer and give a complete view of the scene.

You literally stand inside a very large painting, and it's a panorama, a full view of the battle. This one is of Pickett's Charge, as I remember. It reproduced the terrain of the battlefield with the Confederate Army on one side, the Union Army on the other, and soldiers and cavalry of both in between. It's full of action and all the stuff of war: cannons, smoke, horses, fallen soldiers, officers shouting orders. It's the whole scene of that famous battle that broke the South and turned the tide of war.

The purpose is to give the full scope of the battle. And a person gets that. But one can also look at specific things; focus on particular aspects of the battle, one place, or one person, Cemetery Ridge or maybe George Pickett.

Well that's very much what Daniel did with his dream here in chapter 7. It is a panorama of world history, beginning with the ancient empire of Babylon and extending to the last gentile kingdom of the future. In the estimation of many, chapter 7 is the most important chapter in the book and one of the most important prophecies in the Bible. It has been called the key to history. And after looking at this long continuum of history that unfolds like a 360-degree painting, with its wild beasts and a variety of detail, Daniel fixes his attention on one part of the whole.

He fixes his attention on one empire and one ruler. But first, he gives an explanation of the dream. He had a sense of it, just as you would if you saw a great painting of a battle and you'd recognized the obvious; that it is a battle, that it's a class of army. But to know what battle is depicted, to know who the characters were, where it happened, when it happened, you would need someone to explain it, that well, this is the Battle of Waterloo. And that's Wellington, and that's Napoleon. And this is Marshal Ney, and he's maneuvering here.

Well, that's what Daniel needed. He knew the dream was about chaos in the world, and it disturbed him. In fact, in verse 15, he says,

"My spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me." But who were the players in the dream? The grotesque monsters coming out of the sea, the glorious Man in heaven who received the kingdom? Would this affect Israel?

Was it about to happen? All of this concerns Daniel greatly, so he asked an angel standing nearby what it all meant. And in verse 17, he gives Daniel some explanation. "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth." So the great sea in verse 2 of Daniel's dream symbolized the earth.

It symbolized, specifically, the gentile nations. They are in an uproar, as Isaiah said. There's chaos and war going on completely. No peace among the nations. It's like a restless sea, and the beasts come out of that, and that represents the kingdoms of the gentiles.

And each of these kingdoms runs its course in history. And then there will be a fifth kingdom. It is different from the four. And this one, the angel says in verse 18, "the saints of the Highest One will receive and possess for all ages to come." So world history will largely be the story of gentile rulers and empires.

It will be a story of greed and war and destruction up to the very end. But the end belongs not to these kings and not to these warring parties but to the saints. We have a kingdom. That is what the Son of Man will receive from the Ancient of Days, a kingdom on the earth. It is the fifth and the final kingdom.

And unlike the other four, this kingdom will never end. It is eternal. Now, that description of it, as a kingdom that will not be destroyed, that will not end, has been used by some to argue against a millennial reign of Christ, to say, "There is no millennial kingdom. It cannot be, because this kingdom that's described here is for all ages to come. It's not a thousand-year kingdom. It has no end."

But, in my opinion, that proves too much. The description here simply means that the kingdom to come cannot be confined to the millennium. So what is given to the Son of Man is the Messianic Kingdom that will merge into the new heavens and the new earth.

And that, really, is the final goal, the ultimate goal of God's plan for history and for His people. And that's our hope.

It's eternity. And that's a panorama of world history revealed to Daniel, from Babylon to the millennium and beyond, into all eternity. But it is the fourth kingdom, it's the last beast that especially got Daniel's attention. It was something "different from the others," he said. This is the creature in the dream that was so unusual that Daniel couldn't even compare it to an animal.

All of the others had some comparison: to a lion, to a bear, to a leopard. But this fourth one is different altogether. He can't compare it to any known animal. Its power was greater than the other three, and it was far more ferocious. It had ten horns and "teeth of iron."

He adds another detail here in verse 19. It had "claws of bronze." So it was completely unnatural. It was vicious and it could tear its victims apart. The beast had another horn in addition to the ten.

It was unique. It had eyes and a mouth, unlike any horn anyone's ever seen. And with its mouth it boasted great things, which means it boasts great blasphemies. In the dream, Daniel described it as a little horn, a little one. But it became larger than the other horns, and soon it dominated all of them.

And it was violent, very violent. That's what disturbed Daniel. It was a persecutor. Of course, it is a king, it's a person, and he's described in verse 21 as "waging war with the saints and overpowering them." It is destroying Daniel's people and they were no match for him.

And the beast would have kept at it, and he would have destroyed them altogether if it wasn't stopped. But it was. The beast devoured the saints. Then we read in verse 22, "until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom." So what is all this about? And who or what is this fourth beast?

That's Daniel's question. And in the next verses the angel explained it all to him. "The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth. It will be different from the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it."

And from history, it's easy to identify this as the Roman Empire. It's easy to identify it also, as we compare this with Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2, and the four different metals: the gold, the silver, the bronze and the iron. And the iron represents the Roman Empire. It conquered everything in its path. It controlled the known world of its day.

But there's another aspect to that statue that Nebuchadnezzar had in his dream. The iron is mixed with clay in the feet. And this beast also has something unusual about it. It has ten horns. And the angel speaks of these as ten kings that rise out of this kingdom, that rise out of Rome.

They rule at the same time as contemporaries in a kind of league or confederacy and alliance together. So together they make up this fourth kingdom. But when would that be, because there's nothing in Roman history that matches this union of ten kings? That's unusual in the dream. And that suggests that this has not yet happened.

Now this is that statue with its feet of clay and iron that represents something that is yet future. This represents something that is yet future. And I think that's supported from the fact that when the Son of Man returns to establish His kingdom, He destroys these kings. So it must be connected with that time. It must be connected with that future period when Christ returns and His reign begins. This then is a future kingdom, a future aspect of the Roman Empire that has not yet occurred.

It's out of it, out of this future kingdom, this future Roman kingdom that another king will arise; the little horn that so fascinated Daniel. Daniel says, "he will be different from the ten, and he will subdue three kings." So what Daniel saw in his dream is a future empire that will be in some way connected to the old Roman Empire

and, evidently, a revised Roman Empire. And after it is established, a man of great ambition will arise that takes control of it. Daniel sees him as a little horn that becomes great, a boasting horn with eyes and a mouth.

John saw something very similar. He saw, in fact, the same thing and wrote about it in Revelation 17:12-13, when he saw one that he called the beast. And ten kings, he wrote will give their power and authority to the beast. In 1 John, John identifies him as the antichrist. And in verse 25, the angel describes his reign. It will be a reign of terror.

"He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." So he will be a blasphemer and he will be a persecutor of Israel and of believing gentiles. This will occur during the seven years of tribulation that will come upon the earth that John describes in Revelation chapters 6 through 19. Many gentiles and Jews will be saved during that time. In fact, there'll be a time of great revival unlike anything the world has ever seen.

John describes it in chapter 7, where he speaks of the 144,000 who will be the servants of the Lord, who come out of the 12 tribes of Israel. And then he sees innumerable hosts of – this multitude of gentiles who are saved out of the great tribulation. It's a scene of heaven, then he sees all of this. And it shows what a great revival will take place during this time. And yet, it will be a time of great apostasy as well, a time of counterfeit religion.

And we see that in the description here of the beast, of this horn who will attempt, we're told, "to make alterations in times and in law." What does that refer to? We're not altogether clear what it refers to specifically. But what's significant about that is that's what God does. Remember that prayer that Daniel prayed back in chapter 2 in which he exalts the Lord God.

And in verse 21, he says of the Lord, "He changes the times and the epochs." He establishes kings and removes them. That's what God does. He changes the times. And here's this figure, this king who dominates the others.

He changes the times and the law. It's his attempt at making himself out to be God and claims worship for himself. It's probably a reference to the times of worship, so that he will probably direct worship to himself. And something like that was attempted during the French Revolution when the leaders tried to set up a ten-day work week. Can you imagine that, a ten-day work week. They had a revolution and they're thinking, "What'd we get out of this; we've doubled our work week."

It didn't succeed, but attempts like this to alter times have been attempted. But all comparisons aside, this will be something altogether different, unlike anything else. It will be a worldwide dictatorship that will eliminate all religious liberty and force to choose to serve the truth or the lie. And the antichrist will have a persuasive influence over people. Not only because he has the threat of death which he holds over people, but also because he will be empowered by Satan to do wonders.

He'll be a persuasive person. Paul writes of this. This isn't just John in the Book of Revelation and Daniel in this book, but Paul writes of it, too, in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-11. He writes of this man of sin who will come on the scene. He writes of the great apostasy that will come, and describes how the man of sin will do false wonders and what Paul calls, "the deception of wickedness."

I don't think that they're real miracles that he does. I don't think he will do actual supernatural things. They will be tricks, they will be slight of hand, that kind of thing. But they will be very convincing, very convincing, and many will be deceived by this man. He will be a persuasive and powerful person. One who, John tells us, "is energized by Satan," in Revelation 13.

So no wonder Daniel is fascinated by this person and alarmed by him. The beast will be inspired by Satan who hates Christ and hates His people. So he'll try to destroy them in what will be a worldwide reign of terror. But as intense and terrible as it will be, it will be limited. It will be rather short lived.

Daniel is told that it will last for "a time, times, and half a time." And most take that to mean three and a-half years. Revelation 13:5 says that he will have "authority for 42 months," which is three and a-half years. And that would make it the last half of the tribulation. So the tribulation period of seven years will become more intense in the second half and a time of great persecution.

And then his end will come. It will come quickly and swiftly. Verse 26: "But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever." The day will break, the night will end, and His kingdom will come. And His kingdom, God's kingdom, the angel says will be an everlasting kingdom. And that is the glorious end to the dream, but the glorious end of all history.

Glorious, but Daniel was shaken up by what he had seen, and it was a lot to take in and signaled a perilous future for his people, perilous before the glorious part comes. That's often the way it is in life as well. We have a glorious future, each one of us, as God's people. But, in the meantime, we may have trials and tribulations, and they wear us down and they're very difficult. Well, it's encouraging to know that just as history, a kind of macrocosm, has a glorious end with trials leading up to that, we in our lives have trials, but in this microcosm of history we have a glorious end before us, and that's to encourage us.

Well, as I say, it's a glorious end. But Daniel's shaken up by all of this, by the chaos that he sees. It's a lot, as I say, to take in. He sees a perilous future for his people before the glory comes. And that's how he concludes the whole thing in Verse 28. "At this point

the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

There's a lot here and there's a lot to understand. And Daniel was aware of that and was in a near state of shock because of it. He'd seen nations rise and fall. He'd seen diabolical figures and persecution of the saints. But he says he kept it to himself. And what he means, he pondered; he spent a great deal of time reflecting upon this.

And there's a great deal of wisdom and counsel in that for all of us. That's what we should do. We should reflect upon these things, reflect upon all of them because there are a number of lessons here to be learned. They give us clear vision for living in the present, as well as an understanding of what's to come. And the two have a connection, because the hope that's to come gives us a great deal of perspective on how we're living today.

Some of the lessons are very obvious. Well, what we've already studied so far is obvious. This gives us a picture, a general picture. Not all the details we might want, but it gives us a general picture of history and what's to come. As I said, chapter 7 is considered one of the most important chapters in the Bible for prophecy and history. It has been called by some, "the key to history."

But it also gives us other lessons. And it gives us a lesson in mankind. To be specific, it gives us a glimpse into human nature. Last week, I commented that Daniel 7 is almost as much about anthropology, the study of man, as it is eschatology, the study of the future. I think that's borne out when we recognize the connection between the dream that Daniel had in chapter 7 of the four beasts and the dream in chapter 2 that Nebuchadnezzar had of the four metals.

The great statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is man's vision of the world's kingdoms. As man sees them, they are all glory and power. Chapter 7 gives God's vision of human rule. He sees monsters. What is glorious from earth's perspective is grotesque from

heaven. Men with power like wild beasts, crushing and devouring everything in their path. It's every man for himself.

Now, that is epitomized in the tyrants of history, a long line of rulers and conquerors from the ancient despots to modern dictators, from the Caesars to Stalin and Mao, and no doubt more to come. In fact, we know at least one more is coming. The little horn, the man of sin. And this is, I think, an important lesson. This is true of all men.

Given the power and the opportunity, many people would behave in the same way that the wild beast of this chapter behaved, because that's what we are by nature. Now, I know that that is offensive to most people. Maybe not most people here, but generally that's an offensive kind of statement to make, to suggest that we are, at our core, corrupt, that we are fallen creatures. That, really, as God sees us, we're monsters.

The suggestion of depravity in any but a very few persons is anathema to people. It angers people; they don't want to hear that. Well, let me illustrate. Hannah Arendt was a journalist who's Jewish, and covered the trial of Adolph Eichmann for *The New Yorker* magazine. And then from that article that she wrote, she wrote a book titled *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

Adolph Eichmann, of course, was a Nazi officer in the SS and one of the main henchmen of the holocaust. He was later captured in Argentina. He was brought to Israel for trial. He had boasted that he would jump into his grave laughing because he had the death of five million Jews on his conscience. He didn't take credit for six million, but he did take credit for five million, and he said that gave him extraordinary satisfaction.

Now, that is a man most people would consider a monster. But Hannah Arendt didn't. The psychiatrist who examined Eichmann concluded that he was normal. She concluded he was a clown. That was her word.

He did poorly in school; he spoke improper German. He had no real conviction about politics. He was no evil genius. He was a dull

bureaucrat who was very good at taking orders. So the full title of her book is *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.

In other words, Eichmann is an example of how ordinary evil really is. It doesn't take a maniacal monster to be evil. The implication is, under the right circumstances and with the right motivation, most people could do what he did and do the most horrific things. That book was controversial. It still is.

The idea that Eichmann was ordinary is an insult to people. Not because it lifts him up to their level, but because it brings them down to his level. Now, I can't evaluate the mental state of Adolph Eichmann or his IQ, or even Hannah Arendt's conclusions. But this I do know, the Bible teaches that every man is capable of great evil and would commit it apart from the restraining grace of God.

In fact, we can put it a little more biblically or put it in a biblical setting. You and I, had we been in the garden, we would have taken the fruit just as Adam did, every one of us. Adam was a real man, but Adam was also every man. Now, I think we have that lesson borne out here in this passage. We often see ourselves as pretty good. We think of ourselves that way.

God sees us as very bad. He sees monsters which means He sees a race in need of a Savior, but one that won't chose Him until it first sees itself as it truly is. So Daniel chapter 7 is about man. It's about the human condition. Not just the bad condition of some kings and one king in particular, but it reflects the condition of mankind, of men and women alike.

It's about human nature on one level, which I think is an important lesson to get if man is to understand the remedy and take the remedy, because there is one. Well, that's one lesson. And then this is not only a chapter with lessons about human nature but also about history, as we said. It explains history. Human history is about conquests and cruelty because human nature is like that.

Human nature is fallen. It is in rebellion against God, just like that great sea is restless at the very beginning of the chapter in verse

2. That's mankind. Those are the nations. That's the population of the world. It's in chaos, it's in revolt, it's in rebellion.

That's true of all of us apart from God's grace. But because human nature is in a bad condition, a fallen condition, this vision teaches a lot about history. In fact, I would offer it as a second lesson. Human history is not about the ascent of man. Daniel's vision gives the lie to the idea that history is about man's upward evolutionary progress. It's just the opposite. It's the descent of man.

The beasts become increasingly fierce, not gentle. Now, obviously, there've been some advances. We've all enjoyed that, the advances in technology. And that's brought about some comfort, but not much contentment, particularly if you own a computer like I do. A lot of discomfort, but technology with all of its advances doesn't offer us altogether a great deal of contentment, and it gives us no moral improvement.

The world is full of inhumanity and justice in spite of all of these kind of advances in technology and science. It hasn't changed that. In fact, technology has been harnessed for the annihilation of man as much as the liberation of man. I'll give you just one brief example, dynamite. Alfred Nobel invented it for safety purposes.

He had a very good intention in his invention. It was to be a manageable explosive in the demolition and building of things. But it was very soon given a military use to cause death and destruction. Mankind will not lift itself up. Every good thing that men do, men find a very different use for it.

So man won't lift himself up. He doesn't have it within himself to redeem himself and build a utopia on this earth. Man can't do that. But, and I add this, neither can man annihilate himself in some nuclear or environmental cataclysm. Not because he doesn't have the capacity to do that or even, in some cases, the will to do that, but because God has a different plan for this world than that.

His plan for this world, ultimately, is one of blessing, not demise. And in that we have yet another lesson from our chapter.

This chapter's also about sovereign grace. As fallen as it is, God has not given up on this world. He will redeem it and He will establish His kingdom on it.

That's how Daniel's dream ends, with the coming of the kingdom of God. It is the kingdom given to the one like a Son of Man in the dream. It is a kingdom given to Christ who is coming again. He's the stone of chapter 2, that crushes the feet of that great statue and grinds it to dust and fills the earth. And notice what is written about it, about this kingdom in verse 27.

The dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to – " well, we might expect the Son of Man. But what Daniel writes is "will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High One." God's people will not only be in that kingdom, a part of that kingdom to come, will not only be citizens of the world to come, we will rule it with the Lord and we'll rule it forever. We will have dominion that all of those kinds of this chapter and all the kings of history have only dreamed about. That will be ours and it will be glorious.

That's our future. That's our hope. But, again, it is hope for, as Daniel says, "the saints." And that very simply means, for the believers in Jesus Christ, the believers in the Son of Man, the Son of God. He is the Savior.

He came into this world that is like a great sea in Daniel's dream. It's restless, it's stormy, it's rebellious. That's the world. "There's no peace for the wicked," Isaiah says. But He came into this sea, as it were, to calm it, to redeem it, to bring salvation to it. And he did that by dying for our sins, that all who trust in Him receive the forgiveness of sin completely and are made children of God at the moment of faith, and are heirs of this kingdom to come.

Now, that's not just some idle fact. That's not just some detail that's interesting, but without much practical value. Eschatology is curious and interesting. It's kind of entertaining but not all that much

value day to day practically. Oh, it's very practical. It means that we have a future.

That's significant. Life is not meaningless. The world doesn't have any real meaning. It's hard to find meaning in life. But we are the ones that have meaning in life.

What we do has importance. Not just for the moment but for all eternity. There are things that happen in your life and you can't understand why they're happening. But your response to them, as a response of faith, has eternal reward. It's important for all eternity.

Time is marching toward that glorious end, toward that glorious kingdom, and each day brings us closer to it. Each day brings us closer to that great reward and that time of reigning forever. Well, then the natural question we ask when we come to a passage like Daniel 7 or we study the Book of Revelation, or we look at Paul's statements about the apostasy to come and the man of sin and all that will happen, in 2 Thessalonians 3, is when's that going to happen. How close is it?

There are lots of people that have ideas about that. I get stuff in the mail about that. In fact, I just opened a letter in between services, and it's all about when it's all going to happen. It's got dates and charts. Well, I can't give you those dates 'cause I don't know. And we need to be careful about speculating on that.

The church has a history of doing that, of speculating on these things and getting very fanciful and exotic in its answers to this. And that's gone on for a long time. In fact, as far back as Oliver Cromwell, there was a group called the Fifth Monarchists. And they took their name from our passage, from Daniel chapter 7 and the fifth kingdom, the kingdom of Christ. And they predicted an end to all human government and that that would come in the year 1666.

Those kinds of excesses have been an embarrassment for the church, and they've happened over the centuries. They've happened even recently. Nevertheless, having dismissed that and given that caveat, that warning to not get into that and those kinda details, 'cause

we don't have them and we don't know them, and we're not supposed to know them. Nevertheless, this is a real hope that we have. And this kingdom and the coming of our Lord is closer today than it has ever been.

In fact, it gets closer every day, it gets closer by the hour, and that should encourage us. In fact, we're to be looking for it. We're be looking for the blessed hope. The apostles tell us to do that. Paul tells us to do that, be looking for the blessed hope out of chapter 2, verse 13.

We are to live in light of this. It gives hope for the future and meaning in the present, and calm in periods of trial. Because what is demonstrated here and all through this book is that lesson that I keep repeating, but it's the great lesson of the Book of Daniel. And that is the absolute sovereignty of God. Life is full of tragedy.

Life is full of disappointment. We all have it to some degree or another. But I cannot think of anything more encouraging than knowing that God is, and that He has a plan for this world. But the same hand that is guiding the events of this world has hold of me and you, and is guiding us and protecting us and making everything that is in our life, everything in our life fit.

You and I don't know how it all fits together, but God says it does. It has a reason. Now, the knowledge of that, the conviction that that is true, and what Scripture teaches in Romans 8:28 gives stability in this life. Especially since someday we will all end in triumph in the kingdom where the unexplainable – and so much of this is unexplainable to us now. We can't always explain why this or that happens.

But then the unexplainable will be explained. Now, that is a statement of faith on my behalf. We know all of that. I know all of that – hopefully, you know all of that – by faith alone, by believing God's Word. If I look at the circumstances, I could never come up with that conclusion.

But I don't look at the circumstances. I look at the promises. And that's how we live the Christian life. That's what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:7. "We walk by faith not by sight." Don't trust what's going on around you.

Trust the Word of God. Trust the promises of God and the God who made the promises. So we walk by faith, not by sight. But we have here in Daniel 7, a vision of both the future and the present, as well as the past. And the vision gives us a good look at things and tells us what we are like, what we really are by nature apart from grace.

We are fallen creatures, far worse than we realize. We are sinners and we all need a Savior, all of us. And Christ is that Savior. So if you're here without Christ, don't leave without Him. Don't think that you're really okay, because when you look at yourself you see something that's, well, pretty good. You're not.

And I don't say that because I see bad things in you. But I see what the Scriptures say about all of us. "There is none righteous, not even one." That sounds harsh to some; it sounds unfair to some. You say you're not like that.

You love people. You love your wife, you love your kids, you work hard, you do good and you vote Republican. *[Laughter]*. But the reality is, as Isaiah said, "All our righteous deeds are like a filthy rag." The best that we get to offer God is just filthy rags. The best that we all fall short of the perfection of God, to see yourself as God sees you, as a sinner, but one who's redeemably.

Christ came to redeem sinners. All who turn to Him and turn from sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are saved. They're received by Him at the moment of faith. They're clothed in His righteousness. They are eternally fit for heaven and they'll never lose that, and that's our glorious future.

So believe in Him. He will transform you and give you a future that is glorious beyond comprehension. And may God help all of us to rest in that and be encouraged by it. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for this great chapter. We spent some time in it. Not nearly enough. We could spend much more time and examine the details more thoroughly. There'd still be some mystery to it for us.

But what we see in it is certainly enough. What you've revealed is more than sufficient. We understand what the world is like. It's not a place of peace, it's not a place of order. It's a place of tyranny, a place of war and great sorrow.

And that's man's rule. It's always been that way. From Cain to Nimrod, to all of those tyrants of the Middle East, to the present day. It will be to the end, until the Son of Man comes, until the Lord Jesus asks you for His kingdom, and you give it to Him. And He comes and He establishes it upon this earth.

And that day is coming. So help us to rest in that and be encouraged by it. Encourage those who are discouraged, and enable all of us to live not for this present moment but for what's to come. What we do now is important for all eternity. We thank you that we have eternity through your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and His death for us. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.