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Sermon Notes

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Four World Empires

Daniel 7, Part 1

I. The Visions of Daniel

Voice of the Martyrs

II. Context in Daniel

A. Historical: "The first year of Belshazzar"

1. Date: 553 B.C., 14 years from fall of Babylon
2. Political circumstances: Nebuchadnezzar's death (562), successors & chaos

Everything in upheaval, future looks uncertain...fourth ruler of Babylon in nine years

3. Daniel's night visions, Daniel's writings
 - a. Daniel laying on his bed... visions from God in his mind
 - b. Daniel wrote them down:
 - i) the very thing that liberals reject
 - ii) God delights in written predictions

[Just like the writing on the wall... say it ahead of time, then do it]

Isaiah 41:23 "Tell us what the future holds..."

John 13:19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it happens you will believe that I Am..."

c. THE SUM OF THE MATTER

[some things just can't be put completely into words]

B. Context in the Book

1. Second major section
 - a. Daniel 1-6: experiences in Gentile courts
 - b. Daniel 1-7: visions of the end
2. Similarities to chapter 2
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's statue
 - b. four world empires rise and fall

Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome
 - c. kingdom of God replaces them all
3. Additional details: Christ and the Antichrist

C. Chapter overview

1. Four world empires, one after another
2. During the fourth, a blasphemous king
3. The heavenly throne seated: the Ancient of Days
4. The fourth beast destroyed and condemned to fire
5. The Son of Man vision: the eternal king for the eternal kingdom
6. Daniel's distressed request: WISDOM
7. The fourth beast: a close-up
 - a. terrifying power, crushing enemies
 - b. ten horns = ten kings
 - c. one horn rises = the antichrist (described in detail, vs. 20)
 - d. three horns fall = three kings conquered by antichrist
 - e. warfare against the saints; initial victory over them
 - f. intervention by God, the little horn destroyed
 - g. ultimate triumph of the saints (vs. 18, 22, 27)

h. ultimate reign of Kingdom of God

III. Four Beasts from the Sea (vs. 1-8)

A. The Setting: A troubled sea & the four winds (vs. 2-3)

1. The Sea

a. symbolic for turbulent nations

Isaiah 57:20 "There is no peace for the wicked..."

Isaiah 34:2 "The Lord is angry with all nations, his wrath is against all their armies

Isaiah 17:12-13 "Oh the raging of many nations--they rage like the raging sea! Oh the uproar of the peoples--they roar like the roaring of great waters! Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters, when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills."

Each of the four beasts comes up out of this troubled sea!!

So does the Anti-Christ of Revelation 13

Revelation 13:1-2 And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. ² The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

b. symbolic of the great mysterious unknown: the FUTURE

c. The future glory of heaven: NO SEA!!!

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."

2. The four winds: God's sovereign judgments & initiatives

All storms and turbulence on sea caused by winds from four directions

Revelation 7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.

B. What Are the "Beasts"?

1. Daniel's confusion (vs. 15-16)

a. asked the angel

b. angel replied:

vs. 17 "The four beasts are four great kingdoms that will rise from the earth."

2. Why are the kingdoms "beasts"?

Why "beasts"? Human empires usually represent humanity at its worst... most bestial and dominant: raw power and savage fury, total dominance over lesser adversaries; most unlike God... most removed from God's original intention for man

Also...contrasted with Kingdom of Christ: human kingdoms advance by conquest, like a beast they consume

Christ's Kingdom advances by self-sacrifice; like a lamb, He is consumed

C. The First Beast: Babylon (vs. 4)

1. The description: a lion with eagles wings

- a. lion: majestic, regal "king of the beasts"
- b. Nebuchadnezzar's preoccupation with lions
- c. the Ishtar gate

Ishtar gate: blue ceramic tile with golden lions; the lions had wings... these gates guarded the entrance to the royal palaces, and Daniel must have walked by them daily

2. The wings: mobility, sovereign power over a wide area

- a. eagle: king of the birds (as lion king of the beasts)
- b. sense of majesty and power

3. The judgment from God

- a. wings torn off
- b. lifted from the earth
- c. human stance, human heart

Almost certainly: Nebuchadnezzar's humbling and repentance

[NOTE: Babylon WAS Nebuchadnezzar... he was the "head of gold"]

D. The Second Beast: Medo-Persia (vs. 5)

1. The description: a bear eating ribs
 - a. ungainly, ponderous, slow
 - b. YET powerful and ravenous!
 - c. represents Medo-Persia's power w/o rapid conquest
2. Up on one side
 - a. split kingdom
 - b. BUT one side dominant over the other
 - c. this represents Persia's dominance over the Medes
3. Three ribs
 - a. commentators divided
 - b. seems representative of three major conquests by Medo-Persians
Lydia, Babylon, Egypt
 - c. empire's self-serving brutality in view here
4. A divine command

vs. 5 "Get up and eat your fill of flesh!"

Again note the contrast: human kingdoms advance by consuming; Christ's kingdom advances by being consumed!!

- a. speaker not identified
 - b. BUT whole message of Daniel: God's sovereign control over nations
 - c. Medo-Persia under divine command to conquer
 - d. BUT it will also be judged by God and conquered the same way
- E. The Third Beast: Greece (vs. 6)
1. The description: a leopard with four wings
 2. Leopard: sleek, agile, deadly

3. Four wings: even faster than Nebuchadnezzar & Babylon
4. Four heads: perhaps representing four winds OR division of empire into four sections
5. Alexander: immensely rapid and extensive conquest

F. The Fourth Beast: Rome (vs. 7-8)

1. Not described!! No beast adequate to represent
2. Sheer terror: two words used to underscore
3. "Iron teeth": clear connection to Daniel 2 "legs of iron"
4. Crushing power to dominate
5. Ten horns: horn = kings or rulers
 - a. traditional historical interp. fulfilled in ancient Roman empire
 - b. premillennial interp. "ten member nations" at time of second coming
6. "Little horn" (vs. 8)
 - a. rises up in front of others
 - b. uproots three horns
 - c. eyes of a man
 - d. speaks boastfully

[Find out more in a moment]

IV. The Heavenly Throne: Ultimate Victory for the Kingdom of God (vs. 9-14)

- A. Daniel's Main Lesson: God Rules Over Human Empires
- B. The Heavenly Court Seated, Judgment Reached
- C. Little Horn Destroyed
- D. "Son of Man" Vision: A Universal Worldwide Kingdom

[More next week]

V. The Fourth Beast and the "Little Horn" (vs. 15-28)

A. Daniel's Anguished Request for Wisdom (vs. 15-16)

1. Deeply distressed over vision & lack of understanding
2. God's deep desire: to make us wise

James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him."

John 15:15 "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends because everything I heard from the Father I have made known to you."

Amos 3:7 Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.

3. Angels there to give the wisdom

vs. 16 "I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this."

["one of those standing there" = angels included in heavenly court]

4. Summary: four beasts = four kingdoms, BUT final victory for the saints

B. The Terror of the Fourth Beast (vs. 19)

1. Rome caused terror all over the world
2. Not content merely to conquer, they sought to crush into the dust forever

e.g. sowing Carthage with salt

vs. 19 "... the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled what was left underfoot."

C. The Ten Horns (vs. 20, 24)

1. "Horn" a symbol of strength and power... usually represents a KING
2. Ten horns = ten kings from fourth beast (vs. 24)
3. Angel gives little information about ten horns

D. The Rise of the Little Horn (vs. 20-21, 24-25)

1. Horn's descriptions:

- a. "little" BUT also "imposing"
- b. "eyes like a man" (vs. 8)
- c. "speaking boastfully" (vs. 8, 11) Especially speaks blasphemy against God

vs. 25 "He will speak against the Most High..."

2. Horn's actions:

- a. rises up

Implies he comes up out of nowhere... somewhat surprising appearance

- b. uproots (or subdues, vs. 24) three kings
- c. waging war on the saints & defeating them (vs. 21, 25)

vs. 21 "As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them."

vs. 25 "The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time."

Little horn permitted to crush the saints on earth for a limited period of time

NOTE: "Time, times, and half a time" ... recurring theme of 3 1/2 years

- d. changes the set times and seasons

Rejection of cycles of weeks & seasons for worship of God... attack on creation itself

Illus. Russian Communist government experimented with 10-day workweek, no seven day cycle

VI. The Present and Future Antichrist

1 John 2:18 "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come."

A. "Antichrist" Present

- 1. "Many antichrists"

Apostle John the only person who uses the term "antichrist" ... def'n is always theological

- 2. Theological definition:

1 John 2:22 Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son.

2 John 7 *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

3. Three great Satanic attacks on the church

 false teaching persecution (especially gov't) worldly corruption

4. Many alive today... the spirit of antichrist lies in all false teachers

1 John 4:1-3 *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

5. The spirit also alive in all persecutors and corruptors of the church

B. Antichrist Future

1. "Man of Sin": 2 Thessalonians 2

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 *Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders*

2. "The Beast"... Revelation 13, 17

3. Summary

- Government leader... human ruler over the whole earth
- Comes to power by toppling three other world leaders in the final state of the "Roman" empire
- Openly blasphemous of God... speaks horrible blasphemies against God
- Wins worldwide worship through a series of deceptive miracles
- Sets himself up as God by placing himself to be worshipped in God's temple
- Makes war on the saints for three and a half year with tragic success and great suffering
- War culminates in a military attack of some sort

- Jesus Christ returns with the armies of heaven and destroys the Antichrist with his breath

VII. Applications

So what?? How does this help my: financial troubles? Marital or parenting troubles? Employment struggles? Health problems?

Why did God give this revelation to Daniel? Why all these visions about the future?

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

1. God knows the future and rules over it
2. The World is a hard place... with a great deal of suffering in store for believers

[Why?? Why does God permit this suffering?? SALVATION!!!]

2 Peter 3:9-10 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

2 Peter 3:15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation

God's patience... day after day, week after week... means more and more people born, growing up, hearing the gospel, repenting and believing it, and entering Christ's eternal kingdom

The context of all that is immense suffering in a world which hates Christ and His Kingdom... the attacks of the Anti-Christ are simply the final, most powerful and most organized of these attacks

3. True peace in this world does not come from comfortable circumstances and earthly favorable outcomes
4. The final outcome will be one of glorious victory for Christ and all those in His Kingdom
5. Meanwhile, the Church cries out for its deliverer...

How long, O Lord, how long??!! When will you avenge your people and come to their aid??

God hears each of those prayers and waits for His time

Voice of the Martyrs: Rikka

Rikka is a teen-aged Christian girl living in Indonesia, with a beautiful faith in Jesus Christ. But that faith recently underwent the most severe testing imaginable, leaving her with a terrifying memory and a greater trust in Jesus, her Savior.

Rikka's homeland, Indonesia, is made up of 13,000 islands in southeast Asia... it has the largest Muslim population in the world

Indonesian government: requires all citizens to carry ID cards including their religious preference

Approximately 10% identify themselves as Christians

The accounts of recent persecution in Indonesia read like a horror story that seems to have no end: rape, torture, burnings, even beheadings

Program of "Religious cleansing" by Muslim extremists... a well-organized attack on churches, leaving many hundreds of Christians dead

Recently, Rikka's Christian high school held their first ever Bible camp

Praying, singing energetic worship songs, praising Jesus for their salvation

Local government official came and warned them that if they didn't quiet down, they might be attacked as one nearby pastor recently had

The worshipers tried to sing more quietly

However, within an hour, a stone crashed through the window, signifying the start of the most terrifying experience of their lives

A band of radical Muslims were throwing large rocks in through the windows

One large rock hit Rikka in the head & she screamed

The leader begged the Christians: "Pray, don't panic"... they got down on their knees and began praying

Soon the Muslims entered the church building and began attacking the Christians; a man shouted at Rikka: “Are you a Christian?” She answered “All of us are Christians!!” The man was tall, with long hair

The man picked up a large shard of broken glass from the floor and held it to Rikka’s stomach: “Repeat after me,” he shouted... then tried to force her to deny Christ

Rikka cried out in her heart in prayer to God: “Lord, please don’t let me deny you!”

When Rikka did not answer the man, he became enraged and pressed it even harder against her stomach: “Do you believe your God can help you now?” he demanded

“Yes,” Rikka answered, “I belong to God and I believe He will save me!”

He grabbed a stick and began beating her across her shoulders: “You think I am not strong... You think I am not stronger than you!!” he shouted... she just kept praying to God for strength

Finally the man stopped: “You ARE stronger than I am” he said, and threw the stick on the ground... the Muslims left the building

Rikka was crying as she recounted the tale, with tears coming down her face: “Jesus was willing to die for me, and shed his blood on the cross. He did this for all of us, so it doesn’t matter what happens to me—I am willing to suffer for Him!”