

Kings and Prophets 17-04-20

This is Thursday, the 20th of April, 2017, and we continue our study in the Book of Daniel at chapter seven, resuming our study of kings and prophets. We've had an interlude of Isaiah's studies since the last time we studied this section of scripture, but we'll be picking up in Daniel's dream of the four beasts. We'll see that this has parallels back to chapter three and the dream of Nebuchadnezzar with the head of gold and shoulders and arms of silver and so on.

But this is a picture not only of the broad sweep of military and political history in that region, but it is a sketch, it is a map or an overview of the kinds of challenges that face us. And this is why it's in the Word of God, not just as a document of the succession of kingdoms or empires that pertained in that region, but it is meaningful for you and me as we try to live on the same planet, just on the other side. So let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and we'll pick up our study.

Father, we're grateful for this time of fellowship and investigation of the truths that you have prepared for us and provided for us in your Word. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister them to each heart, be with the presentation and the reception so that all of us can be more fully aware of what you would have us do, how you would have us live, and the activation of our spiritual gifts and fruit so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that is a blessing and a witness in the world, and that prepares us for the life to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Let's quickly survey this chapter. As I say, it's been a few weeks. Daniel chapter seven, in your New King James, it is labeled the vision of the four beasts.

And it says, in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. He wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. There's a little bit of a text issue there when it says telling the main facts, because there is a version of the word *reshit*, which means the beginning.

And some translations used to say he wrote down the beginning of the dream, then it's like he never finished. But they've done an investigation of this over the years and discovered that this really means he outlined it. He took notes, just like you might do when you listen to a class.

And you know how perishable dreams can be. And he knew this was important, so he took notes. He is an educated man.

We know about his education from the first chapter of this book. And so he wrote this, probably in Aramaic, and was able to keep a detailed account. Daniel spoke saying, I saw in my vision by night.

So first of all, he receives a revelation from God. He takes it down in written form. Now he is communicating this to others.

He is a transmission conduit, if you will, of truth from God to others. And he knows this. And of course, this book has served to do so ever since.

But it is a function that all of us have the opportunity to exercise. We come to know truth, whether through our reflection on the word of God, the teaching of the word of God, coupled with our experience. It goes from gnosis to epinosis, if you will.

And it is a privilege to share it with our fellow believers. And this is the reason we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. This is the reason that where two or three are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, he is in the midst, because the truth of God communicates the will of God and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ is in it.

So this is an Old Testament reflection of that truth. So it says, four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. And you remember again that the sea, we've often quoted a verse that says, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

"There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." But what we don't often remember is that there are several other passages of scripture that compare the world around us to this chaotic, uncontrollable force. For example, Isaiah chapter 17, verses 12 and 13, "Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas, and to the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters." This to me is social media on the internet. This is the rushing of many waters.

This is the babbling of many voices. It's like being in a large room or a big party where everybody's talking at once. And the difficulty, as I think I've mentioned before, is that in the past, people who had the ability to cogently express significant ideas, you think of William F. Buckley, you think of William Jennings Bryan, you think of Abraham Lincoln, you think of others who had a gift for distilling ideas in a cogent and pungent way.

These men would become prominent. They would be speakers. They would be published.

You would hear them. You would go to them and find an organization of thoughts and impressions that you had that you might not have been able to formulate yourself. Well, now the internet has leveled the ground.

There is no hill like Mars Hill where Paul can stand and speak. It's a plane, and everybody stands on the plane, and they're all shouting at once. And it is very difficult to find, even your news outlets that try to assemble talking heads to try to distill things.

You think, well, who are these people? Used to be they would find somebody I recognized. Henry Kissinger would opine about things that had to do with foreign policy. But now somebody's on there that publishes a blog or has a website.

Is there just another voice on the plane? Why am I bringing that up? Because we have, in the

word of God, a set of speakers, if you will, like Daniel, who can make sense of the roaring of the troubled sea, who can distill for us truth from God that makes sense of the world around us. And we don't have to go listen to the waves crashing on the seashore. As you find described in Isaiah chapter 17, verses 12 and 13, the nations rush like the rushing of many waters.

This is the peoples, this is the crowds, the hoi polloi. God will rebuke them and they will flee far away and be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, like a tumbleweed. If you get overwhelmed, if you find that there are so many people talking and you can't find the truth of a thing, you can't find the meat of a thing or the core of a thing or where the truth is, we resort to the oasis of the word of God.

We come to the living water from the fountain from which that life flows. And it is God, our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ says, if you're thirsty, come to me and from within you will flow this river of living beneficial water, not the salty, briny mire and dirt ocean around us. We're not gonna find truth and answers in all of these conversations.

We're gonna find it in the word of God through the interpreting ministry of the spirit of God. And those believers who like Daniel communicate it and share it with believers of like mind. This is the stability.

This is the firm ground that we have to find as our resort. But this imagery is throughout the Old Testament. Isaiah 57, 20 is the verse I quoted.

I learned that with my mother when I'm but a child. Isaiah 60, verse five, you shall see and become radiant and your heart shall swell with joy because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you. The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.

Instead of going out and trying to trove through the seas, trawl through the seas, trying to find something, if we go to God and if we concentrate on that truth, if we make it the object of our faith, those things that we need that are from the world and are a part of the world will come to us. That's what Isaiah 60, verse five says. The abundance of the sea will be turned to you.

It will come. And we're gonna see later on in this chapter, Daniel chapter seven, that the saints don't go grab the kingdom. We're not Israel laying hold of the messenger of God and saying, I will not let you go until you bless me.

Give me by my strong appeal here what I want. God gives to those who are prepared to receive. Ezekiel chapter 26, verse three, thus says the Lord God, behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you as the sea causes its waves to come up.

If you are like Tyre, remember the king of Tyre is a picture of Satan in Ezekiel. You're going to be subject to the forces that prevail in this world, and that's the troubled sea. Revelation chapter 13, John says, I stood on the sand of the sea and I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and 10 horns, and on his horns, 10 crowns, and on his heads, a blasphemous name.

This is John's view of the same thing we have in this chapter, Daniel chapter seven. And again, in chapter 17, verse 15 of the Revelation, the interpreter for John says, the waters which you saw where the harlot sits are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues, and nothing has concentrated the babble of the population of the world like our modern technology. So for clarity, for singleness of purpose and peace of mind, we have to return to the hole from where we were digged, and that is God's word.

So continuing now, Daniel chapter seven, what does Daniel see? The four winds of heaven stir up the great sea. So while the source of these beasts is the chaotic sea of darkness and evil and whatnot, the realm of Behemoth and Leviathan, the four winds of heaven still prevail on. Remember in the storm that puts Jonah inside the great fish, God hurls a spirit into the sea.

Even though it is chaotic, even though it is uncontrollable, even though it is the realm of darkness and confusion, God still controls it, and he does it through his spirit. These are four spirits, four winds. Remember, John is gonna see these four angels controlling the four winds in the book of Revelation as well.

So there is a limit. This is, by the way, the wonder of chaos theory. You used to think chaotic things were just chaotic and not predictable, but chaos theory shows that they conform within bounds.

The turbulence at the bow of the ship, the smoke that comes from the tip of a cigarette, even though it seems random, it is within certain bounds, and it can only do so much, and this is God's control over these forces. So these four spirits from heaven stir up the great sea, and four great beasts come up from the sea. So why did Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon become the great empire? It was God's will.

God formed that empire. What about the Medes and the Persians? God enabled and empowered those Gentiles to prevail. What about Alexander the Great, the Greeks? God brought that about.

It is not based on the word of God. These are not believers, but they are nevertheless accomplishing God's will. They function within the limits and the sphere and obtain success even at God's behest, not their own.

All kings rule by God's will, and this is why we are to pray for those who are kings and others in authority in high places, because they are there as a part of God's purpose. So we saw this before. The first is like a lion with eagle's wings.

In verse five, the second like a bear raised up on one side, three ribs in its mouth. In verse six, the third, a leopard with wings on its back. The fourth beast in verse seven, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong, huge iron teeth, devouring, breaking in pieces, trampling the residue with its feet.

It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had 10 horns. Now, if you look

around a little bit, you can find good graphic comparisons. I found one just Googling on the web between Daniel chapter three and the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and this vision of Daniel, because they are two different views of the same historical situation.

So the lion with the eagle's wings that comes down and stands on its feet like a man. This corresponds to the head of gold of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This is the Babylonian empire at first blush.

Then the bear with the three ribs in its teeth. This corresponds to the chest and arms of silver. The leopard with the four heads is the belly and thighs of bronze.

Of course, the four heads are the four generals that take over when Alexander the Great dies and it's divided with the Ptolemies and the Seleucids and the rest of them. And then the legs of iron. This is the beast with the iron teeth.

And then the feet of iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is a mixture of things. This is where you get to the 10 horns. In fact, later on in this description, you have, I believe it's in verse 19 of this chapter, there is a mention again of the fourth beast different from all others.

There's a new detail in verse 19 compared to verse 7. Do you see it? Verse 7 says, I saw in the night visions the fourth beast dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong, huge iron teeth, devouring, breaking in pieces, trampling the residue with its feet. Different from all the others, has 10 horns. In verse 19, I wish to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, teeth of iron, and what? Nails of bronze.

Nails of bronze. So your mammals typically have five digits on each hand, paw, or foot, right? So how many of these bronze nails would there be? 10. So 10 horns, 10 nails, 10 claws, and the feet of iron and clay of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, how many toes? 10 toes.

So this 10 theme gets emphasized several different ways. And in each case, there are these distinction made between the claws and the teeth. Now the teeth are iron, and that's what's used to devour a thing.

When you devour it, you can't see it anymore. There's no remnant left. It's been eaten, and it's gone.

The claws, typically you tear a thing. You find something laying in the road or in the woods that's been torn by beasts. There is a remnant, and you see the claw marks.

You see the devastation and the destruction by this giant scratching, if you will. And there is a remnant. There is some surviving pieces, right? And to devour, you come near at hand, and you engulf and make a thing disappear.

You reach out with claws, and this is done at more of a distance. You remember Israel when it went into the land, and God said, the people in the land proper, utterly destroy them. Leave

nothing alive.

They're gone. You've basically devoured them off the land and replaced them. The ones that are further distance, if they are willing to make an alliance with you, fine.

If not, then you go conquer them. And this is more of a claw idea. You reach out and create a ring of security around your borders.

David did this later on. So back to verse seven, this fourth beast. This, of course, is the legs of iron and the feet of iron mixed with clay in Nebuchadnezzar's vision.

Now, it's well-known. It's often rehearsed. You can probably name these kingdoms from previous iterations.

But as I mentioned last time, think about this. What do you not see in these kingdoms? Why is Daniel so troubled? He says at the end of this in verse eight, I was considering the horns, and another horn came up and spoke pompous words and so on. And then he sees the vision of the ancient of days.

This is God in his heaven. And the sound of pompous words and the horn speaking and the beast is slain, his body is destroyed, given up to the burning flame. So this is God in control.

He takes care of this fourth beast. Sorry about that. I think I just made a big noise on me by banging the microphone.

But God prevails. God is in his heaven. And this doesn't persist forever.

And yet look at verse 15. I Daniel was grieved in my spirit within my body and the visions of my head troubled me. Now this word for grieved, when you look it up in Hebrew and trace it back through its verbal roots, this comes from the root meaning to be pierced, to have a tunnel dug through a thing, to be hollowed out.

It's a very graphic picture. And you know this feeling. We encounter events, we observe things, and it just bores a hole in your soul.

It can be a bereavement. It can be a shocking sight. It can be an unexpected, tragic, and violent episode of some sort.

But we know what Daniel is talking about here. He says, I was pierced through. I was hollowed out.

Grieved doesn't quite get it. This is a visceral, physical reaction that he has. And he says, I was grieved in my spirit within my body.

What's interesting about this is that the word spirit here is ruach, but literally it says, I was pierced in my ruach in its sheath, in its case. He's been keeping his spirit armored. It's like a

sword inside the scabbard.

It is a print or a painting that you roll up and put inside a cardboard tube so that you can protect it and keep it from damage if you ship it or if you store it. And so his spirit has been inside this sheath or this case, but this vision has penetrated through and pierced that. And it says, even though I thought I had prepared myself, I thought I had my armor on, this thing slipped through the chinks and pierced me, and I was deeply troubled.

You figure, how old is Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar? He's not the young man of Daniel chapter one. He's been around. He's been in the lion's den.

He's survived the destruction of the Babylonian empire, and he's about to pass through the end of the Medo-Persian, right? Into the Medo-Persian from the Babylonian. He's a pretty experienced guy, but he says, this got me. This got beneath my shield and pierced me through.

It's very graphic when it says, it pierced my spirit within its armor, its sheath, its case. Thought I was ready for anything, but this got me. And I asked myself, why? Because it's a sequence of events.

Remember what happened to Hezekiah over in second Kings chapter 20, when Isaiah gives him the prophecy and says, God's gonna destroy the kingdom and all that, but he's gonna give you 15 more years, and this won't happen in your lifetime because you've repented. Remember Hezekiah's response? He says, well, okay, great. As long as it's okay in my lifetime, I'm good.

Well, Daniel knows he's seen these beasts and they're seriatim, they're sequential. And so this fourth beast isn't gonna come until after three other beasts, and then God's gonna wrap it. It's all future.

So why is Daniel pierced through? I don't understand this. Why isn't he like Hezekiah? Well, I don't have to worry, it's not in my lifetime. That's all by and by.

And look, God's in his heaven, the Ancient of Days is gonna sit, and that beast is gonna be destroyed, and it's saints gonna inherit the kingdom, it'll all be good. Why is Daniel so upset by this? This gets under Daniel's armor. And if it gets under his, I know it would get under ours if we fully understood it.

So what's up with this? What do you think? Well, you remember Ezekiel and all the rest of these captives that were down by the river Kabar? What are they sighing over? Why are they hanging their harps on the willows? And what do they want it to go back to? Jerusalem. What is Jerusalem? How did Jerusalem get formed? How did it become Jerusalem? What is it? What does it hope to be again? What will it someday be? It's the capital city of what? It's a kingdom. Now, where is that kingdom in this sequence? I think Daniel keeps seeing these beasts coming out of the sea, and he says, well, one of these is gonna be the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the separate will not depart from his feet till Shiloh comes, and what does he see? He's got the lion with the wings, and he's got the bear with the ribs, and he's got the leopard with the little bird

wings, and he's got this fourth terrible beast, and the ancient of days, he's saying, well, but what happened to the, where's Jerusalem, where's the kingdom of David, where's the promise to Solomon, and you'll not lack a man to sit on the throne, and of all of these, I look as far as I can look, I'm a prophet, I'm looking clear to the end of time.

I don't see the kingdom. What about Jerusalem? What do you think Daniel, what's his hometown? What is he in exile and a captive from? He doesn't see it. He's like Balaam, I see him now, but not near, and it just pierces him through.

He says, you mean all of this time is going to pass, and the people of God are never going to have their own kingdom, they're never gonna have their own land? What does this mean to us? We live in the world, and we keep thinking, well, these militant Christians, Jerry Falwell and the moral majority, they can take the country back for God, and we'll be a Christian nation again, and we'll have good values, and the conservatives will take the Supreme Court, and we'll get these laws fixed, and they'll quit throwing boys in the girls' bathroom, and it's all gonna be so much better, and yet as you watch, and you see the steady, slow spiral and decline in morality, and in the erosion of the Judeo-Christian ethics that used to undergird everything, and I don't see that recovering, I don't see a swinging of the pendulum back in the other direction, it just goes down and down and down. We're like Daniel, looking at the sea, and it's just one dark beast after another, each worse than the one before it, culminating in the one with the iron teeth and the bronze claws, devouring and slashing everything, where are the people of God? Have you heard of Dominion Theology? A part of it is known as Kingdom Now. It is a weird blend of Calvinism, and hyper-Calvinism, and Reformed Theology, Covenant Theology, and the Charismatic Movement, and here's what it is.

What they have decided is, Jesus isn't gonna come back until we build the kingdom, it's post-millennial. So Dominion, we've got to establish Dominion. Jesus gave us the Great Commission, which is to gain Dominion.

We've been given the keys to the kingdom, we've been given Dominion over Satan. This is why you hear them binding Satan all the time. I bind you, Satan, I'm exercising Dominion.

And it's just a weird mix, you can read up on it. But this is the nature of Dominion Theology, and I'll tell you right now, even some people you wouldn't suspect, like Jerry Falwell, and like Pat Robertson, and D. James Kennedy, and some of these others that people think are kind of middle of the road, or whatever, have imbibed various parts of this Dominion perspective. And there is, you look at the big crowd TV ministries talking about the prosperity gospel, and prevailing, and overcoming, and taking over.

This flies in the face of what we're looking at right here in Daniel chapter seven. Because here's what Daniel realized. He says, the visions of my head troubled me.

And troubled isn't just like I ate something that didn't agree with me. This word is sometimes translated to make haste. You get antsy, you're not just sitting there thinking dark thoughts.

You feel like you need to take some kind of action. What can I do about this? Do I need to go to God in prayer? Do I need to confess the sins of the nation like some of the prophets have done? What can I do that something's wrong here? Action needs to be taken. This is troubled in the sense of, I hear water running in my wall, I need to go find out where's the leak type of thing.

You see what I mean? He's pierced through, it's gotten under his armor, and it's not quite panic, but it's action time. Agape is love that expresses itself in action. Well, this is troubledness that expresses itself in action.

Got to do something, let's have a meeting, let's make a committee, let's call the troops, sound the alarm, ring the bell, do something. That's how he feels. So what does he do? He's going to come near to one of those who stood by and ask him the truth of all of this.

This is not so much truth in the sense of emeth, what is the doctrinal truth? This is the credibility, is this for real? Is this really what's going to happen? To establish that I understand this correctly is what he's doing. Am I seeing what I think I'm seeing? Because if I am, this is big trouble. Well, what do we draw from this in terms of an application? Many times I think in our existence here as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we're trying to do what we know God wants us to do.

We take in the word of God, we keep short accounts, we confess our sins, we maintain fellowship with one another, we try to be kind one to another, we try to bear the fruit of the spirit, we do all of the things that we know we should do. And yet sometimes circumstances arise that run a big sharp pull right under our shield and into our spirit, just like Daniel. What is it that got Daniel so upset? I don't see the prevailing of the saints here.

What I see is the prevailing of evil. I see these beasts rising out of the sea, one after the other, and the saints are what are being clawed and devoured and torn and trampled, especially this fourth beast. And notice what Daniel is especially concerned with as you read on down through the chapter, he goes to one that stands nearby and asks him the truth of all this.

He told me, made known to me the interpretation of these things. These great beasts are four kings that rise up out of the earth. Notice the next verse in 18, but the saints of the most high shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.

What does the one who stands by discern in Daniel's question? What we just talked about. Daniel says, what happened to the saints? What happened to Jerusalem? What happened to God's kingdom? Where is that? And he says, look, these four beasts you saw, those are four kingdoms that come out of the earth, but he hastens to assure him, you can't focus on that. The saints of the most high, this is the kadoshim.

Remember kadosh means holy, the sanctified ones, these who have purged out the leaven, these who are not defiled, are not contaminated. What is the key for our sainthood? It's not that at some point, at some time in the past, we claim Jesus Christ as our savior. What does it mean

to be a saint? And I think we all agree, we want to be the saints, right? The saints will inherit the earth.

The saints are going to inherit. We want to be a saint. We want to be kadoshim, sanctified ones.

How do you do that? Well, if you are kadosh, holy to the Lord, you are not in contact with those things that defile. Death. All of the things.

Remember the Mosaic law, it's so descriptive and so emblematic and so these physical things that they were to abstain from and that could render you unclean until evening. Even spitting. Remember, God gets mad at Miriam because she's bad-mouthing her brother Moses and Moses intercedes on her behalf as well.

She's got to go outside the camp for a while because even if her father had spit in her face, she'd have to stay outside the camp till evening. But there were things that defiled. Well, the saints of the Most High, when the rushing roar of the ocean is crashing around us, when the truth of the matter and the importance and the prevailing and all the rest of it seems unclear, go back to basics.

What is our first obligation? Keep ourselves unstained from the world. Separate. Throw out the leaven.

If your eye is offensive, pluck it out. If your hand is offending, cut it off. Separate even from those things that are near in hand and dear if they drag you away from being kadosh.

Because it is the saints, not just the saved, it's the sanctified ones, those who concentrate on the commands of God, the desire of God that, just like the Lord Jesus, is desirous of a church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it be holy and without blemish. It's easy to try to take the kingdom. Remember the soliloquy in Hamlet, to be or not to be? You remember what the whole gist of that thing is? Everybody knows the first line.

To be or not to be, that is the question. Should I stick around or should I commit suicide is what he's really talking about. Listen to a little bit of this.

To be or not to be, that is the question. Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, to continue to be a victim. Outrageous fortune is throwing all kinds of stuff at me, slings and arrows.

Or do I take up arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing, end them? I either dominate, I take up arms against a sea of troubles, take dominion over all of this stuff around me. I'm going to go down and pick at city hall. I'm going to get this law changed or I'm going to make this happen or I'll get killed in the process.

Either I end the troubles or the troubles end me. I can't just sit here and be passive. Then he goes on about sleep and shuffling off the mortal coil.

And the reason we live a life so long is we don't know what's in that born from which no traveler returns. They used to always quote that at funerals. It's in my funeral book my grandpa gave me.

He's gone to that born from which no traveler returns. That's in this soliloquy. So, to grunt and sweat under a weary life, but we have a dread of something after death.

The undiscovered country from whose born no traveler returns, puzzles the will and makes us rather bear these ills than fly to others that we know not of and all of that. But the whole idea here is, do you take up arms? Do you try to establish a kingdom? Look at the vision of Daniel. God threw the winds into the sea.

God has ordained that evil is going to obtain. Evil is going to dominate. Don't expect a Christian nation.

Don't expect a wonderful millennial preview in this life. And not just politically and not just in the country, but in our own personal lives. We are not here to dwell in a land flowing with milk and honey.

We are with Joshua. We're in the time of conquest. We're not ready to be at ease in the land.

We're with Caleb going up against the giants in the mountains of Judah. We're not ready to settle down yet. There is going to be this sequence of beasts and they are going to be in our lives.

And that knowledge can be unsettling. It unsettled Daniel. And I don't think anybody's as far along as Daniel was.

He's mentioned in a roster of about three great Old Testament believers. But this upsets him. What does the one who stands by assure him of? Yes, these four beasts are coming.

And that is a certitude. You saw it right. I'm establishing the credibility of what you saw.

You're asking the truth. It's true. But you've got to remember that the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom.

How long? How long does it say? Forever, even forever and ever. Olam, olam, olam. Yes, evil is going to prevail.

Evil is going to intrude itself and dominate. It's going to tear. It's going to bite.

It's going to crunch ribs, but not forever. You've got to take the long view. Don't expect to prevail and to have dominion.

This is not build the kingdom and he will come. This is he who endures to the end will be saved. But notice Daniel is really concentrating on that fourth beast.

It's the furthest away. He says, well, what I really want to know is what's coming up next for me. He's looking at the fourth beast, different from all the others.

Verse 21, I was watching and the same horn was making war against the saints and prevailing against them. Wait a minute, I thought you just said the saints are going to inherit the kingdom forever and ever and ever. What's Daniel's concern? Why is he so upset about the fourth beast? That's the one he sees prevailing against the saints.

His concern is the Qadoshim, the people of God. That's where his concern lies. That's where our concern lies.

What about us? We've got circumstances that beat us down and trample us and tear us apart and seem to consume us. What is the answer here? Verse 21, I was watching, the beast is making war against the Qadoshim and prevailing against them until the Ancient of Days came and a judgment was made. See where it says in favor and it's in italics? It doesn't say in favor.

Scratch it out, it's not there. The Ancient of Days comes and a judgment is made of the saints of the Most High. And the time comes for the genuine saints to possess the kingdom.

It is not the job of the saints to figure out how to slay the beast. Let me say that again. It is not the job of the saints to find the magic sword that they're going to pick up and slay the beast.

They are judged on their sainthood. Are you Qadosh? Are you holy? We leave the beasts to God. God allows the beasts, He throws a wind into the sea and they come out and He is going to slay the beast and get rid of the beast.

The beast is backdrop. The beast is circumstance. The beast is something that is going to prevail against the saints.

We're going to lose from time to time in the war on evil. It is going to impinge. It's going to pierce us through.

It's going to get under our armor, just like this vision got under Daniel's. But the Ancient of Days comes and it's no accident here in verse 22 that a judgment is made. Why doesn't it just say the Ancient of Days came swooping in and crushed all the beasts, the stone made without hands, smashed the feet of iron and clay and there's a kingdom that lasts forever and ever.

Why does it mention this judgment of the saints? Because that is the issue. It's wonderful to know what history has been for Daniel and his future, for us it's past with all these empires and the rest of it. But the theme here is if you are a child of God, if you are people of God, what are you supposed to do during the time of the beasts? Stay holy.

Be ready for the judgment of the holy ones because it is the holy ones who are judged to be holy ones who are going to inherit. What does it say in the New Testament? You need to be patient so that after you have suffered a while, you do what? Inherit the promises. It doesn't say

you learn how to overcome the things that make you suffer.

It doesn't say you learn how to prevail against the beasts. Stay holy, stay focused on personal holiness, on small group holiness. Those are the ones who will survive to the time when the saints possess the kingdom.

Notice again in verse 25, this fourth beast, he speaks pompous words against the Most High, the little horn that subdues other three. He persecutes, verse 25, persecutes the saints of the Most High. Persecution precedes possession.

The saints are going to possess the kingdom, but persecution precedes it and God allows it. God predicts it. God says it's coming.

And the holy one got to focus on his job to stay holy. Notice that this beast intends to change times and law, seasons and decrees. This, you could imagine today a particular application would be those who are trying to wipe out our religious holidays and make them meaningless and trying to change the standards of what is and isn't a marriage, what is and isn't a man or a woman or a boy or a girl.

The mores that have anchored our society and our civilization for generations now are seeking to be changed. And this is just going to be worse in the days of the end times. It's going to be worse in the days of the Antichrist.

But it happens all the time. It happens in the workplace. It happens in school.

It happens in our personal lives. These are big picture historical events, but they are mirrored and they are reflected in our daily lives. Things that we're used to, patterns and behaviors that are pertained are suddenly disrupted and put on their head.

And it's beyond our control. Well, the task is not to try to gain control. The task is to focus on being kadoshim, on being a holy one, so that when God comes and judges, were you faithful? Were you consistent? Notice again in verse 26, the court shall be seated, they shall take away his dominion to consume and destroy it forever.

Then the kingdom and dominion and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. We don't take it. It is given.

The court of heaven sits and takes that dominion away from those who do not deserve it and should not have it. And that same court gives it. You can imagine that the judgment seat of Christ is a part of this.

The dead small and great standing and the books are open is a part of this. There is a judgment made of us. Are we worthy? Jesus said, if you want to be my disciple, if you want to come after me and follow me, take up your cross and deny yourself.

He doesn't say take up your sword and go forth conquering and to conquer. He says, take up

your cross, prepare to endure difficult times. It's a matter of confidence that God is in his heaven.

The court will be seated. The ancient of days will handle the sources of our opposition. The teeth, the claws and the rest of it.

That's in God's hands. Nowhere in here do the saints do anything to these beasts, do they? Do you see any beast anywhere that's taken down by the people of God? You don't even see a kingdom of the people of God until all of these kingdoms are gone and the stone cut without hands representing, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ comes and God sets up that kingdom, not the people of God. God sets it up.

This is what puts the lie to dominion theology. We don't build a kingdom. It'd be silly that, remember when David wanted to build a house for God and God said, seriously, you're going to build me a house? I made you.

I made the planet. I made you king. I appreciate the thought, but why don't you wait? I will build a house for you that will never be destroyed.

You'll not like a man to sit on that throne all along. Yes, there'll be a temple, but you're not building me a house. I'm building you a house, a dynasty and it's going to culminate in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, this is the God that we serve. This is the opportunity that we have to be the faithful. Yes, there's going to be the movement of history.

Yes, there's going to be opposition and don't expect the goodness of God to prevail in society or in your personal life. In circumstances, there's a lot of evil. That's why the God of this world is the God of this world.

He's not limited and chained. He's unlimited and He walks the earth seeking whom He may devour. His time is going to persist, a time, times and half a time.

But our task is to be faithful, to hunker down and concentrate on personal holiness, doing what we're supposed to do. Let God handle the big picture. His court is going to sit.

His judgment is going to prevail and in the time and the season of God's choosing, remember the beast is going to try to change the time and the season. God establishes the time and the season and our time of victory is not yet. This is our time to serve.

When the master of the house returns, will he find his servants doing their assigned task? Remember Jesus, right before he left, he said, when the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth? He didn't say, will he find conquering victory on the earth? Will he find faith? So when it all seems confusing in a maelstrom of conflicting voices in the rushing of the sea, what do we know for sure? I know for sure what the standards of personal holiness are for me. I know that I

need to rule well my tongue. I know that I need to discipline my thoughts and take them captive for Christ.

I know that I need to expose myself daily to the word of God and reflect on it and have it as a part of my meditations to be comforted by it and encouraged by it and to share that comfort and encouragement with my fellow believers near at hand. Those things we know, leave the rest up to God. And Daniel will eventually be comforted after digesting the contents of this vision and hopefully we will be as well.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word and how vividly and pointedly it is presented to us. And even as we are feeling the shock of circumstance and of the various pressures and onslaughts of the world around us, with your Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us and teach us, your word can have even more impact and even vastly more power to stabilize us, to equip us for every good work.

We pray that as we reflect on this and as we seek to be pleasing to you, as we navigate our own personal rocks and shoals, that your spirit will be our guide, that we can benefit from the fellowship of believers close at hand, and that the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ will be reflected in our lives, both now and at that time of judgment, when the fruit of our life will be finally and fully assessed. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.