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Night Vision Gospel

Daniel 7:1-14
Pastor Greg Lawrence
October 11, 2026

- Keep your Bibles open to Daniel chapter 7, where God gives Daniel a vision that greatly affects him.
- Much of what affects us greatly is tied to what we see.
    - When we see a threat, our brains process that information quickly and prepare our bodies to respond.
- But this reaction can also happen when we *can't* see very well.
    - In the dark, our minds can interpret shapes and shadows as threats.
- Being able to see the whole picture greatly affects our reactions, decisions, and confidence.
    - This is why Navy SEALs wear night-vision goggles.
    - They can see threats in the dark without their eyes telling their brains that every shadow is dangerous.
- Here in Daniel 7, God gives Daniel a night vision.
    - But it is no ordinary vision.
    - It is meant to shape Daniel's heart for the rest of his life, affecting his reactions, decisions, and confidence.
- And this morning, I want you to be convinced of this:
    - **Your greatest need in your darkest night is not to have all the answers, but to see your God.**
- For context, the book of Daniel is presented in two halves.
    - The first six chapters tell the stories of Daniel and his friends navigating life in a pagan empire.
    - But the second half transitions from narrative to visions.
- Daniel 7 is the first of these visions, filled with astonishing scenes and terrifying creatures.
    - God first shows Daniel **the beasts that devour.**

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The Beasts Devour — Daniel 7:1–8

- Imagine standing in the middle of a storm on the shore of a great sea. Winds rush from every direction, and waves violently crash against one another.
- Through the howling tempest, you see a massive creature beginning to emerge from the ocean.
    - Then another.
    - And another.
    - Each monster is more hideous than the next, and little, tiny you are engulfed in their shadows.
- So what in the world is God showing Daniel?
    - The raging sea represents the relentless rebellion of mankind.
    - Out of this churning sea come beasts representing successive human empires.
- The first beast represents Babylon.
    - The lion with eagle's wings was associated with Babylon, the empire that had taken Daniel and his fellow Israelites captive.
- The second beast, in verse 5, resembles a bear raised up on one side, with three ribs in its mouth.
    - This likely represents the Medo-Persian Empire.
- The third beast, in verse 6, resembles a leopard with four wings and four heads.
    - This represents the Greek Empire, whose armies conquered vast territories with remarkable speed.
    - Its four heads represent the division of Alexander the Great's kingdom among four generals.
- Remember, Daniel received this vision more than two hundred years before the Greek Empire came into power.

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- Then, in verse 7, comes a fourth beast, a terrifying monstrosity unlike anything Daniel has seen.
    - It has iron teeth that crush and devour its victims, trampling underfoot whatever remains.
    - This represents the Roman Empire, known for its brutal supremacy and violence.
- Why would God show Daniel such a terrifying vision of the future?
    - Because this was the terrifying reality Daniel faced.
- Daniel experienced so much uncontrollable change in his lifetime.
    - He was forcibly taken from his family and homeland.
    - He was subjected to a cultural reeducation program that dictated what he should eat, how he should think, and whom he should worship.
    - He lived under one regime after another, facing uncertainty, hopelessness for his people, and even death because of his faith in Yahweh.
- Daniel was helpless in the middle of these geopolitical upheavals.
    - These monstrous beasts personified the great forces he could do nothing about.
- And as much as we love control—or at least the illusion of it—we all must admit there are things in this world completely outside our control.
- Perhaps you can relate to Daniel.
    - Are there things you cannot control that make you feel helpless?
    - They could be global conflicts, persecution, disease, job loss, cultural shifts, financial crises, strained relationships, or even death itself.
- Ultimately, the opposition we face is more than just earthly forces.
    - Ephesians 6:12 reminds us:

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    - "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."
- Jesus warned his followers they would face persecution.
    - In John 16:33, he said, "In the world you will have tribulation."
- **The beasts of this life will devour.**
    - Seeing that reality play out day after day can paralyze us, especially if we expected life to get easier over time.
    - We can go frantic trying to predict the tides of life and tame every possible giant Beast we encounter.
- How can we face relentless change and chaos with any kind of hope?
    - When life is at its darkest, we need a vision of hope.
    - **We need a Night Vision Gospel.**
- Thank the Lord, Daniel's vision continues.
    - The beasts devour, **but…**

The Ancient of Days Judges — Daniel 7:9–12

- As Daniel looks at these terrifying beasts, suddenly God bursts onto the scene.
- And what Daniel sees changes everything.
    - Thrones are placed.
    - Books are opened.
    - And God takes his seat.
    - **Chaos is interrupted by order.**

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- In this part of the vision, Daniel shows us three important characteristics of God: God's title, his description, and his role.

God's Title: Ancient of Days

- This chapter is the only place in the Bible where God is called the "Ancient of Days."
- The title highlights God's authority over not just territory, but history itself.
    - God has seen every day.
    - He alone presides over the past, present, and future.
    - He eternally exists, uninterrupted and unhindered by the passage of time or current events.
    - He is unphased by the difficult season you are in.
- And yet he is not far removed from your season.
    - He is present even on our worst days.
    - He knows our suffering and sees what others overlook.
- That is God's title in this vision: **the Ancient of Days.**

God's Description: Fire

- One of the repeated descriptions of God in this chapter is fire.
- Throughout the Bible, fire is associated with God's presence, from the burning bush to the pillar of fire and the fiery presence of God on Mount Sinai.
- Why fire?
    - Fire is often connected to holiness.
    - By its very nature, fire consumes what it touches. In the presence of a holy God, evil cannot remain unjudged.
- God is good, but he is not to be taken lightly.
    - Hebrews 12:28–29 tells us:

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    - "Offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."
- God is the Ancient of Days.
    - God is holy fire.
- And then Daniel tells us what God does.

God's Role: Judge

- In this holy courtroom, the boastful words of the beast's horn have been attracting Daniel's attention.
    - Later, in verse 25, we learn that this horn speaks against the Most High and seeks to wear out his people.
- But in the middle of the beast's tirade, the Ancient of Days takes action.
    - He destroys the beast and takes away its dominion.
    - The other beasts lose their power, though they are allowed to live for a time.
- Consider the scale of power in this vision.
    - Its like one of those infographics at a zoo that compare the silhouette of a man next to a lion, then next to a giraffe, and then next to a white whale.
    - When they are side by side you begin to understand their true scale.
- In a similar way the beasts are far more powerful than Daniel.
    - But the Ancient of Days is more powerful than the beasts.
- And because he is the ultimate judge, nothing escapes God's notice.
    - He has recorded every injustice, cruelty, and offense in his books.
- God is showing Daniel his thorough supremacy over evil in this world.

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    - What an incredible vision!
- But this was a vision of the future.
    - Daniel would not live long enough to see every injustice resolved in his lifetime.
    - And neither will we.
- There are injustices you will experience that remain unresolved when your life on earth comes to an end.
    - That can make it seem as though evil has won.
- But Daniel 7 shows us something we must never forget:
- **God will judge evil.**
    - The beasts will not have the last word.
    - There is not a day, past, present, or future, over which our God does not reign.
    - And there is no evil too powerful for him to judge.
- Often our eyes fixate on the overwhelming evil and problems in our world.
    - So When you are tempted to stare in despair, **look to God and compare.**
    - Look at his eternal dominion, his fiery holiness, and his perfect justice.
- God not only destroys the beastly powers of this world, but He replaces them with a new kingdom and a forever King.

The Son of Man Reigns — Daniel 7:13–14

- After the Ancient of Days takes away the dominion of the beasts, a new figure arrives to receive dominion.
    - In contrast to the beastly rulers who came before him, this ruler is in the likeness of man.
    - He understands what it means to be human.

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    - He is not indifferent to our suffering.
    - And yet he has authority over all creation.
- This figure is understood in the New Testament to be Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
- Jesus used the title "Son of Man" for himself repeatedly.
    - When he stood before the religious leaders in Matthew 26, the high priest asked whether he was the Christ, the Son of God Jesus replied:
    - "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- The high priest immediately tore his robes and accused Jesus of blasphemy.
    - Why such a strong reaction?
- Jesus was deliberately identifying himself with the figure in Daniel 7.
    - He was claiming the authority and dominion given to the Son of Man.
- Now that we know who the Son of Man is, let's examine what Daniel saw.

Jesus Is Worthy of His Kingdom

- In this vision, Daniel sees the Son of Man presented before the Ancient of Days and given dominion, glory, and a kingdom.
- The New Testament helps us understand this scene in light of Jesus' resurrection and ascension.
    - Acts 1 describes Jesus being taken up into heaven, and Hebrews 1:3 tells us:
    - "After [Jesus] had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."
    - But why is Jesus worthy of this everlasting kingdom?
- Because Jesus accomplished what we could never accomplish for ourselves.

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- When Jesus came to earth, he lived the holy and perfect life we could not live.
    - When he died on the cross, he became the perfect sacrifice for our sins.
    - He rose from the dead and ascended to the Father, victorious over sin and death.
- Jesus takes his throne, not through force, but through faithfulness.
    - The beasts rule by devouring; but Jesus reigns by giving himself **to save his people**.
    - To make us worthy.
- Our hope is not that we can make ourselves worthy to stand before a holy God.
    - Our hope is in Jesus, who perfectly represents us as the Son of Man.
- He is worthy of his kingdom, and through faith in him, all people can be brought near to God.

His Kingdom Is for All People

- Verse 14 tells us that this is a kingdom where "all peoples, and nations, and languages should serve him."
- Unlike the beastly kingdoms, which were limited by geography and ethnicity, this kingdom spans all human barriers and divisions.
- John 3:16 tells us:
- "Whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
    - **Whosoever** is an open invitation.
- In a world of deeply divided kingdoms, that is revolutionary.
    - Many of us know what it feels like to be excluded or disqualified.
    - We know what it feels like to be on the outside looking in.
- But the Son of Man came to save sinners and bring the far-off near.

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    - Ephesians 2:13 says:
    - "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."
- All who follow Jesus by faith, regardless of their earthly status or background, are brought near to the King.
    - We receive union with each other through our union with the King.
    - We go from divided sinners to unified saints.
- And verse 18 tells us that the saints of the Most High will receive and possess this kingdom forever.

His Kingdom Is Forever

- The Ancient of Days gives Jesus everlasting dominion.
- To Daniel, his exile in Babylon must have felt like forever.
    - Likewise, the battles we face can seem as though they will never end.
    - But the reign of the beasts, overwhelming as it may be, is temporary compared to the reign of the Son of Man.
- Since the inauguration of Christ's kingdom, earthly kingdoms have come and gone.
    - But King Jesus still reigns.
    - He is still gathering people from every nation to himself.
- Even when we face hardship today, **his kingdom will never end.**
    - Jesus comforts us in John 16:33:
    - "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
- In this vision, we see a perfect King inviting all peoples into his everlasting kingdom.

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- In the face of terrifying beasts, Daniel received a glorious vision of divine victory.
- But you might be thinking, "Pastor Greg, this is all great, but how does this vision of Jesus help me as I face the beasts today?"
- Like Daniel, our problems do not disappear because we have seen this vision.
    - But remember what we said at the beginning:
    - **What we see greatly affects our reactions, our decisions, and our confidence.**
- Because we have seen this vision, we know how the story ends.
- I am a nervous wreck when I watch ice hockey. I sit on the edge of my seat, heart pounding as if I were in the game.
    - Every shot and every save affects me.
- Often I have to settle for watching game replays online.
    - And to my annoyance, the final score is often already displayed on the replays.
    - And even though I know the outcome, I still watch.
    - But when I know my team has already won, I am far less affected by every setback.
        - When my team falls behind, I do not get nearly as nervous.
        - I wait with anticipation.
- What I am watching is new to me, but it does not affect me as much because **I have already seen the final score.**
- In Daniel 7, we see the end of the story, the final score.
    - That alone is good ness but our confidence is not ultimately in knowing how the story ends.
- **Our confidence is in knowing who holds the story.**
- Friend, God holds your story in his steady hands.

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- If you live with this vision of God and his ultimate reign over the world, you can find yourself strangely calm despite the pain and frustrations you still face.

Application

- So what does this mean for your life?
- Perhaps you need to identify the beasts you are facing and honestly evaluate your reaction to forces you cannot control.
- Perhaps you need to consider how much your eyes are fixed on your problems.
    - Maybe this week you need to fix your eyes on God.
- Remember the Ancient of Days who judges justly. Remember the Son of Man who reigns forever.
- When you are tempted to stare in despair, **look to heaven and compare.**

- But all this brings no lasting peace if Jesus is not your King.
- I want you to answer this honestly,
    - Does the one who has been given all authority and dominion over this world have all authority and dominion over your life?
    - Is the one who is worthy of all worship worthy of your worship?
    - Or are you holding back trusting him, trying to face the beasts in your own power?
- Friend, let go of the illusion of control and trust Jesus as your everlasting King.
    - As Psalm 34:8 says:
    - “Oh, taste and SEE that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”

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Conclusion

- What we see greatly affects us.
    - God has given us a **Night Vision Gospel** that can help us navigate the deep darkness of our lives.
- He lets us see the good news so that we can live not a life devoid of pain or even absent of fear, but a life that can endure despite pain and fear.
- At the end of this chapter, Daniel summarizes his experience.
    - In verse 28, he says:
    - "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed,
    - but I kept the matter in my heart."
- Daniel was shaken.
    - But **what he beheld in the dark, he held in his heart.**
- Next week, we will look at chapter 6, where Daniel, years after this vision, faces literal beasts.
    - He is unjustly thrown into a lion's den and left to die.
    - But Daniel does not panic or place his hope in the king's power.
    - He trusts the Lord to deliver him.
- How could anyone do that?
    - It happens when the vision of God's immense power and goodness is kept in our hearts.
- **Your greatest need in your darkest night is to see your God.**
- As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, we can be:
    - "Afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
    - perplexed, but not driven to despair;

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    - persecuted, but not forsaken;
    - struck down, but not destroyed."

- All because we have seen the greatness of our God.
- Let's pray.