

**Text: Daniel 7:1-28 (Pew Bible pg.881)**

**Title: “The Daniel Calendar”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**ILLUSTRATION** – When our kids were little we spent a lot of time out at Six Flags over Texas. Now when Nan goes to Six Flags she’s the roller coaster queen. That’s the way she loves to experience it. When I go, I like to watch people and shows ... mostly because you can do that in the air conditioned places. In fact, my favorite ride is the big red Oil Derrick Observation Tower. I like it because when get to the top you can see everything in perspective. Walking around a place like Six Flags, with the crowds and winding trails, it can become a little bewildering. But from that high vantage point you can see how everything fits together. You can see the Batman Ride, Flashback, Judge Roy Scream and the Titan. You can see how the park is laid out and how everything fits together from that high perspective.

Well that’s what I’m attempting to do in our study though the OT prophets, a series I’ve called “Profiting from the Prophets.” It’s to help you see how these 17 books in the OT fit into the big picture of God’s activity. Today we come to Daniel, a truly amazing personality and a truly amazing prophecy. Open your Bibles to Daniel 7:1 (Pew Bible pg.881).

From our childhood days many of us heard the fascinating accounts found in the first six chapters of Daniel. There we learn about Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who as young men were taken into captivity in Babylon when the Babylonians attacked Judah and began carrying off most of the population of Jerusalem and Judah. We learn about the courage and Daniel and his three friends when they refused to conform to the customs of the Babylonians, but were true the Law of God. We read of how Nebuchadnezzar threw Daniel’s three friends into the fiery furnace because they refused to worship the image of the king, and how God miraculously delivered them in the fire unharmed. We read about Daniel being thrown into the lions’ den because he refused to stop praying. And God miraculously spared his life.

We are familiar with these historic events that are found in the Daniel 1-6. But for the brave souls who read on in Daniel 7-12 it gets very confusing because Daniel 7-12 is mostly prophetic. And that’s where we are this morning as we read Daniel 7:1.

What we’re going to see in the verses that follow is that Daniel’s vision is actually setting out a calendar of events that will unfold over the next hundreds, even thousands of years ahead for Daniel, leading up to the end of the world.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Perhaps you have heard about the discovery of the Mayan Calendar which predicts the world will end on December 21, 2012. There are all kinds of speculations of how it will happen ... but these Maya Calendar experts are certain it will happen on December 21 this year. So I guess you don’t need to worry about Christmas presents. Last year a preacher out in California predicted the end of the world would come last year.

Don't be thrown off guard by people who try to predict the exact date the world will end. We have every reason to distrust those exact predictions, but we have in the Word of God the true calendar of God's end time plans ... let's call it the Daniel Calendar, and it's found in Daniel 7. There are no dates on this calendar, but we have a sequence of events leading up to the end.

Some of the more liberal Bible scholars deny that the Bible, including Daniel, is supernatural. They doubt that it contains prophecy about the future that will actually be fulfilled. But we believe that God is the Author of this book. And the Lord says in...

**Isaiah 46:10 - I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.**

I want to challenge you to listen carefully and attentively. I know the explanation of Daniel's vision is going to seem really weird, and you may wonder what in the world you could get out of this that will in any way help you to live your life as a believer. I assure you, it has everything to do with how you live your life, and how you look at your world, and how you worship and obey the Lord. So stay focused today.

We're going to see that there's a strong link between Daniel's visions, the teachings of the Lord Jesus on His Second Coming, and the book of Revelation at the end of the NT. In this vision in Daniel 7 Daniel sees down through the ages the rise and fall of great kingdoms right up to the climax of history with the Second Coming of Messiah, Jesus Christ, and the establishment of his 1000 year reign upon the earth which then gives way to the coming of the eternal Kingdom of God.

## **1. THE VISION – WHAT IT REVEALED (vv.1-14)**

**Daniel 7:2-3 - Daniel said: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.**

Now what a weird thing Daniel saw in his vision. You may wonder if he had just eaten some bad Mexican food, drank a Monster energy drink, and then rode a roller coaster at Six Flags all before he went to bed. No, he has a vision from God.

So in his vision Daniel sees really weird, frightening creatures. The Avengers movie would be hard pressed to duplicate these creatures that Daniel sees in the vision. And we're told later in Daniel 7:17 that these beasts are actually symbols representing nations or kingdoms that will arise in history, like monsters out of a turbulent sea.

The next few verses describe Daniel's vision of four beasts, which, again, represent kingdoms.

**Daniel 7:4 - “The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.**

I don't have time today to go into a detailed description of the vision of the beasts, but I'll give you just a summary on each. Conservative scholars believe that this beast that looks like a lion represents the Babylonian Empire that is the dominant kingdom of the earth during the days of Daniel.

Remember that the Babylonians conquered Judah and carried most of the Jews into captivity in Babylon. Remember also that the prophet Jeremiah predicted that the exile would last seventy years, after which time the Jews would return to their homeland to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. The reason it last only seventy years is that another kingdom arises to conquer Babylon. That is seen in Daniel's vision of the second beast in v.5.

**Daniel 7:5 - "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'"**

Most believe that this beast represents the Medo-Persian Empire that conquered Babylon, and that king allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. Like a bear this empire lumbered across the earth devouring nations. The fact that it has three ribs in its teeth indicates it has chewed up nations. But that kingdom will give way to another.

**Daniel 7:6 - "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule."**

Now a leopard moves and strikes quickly, particularly one with four wings. Scholars believe that Daniel sees here the rise of the Greek Empire that came to world dominance under Alexander the Great, who swiftly conquered the world of his day ... from Greece to Africa, and all the way to India in the east. The four heads probably represents the division of Alexander the Great's empire into four divisions when he died.

Then Daniel sees a fourth beast that really cannot be compared to any animal known to man.

**Daniel 7:7 - "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns."**

Most prophecy scholars believe that this beast represents the next world kingdom ... the mighty Roman Empire which overthrew Greece in the second century BC. And history books reveal that Rome's conquest of most of that part of the world was violent and fierce, just like the beast that Daniel saw in the vision.

Daniel is particularly intrigued by the horns.

**Daniel 7:8 - "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully."**

Later in Daniel 7 we're told that these ten horns are symbols of ten kings. Now think about what you have learned about the events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ. We know that before Christ comes there will be an emergence of an ominous world leader called the Antichrist. He is called the Antichrist because he is anti-Christ. And many scholars believe that Daniel sees in his vision the coalition of ten kings or nations (ten horns) that is like a resurrected Roman Empire that will be the political empire of the Antichrist in the last years of the planet Earth as we know it. This one horn is really significant.

And the fact that God reveals all this to Daniel shows us that God knows the future. God knew what would happen to the Babylonian kingdom in Daniel's day. He knew what would happen to the kingdom after that and the kingdom after that until the day when Christ returns to establish His kingdom. God is carefully orchestrating events according to Heaven's Calendar until one day all earthly kingdoms will fade, and only one final Kingdom will remain. And we see that in...

**Daniel 7:9 - "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.**

This is a vision of what's going on in heaven at the time of the final judgment of the nations. There are thrones in heaven ... heaven is the control center of the universe. And seated in the position of prominence is one called "the Ancient of Days." Church, this is a glorious description of our great God. Daniel 7 is the only place in the Bible where God is called "the Ancient of Days." God is and was and evermore shall be. He is eternal and ageless. And the white robe and the white hair all point to God's purity and glory.

**Daniel 7:10 - A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.**

Revelation presents a similar picture of the countless angels and saints that are before the Lord. "Books were opened..." This tells us that there is a day of reckoning that is on Heaven's Calendar.

So this is the scene of what is going on in heaven when history is about to come to an end. But remember there is this world leader called the Antichrist who thinks he is God and demands that the inhabitants of the earth worship him. Back to Daniel 7.

**Daniel 7:11 - "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.**

The Antichrist, and the beast that he controls, are destroyed. Again, Revelation teaches us this.

**Revelation 19:20 - But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.**

Now back to Daniel 7 where one greater than the Antichrist comes on the scene. This is an awesome picture!

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

And here we have the appearance of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. In the NT Christ is frequently called “the Son of Man.” He and He alone can go into the presence of the Ancient of Days. So the kingdom of the “Son of Man” is brought in ... a fifth kingdom, if you will. This is what Jesus taught us.

**Matthew 24:30 - “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.**

In Daniel 7:14 the Kingdom of the Son of Man is compared to the kingdoms of the world:

- His is a superior kingdom.

**Daniel 7:14a - He was given authority, glory and sovereign power...**

- His is a worldwide kingdom – as opposed to the regional kingdoms of others.

**Daniel 7:14b - All peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him...**

- His is an everlasting kingdom – as opposed to the limited time of the other kingdoms of the world.

**Daniel 7:14c - His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away...**

- His is an indomitable kingdom – it cannot be conquered.

**Daniel 7:14 - His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed...**

And this is the kingdom of our God and of His Christ! And this is what is revealed.

## **2. THE VISION – WHAT IT MEANT**

We have the advantage of now having the whole Bible to help us interpret these things, as I have done so far, but Daniel didn't have that advantage. And so...

**Daniel 7:15 - “I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.**

But Daniel knows what to do when he has a question. He asks the Lord's messenger for the interpretation.

**Daniel 7:16 - I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things:**

**Daniel 7:17 - 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth.**

**Daniel 7:18 - But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.'**

Here we get a preview of something called "the Millennium," the one-thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth which will precede the eternal Kingdom of God in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

**Revelation 20:4 - I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.**

Back in Daniel 7 we see this glorious kingdom of the Christ.

**Daniel 7:27 - Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'**

Now notice that it is Christ's Kingdom that is established, but the saints get to reign with Him. The Kingdom is for His glory and for our enjoyment for eternity. Isn't that great?

### **3. THE VISION – WHY IT'S IMPORTANT**

What difference should Daniel 7 make in our lives? I asked you at the beginning to stay focused. I cautioned you that you may wonder, "What in the world does this have to do with my life tomorrow as I go to work, or try to pay my bills, or how I treat my spouse or my kids." Here's why it's important:

First, it's important to know that heaven rules human history. It's important for us to have an accurate view of the greatness of God who controls the affairs of the universe and human history.

**Psalm 95:3 - For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.**

Second, it's important for us to know that we will need courage to live faithfully for Christ in the last days. If we take Daniel 7 literally, it tells us that tough days are ahead as we enter the final period of world history. We must be strong and courageous as we wait for Christ's return.

**Revelation 2:10 - Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

Third, it's important to time will not go on forever and ever like we know it now. A day of destiny is coming. It means we should not put off important decisions like putting our trust in Christ to be saved ... like making meaningful commitments of our life to Christ. We need to be faithful to proclaim the Gospel to others so they will be saved.

**Matthew 24:44 - So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**