

Lift Up Your Eyes

Daniel 7: Standing Firm with God series

by Chris Famisaran

Let's pray. God, as we continue our series in the book of Daniel, Lord, as we enter a new phase in chapter seven, I pray that you be with us, lead and guide us, and Lord, help us to see your goodness and not be fearful. Jesus' name, amen.

So Chapman University, I believe last year, came out and did another survey on fear. What do Americans fear the most? The top 10 fears. were, hold on, sorry. Now this is based on last year actually, but in 2023, the number one thing at 60.1%, anybody wanna guess what it was? Public speaking, okay. You guys are way off. Although that is a fear, that is a fear. Actually, let me take that back. In a different context, yes, that is probably the number one. Took me a while to get over that. Anybody else? Anybody else wanna guess what are? In the context of the American public. Heights? Okay. The dentist. My loving wife will disagree with you, Bill. Alright. She's a dental hygienist for those of you who don't know. At 60.1 percent, corrupt government officials. Oh. Alright, 54.7% was economic financial collapse. 52.5% Russia using nuclear weapons. 52.3% the US becoming involved in another world war. 50.6% people who are becoming, people that I love potentially becoming seriously ill. And then below that actually a loved one dying. At 50% pollution of drinking water, below that biological warfare, below that cyberterrorism, and the last one at 48% is that of not having enough money for the future.

Now we've been going through the book of Daniel, and I know some of us feel very scared sometimes when it comes to that book. Can we agree? Did you all grow up being fearful of Daniel? Okay, a handful of us are brave enough to say it. The Unkown Revelation. But I hope that as we continue through this series, there's nothing to be afraid of. If anything, I think we can become excited because what looks horrible and scary, our only conclusion is that Jesus is coming soon. Amen? All right, so let's go with that mindset.

Now, Those of you who've been here a little bit know about, we like to ask some questions beforehand, okay? So again, if you agree, just wave your hand like this, or slightly, okay? If you disagree, you're gonna shout, no, I disagree, okay? And if you're unsure, maybe just wave like you are leading the Rose Parade, okay? All right, number one. If one of the, am I gonna have to switch to the other mic? All right. All right, here we go. If one of the individuals sitting next to me, okay, around you, not your spouse, all right, I don't want to cause awkward conversations after this at lunch, if one of the individuals sitting around me claims to have had a vision, I would struggle to believe that it was from God. How many of you believe that? Yeah, no, some of you being polite. Okay, what does this tell us about us that we've probably become super, super skeptical, right? And for good reason, there are a lot of people who've claimed a lot of things recently, and we know that they're just we're adamantly believe that they're false. All right, number two. I prefer scary horror movies versus sappy, lovey rom-coms. Okay. Most of you are in no. Gustavo, you're brave enough to admit. Maybe you don't want to admit it, because you're in church, and I'm the pastor. All right? Okay, now let's get a little more serious, okay? God, God tends to communicate in different ways with me more often during times of transition in my life. When you're going through a phase of maybe you're going off to start a new job, you're moving across the country. You're about to get married. You're about to have a child. Okay? You're getting older. Whatever it may be, it seems like God tends to be closer during those times or tries to reach out in different ways. All right, number four. Oh, all right. Let's see what we really believe here. God wants us to have prophecies so that we'll know when he's coming. Okay. Alright. And lastly, God gave Daniel visions so that in the future we could read them and know how soon he is coming. Okay. All right. I'm going to break all that down. I'm going to destroy all your notions about that. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

Let's go to the book of Daniel, chapter 7. We are in chapter 7. All right. This chapter 7 is kind of historical in a way, but yet we see a change that's coming in how we read Daniel. All right. Now, Daniel chapter 7. We ready? Okay. In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. When did this take place? But when not in the first year of Belshazzar. What? When did we read about Belshazzar? Chapter what? Chapter five. So

Daniel's backing up and he's going back to chapter five. Believe it or not, the book of Daniel is not written chronologically, at least between, it's divided, okay? And we'll get to that in a little bit. But at times, Daniel is gonna go back to times that we know about. We know about his life, of course. He served under several kings. Daniel's not necessarily chronological throughout the whole book. Okay? And as we continue through the next couple of chapters, you're going to realize that Daniel is having visions along the way that we didn't read about yet in the first six chapters. Okay? Tracking? All right.

Now. The first four chapters primarily focus on what? Babylon. First five and six, Medo-Persia. And then chapter seven, Daniel goes back to when Belshazzar was king, the first year of his reign. And also, anybody else in the book of Daniel go to bed and have a horrible nightmare? Nebuchadnezzar. How interesting. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel are asleep, and they have a vision or a dream. Okay? Now, the first six chapters focus on narrative, right? We start out with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being taken away from their homes to serve as exiles in Babylon, forced into servitude as essentially wise men for the king and eventually, you know, help the king's rule. And then the last six are a series of visions. now. It's interesting that in chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar receives a vision. In his second year as king of Babylon, he gives him a vision of four kingdoms. And 38 years later, under a new king, most likely his grandson probably, Belshazzar, Daniel receives a dream. Why do you think God chose to give Daniel a vision at this time? Why go to him directly? Right? Before, God was sharing visions. with Nebuchadnezzar, who as we know, before he turned to God, was an unbeliever. Right?

Okay. So, let's continue. Verse two, verse two. Daniel said, in my vision, I looked and there before me were four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. The first was like a, a what? A lion and it had 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 human being and the mind of a human was given to it." That's a weird animal, right? Interesting. Verse five, and there before me was a second beast which looked like what? A bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, okay, and it had three ribs and it's to rule. And after that, in my vision, at night, I looked and there was before me 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 10 horns. And while I was thinking about the horns, there was another horn, a little one, which came up among them and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. The eyes, the horn, this horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and the mouth that spoke boastfully.

Now, Is there any similarities between what we're reading now in chapter two? What's similar? Kingdoms. They all represent four kingdoms. The first kingdom we recognize as who? Babylon. The second one? Medo-Persia. The third one? Greece. And we've traditionally, the fourth one argued that it is Rome. Others will say it's a Greek king and, and Tantias, his name eludes me at the moment. And then of course, in King Nebuchadnezzar's statue at the bottom, the tippy toes, the feet, were made of iron and clay. Now in chapter seven though, the beasts come out of where? The water, okay? The lion has wings like an eagle, but it stood and had a mind like a human. The bear was raised up on one side, kind of signifying the fact that Medo-Persia. Medo was stronger, but eventually Persia gained ground, and that's who eventually took over Babylon. Then you have the leopard, four wings and four heads. We sometimes have said that those are four kings or kingdoms. And then the fourth one had a mixture of iron and teeth, representing, of course, similarly to the first dream iron legs. Okay, there was ten horns. Three. 10 horns and then three horns uprooted with eyes like a human being. And there was one that spoke boastfully. Okay. So both dreams have four distinct parts. And as you continue to read through the book of Daniel, you're going to have similar thoughts, but more intricate. Okay. This one has much more detail compared to chapter two. We tracking so far? All right.

But. But there's another part. There's a second scene to this. And traditionally, we've always focused on these four beasts. But what follows, I dare say and argue, is that this is actually even more important. Let's go to verse 9. Verse 9. As I looked, what was being set in place? Thrones were being set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was white as snow. The hair of his head was like white wool. Wool, white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire. That sounds amazing, right? And its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended to him. 10,000

times 10,000 stood before him. The court was seated and the books were what? Opened. Were opened.

All right. Let's recap this little couple of verses. What happens after the beast immediately Daniel shifted to what? What next scene comes up? There is one who looks that they call the ancient of days, right? And his clothing was white as snow and his hair of his head was like white like wool. What does that signify? Somebody who's older, who's been around a long time. All right? Wise. So I have friends who lovingly joke with me. When I haven't seen them for a while, I can remember one particular couple, former members of mine. Love them. It's been a few years since we've seen each other. You know what they always say to me when they see me? They look at my head and they say, oh, you've gotten more gray. And I say, thank you. To which she then says, to try to make me feel better, you look more dignified. To which I then say, I just feel older. But we see that the ancient of days, and this is another way of saying that they didn't have necessarily a theology of God at that time, but basically the one who's from forever, right? The ancient of days. But what's also unique about this is what was placed Thrones and what was attached to the Thrones? not only fire, but wheels. Why would wheels be on a throne? And who is this ancient of days? Obviously we know it is God. What is God trying to tell Daniel? We're talking about the sovereignty of God this whole time. When was the other time that a king would be on wheels moving about aside from going to see people? Think about it. What do kings try to do? They try to travel in the negative sense. They try to conquer. What does a good leader do? They lead. Oftentimes, where do they lead? They lead from the front.

Now, we see we've talked about four kingdoms already, okay? And there's another kingdom setting here as well. Ultimately, what kingdom is this? God's kingdom. Is it possible? What is being told to Daniel in that with God, remember, is sovereign. God is able to be with us and go through whatever happens. God's throne is not a set kingdom where God just hangs out. God wants to be among God's people. Does that make sense? Traveling, tracking? Remember, um, and not only that, The court was what? Seated and the books were open. We're gonna come back to that. Now, however, it says verse 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 was destroyed and into the blazing fire. The other beasts had been stripped by their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time. In my

vision, I looked and there was before me one like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the ancient of days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. And all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is how long? An everlasting dominion that will not pass away. And his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. If you understand the context, are you getting excited? Are you hopeful? Do you have joy? Do you have confidence in God? Okay. Now, let's also remember, okay, when we look at scripture, my friend Roy, he describes it this way. It's the three lenses, okay? The first lens is who is the original recipient? Okay. In this case, Daniel. And what did it mean to the audience when he shared it with others, right? The believers, okay? And then the third audience is us. What are some lessons that we can take from this, okay? The reason I say this is because oftentimes, again, we've talked about this already a little bit earlier in the series is when we open the Bible. We automatically go and pray, and I'm not saying this is, well, okay, this is something that we just do. I'm gonna open the Bible and see what God has for me, and we read it for what? Today's time. But we have to remember, we have to take into context what did it mean when it was written back then? Okay.

Now. Daniel, verse 15 says, I was what? Troubled in spirit. And the visions that pass through my mind disturbed me. All of a sudden he wakes up and like Nebuchadnezzar, he finally has a pit in his stomach and he's feeling, I don't feel good. Right. He needs somebody to help explain. And he says in verse 16, I approached one of those standing there and asking the meaning of all of this previously Daniel served as what? The interpreter of the dream. And now moving forward, now Daniel needs an interpreter. Because Daniel's being distracted. He's wondering what are all of these things? And the biggest takeaway that I want you to leave today is Daniel is showing still God's sovereignty. That's what we're gonna end with today. That's the big takeaway. And I know that seems so cliché-ish. you'll see why in a few minutes. He says, So he told me, he gave me the interpretation of these things. The four great beasts are what? Four kings or kingdoms that will rise from the earth, but the holy people of the most high will receive the kingdom and will pass, possess it forever. Yes, forever and ever. What is verse 18 telling us? Despite all of these kingdoms, okay, you're Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and whatever succeeding kingdom, but it does not matter because

there is one ultimate kingdom. Amen? And how old and how long and everlasting is that kingdom? Forever. Okay. But Daniel's heard this awesome message and he's still distracted, but I love this because no matter what, okay? No matter what. God wins. God's kingdom is eternal. And who inherits the kingdom? We do. Okay. Why is all of this important? Now, Daniel's distracted because in verse 19, he wants to go back to the meaning of the fourth piece. Okay. Now, unfortunately, folks, I cannot get everything done today. That's why you need to join us on Wednesday nights. Download the manual and join us on Zoom. Okay. Now, heads up, I'm sorry, I forgot to... remind Bill, unfortunately this week, this is the only week that I'm planning, I'm not able to hold the Wednesday meeting this week. Due to a plan and error, it is what it is. So we're going to recap following week, but we're going to do seven and eight together, which I think is actually good because they go hand in hand. So we're not going to meet this week, we'll meet the following week.

But verse 19, it says, then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth piece. And he says, I want to go back. And the angel or the watchman continues to share. Now here though, verse 26, okay? Verse 26. It says, but the court will sit and its power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms of under heaven will be handed over to the most holy people of the most high. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. What is verse 27 handing over? Because at the end of the day, when everything is said and done, there's gonna be a time where, for instance, we're gonna see, well, my Aunt Sally is not here. My best friend John is not here, and this and that. Who's put under trial? If we look towards the end of Revelation, after the end of the thousand years, during that thousand years, what are we doing? In a way, God's on trial. By who? By us. What a loving, benevolent God, in a sense, to be put on trial, because there we'll see that God is sovereign, but also God is just. And I love that His kingdom, though, will be an everlasting, and all rulers will worship and obey Him. So what does all of this mean, my friends? Oftentimes I think we tend to focus on the beast and the kingdoms. Okay. And I'm not saying we should forget about them, but the bigger story, and I think the bigger takeaway from Daniel 7 leading into the next couple of chapters is this. We tend to focus on the beast and the kingdoms and forget the second scene, which is the ancient of days and the one like the son of man. And

that is you're going to have cycles of kingdoms. You're going to have, we have all of these and even to this day, okay, there are cycles. one power is going to try to dominate and take over. Is that not true of history? Okay. The weak will not survive. Whoever's bigger and stronger is going to take over. And how apropos where we're, folks, I'm not gonna lie. Like sometimes it's just exhausting just to get through life because we have so many distractions of being told of things that we should be fearful of. The list that I read through, let's be honest, I think we feel some of those things. Maybe not to the level of degree, we may reorder them a little bit, but those fears are legitimate. Am I wrong? Okay, so. as believers of Jesus, should we be fearful? No, I don't think so. But does it mean that life is always gonna be comfortable for us? No, was Daniel Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego ever comfortable? Maybe a little bit here and there, but for the most part, the stories that we see, they were put in some very uncomfortable situations, right? Imagine being Daniel trying to tell the king he knows what the truth is and he's wondering what is the response going to be? All of the four kingdoms before showed power, but the true power comes from where God, the ancient of days, and one who looks like the son of man. Another way of saying, you look human, but you're not. You're more than that. Was Jesus not human, but also much more than that? Amen. And here we see a representation of Christ who was always there for us. Amen. Even in the Old Testament, we see Jesus. And so I take hope in that. I take strength in that. Sometimes though, life can be uncomfortable, just like Daniel. And sometimes it's easy for us to fall into distractions, just like Daniel, because he wanted to focus especially on that one particular beast. But with the watchman, the angel was trying to tell him that all of these kingdoms have come and they have... Okay. Ultimately, the one kingdom that stands is the everlasting kingdom of God. And as you go through, there are going to be times where you're going to question, God, can you please just come? Because everything, all the nonsense that we experience, it just seems so distracting. Sometimes maybe you'll see something online and you're so distracted by it because you're so angry and so fed up and so upset that you have to respond and maybe you're going to respond with something that maybe a few days later. I should not have posted that. Has that ever happened to you? Or maybe you like something that you really believe and then you realize, yeah, after happenstance, I'm actually really thinking about it. I don't think I agree with that. You ever make a decision to say something that you instantly regret? I think all of

us at some point have at least thought of something. Maybe we didn't say it, but we definitely thought it, right? And then when the bigger truth and the bigger unfolding of the actual story comes out, then you realize, well, I got it completely wrong. Don't just trust one source, folks. Try multiple sources. Now, what's interesting, I want to show you something too, though. OK? So. Earthly kingdoms, sorry, earthly kingdoms will come and go, but God's kingdom is eternal, okay? Earthly kingdoms come and go. I want you to remember that, okay? Especially as we head towards November, okay? Earthly kingdoms come and go. Doesn't matter. The earthly kingdoms come and go.

Realize that there's a chiasm here. Chapter 2 and chapter 7 talk about four kingdoms that fall. Chapters 3 and 6 talk about tests of God's faithful. Daniel being tested, throwing an alliance in, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being put in a hot furnace. And finally, chapters 4 and 5 are a following king. Two different endings, though. Because remember, Nebuchadnezzar, He tried, you know, but yet his pride still got him. And after seven years in being essentially like a wild animal, he comes back and he calls God what? Sovereign. Belshazzar didn't have a happy ending. See the intentionality of how Daniel wrote this? This is also a reminder of God's faithfulness, a reminder.

Now, as we move forward, reflection. by the personal beasts or kingdoms in your life, or the victory that we have in Jesus. Okay, do not let distractions get in the way. I want to encourage you, in spite of everything that is going on, in the grand scheme of things, God is victorious. You may have fears, you may have uncertainty, we all do, but God is still God. And the promise of the kingdom, the future kingdom, where God, we reside with God, will be a great one. Until that day though. It doesn't mean we're not gonna have challenges. There are gonna be moments of uncomfortability. And I think sometimes that's intentional because, again, when are we closest to God? When we're uncomfortable. Daniel had his fair share of hardship, but we need to remember to lift our eyes and keep our perspective on heaven and live for the kingdom. The kingdom is not. in the future. Jesus argues in the book of Matthew, the kingdom is now. How do you live today? Does it reflect the kingdom? And no matter what kingdom here on earth, may we faithfully love well, love God and reflect that kingdom now. So this week, lift up your eyes, keep heaven's perspective in mind as you live faithfully. and make decisions in your life.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, Lord, you are good, and your mercy endures forever. Father, forgive us of our shortcomings in all things that we do, or even say or think, Lord. You are truly God. May we reflect your kingdom principles in all aspects of our life. And Lord, whatever kingdom that may be, Lord, that is also especially not in tune with you, help us, Lord, to be the difference makers, to show others that there is something better. future kingdom where we will reside with you but until that day Lord give us strength give us courage may we walk together in unity in Jesus name everybody said amen.

Grace and peace everyone.