

Waking Up to Different: Daniel 7
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We've raised five kids in our home. And with five kids being raised in your home, many, many, many mornings have started the same way. Some child stumbles into the kitchen and simply says, "I had the weirdest dream ever last night!" Or they say, "I just had the scariest dream ever!" And whatever you're eating for breakfast is peppered with the details of whatever that dream was- the bits and pieces of that story. You know how dreams go: "The remote control bear drove me to my grandmother's house where my first grade teacher was working on an old recipe-" And you're like, "Whoa! What's going on?" In dreams it's crazy!

When we come to our text today, Daniel chapter seven, Daniel has had a scary dream. Daniel has had a weird dream. Daniel has had a heavy dream. It's alarming to him, and it is a dream that when you begin to look at the pieces of it, it's normal things [that] are not normal in these pictures. It's a dream of beasts. It's a dream with a combination of beasts mixed together, and it's a 2500-year-old dream. It's been recorded for us, preserved for us. Some people have referred to Daniel chapter seven as a scary chapter, a chapter that is puzzling. Some have referred to it as a chapter that's exhilarating. Some have referred to it as a dangerous chapter. One writer I was reading just starts off [saying] "We've now come to the dangerous chapters." If you've been tracking along in our study through Daniel, you would think that a fiery furnace with three people thrown in it would be pretty dangerous. Or a lion's den with Daniel himself thrown into it and it sealed that that's pretty dangerous. But the point is that the chapter's not dangerous to Daniel; it's dangerous to us.

We've come to the chapters that are dangerous to us. And there's a lot of things here that we try to put together and realize that it has changed in Daniel. We've gone from a narrative that's in chronological order of a teenager's life to the point of him being in his eighties to being apocalyptic literature- dreams, visions, supernatural interpretations, figures that just don't normally walk around on this Earth. We try to make sense of it. Why would these chapters be dangerous? Well it's dangerous to us today because there's a temptation to just quit the study. We got through chapter six with things that are neatly in order; Daniel survived the lion's den and he lives in the country happily ever after. Why go to chapter seven? This morning at 3:30, I opened my eyes and looked at the ceiling. That was my thoughts exactly, I was like, "Lord, I think you're leading me to preach something else today."

It's dangerous because I've never- well actually I've preached two times from Daniel chapter seven in my lifetime. At nine o'clock this morning and at 10:15 this morning, [but] never before. And you hear sermons; you hear topical messages that dive in at the fiery furnace. You hear topical sermons that dive in at the lion's den, and maybe you've heard sermons related even to the diet of Daniel at the very beginning of the book. But in chapter seven, when it becomes apocalyptic it doesn't lend itself to just

diving in like, "And today only talk to you about beasts." And it just doesn't work like that. And that's one of the beauties- don't miss this- one of the beauties of preaching through books of the Bible chapter by chapter by chapter is you just take it as it comes. And you look at it and you say, "Lord, you put it here. We're going to try to go after it. We want to see what the spirit of the Lord would teach us and we'll see what he has to say to us." And that's the beautiful thing about just taking books of the Bible chapter by chapter.

It's a dangerous chapter also because there's a temptation to say more than what's here. If you go to Christian bookstores, you can find multiple prophecy books that have to do with the book of Daniel and have to do with the book of Revelation. And there's almost like you could call it a spiritual sport where people try to take the different pieces of the stories and apply it here and apply it there and just to [take the] very, very specific detail of how "this must be exactly what it means." And so there's a real temptation to say more than what's actually there in the text. There's a temptation in these chapters to miss the forest because of the trees. There's a temptation to get down in the weeds. We're going to read stories here about beasts with wings – eagle's wings that's feathers are plucked out and they are raised up on their two feet. And there's a tendency here to do say, "Well let's spend hours here trying to figure out what each one of those feathers represents or each one of those toes on the statue. Or each horn - there are ten of those that- then there's eleven and then the one captures three of those and..." This morning I want you to see the forest. I want you to see the big picture. I want you to see this sweeping hand of history that happens in Daniel chapter seven.

It's a dangerous chapter also because we may be overwhelmed when we see the suffering of followers of Christ in this text and miss the eternal serving and worshipping of a ruling and reigning sovereign God. There are two critical challenges for us in Daniel chapter seven. The first challenge for Daniel chapter seven is what picture will capture our attention. What picture will we walk away with today? There's some vivid pictures and gross pictures, some fierce pictures in this chapter. There's some ferocious intimidating pictures. What picture's going to hang with us? What picture are we going to stay focused on as we go forward? The second challenge for Daniel seven is this critical challenge of when we're dealing with the beast and what they represent that we will miss [that] they're temporary. We will miss that God's eternal. We will miss that God is the ruler of history.

Now to three hundred people in this room, certainly there could be two or three hundred different things rolling through your mind right now. And we all drift and get distracted by things, and you may miss what beast represents what time period and what's going on in the throne room and the trophy room and you may miss some details here in this message. But don't miss this truth from Daniel. It's to be driven home for us week after week after week from the book of Daniel and it's this: God rules history. God is the ruler of history. And you see this played out in Daniel chapter seven- that God is intimately involved in what's going on in history. Because

of that [and] the patterns there that he will be intimately involved in what happens in the future. He is sovereign; he's in control. And our temptation to panic in days that are different and hard and even involve great suffering will cause us to just forget that God is on his throne, that he's in charge and that he's ruling in the events of your life and of your family or events that you look into the future and you just can't see what's going on and you feel a little paralyzed. Hear the message of Daniel- but the message especially of Daniel seven- that God is sovereign and he's ruling history and he's ruling the future.

Let's look at Daniel seven. We're going to read about lions with eagle's wings; we're going to read about bears with ribs in their mouth. We're going to read about leopards with multiple heads. We're going to read about a beast that we don't even know how to classify. It just says it's different than every other beast, but it's fierce and it's terrifying and it's dreadful. It leaves Daniel with all the color draining out of his face; it leaves him alarmed. It leaves him anxious. And we're also going to read about some high and holy places- the throne room of God- the awarding and granting of all authority to the Son of Man.

Let's look in Daniel chapter seven verse one.

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."

And all of a sudden in the midst of these beasts that are fierce and ferocious and terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong, and dominion is given to them and they are seeking and devouring flesh- is this break. And immediately an abrupt change to a different scene in verse nine:

"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from

before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.”

It goes back to the kingdoms again. It's as if it was painting a backdrop and there are things going on with kingdoms and then there's the throne room. In verse eleven: “I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking-” this is a reference back to that eleventh horn, the small horn that appeared and took over three of the other horns. In that small horn that eleventh horn had eyes like an individual, eyes like of a man and had a mouth that spoke great things, and it was speaking. He says, “And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.”

And then again it flashes back to the throne room again and this high and holy scene. And it says, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

End of the dream, end of the visions. Daniel wants an interpretation. He had been the interpreter before, but the interpreter now becomes a dreamer. And the dreamer calls on a supernatural being to interpret to show him, “Tell me what all this means!” And verse fifteen says,

“As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.”

Later in our study of Daniel, [the] angel Gabriel will be referred to. We don't know that for sure here in chapter seven; it's possible that it would've been the same being that would've given interpretation. He says in verse seventeen: “These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.” That's the interpretation. All of those four beasts with all their different figures- here's what they are: those beasts are kings, they're kingdoms, they're territory. The king has an area that he's king and he has a place [where] he rules. Four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. That's the picture of rising up and ruling over a territory.

Verse eighteen: “But the saints of the most high shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.” Daniel wanted to know more! He says,

"Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law, and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'"

And there's a reaction from Daniel: "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." Have you ever played that game where someone says, "Okay, in our conversation today I want you to tell me what animal you would be. If you had to describe yourself as an animal, what would you be?" And it just takes one word, maybe just one word. And somebody might ask you- "Describe yourself!" And you might go on for thirty minutes [after someone says] "Tell me an animal that describes you!" And you pick an animal and you're like, "I get it. It only took one image, took one picture." I think that's what's going on here with these beasts. You could take pages and pages and volumes and volumes to describe the intricate detail of history down through the ages of kings who were rising and kings falling and God just gives this dream. Just- here's a picture, here's a picture, here's a picture, here's a picture. There are four beasts and it communicates to us the character and nature of those kings and kingdoms and their rule and their reign.

There are three scenes in this chapter. There's the dream, there's the interpretation, and there's the reaction. I like the reaction by Daniel because it gives us a glimpse of his humanity. We've tracked with him chronologically since he was a teenager, and he was a strong teenager. As a teenager he stood up before the king and the rules and he said, "Look, give me water and vegetables and test us. We don't want their wine and meat." He was bold and he was courageous and it proved true. He was a part of that group of guys that were thrown into the fiery furnace -Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego-they go into the fiery furnace and they come out without smelling like smoke. Daniel shows up when they need a dream interpreted, and

supernaturally he's able to interpret the dream. We find out in Daniel chapter six that his life was so consistent in his devotion with Christ that his prayer life put them in a position where they could pass a law that he would be arrested because of his consistent prayer life. Then he's thrown into the lion's den, and he's brought out the next morning and the lions never scratched him and never touched him, he's just safe. And he's in his eighties.

When you read about it here in these verses and you see that he was alarmed, you see that he was anxious, you see that he has lost the color in his face, and see him just pondering, keeping the matters in his mind and his heart- [this] shows some humanity as he processes through the drama of this incredible dream. Don't miss the timing of this dream. Did you note in chapter seven it says, "in the first year of Belshazzar." That breaks the chronological order. It's been all the way up through their living freely in Israel, the king is overthrown, Nebuchadnezzar captures the exiles [and] brings them to modern-day Iraq there living in Iraq under Babylonian rule. Nebuchadnezzar is the king, then Nebuchadnezzar passes away and different kings rise. It comes to Belshazzar, who is like his grandson or great-grandson. He's ruling now, it's still Babylonian rule and then he's overthrown. He dies, he's captured, he's wiped away by the armies of the Medes and the Persians, which would be modern-day Iran, and they capture the land and Darius is set up as king. Completely different government, completely different system, different gods, but this dream backs all the way back up in the Babylonian rule. It goes back to a time when Belshazzar in his first year before the Medes and the Persians came in and took over.

In this dream, there are three scenes. The three scenes are the beast, the throne room of judgment, and then what I, just for discussion purposes would divide it up or refer to it as the trophy room. That's the place where the king is king and his dominion is given to him and it's declared that every people, every language every nation would serve him. Three scenes. First the beast: these beasts it tells us represent kings. We don't have to guess at that. We like to spend a lot of time where we get into the discussion of "What kings do they represent? Who's the lion with eagle's wings whose feathers are plucked and are raised up on men's feet and given the mind of a man? Who is that king? Who is the bear with ribs in his mouth? What king and kingdom would've been the leopard with multiple heads- four heads? Who's the beast that has no name- just as terrible and strong?"

As you read back through history I'm convinced with every writer that I've read- and it's been a dozen or so - that those particular beasts refer to different kingdoms. In the first three beasts, it's very subtle, that the lion with eagle's wings would actually have been familiar to Daniel. It would've been history, not prophecy to Daniel. It would have been a representation of Nebuchadnezzar. An important factor to note is that in Daniel chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a statue with four different pieces. And to Daniel, it represented four different kingdoms on that one statue. Nebuchadnezzar was represented as the head of that statue and was a gold head on that statute. This dream runs parallel with that. Four beasts, four types of

metal on that statue.

When you begin to look through history, you see that that very first beast, the lion with the eagle's wings, represented the rule of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylonia. The bear [represents] the Medo-Persian rule. They come in, they overthrow- this would've been prophecy to Daniel- [to] Nebuchadnezzar the picture of the lion would've been history to him. It had happened already, Belshazzar was there ruling and the Medes and the Persians come in and overthrow. Prophecies fulfilled. Darius is king. And then the leopard- when you think of a leopard what do you immediately think of? Spots, I guess. But what about its nature? Fast. Quick. Historian after historian are convinced that this represents in God's prophecy the Greek empire of Alexander the Great.

Just back up and remember that about [the book of] Daniel's written about 550 BC. So 550 years before Christ, this dream begins to unfold and these visions are fulfilled as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and the Babylonian rule is overthrown, and it moves on through to this picture of the bear and that's the picture the Medes and the Persians. And they're going after lands and territories and then you get to the leopard and the story of Alexander the Great and his conquest. And the world is amazed at how fast and rapid he was able to overthrow the kingdoms of others around the globe. And then you come moving closer and closer to the birth of Christ and the death of Christ on the cross. So who is this beast that's unnamed? I don't know. I'm just going to say it- I don't know. I'm in good company- when you get to Daniel chapter eight next week, Daniel talks about his dream and it comes to the end of that chapter and says Daniel did not understand.

The leaning here is that it would be the Roman Empire. There would be just tracking through history of the Babylonian Empire- the lion, the Medo-Persian Empire- the bear, the Greek empire of Alexander the Great- the leopard, the Roman empire- this beast with ten horns. Historians point out that the kingdom would break apart in the different pieces. Here's one thing that we do know. This last kingdom, whatever time period it stretches across represents the last final great battle of evil before God. How long that battle goes on, we're not told here. You say, "Well, can you be sure about the lion being that time period, the leopard being-?" We could banter back and forth and you can bring up arguments.

Here's one thing we do know: kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. The pattern of prophecy is this: is that kings rise, kings fall. We see it in history. Kings rise, kings fall. When Nebuchadnezzar was king, it would've been his impression that just right on down the line every heir after him would just take on the throne and Babylonia would just take on more and more territory of the world. Alexander the Great- his thoughts would've just been, "I will rule the world. I will continue and somebody will follow." There's never the impression, "I'm going to rule for a while and then I'll be defeated and then I'll let somebody else have it." We see that what's happening in history is that God is ruling history. God controls history.

Beast- there's this beast that talks about the ten horns and then the one that appears with eyes. It's my understanding as you begin to look into the book of Revelation and the book of First Thessalonians that this small horn that appears and takes over the other three horns is a reference to the man of lawlessness and to the antichrist who will fight in the end against God's ways and God's people to wear them out in tribulation and suffering. The picture moves then to the throne room. It's so significant when we look this morning and we acknowledge – "This is weird." I mean, on Sundays, we might be talking about how you know you could have a sermon about memorizing Scripture, or sharing your faith, [and] we're talking about bears and leopards and lions and eagle's wings and beasts!

In the midst of that, there's this abrupt change that happens, and it goes from talking about this little horn with the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things to this throne room. And in verse nine: "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat, his clothing was white as snow-" we have this picture again of the ancient of days in the throne room. What's going on here is so significant; listen. In the midst of suffering, in the midst of kingdoms rising and kingdoms falling, in the midst of beasts that devour flesh and conquer the world there comes breaking into that scene a picture that would certainly scar you and keep you awake at night to this picture of the throne room! And it's as if God in this middle of saying, "This is what's going on on the earthly landscape" says to Daniel and it's preserved for us to hear today that there is going to be this time where there is this interaction where heaven intersects earth. And it shows us that when kingdoms come and kingdoms go when kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall that it's not just an earthly enterprise.

But in the midst of what's going on here on this earth- that heaven is involved as well. And you see this scene of taking you to the throne room and seeing the ancient of days sitting on the throne judging, opening the books to declare his verdict. You see the kingdom, you see the throne room with thousands upon thousands surrounding the throne. If you have any time spent in Revelation, you can't help but immediately let your mind go to Revelation four and Revelation chapter five where the throne is surrounded and there's worship going on and there's the confession of every nation and tongue and tribe before the throne.

He breaks back into this scene of kingdoms rising and falling in the battle the antichrist at verse eleven: "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire." He goes back to the throne room again in verse thirteen: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man." In this throne room, the first scene is to show us that God's on the throne. With the rise and fall of kingdoms, God is on the throne. Think about in our world today - elections and changes in leadership- that it looks so earthly. It feels like the kind of thing where you have rallies in coliseums and

you put plastic signs out in your yard and you fly banners around stadiums and you make donations, and you may totally forget the fact that what's going on here on this earth is also involved with what's going on in heaven.

Have you seen that the W that's a logo for our church? And it has that bar that comes through it? It's the broken W; it's the W and the slash mark comes right across it; it's on the sign out by the road. You ever wondered what that bar is for? It's the picture of heaven intersecting earth. The W representing Watkinsville, representing our church, representing a life that we live and that bar is this bar of light; it's the symbol of how light has come from heaven. God has come from heaven. Earth has intersected heaven. It's a lesson to us that what's happening here on earth is not isolated from what's going on with heaven.

You look at this scene and you see the pictures of the beast [and he] describes this last beast, this last battle with evil, this fourth beast as being terrifying dreadful and exceedingly strong. Hear me! It's an empire of evil that continues until the Day of Judgment. And it paints a picture for us of an empire that's terrifying and dreadful an exceedingly strong. And listen to these words over in verse twenty-five when it talks about a little horn that comes out of that beast and overthrows three of the other ten horns. Listen how the rule of that single little horn is described. It says in verse twenty-five: "He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law-" he paints for us a picture of evil of the battle of the antichrist amongst those who oppose Christianity as being one of the only ways to describe it is that it will feel like you're being worn out.

The opposition, the persecution wears out the saints. But on the scene comes the throne room, the ancient of days. What do you need when you're in trouble? When you're despairing when you can't make sense? You don't know what to do next? You don't know what's ahead for life? You say, "I'm seventeen years old, I'm twenty-eight years old, I'm trying to figure out what to do next if I just had somebody to talk to." Do you want to talk to somebody who's fifteen if you're eighteen and trying to make decisions about the future? If you're twenty-four do you want to have somebody to help you understand how to deal with life? People say it over and over; they say, "I love coming to this church because there's some gray hair in the room. I want to be around some people that are down the road a little bit. I feel some security there."

This title of the Ancient of Days is on purpose. It's not a title that's derogatory. It's title of reverence and respect to say, "Here's one who has lived forever! His days are forever! He knows the past; he knows the present; he knows the future! He's the one that sits on the throne! He can determine the verdict! He rules; he reigns; he opens the book! He's the Ancient of Days! He's the one to be revered!" Within this throne room enters one like a son of man. Earthly kingdoms are going on, they've all risen and there comes a time where there are judges and they fall. And the eternal

kingdom is established. "Behold on the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man." Who is this Son of Man?

Daniel didn't have the perspective that you and I have. Immediately in our mind, if we read any of the New Testament, we immediately say, "There's an Old Testament appearance of Jesus! Isn't He referred to as the Son of Man?" He is, and it was his personal favorite title. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John: Jesus is referred to as the Son of Man eighty-one times. Eighty one times over and over and over again. It was his favorite title. When people would call him the Savior, when people would call him Lord, when people called him the son of God, he would come back and say, "It's what you say, but let me tell you I am the Son of Man."

Last week, Jeff preached Luke nineteen. It says, "But the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost." It was his favorite title. I want you to see the most powerful reference of Jesus using the Son of Man in Matthew chapter twenty-six. He's been arrested; he's been betrayed. He's on trial before Caiaphas. He's about to be crucified on the cross; he's about to die and be buried. In Matthew twenty-six beginning in verse sixty-three, Caiaphas is interviewing him; he's trying him. He's on trial. Verse sixty-two: "And the high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?' But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, "You have said so-"

"You have said so." Listen to what he says next: "But I tell you." Don't read right past that. It's as if you could see Jesus' eyes pierce the eyes of Caiaphas and say to him, "Listen to me. You've said I'm the Son of God. I'm going to tell you who I am, and when you hear who I am, you're going to recognize who I am." And Jesus says to Caiaphas, "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." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy."

Why did he react in such an incredible way? Because Caiaphas knew the Old Testament. Caiaphas knew the dreams and the visions of Daniel. He knew the pictures of the throne room. He had no problem with the Ancient of Days and of judgment. Caiaphas would've been glad to step in and help with judgment of God needed him to. And he knew the Son of Man would be given the kingdom, would be given the throne, would be given the authority in every nation and language, and people would bow before him.

550 years, 580 years after this dream and vision of Daniel, Jesus stands before Caiaphas and said, "You're about to kill me. You're about to crucify me. Let's just be clear. I'm not a son of man. I am the Son of Man. Remember the Son of Man back in Daniel that would have the kingdom that would rule and reign whose dominion would never end who would have all authority? That Son of Man. That's who I am."

And today when you and I sit here and we're tempted to look around our world and to give up, quit, to say "no more," to throw in the towel, to grow weary in doing well, in the years to come when the suffering increases and the tribulation comes and the persecution is real in your life or your family's life or your kids' lives one day, will you hold on to the picture of the beast? I hope not. I hope not. I hope you'll remember on October 9, 2016 in kind of a long sermon at Watkinsville First Baptist- my attention was captured by the picture of the throne room where the Ancient of Days would judge and the Son of Man would be given the kingdom and his dominion would rule forever and ever and ever and ever. And your life would move ahead with that picture of victory and triumph.

Do you remember what Jesus said just before he ascended to heaven to his disciples? We call it the great commission. We get the "go" part a lot. This is where Daniel seven comes in. Jesus said in Matthew twenty-eight "all" what. All what? All authority. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me; therefore go and make disciples of all nations." What was he saying? He was inviting us into this grand mission of God. He's saying, "There's coming a day where every people, every tribe, every nation will bow and worship me. I've been given authority and the kingdom of heaven is at hand! I am King of kings and Lord of lords! Join me in this mission and introduce people to me over and over and over and over again until the Ancient of Days sits down on the throne to judge the living and the dead."

In Vacation Bible School years ago -there was in our sanctuary- we ordered one of these giant curtains that cover the entire front of the church and hung it get there and all week long it hung. And I believe it was an amusement park roller coaster scene. And all week long, every time we came into the room with those few hundred kids it would just set the theme and set the tone of the room. Out on the stage in front of that backdrop were people acting and singing and dancing and teaching. It would go on every day, but behind it the whole time this giant picture backdrop just setting the scene. That's what happens in Daniel chapter seven. Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. Saints suffer, saints are persecuted but in the backdrop- God on the throne. God on the throne. God on the throne. The Son of Man given dominion, authority, rule and reign forever and ever. Lord, help us today to have the right perspective in this day to trust your promise, to prepare to walk in step with you in boldness and confidence and not give up- in Jesus' name.