



DANIEL 7:19-28

19 "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, 20 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. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 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. 23 "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. 24 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. 25 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. 26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 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.' 28 "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."

STRUCTURE

- I. **Daniel wisely seeks to understand the "different" fourth beast (19–22)**
 - a. *Its unique identity* — a fourth beast, different from all the rest (19a)
 - b. *Its unique ferocity* — devours, breaks, and tramples (19b)
 - c. *Its unique ruler* — ten horns and a greater little horn (20)
 - d. *Its unique persecution* — makes war on the saints and prevails (21)
 - e. *Its unique judgment* — judged by the Ancient of Days; the saints receive the kingdom (22)
- II. **The heavenly being gives Daniel wisdom about the "different" fourth beast (23–27)**
 - a. *Its unique identity* — a fourth kingdom, different from all others (23a)
 - b. *Its unique ferocity* — devours, breaks, and tramples the whole earth (23b)
 - c. *Its unique ruler* — ten kings, followed by another who puts down three (24)
 - d. *Its unique persecution* — blasphemes, wears out the saints, and disrupts worship (25)
 - e. *Its unique judgment* — its dominion is destroyed; the saints receive the kingdoms under heaven (26–27)
- III. **Daniel wisely keeps pondering, despite his profound shock (28)**
 - a. *Daniel's shock* — his thoughts alarm him and his color changes (28a)
 - b. *Daniel's pondering* — he nevertheless keeps the matter in his heart (28b)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

In the prior context (7:1-18), Daniel observed chaos on earth followed by God's intervention from heaven. This involved judgment by the Ancient of Days and enthronement of the Son of Man. Troubled by these visions, Daniel inquires of a heavenly being, who explains the meaning.

In the last section of the chapter (7:19-28), this pattern repeats and intensifies: Daniel is troubled, he seeks an interpretation, one is given, yet he remains deeply shaken. This time, rather than inquiring further—as if information will calm his nerves—Daniel says, "I kept the matter in my heart" (7:28).

Daniel is our prototypical model for wisdom in the last days. So far, we have watched him seek wisdom from God, teach it to others, and remain faithful amidst beastly pressure. When he is troubled, he inquires further; when a further explanation troubles him even more, he ponders. Daniel is repeatedly considered among the wisest in the empire (1:17, 20; 5:11–14; cf. Ezek. 28:3). Then in later chapters we are introduced to an entire class of "those who are wise"—those who will "understand", "teach many," and "turn many to righteousness" (Dan. 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10). While the world plunges into beastly darkness, God will raise up Danielic sages.

Would you like to become one? Do what Daniel did. Seek wisdom with prayer and fasting. When you don't understand, keep seeking. If God gives you understanding, keep pondering. Then share the wisdom God gave you. When I first noticed this pattern of seeking wisdom for the last days, I began praying for it every night as I went to bed. Daniel inspired me to follow his example.

Daniel asks for more detail because the fourth beast—the fourth kingdom—is unique. Three times, it is described as “different” from the prior three (Dan. 7:7, 19, 23). Then a “little horn” on the beast is described as “different” from the other ten horns on the fourth beast (7:24). Here and in chapter 8, the “little horn” represents a horrific tyrant, blasphemer, and persecutor of God's people. To whatever degree Daniel has already experienced tyranny, this fourth kingdom—this eleventh king—are something else. Even by Daniel's standard.

Interpreters debate whether the fourth beast and terrible tyrant belong exclusively to Rome, or to a revived Roman empire at the end of the age, or to an Ottoman empire, or to every iteration of beastly empire from Rome to Christ's return. We will explore these options below, hopefully, with theological humility. Honest readers must admit that every interpretation comes with challenges. Daniel models the proper posture of readiness for the last days: not proud certainty (like the little horn!), but humble seeking. Regardless of where we land on the details, the broad strokes are clear. Beastly kingdoms will die. The Son of Man lives. And the saints of the Most High inherit the kingdom.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

19 "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, 20 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."

—“Then I desired to know”:

- Had Daniel not acted on his curiosity, these verses would not exist in our Bibles. Curiosity led him to inquire of the heavenly being, who then added detail.
- Pondering supernatural phenomena is a theme in Scripture. Despite tremendous anxiety, Daniel leans in, even asking about the most terrifying image of all. Rather than recoiling, or even dismissing, Daniel presses for more. This is righteous. God is looking for those who are looking for him.
 - The theme of “rewarded spiritual curiosity” throughout Scripture:
 - Ex. 3:2-4: Moses sees the burning bush, and we read, “When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called him.”
 - Luke 24:28-31: The Emmaus disciples encounter the Lord, but without knowing it. When he seems to continue without them, they urge him to stay. Eventually, their eyes are opened.
 - Acts 10:17-20: Peter is “inwardly perplexed” about a vision but refuses to dismiss it. While “pondering” the vision, the Spirit speaks, and gradually the meaning unfolds.
 - The theme of “rewarded spiritual curiosity” in Daniel:
 - Dan. 2:17-23: Daniel learns of the king's demand to reveal both his dream and the interpretation. He seeks mercy from the God of heaven, and he finds it.
 - Dan. 7:16-22: Daniel asks a heavenly being about the meaning of his vision, then presses in for additional information about the fourth beast. God rewards him with the interpretation.
 - Dan. 8:15-17: “When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it.” Then Gabriel is told, “Make this man understand the vision.”
 - Dan. 9:2-3, 20-23: Daniel reads Jeremiah's prophecy about 70 years, and he responds with prayer and fasting. Gabriel comes again “to give you insight and understanding.”
 - Dan. 10:12: “From the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.”
 - Dan. 12:8-9: These verses provide a qualification. Daniel continues the pattern of asking for more understanding, but he is told that the words are sealed until the time of the

end. The qualification is this: Just because you humbly seek clarification, you are not guaranteed the answer you desire. God answers Daniel—but keeps it vague

- On the last verses: The end-times intel Daniel seeks is revealed to John in the book of Revelation. Compare Daniel, “shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end” (Dan. 12:4; cf. v. 9), with John, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near” (Rev. 22:10). This explains why God did not give Daniel the answer he wanted, despite the prophet’s earnest inquiry. It was not the right time.
 - The theme throughout the book is that Daniel seeks, and God answers. Even when he doesn’t answer like we want, it is still commendable to seek. Daniel represents the category of those who are “wise” in the last days—those who “understand”, who will “teach many” and who “turn many to righteousness” (11:33, 35; 12:3, 10). Daniel is the prototype. He gains wisdom by seeking.
 - Such seeking must be engaged humbly. Belshazzar sought to understand the meaning of the writing on the wall, but he did not seek humbly. Belshazzar just wanted answers. Daniel sought God’s wisdom.
- “fourth beast, which was different from all the rest”:
- My commentary on Daniel 7:1-18 argued that the fourth beast was Rome. See there.
 - How was this fourth beast “different from all the rest” (v. 19; see also vv. 19, 23)?
 - **The first three beasts have zoological analogues; the fourth beast does not.** He is simply terrifying. The inability to peg him makes him scarier. Even a peaceful alien would frighten people more than a hungry crocodile!
 - **It is marked by power and fear.** 7:7 and 19 say it was, “terrifying and dreadful... exceedingly strong... exceedingly terrifying”.
 - **It does not just conquer; it devours, breaks, and tramples.** 7:7, 19, and 23 say it “devoured... broke in pieces... stamped what was left.” Daniel watched it “devour the whole earth”—which he doesn’t say about the other beasts.
 - **Its predatory body parts are metallic.** The fourth beast has “iron teeth” (7:7, 19), which parallels the iron depiction in Daniel 2. This fourth beast also has “bronze claws” (7:19). This is not just a beast; it is a robo-beast!
 - **Of the beasts in Daniel 7, only this one has horns**—ten of them, with an eleventh “little horn” that is boastful (mouth) and discerning (eyes). It makes war on the saints and wears them out. It speaks against God, seeking to change the religious standards he established (See 7:8, 11, 20-21, 24-25).
 - **God judges the fourth beast with greater severity** (7:11-12). The kingdom that destroyed *the most people* will itself be *most destroyed*.

—Cheat sheet for the fourth beast:

- “teeth of iron and claws of bronze”: Predatory power. This could include both its outward and inward expressions—military imperialism and criminal punishments.
- “ten horns... other horn... three of them fell”: Kings (see below on v. 24).
- “horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things... seemed greater than its companions”: a final and more powerful king with piercing discernment (eyes) and arrogant boasting (“mouth that spoke great things... he shall speak words against the Most High”, vv. 20, 25).
- More explanation on the horns in vv. 21-25.

21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 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.

—“this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them”:

- Although the fourth beast devours “the whole earth” (v. 23), this unique and deadly “horn” (king) focuses special attention on “the saints” (vv. 21, 25).

- The great white shark eats nearly anything that swims, but it much prefers high-calorie seals and sea lions. In the same way, beastly brutality knows no bounds. But this fourth beast has a special appetite for saints.
- “this horn” refers to the eleventh king that displaces three others, having eyes that discern (not spiritually) and a mouth that boasts.
- Daniel had already experienced persecution from beastly kingdoms. Babylon tried to change his Jewish diet (Dan. 1), then forced him to reveal and interpret a dream or die (Dan. 2). His friends faced a fiery furnace (Dan. 3), and Daniel spent the night in a lion’s den (Dan. 6). Beastly powers had already made war on him and his friends. But the fourth beast would be more blasphemous and deadly than its predecessors.
- Rome’s embodiment of the fourth beast fits the vision historically. Its brutal military suppression, control of the Mediterranean, integration of subdued kingdoms, and widespread persecution of saints across centuries made Rome extra beastly—even by Daniel’s standards.
- The book of Revelation echoes this language (11:7; 12:17; 13:7).

—“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”:

- The “Ancient of Days” first appeared in the heavenly vision of 7:9-14.
- As here, the context there was judgment. The vision involved fire (7:9-10), a symbol of judgment. Thrones were placed for that purpose (7:9). These images were explained as “the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened” (7:10). As we have seen, this language recurs in Revelation 20 with reference to final judgment.
- The theme of judgment continues in 7:11-12, but it does not appear to be “final.” The fourth beast is destroyed (7:11), but the remaining three beasts have their “lives... prolonged for a season and a time” (7:12). Final judgment would have decimated all four beasts, but three of the beasts appear to keep living after a heavenly judgment.
- This judgment is “given for the saints” at the time when they “possessed the kingdom.” A judgment against the beasts is a judgment for the saints.
- It is also a judgment for the Son of Man in 7:13-14. The God-Man of Daniel’s vision rides the clouds of heaven to receive a kingdom from the Ancient of Days. We have already observed that this occurred in the first century, while the fourth kingdom (Rome) ruled. Jesus ascended to God the Father, the Ancient of Days, to receive a kingdom. Daniel sees the Son of Man receive a kingdom alongside the saints (7:14, 18, 27). With a New Testament lens, we see how this plays out: Christ inherits the kingdom; those who are *in Christ* receive it *with Christ* (Eph. 1:20-22 with 2:6; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:5-6).
- The reception of God’s kingdom aligns with the judgment of the fourth beast. Daniel’s vision portrays the fourth beast being totally destroyed (7:11, 26), which did not occur in the first century. The question we must ask is how to interpret Daniel’s vision of a beast that is destroyed concurrently with the Son of Man’s enthronement.
 - Some (critical scholars) argue that the fourth beast was not Rome but Greece. I have already explained why I take the traditional view of Rome. Furthermore, this would not solve the problem. When Greece destroyed the saints (and profaned the temple) most notably under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Son of Man did not assume his throne beside the Ancient of Days, and the saints did not receive a kingdom. On the New Testament’s identification of the Son of Man with Jesus, these heavenly aspects of Daniel’s vision in no way played out under Greece’s reign. However, they did occur under Rome.
 - Others (full preterists) argue that Daniel 7 was entirely fulfilled in the first century. Even the “final judgment” aspects of Daniel 7, they claim, have occurred. Full preterism is a heresy. It denies the bodily return of Jesus and future renewal of all things.
 - Others (partial preterists) locate substantial fulfillment of Daniel 7 in the first century, while retaining a future final judgment and consummation of Christ’s kingdom. They differ over how much of Daniel 7 itself extends to that consummation.

- Others (futurists) can take several forms.
 - Some futurists almost sound like partial preterists, agreeing that Daniel 7 contains short- and long-term fulfillments. Like partial preterists, they may acknowledge that judgment on the beast was inaugurated, Jesus was enthroned, and the saints received a kingdom, while also saying these are fully realized after Christ's return. The differences between the two groups generally focus on disagreement about which aspects of Daniel's vision WERE fulfilled and which are YET TO BE.
 - More hard-line futurists locate the ten-horn/little-horn phase of Daniel 7 exclusively in the future. Even if they acknowledge that the fourth beast is Rome, they also envision a revived Roman empire that will boomerang onto the scene. The tension they seek to resolve is real: Daniel 7 seems to imagine a total destruction of the fourth beast; Jesus didn't totally destroy Rome in the first century; therefore, Rome will come back, and Jesus will come back to annihilate it. I disagree. Daniel 7:12 seems to imagine the continuance of the first three beasts, and then Rev. 13:1-2 combines all four into one composite beast. When I read these verses together, it seems to me that Jesus judged the fourth beast in the first century. But the beastly powers continued beyond the fourth beast (7:12). In fact, all four beasts in some way continue (Rev. 13:1-8). Therefore, when Jesus returns to judge the kingdom of man, he is, in essence, destroying all four kingdoms—and not just them—but the whole kingdom of man, replacing it with his own. As we read in Rev. 11:15, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." In short, I don't believe we need a "revived Rome" for Jesus to consummate his judgment against it. When he judges the kingdom of man, Rome is included.
 - A more recent futurist development was popularized by Joel Richardson in his book, *The Islamic Antichrist*. Joel is a friend, and his view is attractive to me in some ways. But his interpretation requires a six-to-eight-hundred-year gap between the third kingdom and fourth kingdom, depending on how you count it. It seems awkward for Daniel's vision to have moved from Babylon to Medo-Persia to Greece to—centuries later—the Islamic caliphate.
- Others (idealists) emphasize the fourth beast as a general representation of beastly empire that continues until Christ's return, although some also acknowledge Rome as its historical embodiment. Those who view the fourth beast as purely archetypal reason that, since cross-references seem to identify the first three kingdoms by name—Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece—the fourth unnamed empire is general. The appeal of this view is that we no longer face difficulty with short- and long-term fulfillment, since the archetypal fourth beast would span both the first and second advents. My problem with a purely archetypal version of this view is two-fold: (1) Dan. 7:17 and 23 highlight four kings and four kingdoms that succeed each other. This sounds historical, not archetypal; (2) Daniel 7:11-12 says the fourth beast dies, but the first three live on. If the fourth beast were purely archetypal, we would expect the reverse: the first three historical beasts die, but the fourth archetypal beast lives on.
- These eschatological positions exist on a spectrum. Individual readers often blend or nuance them. Therefore, the above descriptions are generalities. They do not speak for everyone in each camp, for that would be impossible.
- Personally, I am closest to a partial-preterist reading. However, futurists will agree with my belief in a final antichrist and period of great suffering. In addition, my view of the fourth beast is strongly typological. This will resonate with idealist readers. Below is my reasoning for these positions:
 - Daniel 7 contains both short- and long-term fulfillments. Internal logic and New Testament confirmations clearly teach that Jesus was historically enthroned as the Son of Man and ruler of God's kingdom, which he shares with the saints. Furthermore, Jesus himself claimed his crucifixion was "the judgment of the world" (John 12:31). It seems

reasonable to conclude that Rome was part of that judgment, even if the full ramifications were not immediate.

- Nevertheless, the destruction of the beast, the opening of books for judgment, and the consummation of God's kingdom are not fully realized until the end of the age.
- It seems best to preserve the tension between short- and long-term fulfillments that align with Christ's first and second coming. Since I locate substantial fulfillment of Daniel 7 in the first century while retaining its final consummation at Christ's return, I am closest to a partial preterist, but with emphases that futurists and idealists can appreciate.

—In light of my position, I believe the "horn that made war with the saints and prevailed over them" was a first-century Caesar, although I'm hesitant to name one (several could fit). Jesus inaugurated his judgment against Rome and Caesar at his first coming. He also received universal dominion over the kingdom of man when he came before the Ancient of Days, surrounded by clouds, in his heavenly ascension. Jesus will consummate his judgment on the kingdom of man at his return when his enemies are made his footstool. His reign will not increase at that time, for "all authority in heaven and on earth" has already been given to him (Matt. 28:18). Rather, his reign will no longer tolerate opposition. Destroyers will be destroyed, the universe will be renewed, and tears will be wiped away.

23 "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. 24 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. 25 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.

—"ten horns... ten kings... another shall arise after them... shall put down three kings":

- Some futurists have suggested that these "ten kings" are part of the European Union, which itself belongs to a reviving Roman empire. This theory seems to be losing traction now that the European Union consists of 27 nations.
- Many proposals have been made about the horn that "shall arise after" the prior ten, taking out three of them, and displaying unique characteristics. No historical examples are perfectly clean.
 - Caesar Vespasian succeeded three emperors who fell out in quick succession, but he was not Rome's eleventh leader. He was also described by Josephus as a "chaste" and "good governor", not a "barbarous tyrant."
 - Caesar Domitian was the eleventh Caesar, starting with Augustus. He was a solid antichrist, too. But the three kings who fell before him are less clear.
 - Titus was the eleventh Caesar if you start with Julius instead of Augustus (both can be defended—Julius was the first leader of Rome, and Augustus was the first emperor). He also destroyed the Jewish temple, which fits very well. But again, the three fallen horns are hard to find.
 - Nero matches the wicked character of this persecuting and blasphemous tyrant, but he did not take out three kings, and he was not the eleventh.
- Many interpret the numbers symbolically, reasoning that apocalyptic numerology typically functions this way. Leon Morris comments, "[N]umbers were often employed symbolically. . . . The apocalyptists loved schematism, and the constant use of numerical patterns is a feature of their system. Symbolism and significant numbers, then, abound. Whether they explain them or not, the apocalyptists use their bizarre symbolism and their curious numerology consistently. Any student of these writings must make an effort to grapple with the phenomenon."
- If taken symbolically, ten is a round number representing the full number of rulers. The putting down of three kings would not represent a list of literal royal names. Rather, it would symbolize a key trait of this persecuting eleventh dictator: he will arise by taking out other leaders. Even when he does this, however, seven (symbolic) kings will remain, which is still a number of completion. In other words, this horrible dictator will arise through intrigue, without overturning the imperial order. *Note: I am not suggesting this precise interpretation is universal among those who view it symbolically.

- I am undecided about the interpretation. Each one has problems. If forced to choose, I would take the symbolic view on horns because that's natural for apocalyptic literature. And the most natural character fit would be Nero by far.
- Nero does not literally arise after ten kings or literally depose three others. However, he ascends to the throne by palace intrigue, ahead of the emperor's own biological son, Britannicus, whom he allegedly poisoned soon afterward. He kills or removes those who stand in his way, yet maintains the imperial order. Daniel's numbers, then, would symbolize the character and circumstances of this wicked king. As the additional horn beyond the complete number ten, he represents an excess, an intrusion, something beyond the normal order.
- I am far from sure about this interpretation, but it offers a feasible way of grappling with other interpretive challenges, while taking apocalyptic numerology seriously.

—"He shall speak words against the Most High"

- Several verses in Daniel 7 address the boastful speech:
 - The horn had "a mouth speaking great things" (7:8).
 - Daniel "looked because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking" (7:11).
 - The horn had "a mouth that spoke great things" (7:20).
 - He will "speak words against the Most High" (7:25).
 - The mouth on the horn is fundamentally self-exalting and God-debasing.
- We observe this same characteristic of tyrants throughout Daniel:
 - Nebuchadnezzar says this: "And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" (3:15).
 - And this: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" (4:30).
 - On Belshazzar: "when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne..." (5:20).
 - On Belshazzar again: "you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven" (5:23).
 - On Antiochus IV Epiphanes: "And in his own mind he shall become great... and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes..." (8:25).
 - On the arrogant king in Daniel 11, extending the Antiochus pattern: "And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods..." (11:36).
 - Dan. 11:36 is echoed strongly in 2 Thess. 2:3-4 about a future man of lawlessness, an antichristian tyrant: *"Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God."*
- Daniel wants us to see the archetypal tyrant as one who boasts, making himself into something of a god, while speaking words against the Most High God.

—"and shall wear out the saints of the Most High"

- In verse 21, we saw that this tyrant will make war on the saints and prevail. He will persecute them.
- Now, in verse 25, we see how this affects those saints who are lucky enough to survive his sword. He wears them out.
- Daniel 12:7 labels this "the shattering of the power of the holy people".

—"shall think to change the times and the law":

- "think to change": The tyrant *thinks* to change the times and the law but only God "changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings" (Dan. 2:21).
- Kings in their arrogance think they can change history and define religious rules. This is a pattern throughout Daniel:
 - Kings pressure Jews to violate their food laws (1:5; 8-16)
 - Kings command false worship and forbid true worship (3:4-6; 6:7-10)
 - Kings stop the daily sacrifice (8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11).
 - Kings desolate the sanctuary (9:26-27).

- Kings might succeed for a season in suppressing or corrupting true worship. But it never lasts, as the next part of the verse says.
- "they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time."
- The saints "shall be given" into the hands of wicked rulers. Their suffering is not the result of God's weakness but his sovereignty. He chooses to let his people suffer—but only for a limited time, and for calculated reasons (later chapters address why).
 - Most interpreters believe a "time" equals one year and that "a time, times, and half a time" equals three and a half years—one year, two years, and half a year (Dan. 7:25; 12:7). Daniel 12:11–12 refers to similar timeframes of persecution in days rather than years—1,290 and 1,335 days—both roughly three and a half years. Furthermore, the book of Revelation alternates between "a time, and times, and half a time" (Rev. 12:14), "42 months" (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), and "1,260 days" (Rev. 11:3; 12:6)—all equivalent to three and a half years.
 - Some have claimed a fulfillment of the three-and-a-half years of persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (168–164 BC) and Nero (AD 64–68). Daniel associates the third kingdom with Antiochus's persecution lasting roughly three years (Dan. 8:13–14), while the fourth kingdom (Rome) is also associated with a period of persecution lasting approximately three and a half years (Dan. 7:25; cf. 9:27; 12:7, 11–12).
 - Regardless of how literal one interprets "three and a half" years, the number seems to contain symbolism. The apparent doubling (time, times) should have led the last number to equal four times (for a total of seven years, which is God's number of completion). Instead, it went backward to half a time. The number declares symbolically that evil will not reach completion; it will be cut off at the knees.
- I have said that Revelation 13 draws from the imagery of Daniel's four beasts, rolling them into one. It is in this section that the characteristics of the fourth beast most parallel John's composite beast. Observe the following chart:

Daniel 7 — Fourth Beast / Little Horn	Revelation 13 — Composite Beast
Ten horns — The fourth beast has ten horns (Dan. 7:7; cf. vv. 20, 24). None of Daniel's first three beasts has horns, so the four beasts have ten horns between them.	John's beast has ten horns (Rev. 13:1).
Big mouth / blasphemy — The little horn has " a mouth speaking great things " (Dan. 7:8, 20) and " shall speak words against the Most High " (7:25).	The beast " was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words " and " opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God " (Rev. 13:5–6).
Death and continued beastly life — " The beast was killed, and its body destroyed " (Dan. 7:11), yet the lives of the other beasts were " prolonged for a season and a time " (7:12). Daniel thus establishes a tension between beastly defeat and beastly continuation.	Death and resurrection — One of the beast's heads appears " to have a mortal wound, " but " its mortal wound was healed " (Rev. 13:3; cf. vv. 12, 14). The beast suffers a counterfeit death and resurrection: decisively wounded, yet beastly tyranny rises again.
War on the saints — The horn " made war with the saints and prevailed over them " (Dan. 7:21; cf. v. 25).	The beast " was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them " (Rev. 13:7).
Universal dominion — The fourth kingdom " shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces " (Dan. 7:23).	The beast is given " authority over every tribe and people and language and nation " (Rev. 13:7).
Three-and-a-half-year persecution — The saints are given into the horn's hand " for a time, times, and half a time " (Dan. 7:25).	The beast is given authority " for forty-two months " (Rev. 13:5).

—The "little horn" of Daniel 7:8 is not pictured as such in Revelation 13, but its character and actions are: boastful speech, persecution, and sacrilege (Dan. 7:8, 21, 25; Rev. 13:5–7). We will see the little horn symbol again in Daniel 8, only there the horn points to the historical figure, Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Greece. This means that the "little horn" in Daniel symbolizes an anti-God ruler who arises in both the third and fourth empires (Dan. 7:7–8; 8:21–23). According to John, the "composite beast"—the kingdom of man—continues this same pattern of devastation. Given the repetition, I believe the proud, persecuting, sacrilegious ruler

recurs throughout history until a final, most wicked manifestation: what Paul calls, “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3-4) and what John depicts as the beast’s climactic eighth king, who embodies the beast itself (Rev. 17:9–11).

—Revelation clarifies that this beastly war on the saints—persecution—only LOOKS like defeat. Consider the contrast between these two verses:

- Rev. 13:7: “Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.”
- Rev. 15:2: “And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast... standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.”

—The beast conquers the saints by killing them. The saints conquer the beast by overcoming death—first, when their spirits soar to heaven; second, when Christ returns and they receive resurrection bodies.

—The army of saints conquers like their Slain Lamb Commander: not by shedding the blood of their enemies but by shedding their own blood to bear faithful witness. Jesus conquered by being conquered (Rev. 5:5-6) and then stood (5:6) by a sea of glass (4:6). Likewise, the Lamb’s army conquers by being conquered (13:7) and then stands by a sea of glass (15:2).

—No matter how chaotic this world gets—even if it kills us—God escorts us through the Red Sea of death to the serene sea of glass in heaven. In the words of Søren Kierkegaard, “[T]he tyrant dies and his rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins.”

—Israel imagined a military messiah; they got a martyr messiah. And in Revelation 5, John hears about a lion but sees a lamb. Jesus is both: his lamblike sacrifice ensured his lionlike victory. It is the same for us. We follow the lamb wherever he goes, even unto death—but also beyond it.

—Jesus doesn’t conquer violence by reciprocating it. Rather, he absorbs the world’s bloodlust, then rises above it. God’s weakness overcomes man’s strength. Why, then, should we suppose that it’s different for the church? Will we win the world differently than Jesus did—through our own strength and glory? Do we brandish the world’s weapons to muscle it into conformity? Or do we bear the Lamb’s cross? Revelation 2-3 seems to answer this for us. Every church suffers a rebuke except for the weakest: one had only a little money (Smyrna), the other had only a little strength (Philadelphia). The kingdom of man has plenty of strength and glory to go around. It won’t last. Faithfulness endures; it wins the world.

26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 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.’

—The heavenly figure interprets the divine court scene from earlier. The fourth beast will “be consumed and destroyed to the end.” We already observed the beast’s destruction in 7:11. Despite the sense of “finality” that accompanies words like “consumed and destroyed to the end”, 7:12 appears to portray beastly life as “prolonged” even after losing dominion. A true “final judgment” would presumably annihilate all devouring kings and kingdoms.

—At the same time, we cannot easily dismiss the sense of finality associated with Daniel’s words. In my estimation, the tension between short- and long-term fulfillment should not be resolved by eliminating one or the other but by holding onto both. Christ inaugurated judgment during the reign of the fourth beast (Rome); he consummates that judgment at the end of the age. Aspects of Daniel’s prophecy can apply to short- or long-term fulfillment, or even both—typologically—in a rippling realization that grows until the end.

—My identification of the fourth beast as Rome can create problems for the both/and view of short- and long-term fulfillment. In the short-term, a reasonable case can be made that Jesus judged Caesar and Rome by revoking the claim of universal dominion and receiving that for himself—and the saints—in his ascension. But if there is simultaneously a long-term fulfillment, in what sense could “Rome” be finally judged at the Second Coming? By then, the Roman empire will have been long gone! It’s already gone—right?

- Many futurists address this problem by linking the fourth beast’s final judgment to a “revived Roman empire” just before the end. I have already explained why I do not share that expectation. I think “Rome” is finally destroyed when Jesus returns to judge the beastly kingdom of man that Rome embodied. John’s inspired commentary in Revelation 13 suggests that Rome’s beastly traits—along with those of the other three beasts—are gathered into one blended, composite beast: the life-devouring kingdom of man. When Jesus returns to judge the kingdom of man—in whichever iterations exist—each historical kingdom is judged with it. They all belong to the same beastly kingdom of man. Rome’s DNA never dies—until the very end.
- This reading coheres with v. 27. When the fourth beast is destroyed, the heavenly being says the saints will inherit more than the “fourth kingdom” (7:23). Rather, **“the kingdoms under the whole heaven**

shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High" (7:27). Not just one kingdom. Not just the fourth kingdom. When the fourth kingdom dies, ALL the kingdoms are handed over to the saints. Furthermore, the heavenly being refers to these plural "kingdoms" as a singular "kingdom" inside the same verse. All the kingdoms of the world are really just one: the kingdom of man. Jesus judges man's kingdom—in every historical iteration—at his return.

- A secondary sense in which Rome is not finally judged until Christ returns can be derived from Matthew 11:22-24: *"But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."*
- Scripture proclaims the historical judgments of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, yet Jesus says they will still face final judgment. Likewise, Jesus inaugurated his judgment on Rome (and, in effect, the world) through his first coming. But that judgment is consummated at his second coming. Then he will not just revoke the claims of earthly empires or bring temporal judgments upon them. He will judge the kingdom of man eschatologically: its beastly characteristics will no longer transmit to the next empire in line. When Jesus returns, "the kingdom of the world" will become "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15).

—It's fascinating that we don't just rule alongside Jesus in the nebulous "kingdom of God." Alongside the Son of Man, we actually receive "the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven." The greatness of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and apparently all the "kingdoms under the whole heaven"—belongs to the saints.

—Therefore, we don't just inherit a spiritual kingdom but a terrestrial one. When Jesus returns, and heaven and earth are finally united, all earthly dominion will be brought under the kingdom of God. The beastly kingdom of man will be destroyed, while its dominion and glory are transferred to the Son of Man and his saints.

28 "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."

—"Here is the end of the matter": the vision and its interpretation are complete.

—When Daniel's visions finished, he was "anxious" and "alarmed" (7:15). After a celestial being told him the interpretation (7:17-18, 23-27), he becomes "greatly alarmed", so much that his "color is changed" (7:28).

—Having the interpretation doesn't always make it easier. Sometimes it feels harder.

—"I kept the matter in my heart": The revelation is finished; the meditation is not. Like the mother of Jesus, Daniel ponders these strange revelations in his heart.



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