

Daniel 7:15-28

Who Is The Antichrist?

Log onto the internet and do a search for the word *antichrist* and you find he's a pretty popular fellow. 59,325 web pages refer to antichrist. Some are biblical, some are mockery, some are ridiculous speculation, but all recognize that the Bible says something about one who is opposes God as Satan's representative on earth.

Who is this antichrist and what does the Bible actually say regarding him?

Turn to Daniel 7 pg 865

Daniel the prophet lived in Babylon in the 6th century BC. He was a godly Jewish man who had been taken from his home in Jerusalem when he was just a teenager and brought to serve in the court of Nebuchadnezzar the king.

As you read through the book of Daniel you find that in spite of the pressures he faced Daniel remained faithful to God. The first 6 chapters of Daniel gave Daniel's personal story. The last 6 chapters are a prophetic overview of the end of the age.

Chapter 7 falls into two major parts. Verses 1-14 contain a vision which God gave to Daniel. Verses 15-28 contain the divine interpretation of this vision.

Our study has brought us to the divine interpretation.

God showed Daniel a vision of 4 beasts. A lion with wings, a bear that devours, a leopard with 4 heads, and a fourth terrible beast. The fourth beast is really the focus of this chapter. The fourth beast is a final world kingdom that is ultimately destroyed by the return of Jesus Christ.

Having seen this disturbing vision, Daniel makes a request. **Read vs 15 & 16**

I believe that during this age God isn't speaking through dreams and visions. That ceased when He completed the canon of Scripture. When God used John to write the Book of Revelation His complete and authoritative message to us was accomplished. We now have what we need.

I hear people claiming visions from God, angelic messages. My question is, where are the reactions like people in the Bible so often had?

Daniel's response to the vision was far from assuring or calming. He was grieved and troubled. Now you might say that was just because he didn't have the interpretation yet. In part that's true. But look at his reaction after God explains the whole thing to him. **Read vs 28**

This passage doesn't detail us the reason for Daniel's distress, but we can guess at it. I would think Daniel was grieved that man's sin would take such a terrible toll on earth. He was alarmed by the vision of the beasts, especially the last beast and its blasphemous little horn. Even when he knew that all these events were planned and permitted by God, it did not give him any satisfaction.

Daniel didn't gloat over the world's fate, but he grieved for it. It is a fact that "anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." If we've trusted Christ as Savior we should rejoice that we're going to heaven, but that knowledge of the reality of Judgment should cause us to try all the harder to win others to Christ.

Well the vision that Daniel had was what we might call an "interactive vision." Daniel was not only present in the vision but was able to approach one standing by to ask the meaning of what he saw. It seems safe to assume the interpreter was probably an angelic being. That's what we'll find in a similar situation when we get to chapter 8.

The interpretation follows what we've seen the past two weeks.

Read 17-18

Four kingdoms rise up, out of what we saw at the beginning of this chapter is the Mediterranean sea area. these are future kingdoms from Daniel's time. But Daniel's real interest is in the 4th beast.

Look at the characteristics of this 4th beast. **Read vs 19-25**

The fourth power will dominate and crush all opposition. The leader will rise to the top of a confederation of ten kings. He will speak pompous words. He will

persecute believers. He will dominate them for what's referred to as time, times, and a half time. And he will be overthrown and judged at the coming of the "Ancient of Days."

In the book of Revelation John sees a vision the sheds even more light on Daniel's prophecy. **Turn to Rev 13 pg 1183**

Follow along as I read this chapter (it's just 18 verses long) and see how it expands upon Daniel 7.

Read 1-2

We start of with the lion , bear, and leopard, but now they're part of the final beast that Daniel saw. The authority of the beast comes from the dragon. In Revelation 12 the dragon is identified as "that old serpent the Devil."

The prophetic Scriptures reveal that God has a program which will be culminated by the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to redeem creation and to establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace.

This same Word tells us that Satan also has a program for the world which will be culminated by the advent of this man, called the Antichrist or the little horn, or the beast. Satan is the master counterfeiter. He knows that sinful people are looking for a person and a program in which they can put their trust. It is Satan's goal to turn away man's trust from God and to put it in man.

Read vs 3

The antichrist suffers what appears to be a mortal wound but is raised from the dead.

This is a miracle. And look what happens, **Verse 4**

It's the dragon that gives authority to the beast. And all the world eventually worships the dragon and the beast. Since the garden of Eden Satan's goal has been to draw worship away from God and to himself. In the Antichrist and his rule Satan seem to be finally accomplishing his goal.

Read vs 5-7

As we'll see in Daniel 9 the antichrist actually comes on the scene bringing peace. For some strange reason we thought that the fall of the Soviet Union would lead to world peace. The cold war ended but that just put the spotlight on the hundreds of hot spots all over the globe.

The Antichrist will come with what appear to be solutions to every world crisis including the Middle East. As much as President Clinton wants to leave a legacy of peace in the Middle East he won't do it. But the antichrist will. At least for a time. But that time of peace will end. He will begin a reign of terror against Israel, anyone who opposes him, and also against Christians.

He makes war with the saints and he's given that ability for 42 months. Forty-two months is 3.5 years. Daniel 7 called that "a time and times and half a time."

Read 8-10

The people of the world will be so taken in by this charismatic, world leader that they will willingly worship him.

Read 11-14

We call this second beast "The False Prophet." Empowered by Satan himself the false prophet does signs and wonders. How many times have you heard someone say, "If God would just do a miracle, then I could believe in Him." This is Satan's answer and millions will be deceived.

Reads vs 15-18

Under this final phase of the kingdom of the beast he'll control everything. You know how you can shop at the store with your credit or debit cards? When that's all you can use, and you can no longer use cash, the government could just remove you from the database and you would be prohibited from buying your groceries. The antichrist will control all.

What's his number? 666. What does that mean? I can't say for sure, but here's my guess. In the Bible you'll find certain numbers have significance. The number 6 is the number of man. 666 then would be Satan's emphasis; man, man, man. Not father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We don't need God. All we need is human potential.

It's like the antichrist will be the ideal man *without God*. He will be all that man would be if it weren't for the providential grace of God.

Turn with me to Romans 3 Pg 1087 This is a description of the natural man. This is humanity with the restraining grace of God.

Read 10-18

The antichrist will be the living embodiment of human depravity left unchecked.

If all the world had to look forward to was the reign of the antichrist the outlook would be bleak.

But remember the biblical principle, *God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

Back to Daniel 7:26 Read vs 26 & 27

The antichrist will get exactly what he deserves. His stay on the mountain peak of human history will only be a few years. Then the court of heaven will be seated and they shall take away his dominion.

How will that happen? II Thess 2:8-10; *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

Turn back to the Book of Revelation one last time. Rev 19 pg 1187
Read vs 11-21

It won't be much of a contest--a sinful, human monarch against the immortal, incorruptible God-Man, Jesus Christ. The confrontation takes place in the plain of Megiddo outside of Jerusalem. This is the real "Earth the Final Conflict." It's the battle of Armageddon. Here the career of the Antichrist will end. He will sink into oblivion just like other dictators before him. Both he and the false prophet will be seized and cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, where they will be tormented day and night forever. They will be the first two human beings to inhabit the lake of fire. The punishment is befitting to the crime.

Sin against an infinite, eternal God requires an infinite amount of time to carry out the sentence of judgment. The shame is that men and women in that day will willingly follow the Antichrist to the eternal damnation of their souls.

All of this raises some questions for me. And I'd imagine for you too.

#1 Can we identify the antichrist? Trying to identify the antichrist is what David Jeremiah calls, "one of the most popular indoor sports with theologians." They've tried starting with the Roman emperors though most of the Popes and political figures down through the ages. Everybody from Hitler to Henry Kissinger has made the list. There's even a web site with a picture of Al Gore and Bill Bradley debating on CNN with a caption that reads: *Some people see an antichrist goats head between Gore and Bradley in this photo. Others see a large image of the Devil's face filling the background.*

The truth of the matter is we don't have the slightest idea who the antichrist will be. It's utter foolishness to try and speculate. I believe the true antichrist will turn out be the last person anyone would have expected. We don't know who he is but we do know is character. The Bible calls him titles like *The Son of Perdition, The Wicked One, The Beast, The Man of Sin, The Little Horn, The Mystery of Lawlessness, and The King of Fierce Countenance.*

#2 When will all this take place? When will the antichrist take over? The Bible doesn't give dates for these prophetic events. My advice to you is watch out for anyone who sets dates. We know this much: Daniel's prophecies concern what's called "the time of the end."

As I read God's prophetic timeline I see the next event to happen is the rapture. I Thessalonians 4 describes the rapture this way: *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*

That catching away of believers marks the start of the 7 yr. tribulation period and the time when the antichrist will begin his rapid rise to power.

Now, the rapture could take place at any time. There's no prophecy left to be fulfilled before it happens. That means that the antichrist could be alive today.

When will all this take place? The biblical answer is it could happen at any time. That's why we're told to be ready.

Bob Deffinbaugh adds these thoughts: Prophecy is necessary because God has chosen to settle His accounts with men slowly. God is eternal, and so is His plan for all creation. God is in no hurry to fulfill His promises, whether His promise of the eternal kingdom for believers or the promise of eternal destruction and judgment for unbelievers. Prophecy is necessary then so that men are reassured of divine deliverance and blessing, as well as divine judgment. Through the ages, the saints have learned that they must wait for the promises of God to be fulfilled and that this may not happen in their lifetime. God may choose to delay judgment on the wicked until their sin reaches full bloom;

the possession of the land of Canaan would not happen in Abraham's lifetime, but more than 400 years later after the suffering of the people of God. God also allows the wicked to persist and even to prosper, so that those whom He has chosen might be saved. God's plan and program are carried out on His schedule, not ours. Prophecy becomes necessary from time to time to remind men of those things God has planned for the future which He will surely fulfill.

#3 Why has God given so much prophecy of future things? What's the purpose for Christians down through the centuries? What purpose does it serve for us if we're not even going to be here when it all takes place?

Let me give you a couple of things:

a) Prophecy teaches us that suffering is to be expected by God's people, before they enter into the kingdom of God. Daniel 7 indicates in the clearest way that prior to the coming of the kingdom of God the saints will suffer at the hand of the antichrist and even be overpowered by him. Wherever I see the Scriptures speak of the coming kingdom of God, I find suffering closely associated with it. Before the Israelites were delivered out of Egypt and brought into the land of Canaan, they suffered at the hands of the Egyptians. Our deliverance from the power of sin and the penalty of death has been accomplished by our Lord Jesus, who suffered in our place. Those who will reign with Christ are those who have suffered. Suffering is an inseparable part of the process which leads to glory. It was that way for our Lord, and so it will be for us.

b) Prophecy is not written as hype but revealed to produce the hope of glory and endurance in our present problems and tribulation. Prophecy is not a pep rally, which generates a great burst of short-term enthusiasm but doesn't inspire faith and endurance in the midst of suffering. Prophecy isn't written to make us happy or to feel good. Daniel's response is testimony to that reality.

c) Prophecy is written to sober us. Prophecy doesn't only speak about the joys and glories of God's kingdom to come but of the suffering and tribulation which precedes the eternal blessings of the kingdom of God. In the context of the coming of His kingdom and the suffering and trials which precede it, soberness is a vitally important quality which prophecy promotes:

Listen to 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (1 Peter 1:13). But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. (1 Peter 4:7).

d) Prophecy isn't revealed to give us the particulars of things to come, but to change our perspective. Prophecy is necessary because God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways. We could never predict the goals God has determined, nor the means He has ordained for history to reach them. Prophecy reveals that which we would not and could not expect apart from divine revelation.

See in God's economy, things are not what they appear to be. We don't walk by sight, but by faith. We don't act on what we see so much as on what God has said. Abraham and Sarah were elderly and childless. Humanly speaking, it was

impossible for them to have a child. And yet God said they would. And they did! Abraham had to believe and behave on the basis of God's promises, rather than on the basis of his perception.

As the boasting horn of Daniel 7 seems to be getting away with his blasphemies and his oppression of the saints, it seems to him he can do whatever he wishes, including the changing of times and law. As the wicked prosper in their sin, it seems as though they can continue in sin without any fear of divine judgment. Their perception is wrong. Suddenly and without warning their day of destruction will come upon them. When that day comes for them, it is too late to repent.

As the saints suffer at the hands of the wicked, it may appear all hope is lost. It may seem to them that their defeat is certain and that their hopes of entering into the eternal kingdom are lost.

Things are not as they appear to be! When we expect it least, the Lord will return, the wicked will be punished, and the kingdom of God established forever.

Think about this. People often struggle to explain the "gaps" in Old Testament prophecy. One of those gaps is found in Daniel 7. The coming of the Son of Man is represented as one coming, and not two. We know that Jesus came the first time to die for sin and that He will come again to subdue His enemies and establish His kingdom. Now obviously the Old Testament prophet couldn't see the distance between the first and the second coming of our Lord, just like you can't see the distance between two mountains, when your far away.

But really, if you think about it, the "gap" in the prophecies of the Old Testament isn't the prophet's problem; it is ours. The Old Testament prophet did not see the gap because he viewed the coming of Christ as God does. From an eternal perspective, the coming of Christ and His kingdom is but one coming. Jesus' first coming happened over 2000 years ago. If, in God's eyes, a day is as 1,000 years and 1,000 years as a day (2 Peter 3:8), then the coming of our Lord was a few days ago.

We see a gap—an almost insurmountable gap—between suffering and glory; God doesn't. Suffering and glory are a part of one work. Christ's suffering and glory are a part of one coming. Prophecy helps us because it allows us to see

things from the bigger and broader perspective—from God’s perspective—so that when we suffer, we know it’s just a part of the process of getting to glory.

Think about the birth of a child. The process of having a baby involves the pains of childbirth. They are far from pleasant but an unavoidable part of the process. The woman endures pain in the view of the final outcome of the process. When the child is born, the pains of suffering are quickly lost in the joys of seeing a new life. Child-bearing is a process which involves suffering and glory. Salvation is a process involving suffering—and then glory.

So prophecy is revealed to us to change our perspective, to urge us to see things as God sees them rather than as they appear to the human eye. We are not to base our thinking and actions on circumstances, but on the Scriptures. What God says, He will do. History has shown this to be true in the past, and prophecy assures us that it will be true in the future.

So let’s listen then, and be sober, enduring the sufferings and trials sent our way, looking expectantly and certainly for His kingdom to come. And knowing that all this will happen because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

In His first coming He suffered for sinners. He stood in our place as our perfect substitute. The sacrifice for our sin. He rose from the dead the victor. And on the basis of His sufferings we can be forgiven of our sins.

Daniel said the saints of the most high will possess the kingdom. Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."