

Dr. Wendy L. Widder, Daniel, Session 10, Daniel 7, God's Superior King and Eternal Kingdom

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This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 10, Daniel 7, God's Superior King and Eternal Kingdom.

For this lecture we are in Daniel 7 and I've titled Daniel 7, God's Superior King and His Eternal Kingdom.

In terms of where we are in the book of Daniel, we have reached the end, the last chapter in our Aramaic. So you remember we started with chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of this statue. Chapter three, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced the fiery furnace. Chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of a magnificent tree, and he's ultimately judged for his pride.

In chapter five, Belshazzar sees the handwriting on the wall, and the message to him is that he's going to be judged by God, which he is immediately, and his kingdom goes to Darius, who shows up in chapter six, where Daniel faces the lions on account of his faithfulness to God. In chapter seven, Daniel has a vision in which he sees beasts rising out of this tumultuous, chaotic sea, and then he has a vision of this eternal kingdom that God has. So, in terms of our structure, chapter two and chapter four are similar.

They both are talking about four human kingdoms, four earthly kingdoms, and then the fifth eternal kingdom of God, which will surpass them all, even destroy them all, and then endure forever. In the chronology of this chapter, we're backing up, actually. So according to our timeline, we started in the third year of Jehoiakim, which was early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

Then we were in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar. He built a statue in chapter three, we don't know when. Chapter four is near the end of Nebuchadnezzar's career.

Chapter five takes us to Belshazzar in the fall of Babylon in 539. Chapter six is 539-ish, as Darius the Mede is king, probably early in his career. Chapter seven, we're going back.

We're now in the first year of Belshazzar. Chapter seven is really pivotal, actually almost literally pivotal, in the book of Daniel. So, you're familiar with this chiasmic structure and how Daniel seven is part of it.

So, it is Aramaic, and it is tied to chapter two thematically, sort of holds this whole thing together. But Daniel seven is also a change in genre. So, we shift here from the narrative, from the stories that we've been looking at for six chapters, and now starting with chapter seven, we're going to be looking at apocalyptic visions.

So, Daniel seven holds the first part of the book together, but it's really linked to the second part in its genre. And it actually casts a vision that the other visions will fill out and fill in some details. So, it's actually also what I consider to be the heart and the hinge of the book.

So, in Daniel seven, we will see this cosmic view of God's kingdom. And in the middle of this view that we get, we have this astounding view of the throne room. And along with seeing this throne room, we see one like the son of man receive the kingdom, and the saints will rule forever over this eternal kingdom.

It's this glorious picture, this encouragement for people who had been oppressed that there was a reward ahead, that this glorious inheritance was going to be theirs. Once we get out of chapter seven, the encouragement is much more scant. It's not nearly as glorious as chapter seven.

Chapter seven is fabulous in terms of the vision of encouragement that it casts. And if you take that encouragement, it can get you through the rest of the book. You keep that long vision of this eternal reward, this inheritance of the saints, this glorious kingdom of God.

So, chapter seven is pretty spectacular and pretty important in the book. It's actually the chapter that keeps people from neatly dividing the book. You could try to divide it by genre, but chapter seven connects you to language.

If you try to divide it by language, chapter seven is going to connect you back to the apocalyptic. So you cannot take the book apart. Chapter seven holds it together.

And I think that's appropriate given the vision that it portrays and the hope and encouragement that it casts. So, let's talk a little bit about the kind of literature that it is. Chapter seven is apocalyptic literature.

Apocalyptic literature is actually part of a larger group or a larger kind of literature called visionary literature. In visionary literature, you have a kind of writing in which the author or the writer sees things and pictures things at the time of the writing that exist in their imagination or what they're seeing but not yet in empirical reality. That definition largely comes from Leland Ryken.

He's got a great book on how to read the Bible as literature and get more out of it. So, a lot of my thoughts here about this visionary literature and how to approach it

come from his resource. So, the visions themselves might depict things that will literally happen, but they do it symbolically.

So even though they're portraying things that might actually happen, you have to sort through the symbolism to figure out what those things are. So, they might depict literal events, but the symbolic descriptions don't necessarily represent those events literally. So, under this umbrella of visionary literature, if you want to think of it that way, we have prophetic literature, or just prophecy, I'll say, and we have apocalyptic.

They share things in common, but they're not the same. They're not simply interchangeable. We'll come back to some of these differences in a second.

Visionary literature offers several different kinds of messages, depending on the particular purpose of the author. It often gives encouragement to oppressed people, or it might warn an oppressor that punishment is coming. So it can either be speaking to the oppressed, warning the oppressor, or, in the middle of all that, calling to faith those who might be wavering between God's truth and human wisdom.

When we talk about apocalyptic literature, it is easy for me to say that there are some common characteristics that help us identify it when we see it. And these things that I'm going to talk about don't have to all be present in any one piece of literature. What scholars tend to look for is a cluster of symbols, a cluster of characteristics.

So, several of these traits are evident in a piece of literature. So, the first thing, the easiest one, is a lot of symbolism. It's probably the hardest thing about apocalyptic literature is trying to deal with the symbolism.

Also, very common in this kind of literature are visions and otherworldly journeys. So, your seer, your person who's seen the vision, might be on a journey in some other world. And they'll often have a supernatural or an angelic interpreter helping them understand the things that they're seeing.

And often, the visionary, the seer, is a famous, respected person from the distant past, like Abraham or Enoch or one of the patriarchs. And that name will be taken by the person seen, and they will use that as the name under which they write. So it's pseudonymous.

Did I say that right? I think so. It's an anonymous author. They take a different name, a fake name, so to speak, and apply it to the vision that they're seeing.

The reason they do that is because they might be a nobody, but they're drawing on this name that people respect and a tradition that's respected with that name to

communicate the vision that they've had. The accounts will often involve persecution of the righteous, cosmic destruction, final judgment, the destruction of the world, and then often a recreation. How can we tell the difference between these two kinds of literature? There are several things that are characteristic of one and not the other.

So, in prophecy, something we very often see is the statement, thus saith the Lord, or thus says the Lord, and then the prophet says what the Lord has told him to say. You don't really see that so much in apocalyptic literature. What you see or you hear is revelation that's given through visions.

So, you just get the vision. You don't have it prefaced by thus, says the Lord. It's a vision report.

In prophecy, they will often be associated with real-time, with real people in their real-time. So, Isaiah was prophesying to people when Isaiah, the real person, lived. In apocalyptic literature, as I just said, sometimes they will draw on names of respected people from the past.

So, it's not a real person in their present time. That's common in apocalyptic literature. In prophecy, prophets are generally speaking to their own immediate situation.

They're speaking to things that their people are encountering at that time, and they're speaking God's encouragement for the future. There could also be future fulfillment to what they're saying, but they're addressing an issue that their people are facing at that time. With apocalyptic literature, you sometimes will have a person who is a prophet, who is a prophet.

You have this after-the-fact prophecy, where the ex-eventu prophecy. So, the prophet, this name from the past, is telling history as if it's a prophecy. It's things the audience probably already knows, and then it projects a bit into the future with the intention of encouraging people by seeing God's hand in the past.

With that encouragement, they can hope and rest on the fact that he will continue to work in the future. Symbolism, again, is very extensive in apocalyptic. Prophecy does use symbolism, but not nearly to the same extent.

Another fairly significant difference is that in prophecy, there is the awareness that the world does not meet God's ideal at this point. It's flawed. It's broken.

It's sinful. But he's ultimately going to transform it. He's going to make things new.

He's going to fix it. For apocalyptic literature, things are so bad that only wiping the slate clean and totally starting over. Cosmic catastrophe that's the only way to fix it.

The last thing about apocalyptic literature and prophecy that I want to highlight is that one of the primary goals of prophecy was to call the people to repent. So, you're sinning. Repent.

If you repent, judgment could be averted. If you're not going to repent, judgment is coming. But after judgment, there's restoration.

That's a repeated theme throughout the Old Testament prophets. Apocalyptic tends to have a more deterministic perspective. So, we'll see this even in Daniel, where you have fixed periods of time in history.

This is almost determinism, and this is how God has set things out. And we are almost at the last one. So, God's just about to act cosmically and fix things.

So well, I think that's enough on apocalyptic literature. Let's jump into Chapter 7. All right, let me start with the qualifier. So, when people read Daniel 7, there's often a lot of interest expressed in the identity of the four kingdoms represented by the four beasts.

Same with Chapter 2. And I said when we were in Chapter 2 that I was going to put a lot of that off to Chapter 7, which I am. But today, in this particular lecture, I'm going to put it off until one more lecture. And I'm going to combine 7 and 8 and talk about all three of those chapters, 2, 7, and 8, together.

So, we'll get there. But what I care most about, at least in this lecture, is what the chapter and the text care about. And what the text cares about is not the identity of the kingdoms.

What the text cares about is very different. There's a different emphasis. It doesn't mean we shouldn't care at all about them.

I do care about them. It's helpful when you're interpreting. But that's not the emphasis of the chapter.

So, we're going to start with the text itself. We're going to look at the things that it emphasizes. After that, in the lecture or two, we will talk about the identity of the kingdoms again.

One more explanatory note: I organized my outline of this chapter a bit differently than a lot of commentaries do. I've structured it based on an article in which a New Testament scholar analyzed the book of Revelation, which is clearly apocalyptic.

And he structured it according to some key literary features that he identified. So, I'm going to use some of his language to help us structure the book of Daniel also. And some of that language, one of the things I will talk about is a space-time referent.

So, we will hear when and where something is happening. We will also have a series of formulaic statements that actually help us organize the structure of the vision. So, things like, behold, or I saw, or I was looking, and I saw.

There are several of those throughout these visions that I will use to organize my outline. One phrase I want to acquaint you with is a vision block. So, chapter seven is a vision, but it's separated into three vision blocks, three large chunks that are each introduced by a very similar phrase.

Within these major sections, there are several minor sections. So, vision elements, they might be called, or an individual vision. So, I have three major sections, three vision blocks.

Within each of those are several visionary elements or individual visions. And again, it's based on the structure of the text and the literary features that are there. So, my three blocks, just to help you sort of track with where we're going, if the reference is right, one through six.

This is verses one through six. And then verses seven through twelve. And then thirteen through whatever the last one is.

Twenty-eight. Each of these starts with a pretty long introductory statement, which is the same one. That statement is, I was looking at my visions at night, and then you get the visionary block.

I was looking in my visions in the night, and then you get the block. I was looking in my visions in the night, and you get the block. All right, so I'm going to read them block by block, and we'll go through each block.

So, the first vision block verses one through six, is what I've called the vision of the three beasts. All right, Daniel 7, one through six. 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 eagle's 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." All right, so you probably heard several individual visions, some key words in there.

Behold, I looked and behold. The first one is in verse two. And there he says, beasts rising from the sea.

And then specifically he says the first beast was like a lion. And the second one was verse four. And he sees the transformation of the lion.

And then the next one is verse five, and that's the second beast, which is a bear-like creature. And the last one is in six, and that's the third beast, which is the leopard-like creature. But at the beginning of this is verse one, which is our space-time referent.

It gives us the time and the place, and where are we? First of all, notice we're a third-person narrator talking right now, right? Daniel saw a dream. So, in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. So, we've gone back in chronology.

We have a disrupted chronology here. The literal year of this, if we take it literally, and I'm not sure if it's meant literally, is 553 BC. That's the first year of Belshazzar.

If it's meant to mean something more like early or at the beginning of the reign of, well, we're still probably close to 553. It's really common in visions, by the way, to have these date formulas and the space-time referent just to orient the reader to where the seer is. And in Daniel, these date formulas also link the visions back to the narrative chapters.

So, they ground them in that chronology that you're already sort of familiar with. These visions aren't just out there as some separate part of the book. They're connected to stories and characters that you've already met.

And in this case, it's Belshazzar. Both this vision and the next one in chapter 8 are dated to Belshazzar's reign. And I've spent a lot of time wondering why that is.

Why do we care that this is in the reign of Belshazzar? Why did he get these visions now and not during the reign of St. Nebuchadnezzar? Why doesn't the narrator bother to tell us that anyway? I think part of the reason is Belshazzar is the book's first glimpse at this defiant, blasphemous king. And when we were in chapter 5, I

suggested to you that he's a prototype for these even worse kings who will come. In Daniel 7, we get a vision of one of those worse kings to come.

So, I think by evoking Belshazzar's memory here, we are almost creating this ominous sense of, oh, Belshazzar, nothing good can come during Belshazzar's reign. We know what he was like. He was arrogant.

He shook his fist at God. And those are the very things that these visions are going to show in amplified form. Ernest Lucas, who wrote the Apollos commentary I had here the other day, calls Belshazzar a pale foreshadowing of the kings that appear in Daniel's visions.

And I think that's a helpful way to think of it. All right, so in this first individual vision in verse 2, he sees four beasts rising out of the sea, rising out of a tumultuous sea. And the winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

Four could be literal. It's entirely possible. And he describes four literal beasts, right? But it could also be a sense of totality like it is with the four winds.

So, he says the four winds are stirring up the great sea. Well, four winds? What he means is wind from every direction is swirling around and stirring up the sea. So he does see four beasts, but when we get to the interpretation, I believe those beasts have historical references, but I think there might be more, and that this is a totality.

The Great Sea in the Bible is typically understood to refer to the Mediterranean Sea. I think here it probably refers more likely to the great mythological sea. That's this primeval chaos, this disorder that needs to be controlled.

It's a threat to the order of creation, and only the power of the gods in ancient mythology can control the sea. We get hints of that in Genesis 1, where the spirit of God is hovering over the face of the waters. What God does in chapter 1 is bring order to this chaos; to this watery mess of chaos, he brings order to it.

Other ancient Near Eastern cultures have their own creation stories and creation myths for them, and they typically involve this chaotic primeval sea. So, in the Enuma Elish, which is the Babylonian myth, we have the god Marduk, who fights against the sea goddess Tiamat, and he's fighting for rulership of the gods and kingship over the gods. In the Ugaritic myth of creation, they have a cloud-riding god whose name is Bael, and Bael defeats the sea god, and by defeating the sea god, he earns the right to kingship over the gods.

I can tell you that in ancient Near Eastern thinking, this great primeval sea is foreboding. It's ominous. Nothing good can come out of a scene that has the primeval sea.

And I think this is true in Daniel's vision too. When he sees this tumultuous sea, that's ominous. And then what comes out of the sea is also not very comforting.

Four beasts arise, and he describes three. The first three he describes as being like something else. So, this is not exactly a lion that he sees. It's not exactly a bear.

It's not exactly a leopard. It's something like a lion, like a bear, like a shepherd, or, sorry, a leopard. Yet, each one of them has features that clearly make them un-lion-like, un-bear-like, and un-leopard-like.

The lion has wings like an eagle. The bear is kind of hunched over. We're not exactly sure what the language means about it being raised up on one side.

It's got ribs hanging out of its mouth, and it's kind of mutant-looking. The leopard has four heads. Well, that's not a normal leopard.

And it's got wings. So that's what he sees in his first vision. Then, in the second series of visions, I'll be here.

Okay, I just covered this one. It's a lot of talking just to cover that one. Verse 4 shows the transformation of this first beast.

It's changed from being this lion-like creature into a creature that's really more human than animal. Rather than being down on all fours, it's standing on two feet. It has a human heart.

And you get this passive verb language describing it. Its wings were plucked. The creature was lifted.

It was set on its feet. A human heart was given to it. It's as if this creature has no control over any of these things.

They're being done to it, such that the beast ultimately becomes something more human than the beast. The bear, a bear-like creature, like I said, is raised up on one side. Maybe it's ready to pounce.

That's what some people think. The ribs in its mouth might represent the fact that it's just slaughtered a couple of creatures and recent exploits. It hasn't quite finished eating yet.

This beast is given permission to act. What I mean by that is it also is being acted on by an outside force. It says, another beast was raised up.

It had three ribs. And it was told, arise, devour much flesh. So, it's given permission to go devour more.

The leopard, four heads, four wings, and it is given dominion. Again, a passive verb describing what happens with this leopard. All of this together is a really eerie scene.

We've got the tumultuous sea. We've got these mutant kinds of creatures rising up out of it. And that is the end of the first vision block. So, we will move to the next one. That one's pretty short.

The second one is verses 7 through 12.

And this one is the fourth beast. After this, I saw in the night visions, or I was looking in my visions at night, and behold, a fourth beast—terrifying, dreadful, and exceedingly strong.

It had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke into pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the other 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 the eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. 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 courts sat in judgment, and the books were open. And 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.

As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. So let me identify the visions we have in this block. There are five of them.

In verse 7, we have the vision of the fourth beast, or a beast unlike the others, it's called. In verse 8, first part of verse 8, we have a little horn. In the second part of verse 8, we get another and behold statement, so another individual vision.

This is the little horn's eyes and mouth. And then the last individual, oh, two more individuals, I can't count. The divine throne room is number 4, and that's verses 9 and 10, and then 11 and 12 are the fate of the four beasts.

So, each of these individual visions is prefaced by, I saw, or and behold, some statement of vision. So, what's going on in this section? This fourth creature is not compared to any other creature. The first three beasts were all compared to something that Daniel recognized.

It's like a lion, like a bear, like a leopard. This one is unlike anything else. He explicitly says, well, he doesn't explicitly say it.

He says it's different from all the other beasts, but all he says of it is it's terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. Apparently, there's nothing in his collection of thoughts that he can compare this beast to. This beast fills him with dread fear and terror.

It's exceedingly strong. That language, given our chiasmic structure here, might help us. Oh, remember we had something here in Nebuchadnezzar's statue that was exceedingly strong, and that was the fourth kingdom.

The iron legs were as strong as iron, obviously. And here we have a beast with iron teeth. Verse 7 says this beast is different, and it seems to be different not only because of the way it looks but also because of what it does, or even that it does anything.

All these beasts, none of them do anything. They all have things done to them. This fourth beast is doing things, and they're not nice things.

It's trampling, it's crushing, it's devouring and breaking things. And it has ten horns. Horns in the Old Testament are symbolic of power, and so this beast has ten horns.

Well, a normal animal would have two horns. So, the fact that this beast has ten horns, which is five times more than a normal beast would have, suggests that it really has extraordinary power. Then he sees a little horn, his next individual vision.

A little horn comes up among the ten horns. So, this is an eleventh horn. This is a short little vision, but it's important because this little horn is actually going to dominate the vision from here on out.

This fourth beast almost fades into the background, and the vision is really concerned with this little horn. It uproots three horns in the process of coming up. And what's more, Daniel says, I saw eyes and a mouth on this little horn.

And this mouth was speaking boastful things or great things. It doesn't tell us what those great things were, but often in the Old Testament, verses about eyes and speech suggest to us that they indicate character. So it might be that this description of this little horn having human eyes and a mouth that doesn't stop might be suggesting its arrogance, which will become explicit later.

This little horn is going to be characterized by arrogance, irreverence, and wickedness. Then Daniel has another individual vision in verse 9, and he sees a throne room. He looks, and he sees thrones being placed and the Ancient of Days taking his seat.

It doesn't tell us where this throne room is. We might naturally think it ought to be in heaven. It's possible it could be on earth.

It just depends on how you want to interpret the context. But what we're probably looking at here is a vision of the divine council. Now, that may not be a familiar concept to you, so let me do a little crash course on divine council truth.

This is a long section. This is basically all of chapter 11, except for the first verse, and the first four verses of chapter 12. I'm going to give this its own little introduction before we actually get to the text, and we'll approach it in much smaller chunks.

So, as the angel makes this revelation, there are basically five areas of prophetic concern or five specific eras that he's going to work through. He's going to talk about Persia. He's going to talk about Greece, who he will refer to as the strong king or a strong king.

He's going to talk about Egypt and Syria, more specifically for words that we might recognize here. That's the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. He's going to talk about Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who will just be called the despicable person, or one version calls him the contemptible person.

And then there's a section that's very much debated and discussed about the king who exalts himself. And when we get to that section, it begins in 1136. It becomes particularly difficult because we've been tracking historical events up to this point, and then it shifts and suddenly we can't find reference that apply in history.

So, there are two ways to approach it. Either Daniel or the prophet got it wrong, or we've transitioned from talking about just Antiochus Epiphanes to launching into the future to talking about a future antichrist. I want to, before we get into this section, revisit the issue of ex-eventu prophecy, because that will become an issue when we get to verse 36.

So, we talked about this much earlier in the course, but I fear I perhaps confused you more than clarified anything, and it's been so long ago that you've undoubtedly forgotten it anyway. So let me try again. So ex-eventu prophecy, or after the event, prophecy, is known in the genre of apocalyptic literature.

I don't think anybody necessarily denies that. The question for a lot of evangelical scholars is whether that genre is, whether that element of apocalyptic literature is at play in the book of Daniel or not. People have different reasons for thinking it's not, but I'll try not to go into all of that.

So, here's how this works. And I'm going to speak about it in terms of the book of Daniel. I'm going to assume the position of those who have the view of ex-eventu prophecy so that I can best explain it.

Ex-eventu prophecy, in the book of Daniel, the claim is that there is a second century anonymous Jew who lives in Palestine during this persecution of Antiochus. And the specific date that they'll give to the writing of this prophecy is 167. So, 167 is when the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes really picks up.

This is when the temple is desecrated, and things just go downhill from there. So, we will put this prophet who we're naming Daniel, even though in this view he is an anonymous second-century Jew who has adopted the name of Daniel. You say, well, why would he do that? Well, here's how the genre works.

So, he's in the middle of a really tumultuous time. His people are being oppressed. Part of the purpose of what he wants to write is to encourage his people to believe that God has control over the course of human history.

And if you remember that, you can be assured that he has control over the course of future history as well. So, the aim is to show God's control over this determined history. He's got it all in his hands.

That's part of what they're trying to accomplish with this. So what he does is go back and pick this highly respected, venerable character from the time of the exile: the real Daniel, the historical Daniel. And that historical Daniel becomes his mouth, or he's going to be the mouthpiece using Daniel's name.

So, this prophecy is spoken in the name of Daniel, but it's being spoken by the synonymous Jew down here in the second century. And what this prophecy that Daniel gives is he recounts the history of time up until, for sure, up until this point. So, he's going to talk about the Persian Empire.

He's going to talk about the Greek Empire. He's going to talk about the Seleucids and Ptolemies as they rise to the scene. And he's going to get all of these prophecies spot on.

Why? Well, because for this guy actually writing it, it's history, right? But he's writing it as if he's Daniel living down here foretelling it, okay? So it's Daniel, the real Daniel, supposedly speaking, but the real voice is this guy. So he gets everything right. In Chapter 11 of this prophecy, we have remarkable details.

I mean, when we go through it, it's like a fill-in-the-blank. You can put historical names in this prophecy, and it's like you're reading a history book. That is really unlike anything else we have in biblical prophecy.

It's just weird. Now, it's not weird in terms of apocalyptic literature and that genre, but it's weird in the Bible, okay? So that means we're not quite sure what to do with it. So, when he gets to this part in history, all the details, I mean, he knows this history really well.

All the details are there. This view will say that this whole genre is actually the reason for this mysterious person, Darius the Mede. This is a side note, okay? This has nothing to do with Chapter 11, per se.

So, what this view will say is because this is ex-eventu prophecy, this real author is talking about ancient history to him, and he got it a little confused. So instead of Cyrus, he said Darius. So he switched those guys because he really didn't know his history that well, which I think is actually really bad.

I mean, even if I held this view, if I don't hold this view, that's just really a rotten view of this man's view of history, okay? I think we can give the biblical authors a little more credit than that to make that big of an error and to make it four times. He calls him Darius the Mede four times. Anyway, that's beside the point.

I get sidetracked. Okay, so he gets this spot on all the way to right about here, and this is 1136. It's right about where we end.

Then, he keeps talking about Antiochus, this king who exalts himself, and he starts saying things that we can't find in the historical record. So, he makes predictions about Antiochus, such as where Antiochus will die. But then the historical record seems to not match up.

So, the theory says, well, yeah, because from this point on, he's actually making predictions. Here, he's just recounting history. Of course, he got it spot on.

Here, he's actually making predictions. Some of them he gets right. Some of them he gets wrong.

So, they allow him error because he's actually making predictions. Okay, so that's the gist of how *ex eventu* works. Some scholars will say, well, then the question becomes, if you're an evangelical or a Christian scholar and you hold this view, then you have to account for how this is got it wrong, how that can be in Scripture.

How do we get it wrong? How do we have a prediction that's wrong? It takes you back to your views of the Bible, what the authority of Scripture means, what inspiration means, and how the use of genres factors into all of that. So, it gets pretty complicated. It takes just some pretty fundamental questions.

But aside from all of that, that's how this view works. So, whether or not this kind of genre would be appropriate for the Bible is a question I'm going to leave you to think through for yourself. Some people have very strong opinions.

It's not the kind of genre God would use. Other people say, well, it's a genre. God can choose to use whatever aspect of literature or kind of writing that he wants to use.

He can do that. So that's the issue. That's *ex eventu* prophecy.

Now back to the prophecy. Verse 11, the kings of Persia. And now I will tell you the truth.

Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them. As soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.

The fact that there are four kings here causes a lot of disagreement about how to number the Persian kings. It seems like the best explanation is to say this is a number of completion. There are three plus one more, which is actually a Hebrew idiom.

There's actually more like a dozen kings here, but all of them. So, this is the kings of Persia. And then in verses three and four, we move on to someone he calls the strong king, which is a Greek king.

So, a mighty, and I'll just say Greek to fill in the blank for you, a mighty Greek king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded. For his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others beside them.

Everyone agrees this strong king, this mighty king is Alexander the Great. He came to power in 336, carried out unprecedented military campaigns to the east, and within ten years, he had marched from Turkey to India, and he had established the largest empire to that point. He defeated Darius III in 330, and he took over the Persian empire.

But then at the peak of his power, he died and left no heir. So, his empire is parceled out. This is history we've been over several times.

The only ones we're going to care about, and the only ones this revelation is going to care about, are Seleucus and Ptolemy, who the prophecy calls the king of the north, that's Seleucus, and the king of the south, that's Ptolemy. So, the kings of the north and the south. Now, this section that I'm launching into here recounts a couple hundred years of history between the Seleucus and the Ptolemies.

If I were to stop and give you all the details, I promise you you'd be glassy-eyed. This very quick part of the vision proper is his concluding words. So that's the structure of the third block.

Let's just go through each section here. So, in verses 13 and 14, he sees this one as a son of man, which simply means it's one who looks like a human. Like a son of man means this is a human-like figure.

Notice that we're back to this comparative language again. The first three beasts were like something else. Here, we have a figure who is like a human being.

And that's a contrast. Beasts, here we have a human. He sees someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.

Whenever we get cloud imagery in the Old Testament, we should pay attention. Sometimes clouds just refer to the billowy things in the sky, referring to a meteorological phenomenon. Sometimes clouds are used figuratively.

They'll talk about the impermanence of something or immensity or impenetrability. It's used as imagery for something else. Most commonly, though, the use of clouds in the Old Testament is related to theophanies or appearances of God.

So about 58 times out of 87, if my source counted correctly, 87 occurrences occur in the context of God's presence. These are especially prevalent in the Pentateuch, the first five books. We have Yahweh's glory cloud above Sinai, above the Tent of Meeting.

We have his presence in the cloud pillar. Then, in the later temple text, we hear about the cloud. The imagery, though, of someone coming on the clouds or someone

coming with the clouds is particularly relevant here in Daniel 7. In ancient Near Eastern literature, someone rides the clouds like a chariot.

They don't just float on the clouds. That's what we think of when we're in the clouds. You float on the clouds.

This is someone riding the clouds like they're a chariot. Baal is the most famous of them. Baal actually has the nickname the cloud rider or rider of the clouds.

And you can see depictions of him atop a cloud with his lightning bolt in his hand because he's in charge of the weather. And he's going to either bless his subjects or not with rain. In the Bible, we also have an image of cloud riding.

Yahweh is the one who rides the clouds. So, in the book of Psalms, he rides the clouds through the heavens. Sometimes he rides the clouds in judgment.

That shows up in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Nahum. Well, what's curious in Daniel's vision is that he's got the throne, right? And on the throne, he's got the Ancient of Days. I know that's a bad throne.

Ancient of Days, Yahweh, right? But he also has someone riding a cloud. There, I just made a billowy cloud. He's got a cloud rider.

But in the Old Testament, someone riding a cloud is Yahweh. Well, how do we do that? We've got Yahweh riding the clouds. We've got Yahweh on the throne.

In Daniel's vision, Yahweh's on the throne. And there's also a cloud with someone riding on it. What Daniel is seeing in this single vision are two Yahweh figures.

He sees the Ancient of Days, and he sees the cloud rider. And this cloud rider receives the right to rule, right? He appears before the throne, and the Ancient of Days gives him the right to rule and gives him the eternal kingdom. Daniel is, strangely enough, seeing two powers in heaven.

He sees the one on the throne, the Ancient of Days, and he sees the cloud rider. He sees a vice-regent, someone given shared power with Yahweh. But it is Yahweh.

How do we explain that? Let me go back over here to this divine council. In typical Ancient Near Eastern divine councils, El is the high god. At least in Ugaritic, this is true.

His vice-regent is Baal. Baal, the cloud rider, is given the right to rule. This is his vice-regent.

So, El and Vice-regent Baal are not the same. They're not on the same level.

El is the high god. Baal is part of the family. What Daniel 7 suggests is that in the Israelite divine council, we have Yahweh, the Ancient of Days, and we have a vice regent given the right to rule who shares his essence.

He's not lower. It's the same language. We expect Yahweh to be the cloud rider.

We have two powers, equal powers, in heaven. Do we have two gods? No. They're both Yahweh.

Well, how can that be? Well, that's the big difference in the Israelite divine council and the Ancient Near Eastern divine council. What I want you to maybe think through here is that this Old Testament concept of the divine council is the perfect structure for moving to the New Testament and understanding the person of Jesus. We would say, well, Jesus is this vice-regent, the one who's given the right to rule.

He receives the kingdom. Yes, he's also of the same essence as the father. This is an astounding picture of Israel's divine council, and it shows the most significant difference between Israel's council and other councils.

This is part of, I think, in my view, what makes Daniel 7 such a powerful text. This human-like figure, who we will come to know much later in the canon, is given dominion and a glorious kingdom forever. But what's more is this kingdom that this son of man figure receives is shared with the saints, and they rule with him forever.

So, there's this incredible relationship that, as I said, just provides the encouragement you need to get through anything else that the book of Daniel might have, this splendid picture of Israel's God and his greatness. This is the figure who will receive the service or the worship of all peoples, nations, and languages. Okay, so that's the end of this first part of that vision.

And then we have this interpretive interlude where Daniel is, whoa, he doesn't know what to do with this. So, he approaches one standing by, probably one of the attendants around the throne, and he asks to know what it all means. And I love the initial interpretation.

Daniel says he asked him for the truth concerning all this. And so, he told me, these four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. And then he moves into talking about the saints.

That's all you get. These four beasts are four great kings. That's it? That's all we get? That's not what this vision cares most about.

This vision cares most about the saints associated with this son of man figure and the inheritance that they receive. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever and ever. That's the initial interpretation.

That's all he gets. And we have a whole lot of questions about these wacky creatures. The angel says there will be four great kings, but the saints of the Most High are going to inherit the kingdom forever and ever.

The saints of the Most High weren't even in the original vision. And here they show up in this initial interpretation. So understandably, Daniel wants to know a little bit more, so he pushes a little further.

I desire to know the truth about specifically this fourth beast. The fourth beast is bothering him because it's different from the rest. It's very terrifying.

And he really almost takes us through what he initially saw of this beast. And he adds a few things. So here we learn that it has claws of bronze that wasn't in the first description.

And he wants to know about that beast. He wants to know about the ten horns, and that little horn, and the three horns, and the eyes, and the mouth. I want to know more about this.

While he wants to know more about this, he seems to see things still happening between this little horn and the saints of the Most High. So that takes us to another vision. While he's asking for information, he sees this little horn making war with the saints and prevailing until the Ancient of Days comes and passes judgment in favor of the saints.

Okay, so let's slow down a little bit. These four great beasts are four kings. And I think we can try to identify four literal kingdoms.

We'll do that in two lectures. I think at this point, maybe it's totality. That's all the angel cares about.

These four great beasts are four kings. And remember, these four beasts grew or arose out of a sea that was swirling from the four winds. So there's totality in this imagery.

The greatest interest to the interpreter is this transfer of sovereignty from those four beastly earthly kingdoms to the Holy Ones of the Most High. And so I think we can assume that the details in the vision, the original visions, are significant. But I think the little information we're given in the interpretation should caution us against

holding to any one view too tightly or assigning too much significance to things that are really secondary in the text.

Let's see. So, he asks for more information specifically about this fourth beast. Then he sees this additional conflict happening.

And then we get another interpretive interlude. So, after he sees this happening, we get some more interpretation. Just a little more here.

We get more information about the fourth beast, which represents a kingdom. And again, this might be symbolic. Notice how the angel repeats it.

He says, As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the others. Using four in apocalyptic literature, according to Greg Beal, who's written a mammoth commentary in the Book of Revelation, he says four might be hinting at the symbolic nature of things here. So four in apocalyptic literature, he says, is a number of completeness, especially connoting something of universal or worldwide scope.

It's the number of cosmic completeness. So, I think while we can talk about who specifically this fourth kingdom identifies, we also need to back away and say, this vision is cosmic. This is not just restricted to four human empires.

We're talking cosmic significance here. There's a universality to this fourth beast. The ten horns, we're told, are ten kings arising from this fourth kingdom.

This could be symbolic. Ten is a common number in apocalyptic literature. History is often divided into ten periods of time.

It could be symbolizing completeness. But again, the horn is a symbol of power. So, we have this beast with extraordinary power.

Then, that eleventh little horn that was troubling Daniel so much. This king is unique. He's going to be different from the earlier kings.

He's going to subdue three kings. And again, we can try to identify who those are, but the angel doesn't tell us. So, I'm not going to get too dogmatic about that.

This little horn, this eleventh king, is going to speak words against the Most High. There's no explanation given for the eyes. But as we noted before, it might just be a suggestion of the arrogance or the wickedness in the behavior of this little horn.

Who are these holy ones? These holy ones are spoken against and that are oppressed. And the holy ones that inherit this kingdom. Who are they? Well, in the

Old Testament, generally, and in Daniel, pretty broadly speaking, and I think even here, holy ones are best understood as heavenly beings.

So, supernatural beings. However, I think the book of Daniel is one of the rare places in the Bible where we have the curtain pulled back. Typically, the Bible is concerned with life on earth.

Your life on earth. God's working through history. God works out his plan on planet Earth.

That's most of the Bible's interest. But every so often, we get this curtain pulled back, and we see that there's a little more than life on earth going on. There's a supernatural world.

We don't get a whole lot of information about it. We get a few glimpses that there's warring going on there. There's fighting.

There are struggles. We'll see more of this in Daniel 10 and 11. We've got cosmic, angelic fights going on.

And I think that we get this idea that things that happen on Earth are mirrored in some way by things that happen in that heavenly realm and vice versa. So, when we talk about something happening to the holy ones, if we want to press the language, I'd say, well, those are angels, or they're divine beings. But whatever conflict is happening with them is reflected on Earth as well.

So, it gets a little dicey, and because the Bible gives us so little information about it, it's not something I talk a lot about because I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell me. We just get little glimpses that there's something going on behind that curtain.

And in the book of Daniel, I think the lines kind of blur between those two realms, such that in this vision, we're not really sure. Are we seeing people? Are we seeing angels? Who's this happening to? But there's a relationship between them. So if the little horn and, say, his heavenly counterparts, whatever sons of God are over that territory, this little horn and his heavenly counterparts are oppressing the holy ones of the highest, that's going to be manifest in heavy oppression of the holy ones' people on earth.

Okay. By the time the interpretation is finished, we have a lot of questions that have not been answered. We're left with this explanation that these beasts are going to be judged, the little horn's going to be judged, and the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the, not the holy ones, but to the people of the holy ones of the Most High.

Now, some translations will say people of the saints of the Most High. Saints is the expression for holy ones throughout the Old Testament. So I think that's another little hint that we have angelic beings and human beings, and there's some relationship between those two that we're not quite sure about.

But in verse 22, it said the holy ones would possess the kingdom. In verse 27, the people of the holy ones will possess the kingdom. There's lots of mystery.

There's lots of mystery in the interpretation and in the vision. There are lots of details unaddressed, and then there are some details interpreted that aren't even in the vision. And I'm okay with mystery.

I'm okay letting the Bible say what it says and asking the questions that I have of it, coming to the best answers I can come to, but then backing away and saying there's a mystery here. I don't know all the answers, and I'm content with that. Daniel concludes by saying, My thoughts greatly alarmed me.

Well, no doubt. He just had a vision of great oppression for the people of the holy ones of the most high. Where is he historically? He's back in Belshazzar's reign.

He's on the verge, really, of restoration. When Cyrus issued his decree in 539, Israel was free and even funded in some ways to go back to the land. Enforced exile is about over.

Surely, the prophet's words about this glorious restoration are about to happen. That's the hope, I'm betting, that Daniel has while he's in exile, this hope of glorious restoration. And then he has this vision that says, Well, you're going to have to wait.

There's still great suffering ahead. When we get to chapter 9, we're really on the verge of restoration, and Gabriel will say, Yeah, that's just a little part. There's a whole lot more to this whole picture.

So hang on, Daniel. Daniel's troubled, but he keeps the matter in his heart. I don't know who he would ask about it anyway, but he's alarmed, and he's troubled by it.

And this sort of reaction is really only going to intensify as his visions continue. So that's the end of vision block 3. It's the end of the whole report. It's the end of the chapter.

What's interesting is that Daniel, who is known to be able to interpret visions, he can't interpret this one. It's a mystery to him. There are worse times ahead for his people, but there's also great comfort in this vision of the throne room and the one like a Son of Man receiving.

There's great comfort in that. And it's also a reminder, I think, for God's people that they're not fighting alone. This war is going on between the Little Horn and the Holy Ones.

Now, they're involved in it, but this is a cosmic struggle. This is not just their fight on earth or their struggle on earth. There's cosmic significance to what they are facing, but it's all under God's control.

And the best news for them is that God's eternal kingdom is ultimately going to triumph. C.L. has a commentary on Daniel, and he summarizes this whole chapter by saying, nothing less than world order is at stake, and the Holy Ones of the Most High, both the celestial and the terrestrial, are together the champions fighting on the side of all that is good. So that is a great comfort for people who face apocalyptic times.

And sometimes, in the culture I live in, I haven't really faced those, which makes apocalyptic literature especially hard to understand because it's not real in my situation. But there are people around the world for whom this literature is very real. Suffering is very real.

And the comfort offered by this encouragement is huge. That's the end of Daniel 7. We'll get back to Daniel 8 next time we meet.

This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 10, Daniel 7, God's Superior King and Eternal Kingdom.