

Daniel Chapter 7:15-28

Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts

The first six chapters of Daniel are autobiographical history. That is, they speak mainly of the story of Daniel personally. The final six chapters of Daniel are not autobiographical history but incredible prophecy, for they deal with future events. At least in Daniel's day, they were future events. From our perspective, many of them have already come to pass.

Why is this chapter so important?

Chapter 7 is one of the great prophecies of the Bible and the key to the entire program of God from Babylon to the second coming of Christ.

Interpreted in this way, the chapter forms a major outline of future events to which additional details are given later in the book of Daniel and in the New Testament, especially in the Revelation. Such a panorama of future events is of great importance to the student of prophecy, as it provides a broad outline to which all other prophetic events may be related.

I would like to make clear that there are other interpretations of Daniel and revelation. There are people who love God who don't believe what I believe, and there are people who love God who do believe what I believe. If you have a different viewpoint, then I encourage you to learn what you can because we are all learning and growing.

As Proverbs 27:17 says: *As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.*

I believe it is healthy to study other points of view apart from my own. As I am studying to prepare, I am learning about the other view points as I go along. I choose not to dwell on or take time to explain the others because it would most likely cause confusion. It's a big enough subject as it is. I think it's best to learn each view individually, and then compare.

I recommend a book by John F. Walvoord, Daniel: the key to prophetic revelation. He does a great job of quoting the main proponents of the other views and discussing them and also comparing them to scripture. It's very helpful and written in a way that is easy to read and understand.

Vision of the Four Beasts

7 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head *while* on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

² Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. ³ And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. ⁴ The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

⁵ "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and *had* three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'

⁶ “After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

⁷ “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

Vision of the Ancient of Days

⁹ “I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment *was* white as snow,
And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool.
His throne *was* a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;

¹⁰ A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.
The court was seated,
And the books were opened.

¹¹ “I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

¹³ “I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, *One* like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.

¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom *the one*
Which shall not be destroyed.

Daniel's Visions Interpreted

¹⁵ “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me. ¹⁶ I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: ¹⁷ ‘Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings *which* arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.’

¹⁹ “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; ²⁰ and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows.

²¹ “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

²³ “Thus he said:

‘The fourth beast shall be
A fourth kingdom on earth,
Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms,
And shall devour the whole earth,
Trample it and break it in pieces.

²⁴ The ten horns *are* ten kings
Who shall arise from this kingdom.
And another shall rise after them;
He shall be different from the first *ones*,
And shall subdue three kings.

²⁵ He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.
Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.

²⁶ ‘But the court shall be seated,
And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy *it* forever.

²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.’

²⁸ “This *is* the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart.”

Last week we saw that verses 9 and 10 point to judgement. It is clear that both the world system, the Antichrist, and unbelievers individually, will eventually face judgement. God is allowing evil to dominate currently, and will do so even more so in the tribulation period, especially the last half. But one day, human government will end. Hallelujah! No more immorality, brutality, corruption, greed, or violence. Jesus will reign supreme and rule the nations with a rod of iron. The lion will lay down with the lamb in a rejuvenated or restored creation/earth. The new heavens and earth will come at the end of the 1,000 year millennial period.

This week we will focus on the angelic interpretation of Daniel’s vision.

Daniel 7:15–18

¹⁵ “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body,

This shows that our **spirit** indeed dwells **within** the **body**. It is true that the spirit is more important than the body (1 Timothy 4:8), but the state of the body generally has an effect on the state of the spirit, and vice versa.

Clarke says that the phrase **my spirit within my body** has the sense of “within its sheath or scabbard.” From this, Clarke says: “Which I think proves, 1. That the human *spirit* is different from the *body*. 2. That it has a proper subsistence independently of the body, which is only its *sheath* for a certain time. 3. That the spirit may exist independently of the body, as the *sword* does independently of its *sheath*.”

¹⁵ ...and the visions of my head troubled me.

¹⁶ I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this...

Daniel was distressed by what He saw. I think that if you and I were given the privilege of seeing the future — all the wars and suffering and the persecution of the saints — without understanding what was going on, then we would be distressed as well.

¹⁶ ...So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

¹⁷ ‘Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings *which* arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.’

In chapter 2, we saw that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was of a huge image of a man with a head of gold, chest of silver, belly of brass, and legs of iron. Man’s perspective of world history and the governments that would come was stately, valuable, impressive. But here in chapter 7, we see God’s perspective of those same empires. They’re not gold, silver, brass, and iron, but beasts.

Why?... they are evil. Corrupt, violent, greedy, immoral, wicked, depraved...

V18 The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom: When the day of the fourth beast is over, then God’s people **receive the kingdom**. Yet we know the Roman Empire is long gone—and it doesn’t seem that the saints have received the kingdom.

i. This is what prompts many to look for either a spiritualised or allegorical interpretation fulfilled in history, or some kind of future restoration of the Roman Empire that will happen in the last days, one that will literally fulfill the prophecy of the ten horns and the little horn as well.

ii. **Shall receive the kingdom:** The saints **receive the kingdom**. God gives them the kingdom at the return of Jesus. They do not gain dominion over all these earthly kingdoms before the return of Jesus. The church is not going to win the world for Jesus and make everything hunky dory or just right so Jesus can then come back. Consider what the scriptures say the world will be like in the days before Jesus comes back.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Also consider:

Luke 18:8 “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

Jesus is saying here that in the last days, there will be very few faithful, fervent Christians.

Daniel 7:19–22

¹⁹ “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; ²⁰ and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows.

²¹ “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favour* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

V21 **Making war against the Saints...** Assuming the church has been raptured prior to the start of the tribulation period, the saints referred to here would be the tribulation saints, those left behind who have believed because of the witness of the nation of Israel. In particular the 2 witnesses and the 144,000 evangelists. We will learn more about Daniel’s prophecies concerning Israel later on. For now we will focus on who the saints are. I will read a series of verses from Revelation that should shed some light on who these particular saints are.

Revelation 6:9-11,

⁹ When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ¹¹ Then a **white robe was given to each of them**; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, **who would be killed as they were**, was completed.

Revelation 7:13-17

¹³ Then one of the elders (represent the rapture church already in heaven) answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ And I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

So he said to me, “**These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne

will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Revelation 12:17

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Why would they be killed? Because according to Rev 13:15-17 the false prophet is given great power. Here is what he does:

¹⁵ He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and **cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed**. ¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

We get more information about this in Revelation 14:9-13:

⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: **‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’**”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them.”

So basically, at the halfway point of the tribulation, the Antichrist or beast or little horn, breaks his treaty with Israel, sets up an image of himself in the temple, and his sidekick, the false prophet who is given the power to do amazing miracles, demands that people worship the Antichrist, aka the little horn or the beast, as God. But angels will be flying around, warning people that if they take the mark of the beast, they will seal their fate. There will be no more chances for them. If you take the mark, you will go to hell when you die, it's that simple. That's why so many will be martyred. People will be forced to make a clearcut choice — accept the mark of the beast and live for up to 3 and a half more years, suffering through plague after plague, and knowing that you will go to hell for eternity. Or, be willing to die for your faith and be in the presence of Jesus, who will comfort them. Listen again to Rev 14:13:

¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them."

Daniel 7:23, 24

²³ **"Thus he said:**

**'The fourth beast shall be
A fourth kingdom on earth,
Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms,
And shall devour the whole earth,
Trample it and break it in pieces.**

²⁴ **The ten horns *are* ten kings
Who shall arise from this kingdom.
And another shall rise after them;
He shall be different from the first *ones*,
And shall subdue three kings.**

The fourth kingdom, or the Roman Empire, is the one from which the little horn, or Antichrist, will arise. Here again, the meaning of the vision is made clear. The 4 beasts are 4 kingdoms, just like the statue represented 4 kingdoms.

Daniel 7:25 (a)

He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,...

Antichrist will be such a great orator that he will capture the imagination of the entire world.

Daniel 7:25 (b)

... Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,...

This speaks of a cruel and systematic pressure, coming from the word "to wear away" or "to wear out," as friction wears clothes or shoes. This persecution will be intense.

"To wear out the saints means to harass them continually so that life becomes a wretched existence." (Wood)

"Such continual and protracted pressure far more effectively breaks the human spirit than the single moment of crisis that calls for a heroic decision. It is easier to die for the Lord than to live for him under constant harassment and strain." (Archer)

Who are these saints? We have already seen that they are the tribulation saints, those living in the time of the 7 year tribulation period who choose to believe in Jesus and accept His gift of salvation for the forgiveness of their sins.

Daniel 7:25 (c)

... And shall intend to change times and law.

Perhaps this refers to the possibility that, although he knows the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, he thinks he can beat the rap and be victorious in the end.

Daniel 7:25 (d)

**Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.**

Antichrist will be successful—but only for three and a half years.

This shows that it's not the church, because Jesus said in Matthew 16:18b ...and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

Yes the church will be persecuted. But, in the church age, persecution actually produces growth. Consider China and Iran. Satan is powerless to stop the growth of the true church. However, things will be different in the tribulation period, where because of the mandatory or compulsory choice to chose to swear allegiance to the Antichrist and bow down to his image, or die, it appears that there will very few believers or tribulation saints still alive at the end of the tribulation period. The exception will be the believing Jews miraculously protected at Petra or Bozrah, who will become the nation of Israel ruled by Jesus Himself for a 1000 years.

For a time and times and half a time.

This three and a half year period is also mentioned in Revelation 11:2-3 and 13:5 where it refers to half of the last seven-year period of man's rule on this earth (the seventieth week of Daniel, which we will learn about in a later chapter).

In Revelation 12:13,14 we see that it is at the halfway point that Satan is kicked out of heaven,...

¹³ Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

The woman is Israel, and she is protected for 3 1/2 years at Petra or Bozrah according to OT scriptures. We will study this more in Revelation.

For now, what is “a time, times, and half a time”? “A time” speaks of one year; “times” speaks of two years. Thus, this is three and one-half years. At the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation period, Antichrist will suddenly wage war against the Jews. When he first comes on the scene, he'll win the approval of the entire world. But, after three and one-half years, he'll show his true colours when he erects an image of himself in the temple and demands to be worshiped as God. God, however, will protect Israel by taking her to a place in the wilderness—most likely the rock city of Petra, referred to in the OT as Bozrah (Isa 34:6, 63:1)

Other scriptures confirm this three and a half year period of time.

Revelation 11:2(b)—3, 7

² **And they will tread the holy city underfoot *for forty-two months*.**

³ **And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy *one thousand two hundred and sixty days*, clothed in sackcloth.”**

When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

In scripture, a year is measured as being 360 days, so 1260 days is 3 1/2 years. Also, there are 12 months in a year, so 42 months is 3 1/2 years. In this case, they are referring to the first half of the tribulation.

Revelation 13:1-7

¹ Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given **authority to continue for forty-two months**. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

This time the 42 months refers to the second half or second lot of 3 1/2 years of the 7 year tribulation period, also known as Jacob’s trouble or the great tribulation.

Daniel 7:26, 27

²⁶ **‘But the court shall be seated,
And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy *it* forever.**

²⁷ **Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.’**

This world leader, this little horn, this big-time power is going down. All dominions shall serve Him—Jesus Christ. Oh, when will man understand this?

Inscribed on the United Nations building in New York City are these words...

“...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

The problem is, the first part of the verse is omitted...

Isaiah 2:4

He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.

They left out the fact that the Lord is the One who will bring peace. Man's attempts at government are beastly at best. What does a beast do? He angers easily. He guards his territory ferociously. He sheds blood callously. You never see a group of bears marching to save the rabbits. What beasts want, they go after. They take whatever they can get. And they expand their territory whenever possible. That's why God sees these empires as beasts. It's a Person, not a program that will bring peace.

Man does not have the ability to rule himself. He's sinful and corrupt to the core. But the Ancient of Days is coming. And a kingdom that is right and beautiful, true and equitable will follow.

Now, going back to what I said at the start about different views. There are three options in interpreting God's kingdom being established on earth:

- There is no fulfillment; Daniel is in error.
- The fulfillment is symbolic in church history.
- The fulfillment is literal, and yet future.

So there are your three choices.

V27 Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High: It is my view that this must describe the millennial earth, not our current age or heaven. Why? The **kingdom and dominion** of the earth certainly does not belong to the righteous now. If this describes the eternal state, then what are the **dominions** that **shall serve and obey Him**? It therefore must describe the millennial earth.

To continue this thought, we can compare Dan 2:44-45 with 7:4, 11-14, 21-27 and what Jesus says in Mat 24:27-31

Daniel 2:44-45

⁴⁴ **And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed;** and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵ Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

In Daniel 2:44-45 the ten toes are identified as 10 kings. In Daniel 7:24 the ten horns are identified as 10 kings. Thus they are parallel accounts. The important thing is that in the days of these 10 kings, God sets up His kingdom, his physical kingdom on earth (2:44) —

that means in the lifetime of those kings. My logic is that since Jesus has not returned yet, those 10 leaders or rulers or kings haven't been revealed yet. Last week we read other prophecies from different parts of the bible which describe Jesus' victorious and complete rule and reign over the earth. In addition to those, Jesus said in Matthew 24:27, 29-31:

²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.... (everyone will see) ²⁹ "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Verse 27 in Matthew 24 makes it clear that everyone will see. Verses 29-31 make it clear that when Jesus comes back, it will be with power and much glory, and that He will gather together His elect. This has not happened yet. This is the start of Jesus setting up His kingdom. This is a parallel account to the rock made without hands in Daniel 2 smashing the statue and covering the whole earth, and also The Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14 coming in glory and given a kingdom that will rule all people, with us at His side in Daniel 7:18. As I said last week, Psalm 2 says that Jesus will rule with a rod of iron, and there will be no more human government. Jesus will rule the whole world, initially for 1000 years on a regenerated earth, and then forever on the new heavens and the new earth.

We again notice that the **kingdom and dominion ... shall be given to the saints**. It is something received, not achieved. The church does not convert the world to Jesus' kingdom and give the kingdom to Jesus; He gives it to them.

Daniel 7:28

"This *is* the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart."

When he saw world history from God's perspective, Daniel was troubled. But he kept the matter in his heart

Application: how does this affect us today? How should we take this to heart? We have learnt that the bible predicted 4 main empires, and they have come and gone, but there are still the 10 kings and the Antichrist to come, assuming they are future. Remember that the whole point of this is that whatever viewpoint you hold, all believe that God is coming back and when he does He will judge the world. Why is God judging the world? Because of Sin. God is perfect and so must judge sin. The problem is that we are sinners, and therefore will be judged by God because we have broken His law, the 10 commandments.

What is the gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:1, 3-4

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you... ³ that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,...

The gospel is that Christ died for our sins. It's so simple. Jesus is the only solution to our terminal condition. He is the only sinless man and He is also God. Therefore, He is the

only one who can pay the penalty for our sins, indeed the sins of the whole world, and that means everyone. Jesus said in John 14:6:

6 ... "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

So what should I be doing?

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, **so that we could be made right with God through Christ.**

It's so clear, so simple. Jesus says in John 8:24:

Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."

This means that if a person doesn't accept both that Jesus is God come to earth as a man, and that Jesus' sacrifice or payment on their behalf is the only way to have their sins forgiven or taken away, then they will spend eternity separated from God, tormented in the lake of fire which is the second death.

Paul said in Romans 1:16:

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes

To save means to rescue from danger.

To believe means to trust in and commit to, like you put on a parachute before you jump out of a plane. It's possible to believe, to have an intellectual understanding that the parachute will save you if you put it on. But if you jump without putting on the parachute, that knowledge won't help you. You need to put the parachute on. In the same way you need to put on Jesus, to be totally committed and dependant on Him.

It is not an easy message. But we need to be true to our calling and faithful to tell others about the most important choice that they must make — the choice of where they will spend eternity, - heaven or hell.

I will finish by reading you a section from the Evidence Bible notes: "A Dream of Judgement Day."

It refers to Daniel 7:9-10:

This passage (Dan 7:9-10) refers to the great and terrible day of the Lord. (See also 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 1:13-18; 20:11-15.) This should ever be in the mind of the Christian. This is why we preach Christ—not to improve the lifestyle of the unsaved, and not to "change" their lives. We preach Christ so that sinners may be saved from the wrath that is to come.

May the following letter, written by a pastor, stir your heart to do all that you can to lead sinners to genuine conversion:

Dear Brother Ray,

I have been a pastor for 25 years. I always thought I was doing a reasonably good job. Kind of like the folks who consider themselves "good people." I had tried to preach, what I

thought, was the whole counsel of God I prayed, over the years, with many people to accept Jesus and make Him Lord of their lives.

My wife, Judy, and I moved to Ruidoso, New Mexico, about six years ago to plant a church. Shortly after arriving I was convicted that some-thing was horribly wrong with my ministry. I read the Scriptures and prayed earnestly that God would show me what was wrong. The feeling continued to grow and I became depressed and moody. I asked Judy to pray for me and explained my problem. I didn't know if this was the Holy Spirit convicting or Satan attacking. She prayed that God would reveal the cause of my depression and make Himself clear as He revealed any problem with my ministry for Him.

That night I had the most terrifying, realistic, blood-chilling nightmare any man has ever had. I am a Vietnam veteran and I know a little about nightmares. Nothing in my experience has ever come close, nor do I ever want it to, to the horror of that night.

I dreamed that it was Judgment Day and I was standing right next to the throne of God. I noticed that to my left and my right were pastors as far as I could see. I thought this was odd that the Lord would reserve this front-row space for pastors only.

I looked out across a space of only a few yards and there were millions, maybe billions, of people, yet I could see each one of their eyes staring at me. As I studied this group I noticed that I knew many of them from times at the altar or ones who had sat under my teaching. I was pleased to see that they had made it to heaven, but confused because they didn't look happy. They looked very angry and hateful.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord say, "Away, I never knew you." I was suddenly frightened that what I was seeing were those who thought they were saved. Then I saw all of them pointing a finger at each of us pastors and saying together, in one voice that shook my soul, "We sat in your church and thought we were saved. Why didn't you tell us we were lost?"

Tears were pouring down my face and the faces of all of those pastors. I watched as one by one those people were cast into hell. One and then another, and another, and another..., until they were all gone. I died inside as each one screamed in agony and gnashed their teeth, cursing us as they went into the lake of fire.

Then I was looking into the face of Jesus and He said to me, "Is this the part where I'm supposed to say, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant'?" I woke up with a scream and my heart pounding and I was begging Jesus to forgive me.

I died a million deaths that night. Since that night I have done two things on a daily basis. I do everything I can to preach the Law before grace in the hope that conviction of sin will bring a sinner to true salvation. The other thing that I do is pray for every person I have ever preached to, asking God to repair any damage I have done. I also never believe anyone when they tell me they are saved. It is my duty to challenge them and search out the solidness of their salvation.

I am learning to be more effective and confident as I teach others how to share their faith by using the Law. I have seen several people saved, who thought they were saved, as I have used the "Way of the Master" material to teach them evangelism.

I do want to hear those words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant," and thanks to you and your team I have a better chance of hearing them. Thank you! I just wanted to let you know, some pastors are waking up to the truth. The desire of my heart is to please God. I pray that my days of being a man-pleaser are over along with the nightmares. I also pray that God will use me to bring other pastors into the truth of the Gospel message so that they will not have to face the nightmare that I did.

Steve Kreins