

CHAPTER VI

The Prophecy of the Four Great Beasts and of the Ancient of Days

DANIEL 7:2-27

As in the case of chapter two, portions of this chapter and questions not related intimately to eschatology will not receive any extended treatment. We may rejoice that in general all schools of believing opinion agree on the large part of the chapter. It is only where variant views of the rôle of the church in the present age and eschatology enter that the disagreement comes. And it is just at this point that the premillennial eschatology again shows its superiority.

It is generally agreed that chapter seven relates to the same subject and scheme of prophecy as chapter two (exceptions are Hitzig and Bonnar¹). The correspondences are too close to be missed or explained away. The differences between the dream prophecy of chapter two and the vision prophecy of chapter seven are chiefly as follows: (1) The *dream* was not seen originally by a man of God but by a heathen monarch, hence it was something that would appeal to such a man and which might be readily explicable to his intellect. The *vision* was seen by a holy man of God, and hence in terms more readily explicable to his intellect. (2) The *first* presented the history of nations in their outward aspect--majestic, splendid; the *second* in their inward spiritual aspect--as ravaging wild beasts. This might be elaborated to say that the first is a view of the history of nations as man sees them, the second as God sees them.

Since the same general subject is treated in this vision as in the dream of chapter two, it is natural that the same general principles present in that prophecy should follow here--the same series of powers, the same continuity of rule, degeneration in character of authority, division of sovereignty, and increasing strength of the kingdoms.

However, it is not to be expected that this will be mere repetition of the prophecy of chapter two under different figures. We might expect some elaboration and enlargement of details. And, this is just what does take place in chapter seven. The fourth (Roman) kingdom which in chapter two is given no more particular treatment than the first three is here picked out for special treatment. Furthermore, the final Antichrist who does not appear at all in chapter two is here introduced (as a "little horn") and identified as the final king of the fourth kingdom.

Since, as has been pointed out, chapters two to seven relate particularly to Gentile affairs, but chapters eight to twelve to Israel's future, it might be expected that there would be some sign of a transition to that subject in the last portion of this oracle. This is precisely what does happen. A

¹ I am indebted to rather full presentation of the views of Hitzig and Bonnar by Thomson in his volume *On Daniel* in the *Pulpit Commentary*. I have not been able to locate *Das Buch Daniel* by Hitzig and *The Great Interregnum* by Bonnar for my own reading.

shading off which leaves Israel, Israel's God, and Israel's future in the center of the scene of interest takes place. Israel is seen at war with Antichrist in the closing verses of this prophecy and the prophecy closes with Israel in possession of the long promised kingdom.

I shall not burden the reader with the inclusion of a particular commentary on the main details of the vision of Daniel. The chapter should be clearly in the reader's mind, however, if he is to appreciate the difficulties and understand the arguments.

Postmillennialists see the succession of Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome in the four beasts which appear on the scene. They also see the Messianic Kingdom in the coming of the kingdom of one like the Son of man. The "little horn," who blasphemes and makes war on the saints of the Most High, is conceived to be the Pope or the Papal system, and the saints are conceived to be the church of the present age. The ten kings (symbolized by the ten horns) are usually taken to be either ten successive emperors of Rome or ten contemporaneous kings ruling in various parts of the Roman empire. Different postmillenarians interpret the ten horns differently, but all agree that they are historical kings now long dead. The victory of the kingdom of Messiah is conceived to be gradually accomplished within the present age, but to be consummated at the second coming of Christ.

Amillennialists (I am citing the views of Young) see the same succession of four kingdoms in the four beasts. However, the beast with his ten horns, and finally with a little horn, is said to represent three stages of the Roman kingdom: The first stage, indicated by the beast itself, lasts till the destruction of the Roman empire, say about the middle of the fifth century; the ten horns represent merely that a number of kingdoms will succeed to the Roman kingdom and shall rule; the little horn represents a final Gentile king who shall be destroyed by the Lord at His second coming. The "saints" of the vision are the church of the New Testament, who will suffer special persecution near the close of this age.

The strict Premillennial interpretation, advocated by this writer, holds that the four beasts are the same four kingdoms set forth by the orthodox Postmillennialists and Amillennialists. In this the major believing schools of thought agree. But thereafter the agreement disappears. We hold that the horns represent Roman kings, that those kings are contemporaneous within the Roman period, that they are not yet known but are the same as those symbolized by the ten horns on the first beast of Revelation 13:1 ff. We hold the identity to be practically demonstrated by the obvious similarity of the visions and the principle of progressive revelation of divine truth. It is hardly likely that two such similar figures would symbolize different things. Of these ten, John specifically says (Rev. 17:12), "And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings with the beast, for one hour." This, I think, settles the fact of their contemporaneousness. Furthermore, the connection of Revelation 17, even apart from a futuristic interpretation of Revelation in general--the connection, I say, with obviously eschatological events, settles the futurity of these ten kings and places them in an eschatological context.

The "little horn" we hold (in common with most commentators) to be the Antichrist. Antichrist I hold to be a person who will arise in the end of this age, who will gain mastery over the whole world for a brief period, and will be destroyed by the Lord at His second coming (II Thes. 2:1-9; Rev. 13:1-10).

The "saints" I hold to be no different from "the people of the saints" in the passage before us (see below). They are the Israelites of the end time who will at last inherit the kingdom of David with Christ Himself reigning as their king.

Finally, the kingdom of the Most High, said to be "an everlasting kingdom," is none other than the Kingdom of Christ, of which the first stage is the Millennium, elsewhere treated in this dissertation.

That the Premillennial interpretation alone is a satisfactory explanation is demonstrated by the following:

(1) The facts of the prophecy demand that the kingdom of Messiah follow the kingdom of the Gentiles--that its very establishment awaits the destruction of those kingdoms, being at no point of its history contemporaneous with those kingdoms.

The kingdom of Christ is not represented as being established till after the final beast of the series "was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire." This is in complete harmony with the prophecy of chapter two. There the kingdom of the stone does not gradually grow up during the final stage of the image's prophetic history, but the stone kingdom comes with force, destroying violently the image. After the destruction of the image, after its very dust has been blown away, the stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth.

This is the basic fact that Amillennialists and Postmillennialists must face. This fact alone discredits both systems of interpretation. It simply is not possible to have an earthly kingdom of Messiah present during the Roman period of Gentile history and harmonize it with the facts of these two prophecies.

Related to this is another:

(2) The kingdom of the Most High succeeds a final form of the Roman kingdom, a form in which that kingdom has not to the present moment appeared.

The Roman kingdom is symbolized by a diverse beast which, in addition to other less significant features, had on its head ten horns. These ten horns are "ten kings" (v. 24). Among these ten horns another "little horn" arises. That he arises while the ten are still prevalent is required by the fact that this little horn uproots three of them (vs. 8, 24). He arises later than the ten, and in this sense is "after them" (v. 24), but while they still prevail as kingdoms.

Furthermore, if three of these were plucked up by one on his arising, it is obvious that the horns are intended to represent contemporaneous, not successive, kingdoms.

This same final stage of tenfold division is symbolized also in the prophecy of chapter two. True, it is latent there, not specific, but it is there nevertheless. In the first description of the image, no further division of details is made after the mention of the feet (2:33). But in the interpretation it is further specified that "thou sawest the feet and toes" (2:41). It sounds to me slightly like sophistical reasoning to hear it said that no mention is made of ten toes (Young). Anyone who ever counted the toes of a normal man would know that if this image of man had toes there would be ten of them. That the toes were to symbolize kings is the evident meaning of verse 44a. I present the portion to make this clear.

42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay. 44 And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed... (Daniel 2:42-44, A.S.V.)

To argue with the Amillennialists that "those kings" of verse 44 are the four successive kingdoms is out of harmony with the facts of the symbols and their interpretation. In only one case, the head of gold, are the king (Nebuchadnezzar) and the kingdom equated. Furthermore, the connection of the "toes" in verse 42 and of the "kings" in verse 44 is too close to allow any conclusion except that the toes do represent the kings destroyed by the coming Christ.

Now to the present moment, the Roman kingdom has not assumed this form. Grant even that the number ten is intended only to represent a large but indefinite division of the empire (which may possibly be true), and the fact remains that the "little horn," whom many Amillennialists as well as the majority of Premillennialists recognize to be the final Antichrist, has not yet appeared among them and uprooted three. Until he does, the kingdom of Messiah is in a definite and unique sense a future thing.

Related to this fact is still another:

(3) *The kingdom of Messiah clearly follows the appearance of Antichrist and his destruction, which events are still in the future, as explained by the New Testament.*

Auberlen says: "Here for the first time in the development of revelation, the idea of Antichrist is clearly unfolded, because here for the first time the entire course of the development of the godless and God-opposing world is clearly surveyed down to its end" (*op.cit.*, 39). Observe further that in this first clear unfolding of the doctrine of Antichrist, his personal existence is at least suggested by his description (eyes of a man, mouth speaking great

things, etc.) and by his actions (making war with the saints).

Nearly all Postmillennialists, Amillennialists, and Premillennialists unite in affirming that the Man of Sin of Paul and the Antichrist and first Beast of John are the same as this "little horn" of Daniel seven.

Innumerable reasons can be advanced for rejecting the prevalent view of Postmillennialists that the Pope or the Papal system is Antichrist. However, there is one grand reason which makes all the others unnecessary. That reason is that Paul makes it clear in the second chapter of II Thessalonians that the appearance of the Antichrist is an eschatological event to take place only at the end of this present age. As we have shown elsewhere in this paper, his coming is associated with certain events which at the present moment are still future. (Please refer to the discussion of Antichrist in the first section of this dissertation.)

But now we call on our Amillennialist friends to look, and to look steadily for a moment, at the fact that the kingdom of Messiah which they contend was established at the beginning of the present age is in this chapter specifically predicted to appear after the appearance and destruction of Antichrist, and *only* after the appearance and destruction of Antichrist.

In the next place:

(4) *The kingdom established by Messiah at His coming is a kingdom of power and glory, not one of suffering and cross-bearing.*

This is evident in both chapters two and seven. The language is applicable only to an all-prevailing, irresistible, glorious, civil as well as religion kingdom. This utterly does away with the Postmillennial view. It also militates against the Amillennial view, for though they do allow that in final manifestation the kingdom will be thus, they postulate a present *earthly* kingdom of Christ under the same figure when the figure will not allow it. They are placed in the unenviable position of trying to have their logical cake and eat it too. Their church kingdom they try to relate to the "saints" in the passage, but the saints are clearly not the kingdom here, but the ones who after a period of suffering receive a kingdom. So even granting (which I do not) that the saints herein are the New Testament church (Young, Keil, Leupold), their theory will not fit.

Finally,

(5) *The Kingdom of the Most High is Jewish in some definite sense, just as our Premillennial doctrine affirms of the coming kingdom of Messiah.*

In verse 14 it is affirmed that "one like unto a son of man" is to receive the world dominion, and that this is the final everlasting dominion. Commentators, almost with one voice, agree that this is Christ possessing His kingdom. But let it be remembered that Christ or Messiah is a Jewish conception and the very name specifies His office as Jewish king.

In the verses following 14 it is four times affirmed that the "saints" shall possess the kingdom, presumably Messiah's kingdom. The identity of these "saints" or holy people is the important question. In my opinion Auberlen was precisely correct when he wrote:

By the "people of the saints of the Most High," to whom dominion is then to be given (Dan. 7:18-27), Daniel evidently could only understand the people of Israel, as distinguished from the heathen nations and kingdoms, which were to rule up till then (2:44); nor have we, according to strict exegesis, a right to apply the expression to any other nations; hence we cannot apply it immediately to the church....The prophet's words refer to the re-establishment of the kingdom to Israel, concerning which the disciples asked our Saviour immediately before His ascension: and our Lord, though refusing to reveal to them the date or chronology, did in no way negative the subject matter of their question, and thereby confirmed it (Acts 20:6,7) (*op.cit.*, 216,217).

This matter is crucial for the Premillennial view, and needs full examination.

The fact that the church of the New Testament is to be joined with Christ in the rulership, as set forth in Revelation 20, is irrelevant to the question. That is a New Testament revelation. The question is, Does this chapter affirm that Israel, the covenant nation, shall have a place in that kingdom, and in a real sense possess it? If so, then, a national restoration is in the plan of God for that nation.

There are five references to this group (v. 18): "the saints of the Most High," *qaddishe elyonin*, the same expression is used in verses 22 and 25. In verse 22 they are also simply called "saints," *qaddishim*, and in verse 27, "The people of the saints of the Most High" *am qaddishe elyonin*.

To one versed in the Old Testament Scriptures, these can be understood in only one fashion--of the covenant nation Israel. Consider the evidence. The Hebrew adjective equivalent to the Aramaic *qaddish*, saint, is *qadosh*. In Exodus 19:6 it is used of Israel and of Israel only in her peculiar relation to God as His covenant people. In Leviticus 20:7,26 it is used in the same sense as also in Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2,21. The Hebrew noun *qodesh* is also equivalent to this Aramaic word, and is used of Israel and of Israel only in this special sense of describing a people peculiar to God. This use appears many times.

However, one need look no farther than the Book of Daniel itself to find who the "saints" or "holy people" are. Chapter eight may contain eschatological material, viewed in a typical fashion, but most interpreters of every school of eschatology unite in regarding it as primarily a prophecy of the conflict of the Jewish people with the Greek kingdom of history, especially as it developed between the Jews and Antiochus Epiphanes. Now, in verse 24 the Jewish people are called by this name: *am qedoshim*, in the English versions translated, "the holy people" but in the Hebrew literally (cf. A.S.V. margin) "the people of the saints." This is as near a linguistical equivalent of the name given the people of Daniel 7:27, "the people of the saints of the Most High," as is possible. Even Dr. Keil, Dr. Leupold, and Dr. Young, whom I

regard as the leading advocates of the Amillennial approach to Daniel, think that this expression refers to the Israelites in chapter eight. Why not, then, the same in chapter seven? There is only one answer. It does not harmonize with the exigencies of their eschatological system.

Again, Daniel 12:7 mentions the "holy people" (*am quodesh*). There also, as in chapter seven, they suffer for three and one-half times (or years). The correspondence with the suffering of the saints of chapter seven for the same period of time (7:25) is unmistakable. Neither can it be seriously questioned that this refers to the same tribulation of Israel prophesied in 12:1. There these folk are called "the children of thy [Daniel's] people," and "thy [Daniel's] people."

Dr. Keil, for all his learning and unquestionable piety, is certainly in error when he writes:

The circumstance that in Daniel's time the Israel according to the flesh constituted the "holy people," does not necessitate our understanding *this* people when the people of God are spoken of in the time of the end, since then the faithful from among all nations shall be the holy people of God (*Commentary on Daniel*, 491).

The whole point is that Daniel was referring to his own people when he used these terms, and whatever the New Testament may add does not contradict this simple fact.

Dr. Delitzsch, the famous collaborator with Keil on the Keil and Delitzsch commentaries, regarded it "as an essential progress in prophetic theology...that the following three ideas are recognized in their intimate connection:--1. Israel in prophecy is not merely a type of the church; 2. that Israel has yet a future; and 3. that before the last judgment there shall be a time of a glorious kingdom of God" (Auberlen, *op.cit.*, 219). With these words of Dr. Delitzsch, all Premillennialists will heartily agree.

These facts demonstrate sufficiently that Premillennialism, and only Premillennialism, gives a satisfactory explanation of "the Prophecy of the Four Beasts and of the Ancient of Days."