

Daniel 7:1-14

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Preacher: Nick Kidwell

[0 : 00] I have the joy and privilege of introducing our guest speaker this morning. Nick Kidwell serves in Covenant Fellowship Church. You guys know this church because we've had several speakers in from this church.

It's a powerhouse of a church in Pennsylvania. Nick graduated from the Sovereign Grace Pastors College last year. So some of you who have thought about that, you could talk to him and happy. And he just passed the last of his three ordination exams. So yeah. And so he will be ordained very soon by his church as a pastor.

And he's there right now as a church planting resident. He's going to be sent out with his family. He already has a place in Melbourne, Pennsylvania, where he'll be planting a church.

He's been married to his wife, happy for 10 years, happy he's right here with us as well. And they brought their 8-year-old daughter, Anna, with them. And if you can guess Anna's ethnicity, you get extra credit.

[1 : 05] But Nick and Happy have been a pleasure to get to know. They're a humble couple. And Nick's a gifted preacher. And their testimony, their life story, it's real witness to God's faithfulness that we've been singing about.

And God leads his people to what they've called them to. So I'm really excited for you guys to hear from Nick. Nick, please come up and preach for us. We were hanging out with the Woos last night. And we were looking at their board games. And I got a board game down for the kids. And Sean's like, you won't have to use the chair. See, and Sean's trying to put the mic up there. A little bit taller. Well, I'm so glad to be here with you guys this morning.

As Sean said, I'm Nick Kidwell. My wife, Happy. Daughter, Anna, and I all came up from Covenant Fellowship in Glen Mills, PA. I've been there since 2010.

We just got back from the pastor's college earlier last year. And one of the things I love so much about our experience at the pastor's college and even coming back is this.

[2 : 22] Getting to be a part of and experience other churches in Sovereign Grace. It's such a joy to get to partner together, knowing that God's people are much bigger than myself and bigger than our church in Glen Mills.

And we just have so much to gain and benefit from one another. So we just had such a joy with the Woos last night and receiving their warmth and hospitality and care. Made me all the more eager to be here with you this morning.

And you've not let me down. You guys have been just very welcoming and inviting for those of you I've gotten to meet. And I'm excited to meet more of you later. So thank you for having us this morning. I'm excited for us to get to spend time together in God's Word.

I'm excited for the passage that we're going to be in this morning. So we're going to be in the book of Daniel, which isn't one that I think normally we spend a lot of time in. And I'm excited for us to be there this morning.

And I think it's a particularly encouraging passage for us as we stand at the beginning of a new year. New years are times of reflection.

[3 : 28] Even thinking we're sitting at the beginning of a new month. And we tend to plan things by chunks of time. And so we're thinking about this year ahead, 2022. And I think this passage helps us as we look forward.

And I think for all of us as we're looking forward into 2022, we're probably hoping for good news and good things to come. As we all know, the past few years have been chaotic.

There's been a lot of instability. A lot of things have just felt very uncertain. And it can be easy for us, for Christians and non-Christians alike, to slip into doom and gloom mentalities.

We look around and we think, we've lost. You know, the world is going down the toilet and evil and the enemy has gotten the upper hand. Well, that's why passages like ours this morning in the book of Daniel are so important for us to spend time in, to help us with those mentalities that we can slip into.

So turn with me, if you would now, to the book of Daniel, chapter 7. And I love so much, I was looking at the table back there. I love this little card that you guys have as a resource on Bible study.

[4 : 37] This is fantastic. And so we're going to hit right now, you know, some of this understanding of the genre and the background of this book. It's just so helpful for us as we dive into God's Word to understand it better, to know what's coming.

So this is a great resource. If you haven't used this, I'm taking one home. It's a good reminder. So the book of Daniel was written by its namesake, Daniel, during the 7th and 6th centuries BC. This was a time of upheaval for the Jewish people. Prior to Daniel's time, the kingdom of Israel had split into two. And about 100 years before Daniel's time, northern Israel had been taken captive and exiled by the Assyrians because of their sin.

And now, during Daniel's day, southern Judah is also experiencing the same kind of judgment from God. First by the Babylonians, then the Persians, and Daniel is alive for all of this, much of this. And he starts early in the exile, and then he sees this all happening. And during this time, you know, he's thrown into a lion's den. His friends are thrown into a furnace.

[5 : 45] He sees many kings come and go. So he witnesses a lot of things. But during all of this time, God met Daniel in very profound ways.

And fortunately for us, God had Daniel write many of these things down for our edification. Now, for all of its value, Daniel can be a challenging book to approach.

And it can be unfamiliar to us in many ways. You know, there's a lot of those stories that we do know. Like I just said, you've got Daniel in the lion's den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace, the writing on the wall.

And a lot of these come from the first six chapters in Daniel, which are a lot more narrative in nature. But as you move beyond chapter six and you start into chapter seven, things start to get a little weird.

You get four-headed beasts and fiery thrones and dueling rams and goats, indecipherable calendars, and a man with flaming torches for eyes.

[6 : 45] And what you've stepped into is apocalyptic literature. We heard some of that this morning as we read from the book of Revelation, which is heavy in apocalyptic literature. Swords coming from mouths and fiery eyes.

And actually, the book of Revelation reflects and pulls a lot from the book of Daniel, which is where you hear some of that common terminology. And it can be a challenging genre for us, especially if you're not, I don't tend to be someone who thinks flowery poetry doesn't, you know, strike a chord with me generally.

So this type of language for me is a little more challenging for me to receive. And I know it can be for others as well. So that's why it's important for us to know what we're walking into. So apocalyptic literature, it's characterized by a focus on future events.

And it's told through imagery and symbols and numbers. Now, people tend to go one of two ways with this. You either give up reading it because it's too hard to understand.

Or people can become obsessed with it, trying to unlock and decipher exactly what all of the historical fulfillments and the meanings of each of these things are.

[7 : 54] God doesn't want either of those outcomes for us. God in his kindness has given us things such as Daniel's vision here to stir up our emotions, to give us helpful images that we can take away and to use those images to teach us deep truths about who God is and what he intends for this world.

So don't be afraid of this type of imagery, but also don't walk away trying to figure out all of the exact fulfillment of all of these things. There's some fruit in that. It's encouraging to see how prophecy gets fulfilled.

God wants us to marvel at that, not to be surprised as history unfurls. But knowing those exact times and places isn't his primary concern. And it won't be ours today either because there's some timeless and universal truths that God wants us to have, that he wants to impress upon our hearts

through these visions and the events that they represent.

And there's one truth that's very prominent through the book of Daniel and is on full display in our passage that God reigns victorious over all.

Nothing that happens surprises him. He knows and he decrees all that will come to pass and he is greater than any power. What a comfort that truth would be to a people who were trampled and conquered under oppression and persecution, living in a foreign land with foreign godless rulers, a people who lacked stability, were subject to fear and confusion, confusion of people who wondered, where is God at in the midst of all of this mess?

[9 : 36] And we can often ask those same kind of questions. Where is God at in the midst of this? Well, Daniel helps us to answer that question.

So let's read together. This is Daniel's first recorded vision in chapter 7. I know it says 1 to 14 up there. I'm actually going to go to verse 18 in reading this. But let me pray for us as we enter into God's word.

Father, we just ask that you would meet with us this morning. We are just aware of our need for you to help us by the power of your spirit to receive what your word has for us.

Impress truth upon our hearts. Help us to have a bigger vision of who you are, to understand your mercy and your grace for us. God, we thank you that you are mighty and that you can even help us in our understanding.

You know our hearts. You know our minds. Be with me now as I preach your word. Father, may it bless us. May your word bless us now.

[10 : 41] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. And one of the things as you read this, that if you want, you don't have to. You know, but try and imagine.

Because it is very imagery heavy. So really try and picture it as you're reading. And maybe just listening and closing your eyes, however it helps you. But we're supposed to visualize these images. They're very vivid.

So, 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 he 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 I looked and its wings were plucked off and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man.

[11 : 44] 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.

After this, I saw in the night visions and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth.

It devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the 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 the 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.

[12 : 53] 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 thousand served him. And ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court sat in judgment and the books were opened. 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.

I saw in the night visions. And behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man. And he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him. And 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 one that shall not be destroyed.

[14:05] As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me. I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.

These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever, and ever.

Amen. There's a lot going on there. And you might be thinking, what was that all about?

We're going to walk now together through this vision and we're going to focus on three things. Evil will rage. God will judge. And Christ will reign.

So first, evil will rage. We look at the four beasts. The passage begins and it makes known to us that the vision took place in the first year of King Belshazzar. Now this was King Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, if you know that name.

[15:14] He was not a humble man. He, like many before and many after him, elevated himself rather than praising God. Daniel at one point calls out Belshazzar for lifting himself up against the Lord of heaven and for praising the gods of silver and gold, even though Belshazzar had seen the power of God marvelously displayed.

And it's during this time of proud defiance that God speaks to Daniel and he lays out this vision of the future for him. Now remember, Daniel saw the fall of Judah.

God's land, God's people, God's house were destroyed just as God had foretold. So as Daniel receives this vision from the Lord about the future, I'm certain that if he was hoping for something, it would be that it would speak of immediate relief from their enemies, immediate restoration.

But instead, he sees this, a series of four beasts. Four beasts that represent rulers and kingdoms, just like Belshazzar, proud and arrogant, setting themselves up against God and his people.

In verse 2, he sees the four winds kicking up the great sea. And out of this sea, these four great beasts arise. In the ancient Near East, this would have conjured up thoughts of universal and widespread evil, the four winds being the four corners of the earth, showing that these beasts aren't just local.

[16:47] They're not small. They're not contained. But they're global in their scope. And they're coming from the sea. The sea and the oceans were associated with chaos that needed to be tamed.

So this vision is clear. What's coming is not good, and it's not of God. Not what Daniel was hoping for, I'm sure.

Well, the first beast to arise is a lion with wings. Now this beast gets lifted up, its wings removed, it stands like a man on its two feet with a mind of man given to it.

This likely is representing Nebuchadnezzar, but it sets the stage for us. Because these kings, these kingdoms which oppose God, they lack the humanity that they were created for.

This is true for all of us. Though God made us to rule and to reign on this earth in line with his heart and his ways, glorifying his name, we've all turned away.

[17:51] And in doing so, we follow our own paths. We elevate our own names and become fools in the process. Fools who tear one another apart like animals.

Fools who behave no better than the beasts of the field around us. Don't have to think very hard to imagine images that we've all seen of humans beating one another, berating one another, assaulting one another with just complete disregard for each other.

It's beastly behavior. And we do it in small ways towards one another as well. Like little birds just picking at each other. We do that. You know, we go at each other. Nebuchadnezzar, when he was alive, he was vividly reminded of this.

We see in the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar stands on his rooftop and he declares, Is not this great Babylon which I have built by my might and power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?

Well, God immediately took the kingdom from him, gave him a crazed mind like an animal, and caused him to wander around out in the fields for seven years. Then we're told in chapter four of Daniel that when he finally lifts his eyes to heaven and humbles himself, the mind of a man is restored to him.

[19 : 10] That's what we're seeing in this vision. He blessed God and God declared that it's God's, and he declared that it's God's kingdom that's an everlasting kingdom and not his own.

Being given the sound mind of a man means honoring God for who he is. It means acting in line with his good intentions for humanity. Unfortunately, this first beast, though, is the closest thing that we get to humanity.

Things begin a steady descent after that. We see the second and the third beast, a bear and a leopard, likely representing Persia and Greece. These beasts reflect the brutal nature of the kingdoms that they're showing.

We see three ribs in the bear's mouth. It seems to be showing the victim of a previous hunt still fresh on the lips as it arises to devour more flesh and a leopard with four wings and four heads which allow it to swoop and dash this way and that attacking any and all that it desires.

These kingdoms are on the hunt. They take pleasure in their conquest, and their brutality would only increase as time went on. Their hands are wet with blood.

[20 : 28] And again, it's not hard for us to imagine forces such as this. In the 20th century alone, it's estimated that 108 million people were killed by war, possibly as many as 11 million Jews were slaughtered in the Holocaust.

This list could go on. It's the kind of things that Daniel's being made aware of here in this passage, this kind of brutality. Well, Scripture tells us Daniel was disturbed by these visions, and we can certainly understand why he was.

I can't help but picture someone in the sea being pummeled by waves. You know, wave after wave, and you're trying to catch your breath just as you think you do. Another wave gets you, and you go down over and over again until a giant swell comes and just pushes you.

The future ahead of Daniel and God's people seemed to be evil power overtaking evil power overtaking evil power. And the worst was yet to come.

The fourth beast, the most fearsome, the final swell of this wave, not only has this kingdom lost its humanity, but this beast no longer even resembles a man.

[21 : 45] It can't even be described, Scripture says. This beast was terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It's got iron teeth that breaks nations into pieces and tramples them underfoot.

It's adorned with ten horns, symbols of power. And out of the horns comes this little horn. It has eyes like a man, with a mouth that speaks, and it seems to be talking about a particularly arrogant ruler who would set himself up boastfully in opposition against God.

This fourth beast is dreadful. And one of the most dread aspects of this beast is easy to miss. If you've noticed with the other beasts, there's an unnamed player regulating them.

The first beast is made to stand, and the mind of man was given to it. The second beast is told, arise and devour. The third beast, it says, dominion was given to it.

It's clear God's setting limits, setting boundaries for these kingdoms, for these rulers. But of this fourth beast, we don't hear the same language of it was given or it was told.

[22 : 52] Where was God in this? Is all hope lost? I believe Scripture wants us to ask this question in this moment.

Was God's divine hand now out of the picture? Is it ever out of the picture? Where is God when it feels like he's nowhere to be found? I wonder if some of you here today might be asking those same kinds of questions.

You feel like that person caught in the waves of the sea. Situation after situation in your life just seems to keep pummeling you.

As you think about it, you just can't catch your breath, whether it's a health issue or financial burdens or relational heartbreak or other things, they just seem to keep coming. And for all you can tell, there's no change on the horizon.

You wonder, has God lost control? Does God not care? Is God not good? Well, hear God today as he speaks through Daniel.

[24 : 01] The answer to all of those questions is definitively, no, he has not lost control. He does care and he is good. And this is where our vision pivots.

And what proceeds would have been a great comfort to Daniel and to Israel and should bring us great hope in our own day. The future that God offers us does not end in despair.

Nothing is out of his sovereign control. In contrast to the evil kingdoms and their limited rule on the earth, we now see a vision of God.

Mighty and glorious. God who stands as judge over these evil powers that rage. So evil will rage, but God will judge.

Verse 9, As I looked, the thrones were placed and the ancient of days took his seat. This description of God as the ancient of days serves as a contrast. All of these rulers that have come before, they rose up for a time and they were replaced.

[25 : 06] But this one, God, he is of old. His days are eternal. His reign extends beyond all others into eternity past, present, and future.

This is the God who was in the beginning and who spoke and brought all things to being. Everything stands as fleeting in his sight. We now see the one who's been providentially working throughout these beasts, plucking them up, setting their times, appointing their seasons. We're told that God's clothing is white as snow and his hair like pure wool. Now, we shouldn't walk away thinking of God as some gray-headed old man sitting up in the clouds.

That's not what this is teaching us here. It's, again, figurative language. We're in apocalyptic literature. It's meant to convey majesty, purity, perfection of God's character.

His garments are white as snow. They're unstained. Those beasts, their hands are wet with blood, but this one is pure. He's holy. He's righteous. His woolen hair connotes wisdom that only age can bring.

[26 : 23] His throne is fiery flames and it appears to be set atop a chariot who has flaming wheels. Fire not only evokes power, but judgment. Fire can't be touched without destruction.

The fire proceeding from the throne and the stream of fire that issues out before him should cause his enemies to quake? and his people to rejoice, which is why we see that before this pure and righteous fiery throne there's 10,000 times 10,000 of his servants and worshipers.

He's worthy of praise. The contrast between this one, the Ancient of Days, and the beasts couldn't be more stark.

The image of God is now complete. The powerful, wise, and righteous judge who brought the heavenly court into session takes his seat and the books of judgment are opened.

So we ask, what will God do with these beasts? Specifically, what will he do with this last and this greatest beast who seems unparalleled and utterly opposed to all things pertaining to God?

[27 : 31] And that's the question that Daniel's asking. Verse 11, he turns to look because of the great words that this little horn is speaking. Now, these aren't great as in good.

Other translations actually use boastful. You know, I read from the ESV here. These words are boastful words, arrogant words, big and lofty words.

So you picture this. This eternal, righteous, flaming being has come onto the scene, and yet this little horn stands arrogantly boasting of his strength and his power and his might.

That's the absurdity of man's rebellion against God. There's nothing little about the Ancient of Days. We boast of our strength and we don't even take notice of God's presence.

Then we get what I like to call the uh-oh moment in the story. You know, you can picture it, this beast standing there talking all his arrogant things and this big, towering presence comes up behind him, seems unaware that it's there, you know, maybe even gives his shoulder a little tap.

[28 : 40] He turns around and sees him. And then it happens. Verse 11, And I looked, the beast was killed and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.

Poof! Like that, this little horn, this fourth beast is destroyed. This beast is given twelve lines of text to describe it, to set up how terrifying it seemed.

And then in less than two lines, it's gone. There's no battle here. There's no struggle. Daniel wanted to convey that God was mighty over this beast.

The book was open, judgment was decided, and the beast was done. And the three other beasts, they lose their dominion and experience God's judgment as well. What a comfort.

As followers of Jesus Christ, what a comfort. This will be the outcome for every evil power that stands in opposition to God. This will be the outcome for all of sin.

[29 : 46] This will be the outcome for Satan himself who will be thrown into the lake of fire. For all his raging, he will meet a quick and timely end.

With a blink, with a thought, God can defeat any enemy. And he will defeat all his enemies. While God is telling Daniel about some specific kingdoms to come, he's giving him an image that can apply to all of history.

When you look around and you see evil raging, don't be dismayed. Don't be surprised. Scripture tells us not to be surprised as the fiery trial comes upon us as though something strange were happening to us.

In this broken and sin-stricken world, evil will rage. God knows and will one day bring all things to account.

And if you've trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can rejoice knowing that even your sinful raging against God has been dealt with through the sacrifice of our Lord.

[30 : 57] If you're here though or you're listening and you haven't trusted in Christ as your Savior, this vision should cause you to quake. We will all stand before the judgment seat of God just like these beasts.

We've all failed to live up to the humanity we were intended to be. I appreciate just the confession of sins during the service, that reminder of we haven't honored God as we ought.

And we in many ways walk as half-human, half-beast hybrids raging against God and without someone to intercede on your behalf, you will be met with the same end as these beasts.

Maybe you're aware of this. Maybe you feel very aware of your shortcomings. You've done things you aren't proud of. And if that's the case, let's look now at the end of this passage. As you'll see, judgment is not the end of this vision.

Judgment doesn't have to be the end of your story either. God's got something on the other side. He's got a plan. Daniel would have known that despite man's sinfulness, God still planned to bring about a good king, a ruler who would be all that humanity was intended to be and more.

[32 : 18] So this takes us to the final turn in the vision, the entrance of the one like a son of man where we see that Christ will reign.

So evil will rage, God will judge, and Christ will reign. Verse 13, And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him.

Whereas the beasts were destroyed, this one who was to come, he's able to approach the throne of God and with confidence he's able to enter in. We're told two things about this one.

He comes with the clouds of heaven and he's like a son of man. Whereas the previous images emphasize the beastly nature of the earthly kingdoms, this one, he's like a son of man.

Son of man was a title used in the Old Testament to highlight humanity. This one who was to come was in nature and appearance like a human, reflecting the fullness of what humanity was meant to be.

[33 : 23] No hint of beastliness in this one. However, this ideal human, he's more than that. Remember, he's said to be like a son of man. Though human in appearance in nature, he's something more.

This one comes with the clouds of heaven. The beast arose out of the chaos of the evil sea. This one comes out of heaven. And it's not just that he comes from the heaven.

The clouds tie him directly to God himself. God, throughout scripture, is depicted as riding on the clouds. Isaiah 9, 1, the Lord rides on a swift cloud.

Psalms 18, 9, he parted the heavens and came down. Dark clouds were under his feet. This son of man would come and would not only be allowed into the presence of God, into his very throne room, but he would be akin to God himself.

And he would be given glory and dominion and a kingdom. And scripture makes abundantly clear to us that that kingdom is one of light and one of peace and joy and hope and love.

[34 : 32] In this kingdom, there's no place for beasts. And unlike the failing nature of the beastly kingdoms, the king and this kingdom would never pass away. It would never be destroyed.

Verse 14 reiterates that for us. God's good intentions for humanity would be completed in this son of man and he freely shares this kingdom with those that are his.

When Daniel asks for the interpretation of this dream, he's told that the coming kingdom would belong to God's saints. In the vision, the kingdom's given to the son of man and in its interpretation, it's being given to the saints of the most high.

The saints are so united with the coming king who is to come that what's been given to him belongs to them also. It's astonishing. And as people who live on this side of the cross, we get to experience this kingdom, this reality.

We've come to know that the one like the son of man is none other than Jesus Christ himself. Son of man was in fact Jesus' preferred term in describing himself when he came.

[35 : 45] This would have brought great excitement in Jesus' day. As he proclaimed that the son of man had come by linking himself to the son of man from Daniel's vision, Jesus was also declaring that the kingdom of God promised in Daniel had come.

That's why when Jesus came, the blind could see, the lame could walk, the dead rose from the grave because this glorious kingdom was bursting forth upon the earth. The gospel of Mark begins with Jesus saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. This vision, which was only the future for Daniel, is present for us. But, we can look at Christ's first coming, and I'm sure many did, and say, well, this doesn't seem to be everything that Daniel and others spoke of.

As we've said, evil is still raging. The time of final judgment hasn't come, and that's true, which is why we cling so tightly to this vision in Daniel. Because we need to hear it in our day as well.

The kingdom has come, but the fullness of the kingdom has yet to be. Christ came first to die for our sins and open the way of salvation to the whole earth so that judgment does not have to be the end of our story if we trust in him.

[37 : 10] And through the gospel, the kingdom advances on this earth. You guys have been in the book of Acts. It's watching this, the gospel go forth, and the fruits of the kingdom bearing upon all peoples and all nations.

But Daniel's vision also forecasts not just that first coming, but his ultimate return. As Hebrews says, at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

As Daniel's vision shows, the beasts are allowed to remain for some time. In fact, revelation seems to indicate that there's still a great beast yet to come.

And there will indeed be many beasts that face the people of God as they continue to live on this side of eternity. As the light of Christ shines brighter in the world, the darkness that remains will rage all the harder.

Jesus made clear that in the times of the end, which encompasses all of history from his resurrection to his final return, that there would increase wars and rumors of wars.

[38 : 18] Antichrist would come. Famine and natural disasters would increase and persist. Christ, we experience the kingdom in part now, amidst a dying world.

That's what makes the church of God so precious. When we meet together, we get to experience the fruits of that kingdom. And we await Christ's return together.

And he will return. Just as Jesus said the Son of Man had come, he also said that the Son of Man was yet to come. Jesus said, then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man 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 great power and glory.

This is pulled right from Daniel. The conquering Christ will return. And he will put an end to all sin. This will happen. This isn't a story.

This isn't just a vision. This is truth. And just as surely as Christ came the first time, Christ is coming again. And all evil earthly powers on that day, all the beasts, all those who align against God seeking to destroy him and his work, death itself will be destroyed.

[39 : 42] Hear this familiar passage that the Apostle John writes in his vision of this coming kingdom. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people.

And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

This is the kingdom of God. This is the kingdom that Christ Jesus is bringing and this is our future. This is the future that's promised in Daniel.

So when we look ahead to 2022, to the rest of our week, whatever it is that we're counting and we fret and we fear or we wonder, is it going to be good?

[40 : 51] We can say, come what may, because we know the ultimate future that awaits us. The book of Daniel, for all of its puzzling aspects, is abundantly clear in its message that the God, the

Lord of heaven, the ancient of days, the son of man, rules and reigns over all of the affairs of mankind and cannot be stopped in his purposes and his purposes are good.

The events of our times leave us unsettled and we can hope for things. We can hope for politicians or policies or cultural changes to finally bring about peace, but the peace that we seek can only come from Jesus Christ and from the kingdom that he's ushering in.

If we're not with Christ, then we're serving and aligning with the earthly kingdoms, doomed and destined for a destruction that they will face. And again, if that's you, Jesus stands eager and willing to welcome you into this kingdom, into this life, into this peace that he offers.

For those of us who have trusted Christ, as we go this week, when you see evil showing its head, when you experience the pain and the evils of sin and the fall, look with eyes to see.

Know that there is a sovereign hand who's Lord over all of these things. And let the predictions that have already been fulfilled and the promises kept serve to strengthen your faith as you await the final return of the Son of Man who says in Revelation, surely I'm coming soon.

[42 : 34] He's coming soon. He does not tarry. He does not delay. He will not let you down. Read the book of Daniel. See how Daniel trusts in God rather than man and that trust is not misplaced.

God is trustworthy and true and his glorious kingdom awaits us. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you that these things are true, that your word is true, that evil will not triumph.

Evil will not have the final say, God, but you will reign and you do reign and you will one day bring all things to account. Help us to entrust ourselves to that truth.

Help us to entrust ourselves to you, to look to you as our source of hope and strength. Help us in our times of difficulty and trial to remember that you are coming again, that you appoint times and seasons and purposes that we might endure and have hope.

And we thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, that he died in our place, that we can have this hope. Let us go with that today. We pray this in Jesus' name.

[43 : 45] Amen.