

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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The Fourth Kingdom

Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart. (Daniel 7:19-28)

Throughout the book of Daniel we see a consistent repetition of four major kingdoms, each appearing in succession of the other. As we observed in Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, these kingdoms were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Thus in our study verse the fourth kingdom that now attracts Daniel's interest is Rome. Rome appears to Daniel as being far more "dreadful" than the earlier three kingdoms. James Montgomery Boice makes the interesting observation that Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image in the second chapter depicts Babylon and the three succeeding kingdoms from man's perspective, while the seventh chapter depicts those same kingdoms from God's perspective.¹ Man's perspective is one of splendor, as depicted by the precious metals in Nebuchadnezzar's dream; God's perspective is one of cruel oppression, characterized by the vicious animals in our present context. It is inherently dangerous for a people to look increasingly to their government to solve their personal problems. Any power great enough to intrude into your personal problems is also great enough to strip you of your personal liberties, and sadly often in world history these two patterns appear together.

¹ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: Daniel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1989), 77.

While Boice is quite correct in his assessment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as contrasted with the present depiction of these four kingdoms, I believe he misses the point in his interpretation that this fourth beast points to a final, end-times antichrist person.²

Edward J. Young offers what I believe to be a more correct assessment of the fourth beast. He identifies several points that seem to more correctly frame the fulfillment of Daniel's revelation in this chapter.

1. The Son of man (Daniel 7:13) refers to Jesus' ascension and the setting up of a heavenly kingdom that is wholly different from these four earth-kingdoms. God's kingdom is heavenly, not earthly. It is of divine origin. Its "setting up" coincides with Jesus' victorious ascension fifty days after His crucifixion, rather than at the Second Coming. It appears in clouds of glory, supported by God, not by loading its crushing weight upon its peoples.³
2. Upon Jesus' ascension, He claims sovereign dominion. He sits down on

² Boice...77.

³ Young, Edward J., *Daniel: Geneva Series of Commentaries* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1949), 153.

heaven's throne. He expands His spiritual kingdom on earth to include all cultures, no longer just Jews. Jesus affirms that His kingdom authority includes His people on the earth in the "here and now." (Matthew 28:18-20)⁴

3. The "saints," not exclusively Jews, receive this kingdom at the First Advent when Jesus ascended. It is an everlasting kingdom, not a millennial kingdom. Its recipients are "saints," not exclusively Jews. The saints receive this kingdom; they do not take it or establish it themselves.⁵
4. The fourth beast, Rome, will oppose God and "wear out" the saints, a reference to Rome's relentless oppression of early Christians.⁶
5. The "...time, times, and half a time" mentioned by Daniel in this context requires significant creativity to make it three and a half years, the "Great Tribulation" period of common dispensational teaching. Plural in Jewish language refers to three or more, not to two or more. This time is definite, but measured by God, not by man. It is a time of intense trial that God shall shorten (or did shorten) for the elect's sake.⁷
6. If Jesus is not presently Lord of lords and King of kings, how can Scripture depict us presently as priests and **kings** with Him?⁸

And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. This kingdom "transaction" occurs "under the whole heaven," not in heaven. It is given to "the people of the saints of the most High," not to believing Jews only.

Paul distinctly affirmed this present "kingdom" rule of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17)

Clearly Paul assigns a present reality to God's spiritual kingdom. He describes what the

⁴ Young...156.

⁵ Young...157.

⁶ Young...161.

⁷ Young...161.

⁸ Young...162.

kingdom of God is, not what it shall be in the future. He depicts its major identifying traits as spiritual and directly associated with the present ministry of the Holy Spirit. We do not enter into the joys and blessings of God's spiritual kingdom by a certain diet or other external rituals, but by three spiritual activities.

1. **Righteousness.** Righteousness in Scripture is always measured by God's "yard stick," not by ours. God, not we, determines what is right living and right action.

2. **Peace.** "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...." (Romans 5:1) Although many Christians interpret justification by faith as "saving faith," what they believe the sinner must do to become a child of God, Scripture consistently uses the term in reference to the faith-state and the faith-actions of a regenerate, or born again, child of God. In the fourth chapter of Romans, immediately prior to this verse, Paul uses Abraham as his example of justification by faith. When Paul referred to Genesis 15:6, "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness," he identified a faithful act of Abraham that occurred some ten to fifteen years after Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees "...by faith...." (Hebrews 11:8) Several years ago I was engaged in a fruitful discussion with a man who viewed Genesis 15:6 as the moment of Abraham's new birth experience, the experiential beginning of Abraham's eternally saved state. When I raised the obvious point that Hebrews 11:8 contradicted his explanation of Genesis 15:6, he answered that Hebrews 11:8 describes "...inferior faith that did not rise to the quality of saving faith." My friend attributed this idea to John Calvin. Whether stated by Calvin or by my friend, the idea that Hebrews the eleventh chapter documents "inferior faith" is patently false and wholly without Biblical support. Genesis 15:6 refers to Abraham's faithful believing of God's promise to him, a promise that God had repeated several times already as Abraham left Ur, his native land, and traveled by faith in obedience to his God.

3. **Joy in the Holy Ghost.** Righteous living, defined by God and not by us, forms the basis in our lives for both a sense of peace within, as well as a God-based

joy. A man cannot “preach himself” into a joyful state of mind. Sadly, many people who fail to understand and to live this “kingdom” lifestyle try to preach joyful discipleship, but the fact that they do so with such a long, somber face and with profound sadness oozing out of their eyes destroys their credibility. You must discover and live this joy before you can teach it to others. It is Christ-centered—in fact, Christ-absorbed—not simply based on a few ideas or beliefs.

Whether we are dealing with the concepts of “assurance of one’s salvation” or with our personal discipleship in far broader terms, the more we make any gain for self, including self-assurance, our primary objective, the more surely we shall fail to gain our objective. Conversely, when we forget self—in fact, crucify self on the daily cross of self-denial—the more we invest our lives and spiritual efforts to serve others. We shall discover glorious assurance of our salvation, along with peace and joy, as by-products of our godly service, but never when pursued as our primary objective. How faithfully are we serving others?

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Worship service each Sunday	10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder	Pastor