



## Study 2— Lord of the Kings

### Daniel 2 & 7

A Quick Quiz – Name the last four prime ministers of Australia?.....How did you go? Here's another question to try out– Name the next four prime ministers of Australia!? It goes to show, looking backwards is one thing but looking ahead is completely different! Trying to 'crystal ball' into the future requires a lot of skill and a whole lot of luck. Who knows what's going to happen!

But in the two chapters of Daniel we're looking at today they have one big thing in common. God does give a glimpse into the future. Daniel is given a picture of what future rulers will be like. There's no *guessing* about what might happen. For Daniel is given insight into what *will* happen. And as we'll see, it's scary stuff too. Kings and Kingdoms will come along. They will be powerful. And they will oppress God's people. But along with the scary things that will take place, Daniel is also given insight into how God won't let their power go on forever. The suffering they cause will come to an end. God's people will be given relief. Eventually, God will intervene and do something wonderful.

In Daniel 1:7 we saw that God gave Daniel the ability to understand dreams. In chapters 2 and 7 we're going to see this ability in action. It may take a bit of time, but it's well worth it - **Read Daniel 2 and 7.**

a) When you compare chapters 2 and 7, what is the different role that Daniel has in each instance?

b) From the dream of chapter 2, use the statue picture to mark what each part is made of. Also using the statue, mark what each part represents according to Daniel's interpretation of the dream.



c) From Daniel 7, draw each of the beasts that are described there. Have a go – you don't have to be a Rembrandt!

d) When you compare the two dreams from chapter 2 and 7, what are the similarities?

Daniel says in 2:38 that Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold, the first kingdom. It's reasonable to suggest that the first beast of chapter 7, a lion, is also Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah 4:7 and 50:44 both describe the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, as a lion. But we also need to be careful when we try to pin down each element of these dreams to a specific person or event in history when no specific interpretation is given.

At this point it's worth pointing out that Daniel 7 is an example of 'apocalyptic literature', which has been notoriously hard to make sense of. You'll actually find the apocalyptic style of writing in others parts of the bible as well - Isaiah, Zechariah, Mark 13 and Revelation. Some features of this sort of writing include:

- \* strange imagery – such as a bear with 3 ribs coming out of its teeth!
- \* symbolic use of numbers
- \* dreams and visions
- \* repeating numbers

People have always tried to match elements of apocalyptic dreams and vision to events and people in history. But perhaps the more important thing to do is to get a sense of the big picture, the way repeating patterns work and the overall sense of what's going on. There may be instances where a part of a dream relates to a specific event in history, but these dreams also show us how God lets things happen in the world in an on-going way.

e) From last week's study, what is the terrible situation the Israelites find themselves in at the time of Daniel?

f) From Daniel's dream in chapter 7, how would you describe the beasts and the way they go about ruling?

g) How does this vision of the beastly kingdoms fit with the experience of Israel at the time of Daniel?

h) In chapter 1 we saw that Nebuchadnezzar's rule and authority over Israel was given by God. Nebuchadnezzar was God's instrument in the world. In Daniel's dream of chapter 7, we see this principle again. Next to each of the verses over, indicate how we see that God is really the one in control.

Here are three different ways the four kingdoms of chapter 2 and 7 have been understood:

**Option 1:** The four kings specifically mentioned in Daniel 1. Nebuchadnezzar 2. Belshazzar, 3 Darius, 4. Cyrus.

**Option 2:** Four kingdoms that go beyond the time of Daniel: 1. Babylon 2. Media 3. Persia 4. Greece.

**Option 3:** Four kingdoms that go even further beyond the time of Daniel: 1. Babylon 2. Media-Persia and 3. Greece 4. Rome (ie. the time of Jesus).

Those who see some reference to the kingdom of Greece usually say that there is a particular connection between the boastful wicked horn who oppresses the saints and Antiochus IV, the Syrian Greek King of the second century BC. Antiochus attacked Israel and set up his own god in the Jerusalem temple.

7:4

7:5

7:6

7:12

i) In the dreams of chapters 2 and 7, what is the thing that ultimately happens? What happens to the world's kingdoms?

j) In Daniel 7, the other 'character' that is introduced is the 'saints of the Most High' v18, 22, 25, 27. What will be their experience?

k) Knowing these realities (questions h, i and j), how should this help God's people (in any time) when they feel the oppressive power of the world's kingdoms?

l) How would you describe the Son of Man 7:12-14?

m) How would you describe His kingdom?

**Read Acts 7:54-56.** What similarities are there between the vision that Stephen has of Jesus, and Daniel's dream (7:13-15). What does this imply about Jesus?

The picture of Daniel 2 & 7 is glorious. In fact it gives us a way into understanding all of history. There are forces which are anti-god. They are beastly and un-human. They set themselves up against God and his people. We see this happen in Daniel's time. It happened with Jesus himself who was murdered. It happened with the early church. We still see it happening today.

But we understand that God is the Lord of the Kings (from Nebuchadnezzar's own mouth! 2:47). God is in control. And God will send his appointed King Jesus to bring final judgement to all. There will be victory, the saints will be vindicated and the saints will receive the kingdom of God.

Are there times in your life when you have felt completely overwhelmed by:

- \* the way the world is going?
- \* the way things are going for you because of the forces at work in the world?
- \* the cost you have to pay for being a Christian?

How does Daniel encourage you as you face these circumstances?



Dr Don Carson is a world renowned bible scholar who has written or edited more than 45 books. He teaches at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Canada. On Friday evening, May 11 or Saturday 12 May, you have the opportunity to hear him speak. Cost is \$25 single/\$40 couple for the Friday night and \$80 single/\$120 couple for the Saturday. Grab a registration form at church on Sunday. This is a rare opportunity.