***Daniel 7:1-14 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. 2Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. 3And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. 4The 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. 8I 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. 9I 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; 10A 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. 12As 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. 14Then 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.***

Last week, we finished with Daniel being drawn up from the Lion’s Den at the command of King Darius. Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and Cyrus. Daniel chapters 1-6 represents a largely historical view. Daniel 7-12 will be largely prophetic. At times it’ll sound a lot like Revelation, Ezekiel, 2 Thessalonians. It is an astounding book.

 Our scripture starts tonight in the first year of Belshazzar. We’ve stepped back into the end of the Babylonian rule. Daniel 7:1-3 *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. 2Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. 3And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.*The first year of Belshazzar as king would have been 541 BC. Daniel had a dream and visions, during the night. He wrote down the main facts, which I take to indicate that the dreams were very detailed, and all of those details did not make it to being written down. The four winds has the meaning of unsettled and chaotic times. In the book of Jeremiah, winds and whirlwinds are used to describe death and destruction. As this vision is predicting coming changes of kingdoms, war, strife, fighting, bloodshed, and a generally troubled time is not an unreasonable interpretation. The fact that there are four winds has the idea that trouble is coming from all directions. These winds were stirring the Great Sea. Revelation 17:15 and Isaiah 17:12 equate Seas with peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. Four great beasts came up from the sea. These represent kingdoms, in keeping with our study of Daniel 2. A straight line can be drawn back to the meaning of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Kingdom will conquer kingdom, each different from the other. Each beast is a kingdom, with different people, languages, laws.

Daniel 7:4 *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.* We start with the first kingdom and this gives the impression that one kingdom will succeed another. This kingdom was like a lion, and had eagles wings. The Ishtar (goddess of fertility) gate in Babylon had a relief carved into it of a winged lion. Jeremiah 4:7 *The lion has come up from his thicket, And the destroyer of nations is on his way. He has gone forth from his place To make your land desolate. Your cities will be laid waste, Without inhabitant.* This referred to Babylon coming upon Judah. Babylon’s national symbol was the lion, along with the eagle. The wings symbolize swiftness, as in Habakkuk 1:8. Given that the winged lion symbol is found in Babylonian art and also on the Ishtar gates, which were the gates triumphant armies marched in by, it is reasonable that this lion with eagle’s wings represents Babylon. The wings were plucked off and it was lifted up. Babylon lost it’s swiftness and courage. It’s power is waning. Of course, we know from our previous study that Babylon fell in 538 B.C., but Daniel was having this vision in 541 BC.

Daniel 7:5 *“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!’ S*uddenly, another beast, the second. As in the image with the golden head, and it will be succeeded by the silver kingdom, we see succession taking place. This is the next beast coming from the Great Sea. Like a bear, but raised up on one side. The bear is favoring one side, meaning that side is weaker than the other. In the Medo-Persian Empire, the Persians were far stronger than the Medes. Darius and Cyrus had allied to defeat the Babylonians. As the Persians were stronger, the bear formed by this alliance would have been weaker on one side, or raised up. Isaiah 13:17-19, written 175 years before the Medo-Persian empire, *says “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, Who will not regard silver; And as for gold, they will not delight in it. 18 Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, And they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; Their eye will not spare children. 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.* Most of the commentaries I read interpreted the three ribs in its mouth as being the three great kingdoms that the Medo-Persian empire conquered as they rose to preeminence - Lydia, Egypt, and Babylon. As a result, the Medo-Persian empire was much larger than the Babylonian empire. They will rule the known world from 538 BC to 331 BC.

Daniel 7:6 *“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.* Now the third beast, or kingdom, comes into view. This kingdom is the belly and thighs of bronze from Chapter 2. This one is represented by a leopard, with four wings on it’s back. This describes Greece and Alexander the Great. He and his army were known for their speed and being able to ambush the enemy. It took him only 12 years to subdue the known world. They traveled from Macedonia to India, to Libya, and into Egypt, about 5000 miles, conquering as they went. Greece defeated the Medo-Persian kingdom at the Battle of Arbela in 331 B.C. The wings of a bird has been interpreted to mean that Alexander the Great rose to power very quickly, but, as soon as he reached his peak, his climb stalled. He died in 323 BC at 31 years old.

Alexander did not have a succession plan. As he died, he said that the kingdom would go to the strongest. As a result, his four generals fought, hence the four heads of the beast, and the kingdom was divided. Cassander took Macedonia and Greece. Lysimachus took Thrace, parts of Asia, Hellespont and Bosporus in the north. Ptolemy took Egypt, Libya, Arabia, Palestine, and Coele-Syria in the south. And Seleucus took Syria and everything to the east.

Daniel 7:7 *“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.* Now we arrive at the fourth beast. Remember in Daniel 2 that the legs were of iron and the feet of clay mixed with iron. This final kingdom was to be dreadful and exceedingly strong, reigning supreme. Iron teeth break and devour. This kingdom conquered and trampled the dust of the conquered under foot, meaning all the conquered became subjects and slaves. This is the Roman empire. Rome conquered Greece to become the dominant power in the known world. Their reign was longer, their power stronger, and their dominion larger than all the preceding kingdoms. *It was different from all the beasts that were before it*. All the other beasts had been kingdoms, but Rome was a Republic. It did indeed have ten weak divisions by the end of it’s reign in 476 AD, just as the iron legs become feet of iron and clay. There had also been 10 Roman emperors before it started to splinter and divide. Rome ruled from 168 B.C.-476 A.D.

Daniel 7:8 *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.* Daniel was considering, literally this means while I kept looking or watched, these ten horns, another little horn arose. The horn starts small, but quickly displaces three of the other horns. This horn is different because it has the ability to observe and communicate, speaking pompous words. Theologians have debated much over the meaning of this little horn – some saying the Papal State, some claim it’s the Turkish Empire, but, given the way that it precedes the appearance of the Ancient of Days, it seems to be the anti-Christ. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 we read of the man of sin, *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* In prophecy, it is possible for scripture to have meaning in two periods of time. We are seeing a shift in view from the future 1000 years away to a future sometime that only God knows. We’ve shifted into end times.

Daniel 7:9-10 *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; 10A 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.* The original language held the idea of setting the throne in place. *And the Ancient of Days was seated*. This is God the Father. His garment is white as snow, His hair like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, it’s wheels a burning fire. Ezekiel speaks of fiery wheels in chapter 1 and 10. A thousand thousands ministered to Him. Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. Now, before we all get out our calculators, these numbers were meant to represent innumerable people. When Jews said, 10000 times 10000 they meant more than can be imagined. The court is seated and books are opened. Judgement is coming.

Daniel 7:11-12 *“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. 12As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*The pompous words, the blasphemies against Christ, are still being spoken by the little horn. The beast is slain and it’s body is destroyed and given to the burning flame. Theologians agree that this is a reference to the destruction of the wicked one at the second coming of Christ. Revelation 19:20 *Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone*. The other beasts before this last had their dominion taken away and their lives prolonged for a season and a time. All these kingdoms had people who lived their lives out in the conquering kingdom. Example: Babylonians in the Persian empire. We know that no kingdom succeeded the Roman empire.

Daniel 7:13-14 *“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. 14Then 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.* One like the son of man, this is Christ Jesus. He comes to the Ancient of days, and comes near before God. He is given dominion and glory and a kingdom. It is an everlasting kingdom that shall not be destroyed nor pass away. All people, nations, and languages will serve him. These are the saved people. Revelation 21:24 *And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.* Clearly, Daniel is seeing a vision of end times. He lay upon his bed and had visions of what is to come. As we will learn as we finish this chapter, Daniel is grieved in his spirit, but he seeks the truth about what he is seeing anyway.

God blesses Daniel because he is found innocent before God, Faithful, Focused, and Fearless, even as he witnesses a vision of end times. May we study and understand so we might stand faithful and true before God at all times as well as in end times.