

08.31.25 ~ Pentecost 12
“God’s Holy Kingdom Will Come”
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Daniel 7:23-28 ^{NLT}

²³ Then he said to me, “This fourth beast is the fourth world power that will rule the earth. It will be different from all the others. It will devour the whole world, trampling and crushing everything in its path. ²⁴ Its ten horns are ten kings who will rule that empire. Then another king will arise, different from the other ten, who will subdue three of them. ²⁵ He will defy the Most High and oppress the holy people of the Most High. He will try to change their sacred festivals and laws, and they will be placed under his control for a time, times, and half a time.

²⁶ “But then the court will pass judgment, and all his power will be taken away and completely destroyed. ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will last forever, and all rulers will serve and obey him.”

²⁸ That was the end of the vision. I, Daniel, was terrified by my thoughts and my face was pale with fear, but I kept these things to myself.

Leader: These Are Prophetic Words from God.

People: Thanks be to God!

Matthew 13:51-52 ^{NKJV}

⁵¹ Jesus said to them, “Have you understood all these things?”

They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”

⁵² Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

Leader: These Are Jesus’ Words of Truth.

All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Heavenly Father, we are listening and trying to understand these apocalyptic words of prophecy and parable. Inform us with your divine presence and wisdom so that we can connect more deeply with you and your kingdom to come. Lord, we seek you and your direction now with these stories in Scripture. Help us to strengthen our relationship with you, so that we will be with the righteous at the end of time. Open our minds and hearts as you guide us through this message and messenger. Thank you for your love and steadfast presence every day. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

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Before we begin our message, I want to thank Melissa for 11 years of outstanding ministry, instrumental performance, and service to The United Baptist Church congregants and staff and former pastors, staff,

and church members. We have been truly blessed by her creative talents of piano, clarinet, and vision. Melissa's willingness to experiment with worship styles and a variety of music genres has provided a deeper, spiritual Sunday worship. Her Christian faith and discipline with her husband's talents have provided the choir and all of us beautiful liturgical Christmas and Easter music and inspiration. Melissa and David's instrumental duets are what visitors and members alike recall from our services here. Thank you, and we will miss you. We have something to present to you as well, so all of you, please stop downstairs at the Conference Room for tea and cake to share your gratitude. We have their new address in the office. We wish you well.

In the last two weeks, we studied Chapter 7 of the book of Daniel. This book is longer and has much interpretive history within it, so I encourage you to go back and read the whole 12 chapters. It will make some of what you've learned in Chapter 7 make sense. This book is what is known as apocalyptic literature involving visions, dreams, and the revelations that come from them. Jesus called Daniel a prophet but those who designed the Hebrew canon did not, so the book is considered part of the Hebrew writings (*Ketuvim*), like the Psalms, Proverbs, and Chronicles. It was placed after Ezekiel, considered one of the major prophets, because he too was deported to Babylon, but about a hundred years after Daniel. If you want a good resource, check out the Chronological Bible for your study.

Daniel, this significant and historical book, is often most remembered for four disciplined faith and God rescue stories in the first six chapters: the strong young men refusing the king's rich diet (being

vegetarians), survival in the fiery furnace, interpreting the handwriting on the wall during the king's banquet, and being unharmed in the lion's den, remember? But as we have learned from Chapter 7-12, this book bridges Israel's history with Jesus and the New Testament, recounting the Babylonian Captivity, while capturing the times of the Gentiles and empires until a Messiah returns. God remains faithful by preserving his covenant people, the Israelites, and blessing them with God's kingdom on earth and in heaven (found in Deuteronomy 28 and 29).

I hope that background helps us place his visions in context. Now, we have already met the four beasts representing four empires or nations: Babylon (the lion), Medo-Persia (the bear), Greece (winged leopard), and Rome (the mongrel beast), but the arrogant, large horn that supplanted three others would devour the whole earth according to his apocalyptic vision of the arrogant 10-horned beast of Rome. The Roman Empire came about not in Daniel's day but in 27 BC before Jesus was born, but we all know the impact Caesar, Herod, and Pilate had on the one who was the Messiah. In the 5th Century AD, the Roman Empire was conquered, and they did not re-unite into another empire. It was the end of that apocalyptic vision, and yet, some theologians say a similar authoritarian ruler will rise up near the end of time. One of the 10 horns will become a king and may exist and control the whole world under one government. During this period, Antichrist's 7 years of rule, from Revelation 7, the saints will prevail: "The sovereignty, dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him (according to one explanation

of end times found at <https://www.Bibleoutlines.com> – not an endorsement).” Do not fear this because, as we learned in the verses from last week, the Messiah will return and claim God’s Holy Kingdom once again and the righteous will be present for that.

It wasn’t just Daniel who spoke in symbols and images. In Matthew 13, Jesus told the disciples seven parables: the Sower, Wheat and Tares, the Mustard Seed, Yeast in bread dough, the Hidden Treasure in the field, a Pearl of Great Price, and the Fishing Dragnet. We read the last three recently. Jesus questioned whether the disciples understood any of them. Although they answered yes, their actions proved otherwise, and they continued to have questions of interpretation. This eighth parable of the Householder is a little different and is a reflective one. The first seven were specific and present about life, faith, evangelism, and ethics, while this last one asks a deeper question.

Remember, Jesus is trying to prepare the disciples to take on his mission and become teachers who could share and explain both old thoughts and new, the law and Jesus’ teachings. They will be like a householder who goes into his attic to declutter a life full of things and experiences. He will pull out some trash and some treasure. The old law has been abandoned by Jesus’ fulfillment of the law. The old ten commandments have been replaced by two. The disciples would be required to deliver the Good News of the Gospel to all, not forgetting the past heroes of the faith and prophets, like Moses and the wilderness escape from Egypt and Pharoah, Abraham, Joseph, David, and more. They are to re-interpret the old stories based on Jesus’ teachings, and what they don’t anticipate or understand are his death and resurrection.

We believers have direct access to the mysteries of heaven or eternity here on earth because of Jesus; but we still need theological interpretation to gain the wisdom to teach others. Do you feel assured that God's kingdom will come again? Why do we study the Bible and worship God week after week? Scripture is beyond our immediate comprehension, so we continue to read, study the history, pray Jesus' words and prayers, marvel at his miracles, sing the hymns inspired by Scripture, and ask the hard questions of the faith. That is why we gather as a body of faith.

This is how Daniel fits in with our sermons. Jesus tells his disciples that although he came to fulfill the law and the prophecy (as our Messiah), they are to keep all the recorded stories and teachings in their hearts and minds, both old and new. Like the householder, they are to be stewards of Christ's teachings and the authority to carry them on through all generations. Aren't we disciples too? That is our task, but how can we carry on if we don't study and remember Christ's ways? Who will you teach? How do you live day by day? **That** is the question and connection to our theme, *Vital Hospitality*. Hospitality is not just service, but it is providing an environment and surroundings that are safe, welcoming, fresh, and "hospitable" to open inquiry, study, comfort, care, and service to others. We try to do that well through our Mission Center and our building usage, yet are we doing that through our Church? Are we creating a culturally relevant and inviting worship experience? Who have you invited to drop in on Sundays? Who are we reconnecting with like we tried to do last year? Are we committed to Kingdom growth as a whole church? Based on the wisdom shared in our lessons today, I think we are moving forward as we clear out and assimilate the old with the new. We

could be better stewards as we need volunteers and strong leadership to help separate the old from the new, renovate, update, and create hospitable spaces. Stewardship is the key word. Thank you to those who are already filling those roles. God's holy kingdom will come and soon. Are we ready personally and as a church? I hope so. Food for thought. Amen? Amen. ||

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we come to you again on our knees not understanding the circumstances and violence of our world today, but we need your intervention. Forgive us our sins. Thank you for imaginative language that gets our attention. Help us to remember to steward our faith and our belongings. May we help others interpret the old with new eyes and fresh ideas. Help us to reflect more on our role in your Holy Kingdom, so that we will be ready when you come again. Move us forward Lord, to help build your kingdom right here as you build the church. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.