
The Course of Kingdom Expansion

Daniel 7:9-18

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We are a Commissioned church. We are a church who is publicly and purposefully following the great commission. Through the gospel the Kingdom of God is being expanded throughout the world to all the people groups. It is an inestimable privilege to participate in and to partner with God in the grand mission of Kingdom expansion. We do not see that expansion as a taking over the kingdom's of this world. Rather, God is extending His heavenly Kingdom by conquering men's hearts through the gospel, through the Word and Spirit granting life and faith.

We have made some significant changes over the last two years to align ourselves more with that mission of kingdom expansion. God has seen fit to bless those efforts. We desire, we want, we crave, that all the glory and praise go to Him. Our efforts are but obedience by the grace He gives and the wisdom He has given. Last April, the Elders spent a retreat thinking through together what Kingdom Expansion means for us here at the Chapel. We worked hard to arrive at a consensus among us and a trajectory for the future.

We have used September over the last few years to exposit the Scriptures, explain our principles and launch new plans. This month we want to continue that tradition as we think about how we understand and how we want to grow in our own part of the expansion of God's Kingdom. This vision will be both to the neighborhoods and to the nations.

We are very excited at the growth God has brought us. Sure, it has made things tight. Yes, we are thinking about the future. Some things we are working on will come into being over the next months. Some things will take longer. I pray that as we talk through this together, we will rejoice in the amazing grace of God to us.

One word to our first time guests. If you want to see or hear our regular expositional preaching, visit our website and go the Pulpit page. Our studies in John are there, both the MP3's as well as the manuscripts. This is an invitation to see what God is doing through the Word, through our story for the going forth of the gospel and the expansion of His kingdom. Maybe you are here and you don't believe any of this. We are happy that you are here. Please stay, ask questions, think carefully and consider believing in Christ and bowing to His sovereign rule.

Finally, some of you have expectations about what this month is going to be about. Some of those are going to be met; some are not. At this point, we see multiple paths before us - we don't know which one God has for us. And that is OK. Our aim is move forward knowing that He will grant us wisdom all along the way.

But we need to locate ourselves in that Kingdom expansion. This morning, it is my privilege to show how we fit in the great scheme of God which was shown to Daniel in in chapter 7. Tonight, we will participate in that expansion through baptism and through Pastor

Mark Schindler rehearsing for us some of our own history. So, today in the Word: big picture and a local history.

The Vision of the Kingdom

(v. 9-14)

We are picking up in the latter part of this vision. What has he seen? He has seen a vision of a parade of filthy beasts. Arising out of the slimy and turbulent sea, four foul and ferocious beasts prowl. No house pets these. Stalking across the Serengeti plains of history, these vicious predators stalk and slaughter and strew the blood and bones of lesser nations in dank dens. Out of the chaos of their origin, driven by a craving hunger for power, they spread cruelty and carnage across time and space.

The first beast appears initially like a lion and with eagle's wings. This beast has its wings plucked and is transformed into a man, standing on his two feet with a sound mind. The second beast is deformed and bear-like, its maws filled with flesh decorated bones, prepared for much slaughter. The third beast is a grotesquely mutated, but powerfully sleek, four-headed, four winged leopard whose hunting grounds were great and wide.

A black cloud of fear, dread and terror trailed in the wake of the fourth beast. Unlike no beast on earth, its jaws were iron, its feet crushing, its head bristling with ten horns. Suddenly, as Daniel watched, a smaller horn grew up among the others then ripped three of the horns out like bloody tree stumps with its roots dripping gore. Then fierce eyes glared out from the little horn while a snarling mouth twisted in great, boasting words.

These beasts represent the course of history from rise of Babylon to the final arrival of God's Kingdom in time, space and history. This period of time is called the Times of the Gentiles. The four beasts represented four kingdoms that are woven into redemptive history: Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, Medio-Persia, Greece under Alexander the Great and Rome.

One of the reasons the fourth beast is different may be rooted in the fact that Rome was initially a geo-political kingdom but is now a cultural-political kingdom. It has given rise to trans-national, multi-millennial civilization.

The Glorious Throne

(v.9-10)

"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; 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 thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened."

What an amazing scene now unfolds. A courtroom is set with stately chairs surrounding the magnificent portable throne on fiery burning wheels familiar to us from Ezekiel. Over against the ghastly and grotesque beasts, the majestic Ancient of Days takes His seat. Ageless in purity of hair and clothes, a pillar of fire jets out before him. Untold numbers are poised to serve and stand to praise. In one motion, the beings on the thrones sit as the court is convened. Beautiful and dread are the books which are brought and opened whose pages crawl with dark deeds and terrible dooms.

The Victorious Execution

(v.11-12)

"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."

In the background, the fierce eyes and foul mouth of the little horn pour out the proud and perverse words. The court renders its decision. Powerful guardians are summoned who execute the final beast, burning its body with fire. The other beasts lose their dominion but retain their lives for a short time.

The Royal Presentation

(v.13-14)

"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."

Words can hardly convey the stately majestic aspect and arrival of this personage. He comes in a cloud and is presented to the great Ancient of Days as a favored son and a faithful soldier. The mantle of rule is laid upon his broad shoulders and the crown of the kingdom pressed upon his stately brow. In his train and under his hand, blessed peoples of all the nations serve, forever. Of His kingdom there will be no end to its spreading horizon or its everlasting dominion.

All through the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as this Son of Man who is both God and man. To Him God the Father has given the dominion. Before his name every knee will bow. He is the Lion and the Lamb. He is the risen and ascended King seated at the right hand of God. It is His kingdom expansion we are called to serve and sacrifice in.

The Interpretation of the Kingdom**(v.15-18)**

In his waking dream, here is what Daniel seeks...

The Request**(v.15-16)**

"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."

Daniel seeks help to allay the alarms and anxiousness of his spirit. In his vision, he approaches one of those who stand around the glorious Presence upon the throne. He inquires as to the truth, the meaning, the interpretation of these things.

The Response**(v.17-18)**

"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."

In two sentences, the interpreter summarizes the meaning and focuses the message. Like these four dreadful beasts, four great kingdoms will arise out of the earth and have dominion. But, in the end, the Most High's sanctified ones, His saints, will receive the kingdom and it will be their eternal possession.

Note three important ideas here in regards to the expansion of God's kingdom.

The kingdom is given to the one who approaches the Ancient of Days. In the interpretation, the kingdom is received by the people of God. In the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, this blending of the Christ and His people is common. It may have created confusion for them; but it is so clear to us now in the New Covenant. The true union between Christ and His people mean that the kingdom is given to Him and it is received by us.

The kingdom that is received is forever. It is an eternal dominion. It is not a kingdom for a short period of time. Consistent with all the promises that are made to Abraham, David, Solomon and now predicted here, the kingdom of God is over all his people forever.

The kingdom is one that is received by God's people from every tongue, tribe and nation. The kingdom referred to here is not circumscribed by one nation, that is the Jews, nor a local geographical place, that is, Israel.

The Advance of the Kingdom

How is this kingdom going to come? Will it come through Christian's taking over governments and instituting Biblical laws? Will it come when the whole world believes the gospel and is saved? Briefly, let's take up a couple of texts and note how Jesus portrays the advance of the kingdom in this age. In other words, how is Daniel 7 going to be fulfilled?

The Kingdom and the Gospel

Matthew 24:14

In Matthew 24:14, Jesus connects the preaching of the gospel with the advance and final fulfillment of the kingdom.

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

As Matthew writes this, he is connecting the good news of the unfolding of the kingdom of God with the gospel. The apostles see the kingdom in this light. The king has come. He has died for the sins of the people. He was raised from the dead and is now ascended to heaven and seated at the right hand of God the Father. From heaven He rules for the good of His people and the glory of God.

The gospel then has two critical aspects – believing the message of Christ as redeemer and bowing to the authority of Christ as ruler. This is the good news. God has provided the way for rebels to be reconciled and to return to their true Lord. This is why every record of gospel preaching in the New Testament has both the content of Christ's saving work and the call to Christ's sovereign rule. Peter closes his sermon with this, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified." (Acts 2:36) Paul, preaching to Gentiles says, "God commands all people everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30-31) Paul writing to Jews and Gentiles at Rome writes in Romans 10:9-13

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. [

This is the good news, the gospel of the kingdom that is being proclaimed throughout the whole world to all the people groups. It is through the preaching of the gospel that God will bring about His kingdom.

But kingdom expansion will come only as the kingdom message is proclaimed. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 10:14-17:

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have

not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

It is all wrapped up in that wonderful paragraph. God sends. We go. We preach the gospel. Some have not obeyed the gospel. But many will believe by hearing the Word.

The King and the Messengers

Matthew 28:11-20

So let me bring this around full circle. Why do we think of ourselves as commissional? Because King Jesus commissioned His apostles who have sent us.

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We have the risen Lord who summons His disciples.

We have disciples, some of whom worship and some of whom hesitate.

We have the King who has been granted all authority in heaven in earth. There, on that mountain, the first outpost of the kingdom of God is established.

We have a charge, a command, a commission given. Make disciples of all the people groups. Making disciples expands the kingdom.

We have the means to do it: evangelizing culminating in baptism and edification aimed at mature obedience to Christ.

We have a covenant, a promise that fuels our motivation. Where the gospel is preached and lived, where people believe and bow, the King is present, all the way until the end of the age.

Reflect and Respond

We are involved in a great and glorious enterprise. We are seeking to extend God's kingdom to all people groups by preaching the gospel and making disciples.

Have you entered the kingdom of God by believing in Christ as your redeemer and bowing to Him as your ruler?

We are assured of the ultimate triumph of God's Kingdom. The kingdom has been given and is now being received by His people.

Now, brothers and sisters, are you of those who worship? Or of those who hesitate?

May God grant that we would partner and participate by God's power in the expansion of His great and glorious Kingdom.