

The Triumph of God's Kingdom

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[0 : 0 0] our gracious father we do thank you again for your word and we do pray as we come to this unusual part of your word that you would help us to concentrate help us to work hard to understand what you are telling us and what you are not telling us so that we may be encouraged and keep living for you for we ask it in jesus name amen well i saw a rather amusing church sign which i showed the wednesday two group a little while ago on the next slide it says don't let worries kill you let the church help i'm not sure they've realized what they've done but we can worry about all sorts of things in life whether it's our own health or that of our families or our futures and we can even worry about the future of our world especially these days when we see what's happening around us we seem to be living in disturbing times which can make us wonder and worry about our future for example i'm sure you've heard last week how north korea fired a missile over japan and now the tensions between north korea and the u.s are such that yesterday the newspaper headline was this one on the next slide that putin thinks they're now on the brink of war now i don't particularly trust president putin but it seems to be the case doesn't it you see these are disturbing events which can make us worry about the future we'll take yesterday's news about the tv advert dad dad's for kids who are promoting a fatherhood by the way happy father's day to all you out there tv channels have been running adverts from this non-profit group for the last 15 years around this time of the year but this year they have been banned why well because they've been deemed too political so on the next slide i think it is uh it's uh around the marriage vote and so because it's celebrating fathers one gender it's deemed too political now it's amazing that organizations like free tv are now so scared to even promote fatherhood because of society's changing views of gender and marriage one writer even said will this mean father's day will also go now i don't want to be over dramatic but these are disturbing times and we can wonder about our future or on the next slide there's a court case against the hobart presbyterian minister campbell markham who wrote against homosexuality on his blog in 2011 so we're talking six years ago and now someone who is not gay has filed a discrimination case against him and this month this in september he is fighting it in the high court and if this can happen in tasmania what does this mean for us here in victoria in fact that some of my staff asked me this very question uh last week at last staff meeting now again i don't want to be over dramatic but it seems to me that we are living in disturbing times which can cause us to worry about the future but it was the same for daniel he lived in disturbing times in fact if you look in your bibles at verse one of our passage today daniel's vision occurs in the first year of belshazzar king of babylon now this makes chapter seven out of chronological order because king belshazzar we've actually met back in chapter five and uh you might remember from chapter five that uh when we looked at that i said that he was actually a vice regent he was ruling for his father nebunaitis who was away for 10 years um he was at his other palace and fighting other wars and so on but this is a disturbing time for daniel because gone are the days of nebuchadnezzar who ended his rule acknowledging god do you remember chapter four nebuchadnezzar was made

like an animal and then he acknowledged god's rule and then he was restored and so he proclaimed god's greatness to all his kingdom but nebuchadnezzar has now died there's a new king on the throne and this king we know from chapter five does not respect daniel's god in fact in chapter five we learned that he would set himself against god he's an arrogant king and so daniel might well have wondered as this new king came to his throne what will this mean for our future as god's people and it's in that context that god gives daniel a vision of the future to help him persevere in the present and not worry now before we get into this vision i also need to say that this is the first of four visions which take up the rest of the book and they are written in a style which for us quite frankly is pretty weird uh the style of writing uses lots of imagery and symbols and it's got a technical name it's called apocalyptic uh so think book of revelation it's that kind of writing and the trick to reading this sort of writing is to look at the big picture without stressing over the little details that's a bit like looking at an impressionist artwork from van gogh or something someone if you stand too close you just see the dots of paint like this on the next slide so here's a close-up shot of what van gogh's paintings and you can just sort of see dots of paint it doesn't make much sense but if you stand back and look at the bigger picture it makes sense so i've got the original here well not the the original that'd be nice wouldn't it but the point is if you stand back it's it's clear isn't it it's one of his famous flower paintings and so that's what we need to do with this sort of writing don't get bogged in the details that we don't know about or not told about but just look for the big picture meaning so with that in mind let's turn to the first part of daniel's vision with beastly kings and kingdoms our point one will be our longest point and you'll need your thinking caps on so point one verse one oh sorry verse two we'll take up verse two daniel said in my vision at night i looked and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea and four great beasts each different from the others came up out of the sea it says now the first thing to notice here is that these beasts come from the sea and the sea in the ancient world was a source of chaos and evil so do you remember the story where jesus uh drove out the demons the legion demons into the pigs do you remember that the pigs then run off the cliff into the sea do you remember it was like this metaphoric of evil turning returning to its own place or in the book of revelation when heaven is described it is described as having no sea i used to surf in my former life so i really hope heaven has a sea but it's metaphoric you see in heaven there's no chaos or evil because that's what sea used to represent in the ancient world but the very fact that these beasts come from the sea already signals bad news now the second thing to notice is that these beasts are well they're quite beastly verse four the first was like a lion and it had wings of an eagle which is not normal i watched until its wings were then torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being and the mind of a human was given to it and there before me was a second beast which looked like a bear it was raised up on one of its sides and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth and it was told get up and eat your fill of flesh after that i looked and there before me was another beast one that looked like a leopard and on its back it had four wings like those of a bird and this beast had four heads and was given authority to rule now if we jump ahead to verse 17 we're told that these beasts represent kings or kingdoms who rule for a time but they described in the first part of the chapter as beasts rather than humans because they do not

rule god's way do you remember in the book of genesis god created humans to rule over creation under him his way and so by describing them as beasts instead of humans the writer is showing us or the vision is showing us that they do not rule as they were created to rule in fact even their descriptions as beasts they're not normal beasts they are unusually or abnormal they are more than beasts extra beastly if you like now immediately we want to know who these beasts represent which kings they represent and what each part of their description means most scholars think they represent the four big kingdoms from daniel's time onwards at babylon persia greece and then rome which spanned over the next 500 years but there is disagreement about that the bottom line is we're not actually told clearly who they are and that's probably so that these beasts can be applied to lots of different rulers down through history who rule like one of these beasts do and we'll see jesus do that next week actually as we come to chapter 8 so the first beast it probably represents nebuchadnezzar though it could represent other people after all back in chapter 4 nebuchadnezzar was humbled remember to become like an animal crawling around and in chapter 4 verse 33 we read that his hair grew to be like the feathers of an eagle and what does this first beast have it has wings like an eagle so there's some parallels there this beast in verse 4 also was lifted up to its feet and given a human mind remember in chapter 4 nebuchadnezzar was humbled he became like a beast and when he acknowledged god's rule he was lifted up to his feet and his mind his sanity returned to him and so it could well be that this beast is nebuchadnezzar or represents his sort of king someone who starts off against god but then is humbled and then rules under god it becomes like a normal human as humans were created to of course it could apply to other rulers in history who undergone underwent the same thing so emperor constantine of the roman empire became a christian apparently the first roman emperor so he would be this type of ruler perhaps and then in verse 5 we have the bear who could be the next big kingdom after babylon which was persia persia it was made up of two nations the persians and the medes but the persians were stronger they were the stronger side and perhaps that's why the bear is lifted up on one side to represent the stronger persian side and they were bloodthirsty hence the three ribs in its mouth and the instructions to eat but again this could be lots of different rulers in history i mean think genghis khan he he was pretty bloodthirsty adolf hitler gassed the hundreds of thousands of jews even president of syria today who allegedly uh ordered those gas attacks earlier this year and then in verse 6 we have the leopard with the four wings and the four heads the the number four often represents all uh like the four corners of the earth represent all the earth uh so the four wings suggest covering all the known world at great speed and the four heads suggest ruling all over the known world and that kind of fits with alexander the great he conquered the known world with great speed just 11 years which was remarkable for that time and he did rule over all the known world but again it could represent other empires who ruled over all the known world the british empire until recently did and then in verse 7 we have a different beast altogether which is even more frightening you see verse 7 after that in my vision at night i looked and there before me was a fourth beast terrifying and frightening and very powerful it had large iron teeth it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left it was different from all the

former beasts and it had 10 horns while i was thinking about the horns there before me was another horn a little one which came up among them and three of the first horns were uprooted before it this horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully he was told that this fourth beast is different it has 10 horns which makes it rather different in the old testament a horn was commonly a symbol of power and the number 10 often in this sort of writing represent represents great or complete so back in chapter 1 for example daniel said to be 10 times better than all the other wise men in other words he was way greater than all the other wise men and so this kingdom's power is with the 10 horns is way greater than the other kingdoms and it's iron teeth and and tramples everything underfoot so perhaps this beast does represent rome with its mighty legions that were feared the world over who made great use of iron and march from place to place trampling underfoot the places they conquered and from this kingdom comes a little horn with well a big mouth it speaks boastfully as though it is god in fact in verse 21 it wages war against god's people and defeats them it kills some of them and in verse 25 it opposes god and oppresses god's people he's the sort of king if you're a christian you don't want to meet in the street who is he well again we're not told perhaps he is a guy called antiochus the fourth who will meet next week but he came from the greek empire or perhaps he was the roman emperor nero who had christians burnt and looked to be defeating them or perhaps even the roman general titus who sacked god's temple in 70 a.d perhaps even more recently it could represent isis or even the hindu nationalist party in india as since taking power in 2014 people have said that persecution towards christians has grown in india and just last month another indian state passed laws which made it illegal to convert to christianity the point is these beasts represent different types of rulers and nations that appear on the world stage in daniel's time it may just be babylon persia greece and rome but either way these are the type of rulers that we can expect to see rising up as we live in this fallen world and from time to time we may even see a ruler who deliberately opposes god and his people like the fourth beast now you might be wondering how on earth was this supposed to encourage daniel when in disturbing times in a worrying future well for starters did you notice that these beasts are all under god's control it's subtle but have a look at verse 6 notice that the leopard was given authority to rule by someone else it seems or verse 5 the bear was told what to do by someone else or verse 4 the beast was lifted up by someone else and and given a human mind by someone else and if you were keep working backwards to verse 2 it was the four winds of heaven that churned the sea and enabled all the beasts to rise up in other words it's god who controls them now you might be thinking why would god raise up such nasty looking rulers well you got to remember we live in a fallen world they're going to come up either way yet god we're being told is in control of them all in the words of chapter 2 it's god who sets up kings and deposes them and brings them down and that's what daniel now sees god doing next do you see verse 9 as i looked thrones were set in place and the ancient of days took his

seat his clothing was as white as snow the hair of his head was white like wool his throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze a river of fire was flowing coming out from before him thousands upon thousands attended him 10 000 times 10 000 stood before him and the court was seated and the books were open now the ancient of days is of course god and he's not called ancient because he has white woolen hair so some people will be glad to hear that and notice that god is pure hence the color white he is awesome hence all the fire coming from his throne and he's ancient because he always existed and his kingdom is the greatest hence the thousands who attend him in fact if the number 10 represents great or complete then 10 000 times 10 000 is like greatness beyond degree that's how great god and his kingdom is and yet at this time we enter a courtroom scene don't we god is sits in court and he opens the books he's about to judge you see and that's what happens in verse 11 then i continue to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking and i kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire now the other beasts had been stripped of their authority but were allowed to live for a period of time you see while kings rise and rule in beastly ways god is still in control and he's the one who both sets them up and will bring them down in judgment and this judgment will be fair i think that's the point of uh one of the beasts being destroyed straight away while the other one's being allowed to live for a bit longer it's almost as though that the boastful one the one that is most evil is judged most severely while the other ones are allowed to live for a bit longer they're stripped of their power and and will eventually be judged now while this judgment idea could be in terms of some rulers losing their power as president or prime minister or whatever and others uh dictators perhaps losing their lives we've seen that in history i think the picture here is meant to be one of final judgment judgment day either way for daniel and for us living in disturbing times that might cause us to worry about our future god is saying yes look there will be beastly rulers rising up but don't worry i am in control and i will one day judge them all i remember driving on the road it was mitchum road actually uh down towards mitchum and uh this car sped past me it was um it was probably doncaster road at this point it was out near tunstall square near coles he kind of sped past me and cut me off and nearly clipped my uh my front the nose and i found it very hard not to retaliate very hard i was very annoyed uh and then a few minutes later as i passed him down at the springvale turnoff uh you see he'd been pulled over by the police and was being booked and i must confess i felt like justice had been done now that doesn't happen to all people every day does it but this vision is saying it will happen to all people on the last day justice will be done for god will judge them and it will be fair yet god will do even more for his people which brings us to the second part of daniel's vision point to verse 13 he repeats the line from verse 2 he says in my vision at night i looked same as verse 2 so we know it's a it's a new part of his vision and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven he approached the ancient of days and was led into his presence he was given authority glory and sovereign power all nations and peoples of every language worshipped

[20 : 20] him his dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed so here we meet a person a new king who replaces the beastly kings and this king is like a son of man in other words he's like a human and that's what the phrase son of man means in fact next week in chapter 8 god will call daniel a son of man but the point here is that this king will be a human not a beast and to be a human remember from genesis is to rule under god as he created us to rule but he will also be god he will have god's authority you see this man does not drive a bmw or mercedes or the latest model of chariot he rides on the clouds of heaven which the old testament says was god's car if you like so on the next slide we read from psalm 68 sing to god sing in praise of his name extol him notice who rides on the clouds or psalm 104 the lord makes the clouds his chariot you see this king will ride on the clouds like god he will have god's authority all authority verse 14 and so we have this king who is both human and god who rules under god with god's authority and whose kingdom will never end does that remind you of anyone i got one person going good just nod you know it starts with j ends with easus j all right you're on board excellent in other words god will replace the beastly kings and kingdoms with his perfect king and a forever kingdom and this kingdom is the one you want to be a part of because this is the kingdom that will triumph the one that will last forever and ever when we moved to melbourne we were told to pick an afl team to support so i asked which one always wins everyone wants to be on the winning team you see i got different answers and so we just picked the team that whose suburb we lived in in sydney which was carlton i think we picked the wrong team because they're third bottom on the ladder but anyway being one of god's people though means you're actually on the winning team for his king is the perfect loving king and his kingdom will endure forever you see and so for daniel living in disturbing times which made for a worrying future this was meant to encourage him and yet seeing such visions was overwhelming for him and so he understandably asked what does all this mean point three verse 15 he says i daniel was troubled in spirit and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me i approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this and so he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things and now notice there seems to be someone with daniel in his vision a kind of tour guide and he gives daniel the meaning of all this in other words he's about to summarize the key message of all the things daniel has seen so what is this key message well verse 17 the four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth but the holy people of the most high will receive the kingdom of the son of man and will possess it forever yes forever and ever in other words god's kingdom will triumph yes there will be beastly kings rising up in history but god's people god's kingdom will triumph you see the jews while they lived in disturbing times that made for a worrying future they had confidence to persevere for not only is god in control but he will also judge the leaders the beastly rulers and they will inherit his kingdom forever with the perfect king

now of course our human nature is always to want to know more especially if it's bad news so that we can try and avoid it and that's what daniel seems to do now that is i think we see a very human daniel here who despite being told the main message still wants to know more you see verse 19 then i wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast with the different who was different from all the others and most terrifying with its iron teeth and bronze claws the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left i also wanted to know that about the 10 horns on its head and the other horn that came up before which three of them fell the horn that looked more imposing than the others and had the eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully and as i watched the horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them until the ancient of days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people the most high and the time came when they possessed the kingdom and then i noticed for a moment that daniel has already worked out a fair bit hasn't he yes he wants he wants to understand a bit more about the horns but he's already worked out that they are opposing god's people he's understood already that the ancient of days will judge them he's understood already that god's king people will then possess the eternal kingdom but he's still not sure about those 10 horns and the little one and so the man gives this answer in verse 23 he gave me this explanation the fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on the earth well we've heard that it will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth trampling it down and crushing it again we've heard that the 10 horns are 10 kings who will come from this kingdom and after them another king will arise different from the earlier ones he will subdue three kings he will speak against the most high and oppress his holy people well daniel's already worked that out and tried to change the set times and the laws the holy people will be delivered delivered into his hands for a time times and half a time but the court will sit and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed as we've heard already then the sovereignty power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the most high and his kingdom the son of man's kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all rulers will worship and obey him it says now i deliberately tried to point out the fact as we went along that this man doesn't give daniel a whole lot of new information does he there's a couple of little details but they're not particularly clear like a time and a heart times and half what does that mean rather the man really reiterates the key message that yep kingdoms will rise but god will judge them and his people will triumph you see when it comes to deserving times that make us worry for the future god tells us what we need to know to keep trusting him he doesn't tell us all the details like who these kings are or even if there's literally 10 of them after all the the number 10 can just mean complete or great nor does he say when all this happens as i said a time times and half it's not clear but you see if god told us every detail then would we actually trust him or would we go it alone now that we have all the information you see god tells us what we need to know to keep trusting him and so he tells daniel what daniel needs to know to keep trusting him that god is in control that these beastly rulers will be judged and that we will win and so daniel ends this chapter deeply troubled and with a face that looks like he's about to be sick and so it seems like the vision hasn't actually encouraged him and yet we know that it must have at least in part for nine years later after this vision he stood up to belshazzar in chapter five told him off told the king off and said that the writing's on the wall god's going to judge you and then last week in chapter six daniel defied the next king darius defied his law willing to go to

the lion's den how was daniel able to do those things well partly because god gave him this vision nine years earlier which told him beastly rulers like belshazzar would rule but that god was still in control and would one day judge them more than that god would replace them with his perfect king and give his people the forever kingdom in other words this vision was part of what helped daniel persevere with confidence and keep trusting god through worrying times and it's the same for us except we have even more reason to persevere with confidence because christ has actually begun to fulfill this vision here's a question for you have a look at your bibles at chapter 7 verse 13 and here's the question where does the son of man that's jesus right where does the son of man ride the cloud to is it to earth as though jesus is returning the second coming or is it to god like when jesus rose after he died on the cross it's to god isn't it and in our second reading which is on the next slide jesus is about to be crucified and raised to life and he says from now on you will see the son of man at the right hand of god and coming in the clouds of heaven that is from now on when jesus dies and is raised again that's when he receives all authority that's why the end of matthew's gospel jesus has all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me jesus will return to judge the nations on judgment day yes and then every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is lord but the point is daniel 7 has already begun to be fulfilled in christ for christ has already been given authority to rule the perfect son of man is already ruling now and so when you believe when you have a promise made to you you might believe it because you know the person who made it but if you start to see that promise being fulfilled it gives you even more reason to believe it doesn't it i mean i mentioned before that i quite like lamb roast and last christmas michelle promised me one uh and that promise of a future roast helped me persevere through the business of christmas and i believed her promise because i knew who made the promise but when i saw her buy the lamb and then start to prepare it the night before i had even more reason to believe the promise and to keep persevering daniel 7 is god's promise to his people which is much more than a lamb roast by the way and it was meant to help them persevere through the worrying times and they believed the vision because they knew god who gave it but we have even more reason to believe it because we have christ who's already begun to fulfill it you see christ has died and risen he's approached the ancient days and given all authority he already rules daniel 7 is already being begun to be fulfilled and so while we live in disturbing times that might make for a worrying future like the possibility of war between the u.s and north korea the increasing absurdity of political correctness banning father's day ads the growing persecution of christians around the world we actually need not worry yes beastly rulers will rise but god remains in control and he will one day pull them over book them call them to account while we drive past to enjoy god's forever kingdom and rule the world with god's perfect king let's pray our gracious father we thank you for this pertinent reminder this morning that while rulers in this fallen world will rise up and not rule under you and sometimes even oppose you and oppress us as

christians we thank you heavenly father that you are still in control that you'll one day judge them and that you will one day bring us completely into your kingdom where we will triumph and rule the world with christ now father we thank you that we can be certain of this promise not just because you made it but because christ has already begun to fulfill it we pray these things in jesus name amen