

“A Clear Vision”

Allan Pole on Saturday evening, January 22nd, 2022



Theme: Let eternity shape the way we live today.

Text: Daniel 7:1-28

Here's a thought: Tony Robbins encourages, "If you keep a clear vision for your future, it will pull you like a magnet through your toughest times."

Having a clear vision is essential for progress – especially through difficult times. Imagine how difficult it would be to walk if your eyesight was poor, if it was dark in the room or if you had your head down. It's not difficult for me to imagine because I have stubbed my toe in the dark on more than one occasion. The chances of reaching my destination without bumping into *someone* or *something* are much better when I can see.

God gave Daniel an overview of world history about 600 years before the birth of Christ, and his dreams and visions are incredibly accurate. As a result, he had a clear vision through difficult times.

Let's look at what he wrote in Daniel 7:1-28:

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. 2 Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. 3 Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. 4 "The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. 5 "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. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!' 6 "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. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. 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 ten horns. 8 “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 man and a mouth that spoke boastfully. 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. 10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. 11 “Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. 12 (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.) 13 “In my vision at night I looked, 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. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. 15 “I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. 16 I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. “So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 17 ‘The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever - yes, for ever and ever.’ 19 “Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which 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. 20 I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell - the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. 21 As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. 23 “He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. 24 The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. 26 “‘But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. 27 Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the

people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' 28 "This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself." NIV

We can live with:

A Temporal Vision



The book of Daniel is a compilation of thoughts and events not in chronological order, and Daniel receives this vision before the events of chapters 5 and 6 – in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. While lying on his bed, Daniel had a dream and visions passed through his mind; then, he wrote down a summary of what he saw.

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary provides us with some insight into the setting of what Daniel saw:

The Hebrews were a land-loving people who distrusted a large body of water such as the Mediterranean Sea. To them the sea was a perilous and forbidding place. The sea therefore became a symbol of the seething nations of the world and of the troubled lives of the unrighteous. Perhaps this is why the apostle John spoke in Revelation 21:1 of the glorious new heaven and new earth as a place in which "there was no more sea."

These sea monsters, representing the forces of chaos and disorder, came up out of the stirred-up sea. The great sea referred to in verse 2 is probably the Mediterranean Sea, used figuratively to represent the nations where they lived. Four beasts arise from these nations to dominate them. These beasts represent kingdoms linked to the forces of chaos that bring disorder to God's world then made to submit to His order.

Have you ever wondered what a water buffalo sees?



The first and most impressive beast should have traits of the lion, the king of animals and the eagle, the king of birds. It stands to reason that these four beasts represent the same four kingdoms in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter 2. Therefore, let's review The Wiersbe Bible Commentary and a popular interpretation of what this statue means.

The large image represented four Gentile kingdoms:

1. The head of gold - Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian kingdom. It lasted from 636 B.C. to 539 B.C.
2. The breast and arms of silver - the Medo-Persian kingdom (539 to 330 B.C.). Darius the Mede conquered Babylon (Daniel 5:30-31).
3. The belly and thighs of bronze - the Grecian kingdom (330 to 63 B.C.). Alexander the Great established what was probably the largest empire in ancient times. He died in 323 B.C.
4. The legs of iron and feet of iron and clay - the Roman Empire (63 B.C. to about A.D. 475). Iron represents strength, while clay represents weakness. Rome was strong in law, organization, and military might, but the empire included many groups, eventually forming division. "The people will be a mixture and will not remain united" (Daniel 2:43 NIV).

The Stone, the Messiah, came to destroy the image, judge His enemies and establish His universal kingdom.

Even though it lasted less than a hundred years, the Babylonian kingdom was magnificent and widespread. Even though the three empires that followed lasted longer, the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream portrays each domain as inferior to the previous one.

With this parallel in mind, we would interpret the four beasts to refer to these kingdoms (from Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary):

1. The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle, which refers to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian kingdom. The torn-off wings pointed to Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation in Daniel chapter 4 when he was overcome by insanity and lived in the wilderness for seven times or seven years.

2. The second beast, which looked like a bear, was raised up on one of its sides, had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth and was told, "Get up and eat your fill of flesh!" The bear represents the Medo-Persian kingdom, and the three ribs represent the three kingdoms that the Medo-Persians devoured - Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.
3. The third beast looked like a leopard. It had four wings like a bird on its back. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. The leopard represents the future Greek Empire and its dominance under Alexander the Great's leadership. Four symbolizes universality (note the "four winds," in verse 2), and wings are synonymous with speed. Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, the Greeks rapidly conquered the known world. Four heads describe "heads" of government. Alexander's empire was divided among his generals into four different parts after his death.
4. The fourth beast did not look like any known animal. Since this beast follows Greece, it may represent Rome. The horns here represent rulers. Though the little one begins small, it would become the greatest. This little horn and the beast from the sea in Revelation 13 appear to be the same king and kingdom.

Revelation chapter 13 talks about the mark of the beast. Amid ongoing modern-day speculations about this mark, I appreciate Nicholas Schaser's comments (<https://weekly.israelbiblecenter.com/is-vaccination-the-mark-of-the-beast>):

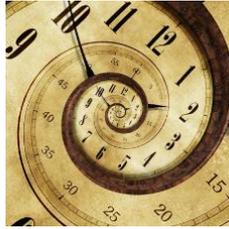
Scripture is a reminder of past trials and future hope. Yet many readers use the biblical text as a kind of crystal ball that offers encrypted allusions to present predicaments. For a person to take the mark of the beast is a symbolic way of saying that one has abandoned the commandments of God. Understanding the real meaning of the beast's mark depends on careful exegesis, not on current events. Those marked in Revelation choose to side with the beast rather than the Lord.

These dreams, visions and interpretations left an indelible impression on Daniel. He knew that the kings and kingdoms of this world would have their time in the sun, but they would come, and they would go. As impressive as these kings and kingdoms were at the time, they all lusted for more power, possessions and places because they lived with a temporal vision.

There is a massive global shift going on in the world today. While many developing countries look at the west with admiration, our spiritual, moral and economic foundations are crumbling. While the church in the west shrinks, the church in other parts of the world grows exponentially. A good look at historical and current events from a bird's eye view should shape the way we live today.

How do current events affect you and your daily life? How do the people and circumstances around you affect you and your everyday life?

We can live with:
A Temporal Vision
or
An Eternal Vision



We have talked enough about the beasts' kingdoms. Let's now talk about the *best* kingdom.

Daniel writes in verses 21 and 22:

21 As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. NIV

While earthly kings and kingdoms come and go, the message is clear – God and His kingdom will last forever! I am less sure of how the details around the fourth beast will play out. However, I look forward to the Lord removing the powers of darkness so we can live in His everlasting kingdom. Worshipping and serving Him is our eternal destiny.

Be careful of what you rub in your eyes. I accidentally rubbed ketchup in my eyes, and now I have Heinzsight.

Daniel and his three friends rose to prominence in the Babylonian and Persian empires – the world's superpowers of their day. Daniel served for more than 60 years under four kings. He was neither enamoured with nor distracted by kings and kingdoms because he faithfully served the *King of kings*. Daniel lived and led with a clear vision, wisely discerning how to be *in* the world but not *of* the world.

Tony Robbins encourages, "If you keep a clear vision for your future, it will pull you like a magnet through your toughest times."

Jesus explains to His disciples in John 16:28-33:

28 I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." 29 Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. 30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone

ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.” 31 “You believe at last!” Jesus answered. 32 “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. 33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” NIV

We have challenges now, but the Lord calls us to look beyond these short-term challenges and to keep our eyes on Him and His long-term rewards. Let us live with an eternal vision and be about the Lord’s business.

Daniel concludes his description in verse 28, “This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”

If we had such an incredible revelation, we would want to post it on social media, write a book about it and go on a speaking tour. Daniel’s reaction is quite different. Warren Wiersbe writes (The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament):

How did Daniel respond to this great revelation? He was deeply troubled and his face turned pale, but he didn’t tell anyone what the Lord had shown him. We shall learn in later chapters that after he had received a vision from the Lord, Daniel often became ill and was unable to work. This is quite unlike some “prophetic students” today who, when they think they’ve discovered a great truth, go on radio or television and tell everybody what they think they know. It’s a dangerous thing to study prophecy just to satisfy our curiosity or to give people the impression that we are “great Bible students.” If divine truth doesn’t touch our own hearts and affect our conduct, then our Bible study is only an intellectual exercise to inflate our own ego. Said A. W. Tozer: “The Bible doesn’t approve of this modern curiosity that plays with the Scriptures and which seeks only to impress credulous and gullible audiences with the ‘amazing’ prophetic knowledge possessed by the brother who is preaching or teaching!”

Dreams, visions, revelations, prophetic words and words of knowledge are wonderful, undeserved gifts from the Lord. Beware of letting these heavenly insights puff us up. We are to love the Lord and love our neighbour more profoundly and humbly in response to these beautiful gifts. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 8:1b-2:

We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. NIV

I find that the more I know, the more I know I don’t know. How does understanding God’s plans for the future affect you and your priorities?

I am annoyed when my glasses get spotted, smudged, streaked or fogged up, so I like to clean them every day or two. I have tried to drive through driving rain with poor windshield wipers, so I have replaced them. I have struggled to steer our old truck on a cold night when the defrost does not blow enough warm air, so I had to open the windows even though I became uncomfortable. Having a clear vision makes all the difference.

We can live with:

A Temporal Vision

or

An Eternal Vision

Let eternity shape the way we live today.

