**SPOILER ALERT: HOW THE STORY ENDS**

**(Daniel 7:1-28)**

 Have you ever had the experience of reading a book and you got so engrossed in the story that you skipped to the last chapter just to find out how it ends? Some people are just impatient. Others simply don’t like surprises.

 I’m like the latter. My Sundays are usually busy; so, I rarely have time to sit down and watch an entire football game. I’m not sure why the still are, but my team is the Dallas Cowboys. When they play on Sunday, I often record the game. When I get home on Sunday night, I look on the internet to see whether or not they won. If they won, I watch the game. If they lost, I delete the recording and don’t bother to watch it. I figure there is no use watching something that I know will be disappointing in the end. This year I have deleted a lot of Cowboys games without watching them.

 Then, there are those who don’t want anyone to spoil the surprises. If they are reading a review of a movie they want to watch, and they find the words “spoiler alert,” they quit reading. They don’t want the drama of the movie to be lessened by knowing ahead of time what is going to happen.

 The title of tonight’s message is, “Spoiler Alert: How the Story Ends.” Do you know how our story ends? If you haven’t yet gotten around to reading the entire Bible, and if you haven’t read the final chapters of Revelation, I want to end the suspense for you. Now, if you don’t want to know, you have my permission to leave. I won’t try to make you stay. I will say, however, that knowing how the story ends will encourage us to be faithful to the end. Knowing how this story ends is actually a good thing to know. It is helpful; it’s beneficial.

 Do you want to know how it ends? I can answer the question with just two words, each of which are just one syllable long. Are you ready? Here it is . . . God wins. God wins, and if you are on His side, you win, too.

 The interesting thing is that you don’t have to go to the Book of Revelation to find out how things end. We can read about it in the Book of Daniel.

 Before we look at tonight’s passage, let me give you just a quick overview of Old Testament history. I will review it from 50,000 feet, so to speak:

* In the first 11 chapters of Genesis we see the beginning of the human race . . .
* Beginning in Genesis 12 we begin to read the stories of the patriarch: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob . . .
* Then, we come to the story of Joseph, and see how the Jewish people come to live in Egypt.
* After many years of bondage, God sends Moses as a Deliverer. After they are finally freed from Egypt, God’s people settle in the Promised Land.
* After the death of Joshua, things start to go south for them, and we enter the time of the judges.
* Samuel is the last of the judges and the first of the prophets. We enter the united monarchy. There were just three Kings during that period: Saul, David, and Solomon.
* After Solomon’s death, we come to the divided monarchy. The Northern Kingdom falls first in 722 B.C. to the Kingdom of Assyria.
* The Southern Kingdom falls in 586 B.C. to the Kingdom of Babylon. Before they fell, Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem in 605 B.C. That was when Jewish youths were taken captive. Daniel was among those.
* With the fall of the Southern Kingdom, the Jews were taken into exile. The exile ended in 539 when Cyrus came to power. That was when the Kingdom of Babylon fell to the Kingdom of the Persians. Cyrus issued an edict allowing the Jews to return to their homeland if they wished. Not everyone did.
* It took a long time to rebuild the temple and eventually the walls around Jerusalem.
* Some of the books of the OT were pre-exilic. Some were exilic, and some were post-exilic. Daniel never made it back to Jerusalem; yet, he is one of the greatest heroes and brightest lights of the OT.

 In the first half of Daniel we see Daniel interpreting dreams, but in the last half of Daniel we find Daniel having dreams, and God let him know what those dreams meant.

 The last half of Daniel is what we call apocalyptic literature. It is highly symbolic. The purpose is to encourage people who are downtrodden and fearful of what the future held. The message, which was couched in this symbolic language, was meant to encourage them and to help them remain faithful. In this respect, the last half of Daniel is much like the Book of Revelation.

 Let’s read Daniel 7. Based on these verses, I want to make three simple statements that help us to see how the story, our story, ends.

1. **THE STORY ENDS WITH THE ANCIENT OF DAYS JUDGING THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD.**

Let’s consider some of the details of Daniels dream. It is very similar to the dream Nebuchadnezzar had in chapter 2. The difference is that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a statue that was made of four different metals. Each metal represented a different Kingdom. Daniel, however, dreamed about four different beasts, and each beast represented a different Kingdom, but each one corresponded to the ones about which Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed.

 From v. 2 we know that Daniel foresaw days of great and terrible turmoil. As wind churns the tempestuous sea, the days ahead will not be calm and serene.

 Lion with wings = Babylon (v. 4)

 Bear = Persia (v. 5)

 Leopard with wings = Greece (Alexander) (v. 6)

 Dreadful beast = Rome (vv. 7-8)

 There is not a one-to-one correspondence with every detail. Many people view the little horn as the antichrist who will come in the very last days. I don’t know if he is the antichrist, but he is certainly an antichrist. Look with me at 1 John 2:18.

 Let’s look at Daniel 7:9-12. Consider that phrase “the Ancient of Days.” For different reasons, we kiddingly call people “ancient.” Truthfully, that is not a very accurate description of anybody. The Bible says our lives are like a mist, a vapor that appears for a little while and then is gone. Life goes quickly.

 Only God qualifies as the Ancient of Days. Daniel has a dream of a courtroom scene with God occupying a throne. The deeds of all men have been accurately recorded. From that record, God justly judges all those who stand in opposition to Him.

 There are two kinds of judgment—passive judgment and active judgment. Passive judgment is when God lets people reap what they have sown. If you abuse your body with alcohol and you get cirrhosis of the liver, God is not actively judging you. He is letting the natural consequences of your actions unfold.

 This courtroom scene, however, depicts active judgment.

1. **THE STORY ENDS WITH THE SON OF MAN REIGNING OVER HIS ETERNAL KINGDOM.**

 Look at vv. 13-14. This phrase Son of Man is important in the NT. Jesus routinely used that phrase to refer to Himself. It is used 69 times in the synoptics and 12 times in John. I used to think that Jesus used the title Son of Man to point out His humanity. We know that Jesus is fully God and fully man. Early on, some people denied the humanity of Jesus. They said that if Jesus had been walking along the beach, He would not have left any footprints in the sand.

 This is why John pointed out in John 4:2-3 that the one thing that determines whether or not a testimony about Jesus is true or false is whether that one making the testimony confesses that Jesus came in the flesh.

 It is by reading Daniel that we learn why Jesus used the title Son of Man about Himself. He was saying that He is the rightful recipient of an everlasting kingdom.

 Kingdoms and civilizations come and go with great regularity. The Kingdom of the Son of Man, however, is an everlasting dominion that will never pass away.

 Look with me at Joshua 3:10. What happened to all those people groups? I have a friend who says that the continued existence of the Jews is one of the greatest arguments for the reality of God. How do we explain that the Jewish people are still around?

 Because of what Jesus did, however, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female, neither slave nor free. We are all one in Christ Jesus.”

1. **THE STORY ENDS WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD ENJOYING THEIR**

 **COMPELTE VICTORY.**

 Let’s consider vv. 15-28. Daniel was still having his vision, and in his vision, he saw a Being standing by, presumably an angel, and he asked for help in understanding the meaning of his dream.

 Look at vv. 18 & 27. The Ancient of Days gives dominion to the Son of Man, and we who trust in Him are given the Kingdom. Since it is a Kingdom that will never be destroyed, we will live in victory forever.

 During the Christmas season in Philadelphia back in 2010, something interesting happened at the Macy’s Department Store. It was called “a random act of culture.” The Philadelphia Opera placed 650 singers at various places in store. They were disguised as shoppers. All of sudden, the music of the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel’s Messiah began to play, and those singers began to sing it to a throng of surprised and delighted shoppers. There is a Youtube video that shows us what happened.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wp_RHnQ-jgU&t=42s>

 The lyrics of the Hallelujah chorus are an apt description of the victory Jesus has won: “The Lord omnipotent reigneth . . . The Kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ . . . And He shall reign forever and ever.”

 That’s how the story ends and how our eternal victory begins.