

Daniel's Vision Of The 4 Beasts: Part 2

Daniel 7:15-28

Intro: This morning we take up the interpretation of Daniel's vision of the four beasts in chapter 7. As we noted last Sunday, Daniel's dream here in chapter 7 corresponds exactly with Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2, but in a significantly different form—*ferocious animals instead of polished metals*. According to chapter 7 verse 17: "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth." Virtually all commentators agree that you have the same sequence of Gentile empires pictured in chapter 2 and 7. Daniel's prophetic vision here in chapter 7 adds many more details than were revealed in chapter 2.

Daniel chapter 7 falls into two major parts. The first part in verses 1-14, which we looked at last Sunday, present **Daniel's Vision Of The Four Beasts**. The second part of the chapter, verses 15-28, provide **The Divine Interpretation Of Daniel's Vision**.

Before moving on the interpretation of Daniel's vision in verses 15-28, permit me to provide a brief overview of what we learned last Sunday. A comparison of Daniel chapters 2 and 7 reveals a succession of four Gentile kingdoms that will be destroyed and succeeded by God's eternal Kingdom. Daniel was told that the beasts are kings, but he was not told the identity of any of the kings.

In chapter 2 *Nebuchadnezzar was identified as the head of gold* (2:37-38). It may be inferred, therefore, that the first beast, the winged lion, represented both Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom, Babylon.

The second beast, **the bloody bear, represents the Medo-Persian empire**, who conquered Babylon and reigned supreme for 200 years (539–336 B.C.).

The third beast Daniel saw, a **leopard with four wings and four heads, referred to Greece and Alexander the Great**, who conquered Persia and its vast empire between 334 and 330 B.C. Alexander's lightning swift conquest of the known world of his day is without precedent in the annals of world conquests.

The four heads on the leopard, you recall, is a reference to the four major divisions of Alexander's empire following his death in 323 B.C. (Dan. 8:8, 22).

His vast kingdom was divided among his four generals. Cassander took Macedonia (Greek Peninsula); Lysimachus was allotted Thrace and Bithynia (present day Turkey); Antigonos took Babylon and north Syria; and Ptolemy was given Egypt. The land of Israel was stuck in between Syria in the north and Egypt to their south, and was therefore ruled back and forth between the northern, Selucid rulers, and the southern, Ptolemaic rulers in Egypt.

Daniel described the fourth beast as unlike anything he had ever seen. This indescribable beast was more terrifying and powerful than the three preceding beasts, which were all ferocious and destructive. **The empire represented by this mongrel beast was Imperial Rome.** This frightening beast had large iron teeth with which it was able to crush and devour its prey. What it does not destroy or consume with its teeth, it crushes under foot. Rome crushed and assimilated into itself the three previous empires Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece (cf. Dan. 7:19).

Another significant feature of this fourth beast was that it had 10 horns. According to verse 24 they represent 10 kings who will rule simultaneously in the latter days. As Daniel focused his attention on the 10 horns, he saw another little horn begin to emerge from among the ten (v. 8). Daniel watched as this little horn rose up among the 10 horns, and uprooted three of the existing kings. This little horn was noted for its intelligence (it had the eyes of a man) and it blasphemed the God of heaven. This little horn is a reference to Antichrist.

Daniel continued watching the little horn because of his boastful words (v. 11). He kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed by burning fire (Rev. 19:20).

Identification of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (vv. 13-14)

Following the little horn's destruction in v. 11, Daniel kept looking in the night vision and watched as one like a "Son of Man" descended from the clouds of heaven, and is presented to the Ancient of Days. "The Ancient of Days" (vv. 9, 13) refers to God the Father. The "One like a Son of Man" (v. 13) refers to Israel's Messiah, Jesus Christ. This is the name that Jesus used most frequently of Himself during His earthly ministry. It is used 31 times in Matthew alone.

This event pictures God the Father's sovereign bestowal of glory and a kingdom upon His Son, Jesus Christ, at His second coming to earth as King of kings

and Lord of lords. The result will be that all peoples, nations, and men of every tongue/language will serve Him. His dominion will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (v. 14). **Daniel 7:13** is the counterpart of **Matthew 24:28-30** and **Revelation 19:11-16**, both passages describing Messiah's second advent in power and great glory.

Look next with me at:

II. The Divine Interpretation Of Daniel's Vision (7:15-28)

A. Daniel's response to the vision was one of distress and alarm (v. 15)

15 "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me."

Daniel's vision caused him great emotional stress and alarm. Even after the vision is explained to him by an angel, Daniel remains greatly alarmed (v 28).

B. Angelic interpretation of Daniel's vision (vv. 16-28)

1. Daniel's request for insight (v. 16a)

16a "Daniel approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this."

For some reason Daniel, who had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's earlier dreams, is not provided the ability to interpret this vision. So he approached one of those standing nearby, an angel later identified as Gabriel (8:16).

2. The four beasts explained (vv. 16b-18)

16b The angel made the interpretation of these things known to Daniel. He explained in v. 17, "the four great beasts represent four successive kings and their kingdoms that would arise from the earth."

As noted earlier, the four kingdoms are Babylon, represented by the winged-lion; Medo-Persia, represented by the ferocious bear; Greece, represented by

the winged leopard with four heads; and Rome, represented by the non-descript beast.

3. God's promise to Israel fulfilled (v. 18)

18 'But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'

The angel tells Daniel that when the Son of Man, Jesus Christ comes, the saints, the believing Jewish remnant living when Christ returns, will be ushered into the Davidic Kingdom, in fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The saints refers to believing Jews, and not to Christians saved in this present Church age. Paul explains in Ephesians 3:4-5 and Colossians 1:26-29 that the Church is a mystery, an truth God never before revealed by God in the Old Testament.

4. The exact meaning of the fourth beast (vv. 19-28)

a. Daniel's request for greater insight (vv. 19-22)

Daniel remained troubled by the fourth beast and so he asked the angel to provide him with the exact meaning of the fourth beast, the ten horns, and the little horn that waged war against the saints of God, v. 19

19 "Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet."

Daniel recalls his vision of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed, and trampled down with its feet.

20 He was even more perplexed by the meaning of the ten horns that were on the head of the fourth beast, and the other little horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates. Several things we learn about this coming worldwide ruler: **first**

he will possess great oratory skills. He will utter great boast, deceptively promising to have the answers to the world's woes. **Second**, he will be larger in appearance—referring to his striking physical appearance. This reminds me of King Saul, who was a head taller than anyone else in Israel.

Third, he will be anti-God, v. 21 As Daniel kept looking, he watched as the little horn waged war with the saints and over-powered them. We will learn more about this aspect of Antichrist's ruthless Satanically energized rule when we study Revelation chapters 13 and 17.

The little horn's brutal reign will come to a sudden end when the Ancient of Days passes judgment against him in favor of the saints of the Highest One, who will take possession of the kingdom (v. 22). The "saints of the Highest One" refers to the nation Israel, who will take possession of the kingdom forever (vv. 18, 22, 27).

b. The angle's reply (vv. 23-27)

23 The angle tells Daniel that "The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth different from all previous kingdoms.

The fourth kingdom is typically identified as a revived Roman Empire. The leader of this fourth empire will devour the whole earth, and tread down and crush anyone who attempts to oppose him. This anticipates the coming of a ruthless worldwide dictator, who will organize a one-world government under his totalitarian control.

This future ruler will be aided by ten kings, and he himself will be an eleventh v. 24,

24 'As for the ten horns, out of this [fourth] kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

We can look for a Ten-Nation Federation to arise out of the old Roman Empire. The final emperor will come to power by killing three of the leaders of the Ten-Nation Federation. It should be noted that a federation of 28 European nations (the EU or European Union) currently exist, and when

the time is right, a 10 Nation Federation comprising a revived Roman Empire, will come to power.

In spite of his great power, this fourth beast and his kingdom will be characterized by progressive weakness, deterioration, and division. The various nations making up the EU today hold to many different governing philosophies: Monarchial, Democratic, Socialists, Totalitarian, etc. Even though they differ widely on many complex issues, yet they will ban together for political, economic, and military strength. This is similar to the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image in chapter 2—a mixture partly of iron mixed with common clay.

The little horn's boasting turns to blasphemy, v. 25 'And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

'He not only speaks against the Most High, he oppresses the saints. He intends to make changes in time and in law. Just what this means is unclear, but it suggests this arrogant king not only speaks against God, but, like Satan, he aspires to change the order God has established. He surpasses those before him by speaking boastfully, then blaspheming, and finally seeking to overthrow God's order.

The little horn's end is determined, v. 26 But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

The Kingdom of God is established v. 27 'Then the sovereignty, the 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.'

28 At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself.

Daniel's vision ends here in v. 28, but its impact on him does not. "This

prophetic panorama of the times of the Gentiles was so awesome to Daniel that he was deeply moved” (Dwight Pentecost, *Class notes on Daniel*). His thoughts continued to alarm him, and his face paled. Yet Daniel told no one of his vision, keeping the matter to himself.

Conclusion

The message of Daniel’s prophetic vision is really quite simple and may be summed up this way. Before the Kingdom of God is established on the earth, four earthly kingdoms will rise and fall. These kingdoms go from bad to worse. Arrogant, boastful, and even blasphemous kings will reign over the nations, opposing God and oppressing His saints. All of this is by divine decree. The four Gentile kingdoms Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome have come and gone. All that remains is the revival of the old Roman Empire, composed of a Federation of Ten Nations. Out of this league of Ten Nations the little horn will come to power over the whole world. He will remain in power for seven years, at the end of which time God will remove him and establish His promised eternal kingdom. Then the saints will receive the kingdom, which will never end.

Dr. Pentecost writes: “Toward the end of the times of the Gentiles, world-wide authority will be exercised by one called “a little horn” who will seek to prevent Christ’s rule on the earth by destroying God’s covenant people. His short reign of seven years will be terminated by the Second Advent of Christ. At His coming Christ will [destroy the beast and consign him to eternal fire (Rev. 19:20)], and establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth in fulfillment of God’s covenant with Israel.”

Closing prayer:

Closing song: *I See The Lord, Seated On His Throne, Exalted!*