

## Daniel 7

We have just looked at Daniel 2, and the dream of the great image that Nebuchadnezzar had. There was a long story leading up to the explanation of the dream.

Daniel 7 is different. It gives a short narration of the time and place that it happened and not much more.

Daniel 2 was half story and half prophecy. Other than the brief introduction, Daniel 7 is entirely prophecy, and it sets the tone for the rest of the book which is entirely prophecy.

Let's compare Daniel 2 and 7. Daniel 2 was a dream to a king. Daniel 7 was a dream to Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan, but Daniel was a prophet of God. The dream of the image was given to enlighten the king first and foremost. The dream of Daniel was given to be communicated to God's people down through history.

In Daniel 2, the dream was of a static object. In Daniel 7 the vision is of beasts, and their actions are part of the story.

Daniel 2 is a sketch. Daniel 7 is a painting, so to speak.

Each successive vision in Daniel shows more activity and more detail. We will see more as we go along.

We also find that Daniel 7 has its own internal chiastic structure.

- A. Three beasts, vss. 4-6
  - B. Fourth beast, vs. 7
    - C. Little horn + speaking, vs. 8
      - D. Judgment scene, vss. 9-10
        - C'. Little horn speaking, vs. 11a
          - B'. Fourth beast, vs. 11b
            - A'. Three beasts, vs. 12

This chiastic structure puts its emphasis on the judgment at the central event of the chapter. Both negative and positive things happen as a result of the judgment.

Let's go.

### **Daniel 7:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

Daniel gives the where and when, and gets right into the story.

### **VIDEO Daniel 7:2-8 (NLT)**

<sup>2</sup> In my vision that night, I, Daniel, saw a great storm churning the surface of a great sea, with strong winds blowing from every direction.

<sup>3</sup> Then four huge beasts came up out of the water, each different from the others.

<sup>4</sup> The first beast was like a lion with eagles' wings. As I watched, its wings were pulled off, and it was left standing with its two hind feet on the ground, like a human being. And it was given a human mind.

<sup>5</sup> Then I saw a second beast, and it looked like a bear. It was rearing up on one side, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And I heard a voice saying to it, "Get up! Devour the flesh of many people!"

<sup>6</sup> Then the third of these strange beasts appeared, and it looked like a leopard. It had four bird's wings on its back, and it had four heads. Great authority was given to this beast.

<sup>7</sup> Then in my vision that night, I saw a fourth beast—terrifying, dreadful, and very strong. It devoured and crushed its victims with huge iron teeth and trampled their remains beneath its feet. It was different from any of the other beasts, and it had ten horns.

<sup>8</sup> As I was looking at the horns, suddenly another small horn appeared among them. Three of the first horns were torn out by the roots to make room for it. This little horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth that was boasting arrogantly.

What a strange conglomeration of creatures!!

A lion with wings of an eagle, which were stripped off. Then it stood and acted human and had a human mind.

A bear with one shoulder taller than the other and 3 ribs in his mouth.

A speedy leopard with 4 heads and 4 wings.

And then a great monstrous, terrifying, strong and dreadful non-descript beast with iron teeth, that went around eating and crushing it's victims and stomping the remainder of them into the ground.

This was a different beast, and it had 10 horns.

As Daniel watches, a new little horn pops up and tears out 3 of the first horns by the roots. This little horn had human-like eyes and a mouth that spoke great, arrogant, or boastful things.

The next scene takes us to Heaven, then back to earth.

### **Daniel 7:9-14 (KJV)**

<sup>9</sup> I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

<sup>10</sup> A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

<sup>11</sup> I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

<sup>12</sup> As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

<sup>13</sup> I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of

heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

<sup>14</sup> And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Daniel must have had a slight clue as to what this vision was about, but he was not sure, so he asks an angel standing by what it meant.

The brief response was that the 4 beasts were 4 kingdoms that would arise from the earth. But how do we identify these beast-kingdoms?

The short answer is, by looking at the rest of Daniel. Daniel 2 begins with Babylon and then covers Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the divided kingdoms and then the second coming.

Daniel 8 begins with the Persians and moves on to Greece and Rome. Daniel 11 begins with the Persian kings and goes on to the second coming.

And let's not forget the chiastic structure that we see in the Chapters 2-7, which puts chapter 2 and 7 in parallel.

So it is obvious that Daniel 7 has the same concern with nations and the eventual coming of Christ as Daniel 2.

And the beasts are appropriate.

32 (Text: Daniel 7:4) "The first beast was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it."

What could better symbolize Babylon, the first world empire (represented by the head of gold in the towering statue), than a lion-the king of beasts and one of the symbols used by the ancient Babylonians themselves to represent their vast empire?

Visitors to the excavated ruins of Babylon today can see lion-shaped bas-reliefs on baked-brick walls and monuments, often with eagle wings!

As the lion is noted for its strength and conquest, King Nebuchadnezzar's military conquests were unsurpassed. The rapidity with which Babylon gained power and spread its empire is appropriately symbolized by the eagle's wings.

(Text: Jeremiah 4:7) Notice that God uses the same symbol of a lion to represent Babylon: "A lion has come out of his lair; a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to lay waste your land..." Jeremiah 4:7.

The proud, pompous king of Babylon envisioned his kingdom lasting forever. He apparently gave no thought to the idea that any other nation would ever rule the world.

He inscribed on the bricks of his buildings, "May it last forever."

However, God said the wings of the lion would be "plucked and a man's heart would be given it." In other words, Babylon would become so weak that it would no longer have the courage and boldness of one possessing a "lion's heart." And that's exactly what happened!

After King Nebuchadnezzar's death, Babylon decayed both morally and politically.

During the reign of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's arrogant grandson, Cyrus the Mede laid siege to Babylon while Belshazzar foolishly feasted with his lords in the great banquet hall.

Before the night was over, the triumphant shouts of Cyrus's army could be heard above the terrified cries of Belshazzar's revelers, and that night, October 13, 539 B.C., the Babylon kingdom (represented by the head of gold in the metal image and by the lion with eagle's wings in Daniel's dream) came to an inglorious end.

The kingdom or empire represented by the second beast- the bear- can be none other than the conquering nation of Medo- Persia, the same kingdom represented by the arms and chest of silver in the giant metal man.

51 (Text: Daniel 7:5) As Daniel watched the bear in his dream, he said, "...It raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it..." Daniel 7:5.

What does this part of the prophecy mean? As we study history, we discover that the second empire was a dual dynasty, or a coalition government. The Medes and the Persians were united into one empire.

However, before long the Persians became the dominant power in the dynasty. One side of this coalition was more powerful than the other. God had predicted this shift in power years before it took place.

Daniel said that the bear had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, but the Bible does not identify their meaning. However, most Bible scholars believe the three ribs represented Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt-the three principal territories devoured by the Medo-Persian armies.

The Persian Empire ruled for two centuries, but ferocious and strong as it may have been, God revealed to Daniel in the dream that another beast, or kingdom, would arise:

(Text: Daniel 7:6) "...Lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it." Daniel 7:6.

Just as a slow-moving bear proves no match for the agile leopard, so the Persian armies were unable to defend themselves against the swift advances of Alexander the Great.

This map gives you some idea of the rapidity of Alexander's conquests.

In Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream, the bronze belly and thighs of the image represented the third world empire of Greece, and so does the leopard in Daniel's dream.

The four wings describe the great speed of Alexander's conquests. He defeated Darius III of Persia in the battle of Arbela in 331 B.C., thus becoming in less than twelve years the ruler of the most extensive empire the world had ever known.

(Text: Daniel 8:22) The leopard's four heads represent the four divisions of Greece. "...Four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation..." Daniel 8:22.

(Text: Daniel 8:22) The New International Version of the Bible states it this way: "...Four kingdoms will emerge from this nation but will not have the same power."

History tells us that the Grecian Empire did indeed divide into four parts. Alexander died of a raging fever at the age of thirty-two, just seven years after his great victory at Arbela.

Even before he was buried, a bloody, 22-year power struggle began, first among his relatives and later among his military leaders. Finally, four of Alexander's generals gained control of the empire.

Now the leopard beast, or Greece, had four heads! Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus.

Naturally each head fought to be number one!

Alexander's four generals were greedy, ambitious men who wanted to obtain the throne.

"Each one whetted the sword against the other and the empire went down in a tangle of strife." Theodor Mounson, *Alexander the Great*, p. 494.

The unrest and strife continued among the four parts of the empire till finally, "on June 22, 168 B.C., at the Battle of Pydna, perished the Empire of Alexander the Great, 144 years after his death." *History of Rome*, book 3, chapter 10.

But what about the fourth nondescript beast that Daniel said would rise to power after the Greek Empire?

The angel told Daniel that this fourth kingdom would be different from the other kingdoms. The beast representing it was extremely powerful, and it had enormous iron teeth that destroyed its prey.

Here is pictured a cruel, vicious power. A more fitting description of the rise of the Roman Empire could hardly be found. It was more ruthless and brutal than all the previous empires, sometimes annihilating whole nations.

When it didn't destroy or subjugate a people, it used them as slaves or sold them into slavery.

Daniel's monstrous beast had iron teeth, while the fourth kingdom in the metal image was represented by iron legs. Daniel was intrigued by this nondescript beast, and especially by its ten horns.

Text: Daniel 7:8) He said, "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots..." Daniel 7:8.

(Text: Daniel 7:24) The angel told Daniel that "...ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise..." Daniel 7:24.

[image graphic] No doubt Daniel's mind flashed back to the great metal image with the toes, representing the divisions of the Roman Empire, accomplished in A.D. 476 by the barbaric tribes of northern Europe.

Migrations similar to what we are seeing today took place in massive numbers. And they over threw a flabby and self-absorbed empire.

Seven of these kingdoms (nations) are still in Europe today. And by the way, the Bible says that they will never come together to permanently form a single power.

But what interested Daniel most was the little horn that pushed itself up among the ten horns, uprooting three horns in its struggle for supremacy.

(Text: Daniel 7:8) Daniel noticed that "...in this [little] horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." Daniel 7:8.

This little horn troubled Daniel.

As we look to history for an answer, we find that during Emperor Justinian's rule, he essentially divided the empire into the east and west. He moved the capital to Constantinople, and left the Roman bishop as the political power. Justinian then began to use the power of the state to root out heresies. Justinian was happy to support the bishop of Rome in his struggles for his own political gain and the gain of the Rome-centered church.

His armies were used to root out 3 groups of people whose theology was not acceptable to Rome. These tribes were the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and the Heruli.

This little horn power was not concerned so much with conquering land as it was with religious issues.

Why did this description of the little horn cause Daniel such concern?

80 (Text: Daniel 7:21) Because "...the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.

(Daniel 7:25) And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." Daniel 7:25.

Daniel recognized that this prediction was no longer just about secular history, but that it had to do with God's people, for this little horn made war against the saints of God and actually prevailed against them for a period of time.

Obviously, it was to be a hostile, persecuting power—a power or agency used by Satan to make war against God, His people, and His truth.

(Text: Daniel 7:28) Daniel said, "I ... was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself." Daniel 7:28,

All of this is but a background, or introduction, to the career of the little horn and the heavenly judgment.

Remember, when we outlined the chiasmic structure of this chapter we saw that judgment the highlighted point of the chapter.

We will talk about the judgment and the little horn power later.

Also, we have not dealt with the scene in heaven. We will also work on that later.

For now, we will simply say that the fourth beast and its horns will exist until the end of time, when God will give the kingdom to His saints.

Our gospel text for this session is:

**Acts 17:31 (KJV)**

<sup>31</sup> Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.