

The Book of Daniel²³

Lesson 5

Daniel Chapter 7

Daniel's Vision – Four Great Beasts

539 BC

Daniel chapter 7 follows chapter 4 in chronological order. Chapter 4 ends with Nebuchadnezzar praising, exalting and honoring the King of heaven and God blesses him by causing his greatness in Babylon to surpass all who had come before him.

Nebuchadnezzar dies in 561 BC and his son, Evil-Merodach, takes his place, ruling for just under two years.²⁴ Evil-Merodach releases King Jehoiachin from prison, clothes him in royal attire, allows him to eat at his table, and elevates him above all the other captive kings in Babylon.²⁵

Evil-Merodach's sister, Nitrocris (Kassaya), marries Neriglissar who assassinates Evil-Merodach in 560 BC and takes the throne.²⁶ Neriglissar reigns until his death in 556 BC, and his son Labaši-Marduk takes the throne.

Killed in a coup, Labasi reigns for less than a year. Nabonidus, because he has married Nitrocris (Kassaya), the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, becomes king in 555 BC and reigns until 536 BC. Because Nabonidus marries the widow Nitrocris, he obtains the legal right to the throne.

In 539 BC, Nabonidus allows his step-son, Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, to co-reign with him. The co-regency lasts for just under three years.

Daniel's Dream

Daniel ^{7:1} In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind *as he lay on his bed*; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.

In the first year of Belshazzar's co-reign, the Lord speaks to Daniel in a dream accompanied by night visions.²⁷ The message is so important that the Lord continues to convey the message in a series of night visions when Daniel awakes before the dream is finished. Sixty-seven years have passed since Daniel was taken out of the Southern Kingdom by Nebuchadnezzar. We do not know the exact age of Daniel at this time in the story, but we can confidently say that he is in his eighties.

²³ All Scriptures in this lesson entitled "The Book of Daniel" are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, Copyright (C) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

²⁴ Also known as Amil-Meroduk and Avil-Meroduk.

²⁵ Jeremiah 52: 31 and 2 Kings 25:27

²⁶ Jeremiah 39:3, 13

²⁷ Dreams occur while you are asleep. Visions occur while you are awake. Daniel has a dream and then awakes to see the dream continued in visions.

Daniel's Four Beasts

Daniel ^{7:2} Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ^{7:3} "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

Daniel's home in Babylon is a long way from the Great Sea, also known as the Mediterranean Sea, but by this time, the Babylonian Empire included most of the countries surrounding that sea.²⁸ In his vision, Daniel sees the Mediterranean Sea begin to churn. Four great beasts come out of it, each beast is distinctly different from the others.

Daniel's First Beast

Daniel ^{7:4} "The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

Statues from the Neo-Babylonian Empire depict a lion with the head of a man and the wings of an eagle.²⁹ These kinds of statues represent Nebuchadnezzar as the greatest king of the empire. God had given him all the land and everything that lived on it, to be under his domain; thus, he had wings to fly like an eagle in order to gather all the known world under his control, but in the dream his wings were plucked. In Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar was struck down during his reign and forced to live as an animal for seven years, but at the end of that period, he stood up and his human mind was given back to him.

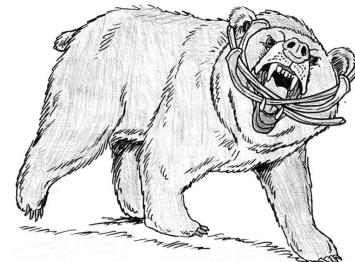


By this time in the story, Nebuchadnezzar has been dead for 22 years and his kingdom is in unstable hands; nevertheless, at this point in the story, the first part of this dream has been fulfilled. Why would the Lord give a vision to Daniel that contains a part of the story that had already been fulfilled? The Lord did the same in the case with Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue with a gold head. He was the gold head and his kingdom was already established. Daniel's vision begins with the symbol of Nebuchadnezzar in order to establish his place in the kingdoms of the world so there will be no confusion in its interpretation. The first beast represents Nebuchadnezzar and the next beast will swallow up his kingdom.

Daniel's Second Beast

Daniel ^{7:5} "And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'

The second beast resembles a bear. Many pictures have been drawn depicting his bear with its three ribs but,



²⁸ Long before, it was called the Mediterranean Sea, it was known as the Great Sea as indicated on most ancient maps.

²⁹ Nebuchadnezzar's Empire is called the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The first Babylonian Empire was ruled by Hammurabi. It was taken over by the Assyrians and then reclaimed by Nebuchadnezzar's father. The second empire, greater than the one before, is called the Neo, New – Empire.

unlike Babylon, nothing can be found to consider the bear a mascot or symbol of the Medo-Persian Empire except here in the Scriptures. However, history tells why this bear has three ribs in its mouth. Cyrus the Great, a Persian, is the second beast to control the second great empire of the world. He conquers three empires in his rise to power over the known ancient world. First, he conquers the Median Empire, then the Lydian Empire and finally the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Once these three empires are devoured and incorporated into his empire, Cyrus dies in battle before capturing any further kingdoms in 530 BC. Thus, the three conquered kingdoms are the three ribs in the bear's mouth.

At the time of Daniel's vision, this part was partly unfulfilled. Cyrus became the king of Persia in 560 BC, just a year after Nebuchadnezzar's death. He overthrew the Medes in 550 BC and Lydia some time thereafter. In just under three years from the time of Daniel's vision, Cyrus will overthrow Babylon. Today, this part of the vision is completely fulfilled.

Daniel's Third Beast

Daniel ^{7:6} "After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

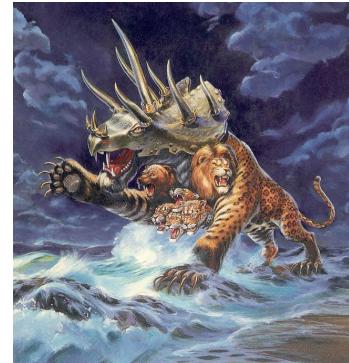
The Medo-Persian Empire lasts until 332 BC when Alexander the Great conquers it. Even though Alexander captures the empire in 332 BC, he does not enter the city of Babylon until October 21 of 331 BC. When he arrives at the city, the inhabitants of Babylon climb to the top of the city wall to view their new king when he arrives. Bagophanes, the city manager in charge of the royal treasury, bestows upon Alexander herds of cattle, horses, lions, and leopards. The leopards become Alexander's favorite animal.



At the time of Daniel's dream, the third beast is still 207 years away from appearing. When Alexander dies of malaria on June 10, 323 BC, his kingdom is taken over by his son who is soon murdered. A series of murders within his family occur over the next 15 years eliminating all the blood relatives of Alexander. Finally, war among his seven generals begins to divide the empire. The fight ultimately divides the empire between Ptolemy in Egypt, Lysimachus in Asia Minor, Seleucia in Babylon and Syria, and Cassander in Greece and Macedonia. After these four generals establish their regions, relationships between them is fairly civil; however, upon their deaths, their successors start a war which continues all the way to the establishment of the fourth beast in 30 BC with the death of Cleopatra in Egypt. All the four empires meld into one, the Roman Empire. The prophecy of the third beast, the Greek Empire has been fulfilled.

Daniel's Fourth Beast

Daniel ^{7:7} "After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.



The fourth beast's rise to power begins in 60 BC with General Julius (Caesar) forming a political alliance. The Roman Republic had begun over 500 years before but its true strength in world domination begins with the alliance. In 44 BC, Julius is appointed as Caesar of Rome and the empire officially begins. He is in love with Cleopatra, the female ruler of Egypt; thus, love joins the last two remaining parts of the Greek empire, forming the Roman Empire 292 years after the formation of the Greek Empire.³⁰ The Roman Empire did not conquer the Greek Empire. The circumstances of all the events caused the Greek Empire to meld into the Roman Empire. After the death of Julius Caesar, Cleopatra falls in love with Mark Antony and gives him three children. When he commits suicide in 30 BC, Cleopatra allows a snake to bite her and she dies. The Ptolemy Empire in Egypt melds into the Roman Empire and the beast with iron teeth fully forms, taking the three previous empires under its domain. This part of the prophecy has been fulfilled.

Daniel sees the ten horns on this beast and it terrifies him. He has many questions about this beast and he asks for an explanation later in the passage.

Daniel's Little Horn

Daniel 7:8 "While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great *boasts*.

As Daniel stares at the ten horns on the beast, he sees a little horn grow up among the ten. The little horn pulls out three of the large horns by their roots as it grows in. The little horn has eyes like a man and a boastful mouth.



Daniel's Ancient of Days

Daniel 7:9 "I kept looking until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture was like white snow, And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire. 7:10 "A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Daniel's visions seem to turn from earthly to heavenly as Daniel sees many thrones established, one throne for the Ancient of Days and many thrones for the entire court. The Ancient of Days is God the Father and His robe and hair are white as snow. His throne and as wheels upon which it sits blazes with fire. Glowing from the throne is a river of fire. His attendants are thousands upon thousands and this worshipers are ten-thousands times ten-thousands. With all the court seated, the books are opened.

Who are sitting on the thrones as the court? They are the 24 elders with their crowns, harps, and bowls of incense. They are the 12 sons of Jacob and the 12

³⁰ The Greek Empire began in 332 BC and the Roman Empire fully took over the Greek Empire in 30 BC with the death of Cleopatra.

apostles of the Lord, 12 for Israel and 12 for the church. What books are opened? They include the Book of Life and the Book of Remembrance. The first has the names of all those who accept the Lord as their Savior. The second book records all the deeds of those who will not accept Him as Lord.

Beast's Destruction

Daniel ^{7:11} "Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. ^{7:12} "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

The little horn with the boastful mouth remains attached to the beast with iron teeth. When the beast dies, the little horn dies too and both burn in the river of burning fire. But what about the empires of the three previous beasts? Somehow, they are "granted an extension of their life for an appointed period of time." This part of the prophecy has not been fulfilled.

Son of Man's Dominion

Daniel ^{7:13} "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ^{7:14} "And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Who is the "One like a Son of Man?" It is the Lord Jesus, traveling on a cloud, Who approaches the Ancient of Days, who is God the Father. The Father gives Jesus "dominion, glory and a kingdom" which will never end containing people from all over the world, a "kingdom which will not be destroyed."

Daniel's Question

Daniel ^{7:15} "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. ^{7:16} "I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

The whole sight distresses Daniel greatly, causing him to ask one of the persons in the vision to interpret the meaning. Who is this person? It must be a messenger of God, an angel. Quite possibly, it could have been Daniel's guardian angel, Michael as indicated in chapter 10.³¹

Daniel's Answer

Daniel ^{7:17} 'These great beasts, which are four *in number*, are four kings who will arise from the earth. ^{7:18} 'But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'

³¹ Daniel 10:21 – Michael is the guardian angel of Daniel, also called Daniel's prince. In the Daniel 10, Michael does not leave Daniel alone. The Lord dispatches Michael to Jerusalem but he does not leave Daniel until

The interpreter quickly sums up the identities of the four beasts, identifying them as four kings whose kingdoms that will arise on the earth; yet, after them the Lord will come to establish His kingdom on the earth forever.

Daniel's Desire

Daniel ^{7:19} "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, ^{7:20} and *the meaning* of the ten horns that were on its head, and the other *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.

The first three beasts do not concern Daniel, but the fourth beast does. He recognizes the lion, bear and leopard, but the "exceedingly dreadful" picture of the beast with iron teeth and claws bothers Daniel because it crushes everything with its feet. What do the ten horns represent? Why does the little horn pull out three of the original horns by their roots? Daniel wants to know specifics about this beast.

Horn's War

Daniel ^{7:21} "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them ^{7:22} until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

From the time the little horn grows up, it wages war with the saints until the eternal kingdom of the Lord arrives. Who is the little horn?

Fourth Beast's Kingdom

Daniel ^{7:23} "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the *other* kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.'

Finally, the interpreter responds to Daniel saying, "The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth" History records that the fourth beast represents the Roman Empire. Before it breaks up into 10 individual countries, the empire grows to encompass the previous three kingdoms far past all their borders, to control most of the known world. Other, smaller nations will eventually take back land from the Roman Empire, threatening its existence. One emperor divides the kingdom into two parts in 285 AD for safety and the next emperor brings it back together. Finally, in 395 AD, the emperor divides it again into the Western and Eastern Roman Empires with Rome as the capital city in the west and Constantinople in the east. Just 81 years later, the Germanic people overtake the west and 1,057 years later, the Muslim Turks overtake the east.

Fourth Beast's Ten Horns

Daniel ^{7:24} 'As for the ten horns, out of this 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. ^{7:25} '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.'

When the Germanic people overrun the Western Roman Empire in 476 BC, they divide the land into five countries: Britain, France, Spain, Italy, and North Africa. When the Muslim Turks overrun the eastern Roman Empire in 1453 BC, they divide the land into five countries; Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, Syria and Egypt. Except for Macedonia and North Africa, these ten countries are still intact; however, the countries that make up the land mass of Macedonia and North Africa are extremely close in their respective relationships and will rejoin each other in the future to fulfill the prophecy. Each of these countries has its own kings or presidents ruling over it. From these ten countries, a little horn or king will arise that will kill three of the other kings on his rise to power. The text says, "And he will speak out against the Most High." The translation should read, "He shall speak as if he were God." The little horn king will introduce an entirely new era of rule, pressing the saints and changing the laws, but this will last for only three and one-half years. The Scripture uses a Hebrew idiom, "for a time, times, and half a time" meaning 1 year + 2 years + 1/2 a year or 3 1/2 years.

Fourth Beast's Judgment

Daniel ^{7:26} 'But the court will sit *for judgment*, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.'

The kingdom of the little horn king will be "annihilated and destroyed" at the end of the 3 1/2 years by order of the court of heaven which Daniel saw earlier in this vision.

Most High's Kingdom

Daniel ^{7:27} '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.'

When the kingdom of the little horn is annihilated, a new kingdom is established by the "Highest One," the Lord, and His kingdom will never end and all the kingdoms of the earth will come under the subjection of the King of kings.

If the kingdom of the little horn is destroyed, how will it come under the leadership of the Lord? The interpreter does not reveal the answer to that question. Daniel does not know the rest of the story, but the Lord will reveal more details to the prophet Zechariah and the apostle John. The little horn will not control the entire world with total sovereignty. Many within his domain will refuse to follow his leadership. People from all over the world will refuse to join him in his fight against Jerusalem and the Lord at the Battle of Armageddon. According to Zechariah, those who refuse to join the little horn in the fight will live through the destruction of his kingdom.

Zechariah ^{14:16} Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

What will happen to those who fight against Jerusalem and the Lord? Zechariah gives that answer also.

Zechariah ^{14:12} Now this will be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth.

Daniel's Thoughts

Daniel ^{7:28} "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."

With the end of the interpretation, Daniel is still shocked, and his face grows pale. The expression, "my face grew pale," does not refer to the expression on his face; he is referring to the glow of the scene of the vision as it dims and the brightness disappears.

Here, the unknown author has recorded the words just as Daniel said them. This vision occurred in 539 BC.