

Daniel - Chapter seven

- The prophecy of Daniel is divided into two sections of six chapters each. The first six chapters contain the personal history of Daniel the prophet under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and finally, king Darius of the Medes and Persians. Beginning with chapter seven, we have the closing section of the prophecy in which we have a series of visions Daniel received from the Lord during his career. They give a comprehensive picture of history foreseen in advance from Daniel's day until the Lord Jesus returns to earth to set up his kingdom' (DeHaan).

Vs.1-3. This is the first of two visions that Daniel had during the reign of Belshazzar, and its interpretation is given in vs.17-27. The vision speaks of the same kingdoms as were seen in the 'great image' of Nebuchadnezzar's dream outlined in chapter 2. Note: In that dream the 'great metallic image' pictured the Gentile world kingdoms from his day until the Second Coming of Christ. Now, in chapter seven, Daniel is shown the same kingdoms from God's viewpoint, and they are presented as 'ferocious wild beasts'.

- 'the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea'. Note: 'Winds', in symbolic passages, denote 'wars', 'strife', and 'judgments' from God. The Apostle John spoke of 'four angels' standing on the 'four corners' of the earth, holding the 'four winds' of the earth (Rev.7:1) until the faithful remnant of God had been sealed in their foreheads. No doubt, the 'four winds' mentioned here in Daniel 7 have the same connection. In the midst of the coming troubles and difficulties under the world empires, God is going to preserve those faithful by sealing them, and keeping them, even through the storm of Tribulation.

- 'the great sea'. In general, there are only three seas mentioned in the Scriptures: Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, and the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea). And since the setting for the four kingdoms described here in Daniel 7 centers around the Great Sea, many believe it's the Mediterranean Sea that Daniel has in mind. Yet, 'seas' in symbolic passages represent 'peoples' (v.17; Rev.13:1; Rev.17:1,15). This is the meaning here.

- 'beasts, in symbolic passages, represent 'kingdoms' and their 'rulers'.

V.4. First Beast: a Lion with eagle's wings.

- In Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image (chapter two), a picture was given of the world empires from that day until the coming again of Christ to the earth (at end of the Tribulation). It began with the 'head of gold', which represented Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, and then digressed from 'gold' to 'clay', a downward route. And, today, after some 2600 years, things continue downward, not getting better but steadily worse.

- Before Daniel's time (before Babylon came to power) there had been two world empires; Egypt and Assyria. They were anti-God and anti-Jewish. And all the world kingdoms from Nebuchadnezzar's day until Christ sits up His kingdom will be as Egypt and Assyria in that respect: anti-God and anti-Jewish.

- In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon) was represented by the 'head of gold'. Here, he is represented as a 'lion'.

- 'eagle's wings' denote the swiftness of the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar as he conquered nation after nation. In just a few short years he had built a vast empire.

- 'wings were plucked', and he stood up as a man. The victories of Nebuchadnezzar's army came to an abrupt halt when he became insane (ch.4). Afterwards, his sanity was restored; he once again acted as a human; and, he blessed the most high God.

V.5. A Second Beast: like a Bear, having three ribs in its mouth.

- This 'beast' represents Medo-Persian Empire, seen as the 'breast and arms of silver' in ch.2. It is the second world empire seen by Daniel, but the fourth empire overall: after Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

- The 'bear' is a fitting symbol of this kingdom because of the kingdom's cruelty, thirst for blood, and love of spoil. Note: It's been noted that the largest species of bear found in the world are found in the mountains of Media.

- 'raised up itself on one side'. Symbolizes the strength of the Persians compared to that of the Medes. Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, was much greater than Darius the Mede.

- 'three ribs in its mouth'. Medo-Persian Empire conquered three mighty nations: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.

V.6. A Third Beast: like a Leopard, having four wings and four heads.

- This 'beast' represents Grecia, seen as the 'belly and thighs of brass' in ch.2. It is the third world empire seen by Daniel, and was founded by Alexander the Great. Note: Daniel predicted that the Greeks would be victorious over the second kingdom (Medo-Persia) because of the genius of its first king. And some 200 years after this prophecy, a young Macedonian (Alexander), who had been taught by Aristotle, united all five tribes of Greece (something no other had been able to do). Too, he developed a 'new battle formation' known as the 'Phalanx'. Using this strategy, he defeated the Persians, although outnumbered 20 to 1.

- The 'leopard' is a powerful and swift animal. And the 'four wings of a fowl' denotes the quickness of Alexander's conquests. While yet a young man, he had conquered the entire known world.

- The 'four heads' symbolize the 'four divisions' of the Grecian Empire headed by Alexander's four generals after his death. (He died a drunkard, with malaria, at the age of 33 in 323BC.) The generals were: Lysimachus (who ruled Thrace and Bithynia), Cassander (who ruled Greece and Macedonia), Seleucus (who ruled Babylonia and Syria), and Ptolemy (who ruled Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia). Today, these divisions are known as Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Egypt. Remember: 'Heads', in biblical symbolism, represent 'kingdoms'.

V.7. A Fourth Beast: 'dreadful, terrible, and strong exceedingly . . . with great iron teeth and ten horns'.

- This 'beast' represents the fourth world empire seen by Daniel: Rome (the same as was represented by the 'two iron legs' of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of ch.2).

- This beast is not like the others. And because of its appearance, Daniel was unable to liken it to any known beast. Yet, its description tells something of how 'ruthless' and 'terrible' the Roman Empire was in its destruction of the various kingdoms and nations.

- In 68BC the Romans conquered what remained of the Grecian Empire. From there, they expanded to form the greatest world empire in history, continuing for some 500 years (27BC to AD476). But in the end, it crumbled and fell apart . . . and was divided into lesser powers.

- Since the fall of the Roman Empire, there has not been a 'power', or 'nation', or 'kingdom' that has dominated and ruled the known world.

- Charlemagne tried and failed in the 8th century.

- Moslems tried in the 12th century with no success.

- Napoleon, in the early 19th century, had a desire to be the world ruler, but failed in his pursuit.

- Kaiser Wilhelm, of Germany, failed in his attempt.

- Adolf Hitler proclaimed that he would consolidate all of Europe, and his empire would last 1000 years. But he too failed, when defeated in World War II.

- Russia has had ambitions to rule the world through military might and the spread of 'communism'. And there was a time when approximately half of the world's population embraced this atheistic form of government, or lived in countries that had communistic tendencies. Yet, Russia and communism have failed, miserably.

Note: America, today (2018), is recognized as the world's only 'super power', yet it does not rule the world, nor does it have a desire to dominate the world.

V.8. 'I considered the horns' (the 'ten horns' on the fourth beast, which is the Roman Empire).

- The 'feet and toes' of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:41-43) are to be the last form of the Roman Empire in the last days.

- The 'two feet', part of iron and part of clay, represent the same as the 'two legs' (Eastern and Western divisions of the divided Roman Empire).

- The 'toes' represent the final division of the Roman Empire into 10 kingdoms, ruled by 10 kings. They are identified here as '10 horns' (7:7,8), and represent the 'seventh empire' that will rule the world (after Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome). This has been called the 'Revised Roman Empire', and will consist of 'iron' and 'clay' (partly strong and partly weak). It is to take place in the last days, after the Church has been caught out (raptured). Note: It's believed by many that this 'ten-toed federation' is now being formed, and we know it as the European Economic Community.

- 'there came up among them another little horn'. The 'little horn', which comes up during the time of the '10 horns' (Revised Roman Empire) symbolizes the last anti-God anti-Jewish world ruler - the 'antichrist' (called the 'man of sin' in II Thes.2:3,8).

- He will make war with God's saints; will overpower them (7:21,22,25); will speak words against the most High (defy Almighty God); and, will think to change times and laws (desire to alter the customary times and law).

- The 'ten kings' (Revised Roman Empire) will give their power to him (Antichrist) in the midst of the Tribulation, and he will be the 'eighth world kingdom', ruling for 'a time and times and the dividing of time' (the last 3 1/2 years of the 7-year tribulation).

Vs.9-14. The Final World Empire.

- 'the Ancient of days did sit'. (Some teach that this is Jesus Christ, but that can't be. Christ comes to the 'Ancient of days' (vs.13,14) and is given a kingdom that shall never pass away. His is the final world empire, the 'Kingdom of heaven' on earth, a kingdom that shall never be destroyed.

- In Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:44,45), we have a picture of this same event, but with more details.

- A 'stone was cut out of the mountain without hands' (supernaturally), striking the 'great image' in the feet.

- Not only were the feet destroyed, but the gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay as well. All of the eight world kingdoms that will have ruled until this time were part of the same world system. They were all anti-God and anti-Jewish.

- Good news! The present world order will not last forever. According to Nebuchadnezzar's dream the philosophy and values of the last-day 'world order', both politically and religiously, will be completely destroyed in order that Christ's kingdom might be fully established.