

# Daniel

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## Chapter Seven

The chronological order of the chapters of Daniel is: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 5, 9, 11, 12, 6, and 10. We do not know why the “chapters” were put in this order. The order in which we have them in our Bible has the first six chapters dealing with Daniel as an interpreter and instructor of unbelieving kings. Daniel served in this manner for about seventy years. In chapter seven he seems to reiterate the vision of Nebuchadnezzar as four animals. However he spends most of his time on the fourth animal and then ends with the statement that the kingdom of God will overtake all kingdoms and rule forever. This conclusion would have been very encouraging to God’s people who were suffering so much.

This chapter parallels chapter two. The two visions differ however in that the dream to King Nebuchadnezzar revealed nations mainly as seen by man. They are glorious and mighty. The vision to Daniel shows the kingdoms from God’s perspective as they are evil but that God’s Kingdom will eventually overcome all the other kingdoms of the world. The difference is important for a total understanding of history. The winged lion corresponds to the golden head of the dream, the ravenous bear to the arms and chest of the statue, the swift leopard to the belly and thighs of the statue, and the ten-horned beast to the legs and feet of the statue. There is a different aspect to this vision from that of the king and that is the little horn which some interpreters think represents the Antichrist that is mentioned in 2 Thess 2:3. The last portion of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was the stone cut without hands and Daniel’s vision correspondingly has the glorified Son of Man as the last portion.

### Dan 7:1-2

*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. (2) Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.*

Daniel dates this portion of his book as occurring in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar but his father, Nabonidus, came to the throne in 556 B.C. Apparently Nabonidus came with his son, Belshazzar, being entrusted with the army and Babylon while he was engaged in empire business elsewhere. Thus Belshazzar was coregent of Babylon as we discussed in chapter five. Daniel states that he wrote the summary of the vision although 26 verses may seem like a significant summary. He states that he saw the four winds of heaven stirring the great sea. The sea has the same symbolic meaning as it does in Rev 13:1; 17:15, and 21:1 predicting that there will no longer be a sea. The sea represents the source of evil as we discussed in those chapters. A restless sea is a frequent biblical image for nations (Isa 17:12-13; 57:20; 60:5; Ezek 26:3). The stirring of this “sea” will cause several Gentile nations to emerge in appearance as four fearsome beasts that

will then go on shore to cause their damages. One normally thinks of wind blowing from one direction but here it is depicted as blowing from four directions. Thus we are told that evil is coming upon mankind from every direction. Today we are witnessing the rising of nations all over the world as people are trying to find meaning from any source other than Yahweh. We are being brainwashed by all kinds of propaganda. We are told that nothing is absolutely true and that we must accept all different manners of interpreting of what is right or wrong as correct even though they appear contradictory. Humanism glorifies mankind everywhere and many of them are in control of the various media that greatly influences us.

#### **Dan 7:3-4**

*"And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. (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.*

The first beast started "life" in appearance as a lion but with wings like an eagle. It was changed when its wings were plucked and made to stand like a man. It also was given a human heart or mind. Remember in Hebrew thought the heart was the center of conscience where all decisions were made. Comparing this vision with Nebuchadnezzar's career we see that the taking away the wings would correspond to a reduction in his power and prestige when he was made insane. The lion was a suitable representation of Babylon during his reign. The Ishtar Gate was ornamented with a long procession of yellow lions on blue brick. Babylon is identified in Scripture as the lion and the eagle (Jer 4:7, 13; 48:40; 49:19-22; 50:17; Ezek 17:3, 12; Hab 1:6-8). Giving the beast the mind of man may correspond to the return to sanity of Nebuchadnezzar. The correspondence of this beast with the Babylonian Empire is not disputed by any reputable scholars.

#### **Dan 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!'*

There is no mention of a conflict between the bear and the lion but evidently this second beast does represent another kingdom coming to power. One side of the beast is higher than the other probably indicating that the Persians were stronger than the Medes. There is considerable disagreement about the meaning of the three ribs but most seem to agree that they represent Lidia, Egypt, and Babylon as nations conquered by the Medes and Persians. Certainly their armies "devoured much meat" across all the battlefields.

#### **Dan 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 next beast was described as a leopard or panther indicating a swift conquest as happened under Alexander the Great that led to the swift expansion of the kingdom of Greece. The four wings would also indicate quickness that has become increasingly important for military victory. This beast is described as having four heads also. Alexander's death in 323 left him without any

successors and the kingdom was divided into four parts. Babylon was defeated when it was in a drunken orgy and so ended the success of Alexander. It seems that our country is taking the same path with the acceptance of alcoholic beverages at every event and even the social use of various pharmaceuticals. Palestine and Egypt went to Ptolemy I; Syria was ruled by Seleucus I; Thrace and Asia Minor went to Lysimachus; and Macedon and Greece were governed by Antipater and Cassander. The Greco-Macedonian kingdom was in the intertestament period between the Old and the New Testaments and so is not discussed in our Bible. During this time Palestine endured their greatest suffering by Egypt and Syria.

#### **Dan 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.*

This beast would correspond with the legs of iron on Nebuchadnezzar's image (2:40-43), but the ten toes are represented by ten horns. The Bible often uses a horn as symbolic of a ruler or some royal authority (1 Sam 2:10; Ps 132:17). This vision represents the Roman Empire as it was strong as iron and spread rapidly from the Atlantic ocean east to the Caspian Sea and from North Africa north to the Rhine and Danube Rivers. The ultimate form of this kingdom consists of ten separate kingdoms as also was represented by the ten toes of the statue. Daniel gives more information about this beast as recorded in verses 19-26.

#### **Dan 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.*

Daniel saw a new arrangement about this federation that was different from what was given to Nebuchadnezzar. A new little horn emerged among the ten horns of the fourth beast and three of the original ten horns were destroyed. There then remained seven horns from the original ten horns and now one new horn. This was a strange horn in that it had eyes of a man and a mouth that demonstrated an arrogant and vainglorious leader. Some interpreters identify this horn as the ruthless world dictator of the last days but this may be jumping ahead somewhat. Daniel receives more information about this horn in verses 19-22 of this chapter.

#### **Dan 7:9-11**

*"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. (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. (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.*

The Aramaic text is poetical in verses 9-10 and some translations print verses 9-11 and 13-14 as poetry with verses 11-12 as prose. Daniel sees thrones established but then there entered a mighty One, namely God Himself. The description is similar to that given by Ezekiel:

*Ezekiel 1:13-17 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. (14) And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning. (15) Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for each of the four of them. (16) The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if one wheel were within another. (17) Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions without turning as they moved.*

The statement that “myriads upon myriads” can be translated as “hundreds of millions”. Thus the number is not exact but represents a huge number of attendants of God. Daniel then saw that all of this represented a court where books were opened that would represent judgment. Although the small horn kept ranting, he saw that this beast was slain and its body destroyed and given to the burning fire. Daniel was then shown the defeat of this beast that was in loud-mouthed defiance of God. The judgment of God destroyed the beast and Daniel would have been greatly pleased to witness this coming judgment so that he would know that God was sovereign and one day would reign absolutely.

#### **Dan 7:12-15**

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

The little horn was now destroyed and his vision turned to dealing with the four remaining beasts. They were dealt with in an unusual manner. Their dominion over the nations was removed but they were granted an extension of time to live. Next Daniel sees the returning Christ from heaven who comes before God to be presented to Him. God then granted Christ dominion, glory and a kingdom so that all people would serve Him. This dominion of Christ would last forever and could not be destroyed. Jesus probably had this vision in mind when He told His disciples: “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matt 28:18) Verse 13 is often quoted in the New Testament and often by the Lord:

- Mark 13:26 *"Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory.*
- Matt 24:30 *"And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.*

This is the title most used by Jesus and it is used 69 times in the Synoptic gospels and twelve times in John. The title states that Jesus is fully man and fully God. Daniel uses an indefinite article in the Aramaic before Son of Man but Jesus uses a definite article to indicate that He is the unique and only Son of Man. The second reason Jesus chose this title was that it was less specific than some other title such as Messiah that would have fit with the peoples' desire for a political ruler. By choosing this title Jesus could identify Himself in a way to avoid such misunderstandings.

Daniel was distressed at all that he had seen as the visions kept alarming him. He then approached one of the angels standing near him. Daniel then has seen the rise and fall of six kingdoms: the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the kingdom of Satan perhaps headed by the Antichrist, and the Kingdom of Christ.

### **Dan 7:16-18**

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

Daniel does not give the name of the angel but it was probably Gabriel since we are told in 9:21 that Gabriel had spoken to him earlier. Daniel asked a general question and the angel gave him a general interpretation. He tells Daniel that the four great beasts are symbolic for four successive kings that will come from the earth, meaning that they are not angelic beings but human kings that God will allow to rule. The angel then added that the ultimate ruling will be done by saints of the Highest One. It seems that the reason for identifying this final ruling to be done by the saints of God is to emphasize that this will be a worldly kingdom rather than a spiritual one. We could then say that this is the final New Jerusalem as detailed in the book of Revelation.

### **Dan 7:19-22**

*"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, (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. (21) "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them (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.*

Daniel then became more specific in his request for information as he was intrigued by the fourth beast who seemed more dreadful than the others. Despite the assurance that the ultimate ruling would be by the saints, Daniel was concerned about the saints having to undergo persecution by the small horn of this beast. The end will then be glorious as the saints will rule with Christ as stated by Paul: *"If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;"* (2 Tim 2:12) A trait of those who have really committed their lives to Jesus is that they will

endure and then will reign. The history of our world is filled with war. One estimate is that man has been engaged in 15,000 wars and signed over 8,000 peace treaties and in all that time he has enjoyed only two to three hundred years of true peace (“The Prophets: Daniel”, J. Vernon McGee, Thomas Nelson, 1991)!

### **Dan 7:23-26**

*"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. (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. (25) '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. (26) 'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.*

The angel then told Daniel that the fourth beast would be a fourth kingdom on the earth and that it would be different from the other kingdoms. From our perspective, it seems that this would be the Roman Empire that would be different, not in size for Alexander's empire was larger, but in type. The whole earth does not refer to the entire earthly kingdoms. The Aramaic word and its Hebrew form that is interpreted “earth” do not refer to the entire globe but to a specific country or territory. The context means that this fourth kingdom will devour all the surrounding nations bite by bite and so acquiring all the lands around it. The angel then explains the ten horns corresponding to the ten toes in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. This would correspond to the ten-horn phase of the Roman Empire.

A smaller horn will then emerge that will defeat three of the ten rulers and the remaining seven will be in subjection to him. This ruler will speak blasphemously against God and he will attack the saints of God as he will be trying to be God. He will attempt to control the people through changes in times and in law. The time change may refer to an attempt to develop a new calendar as was done later throughout history. In the French Revolution people wanted to do away with the A.D. dating calendar and use the first year of the Republic, 1792, as the beginning. This was used for twelve years and was made obligatory so that if anyone tried to use the Gregorian calendar they could be legally prosecuted. Today people try to use BCE (before the current era) in place of B.C. and CE (current era) to replace A.D. We also see many laws being changed such as to replace the Christian concept of marriage and to make it a crime to not approve of homosexuality. Could we be in this phase of history now? These changes will be accepted for a limited period of time before God will judge this ruler when he will be eliminated forever.

### **Dan 7:27-28**

*'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."*



Finally the angel reveals that the fifth kingdom (as in chapter two) will arise with the Son of Man ruling in absolute sovereignty forever. Daniel found this revelation exhausting as he feared the persecutions awaiting his people. Although the ultimate result was revealed as wonderful, the intermediate steps would be very difficult for his people. He was alone so he had nobody with whom to share his feelings or thoughts, and he had to keep the matter to himself.