

The Four Beasts and the Lord's Future Earthly Kingdom

Daniel 7:1-28

Daniel 7:1-28 - *"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.*

² *Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. ³ And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. ⁴ The first 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.*

⁵ *"And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'*

⁶ *"After this I looked, and there was another, 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.*

⁷ *"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.*

⁹ *" I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment was white as snow,
And the hair of His head was like pure wool.
His throne was a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;
¹⁰ A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.
The court was seated,
And the books were opened.*

¹¹ *"I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

¹³ *" I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.*

*¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.*

¹⁵ "I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. ¹⁶ I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

¹⁷ 'Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'

¹⁹ "Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; ²⁰ and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.

²¹ "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

²³ "Thus he said:

*' The fourth beast shall be
A fourth kingdom on earth,
Which shall be different from all other kingdoms,
And shall devour the whole earth,
Trample it and break it in pieces.*

*²⁴ The ten horns are ten kings
Who shall arise from this kingdom.*

*And another shall rise after them;
He shall be different from the first ones,
And shall subdue three kings.*

*²⁵ He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.
Then the saints shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.*

*²⁶ ' But the court shall be seated,
And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy it forever.*

*²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.*

*His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'*

²⁸ *"This is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart."*

Background Notes

The Book of Daniel is clearly divided into two parts of six chapters each. In the second half of the book Daniel recorded the four prophetic visions that the Lord gave him, including the interpretation of each vision. In Daniel 7 we have his first vision. Daniel saw four beasts – a lion with the wings of an eagle, a bear with three ribs in his mouth, a leopard with four heads and four wings, and a fourth beast that was ferocious. This fourth beast had large iron teeth and ten horns. An eleventh horn was growing up. Three of the original ten horns were pulled out by their roots.

As the vision continued, Daniel saw this terrible fourth beast judged and destroyed and burned, and then the Ancient of Days gave a glorious and everlasting kingdom to the Son of Man.

Doctrinal Points

1. The first four kingdoms of Daniel 7 correspond to the metals of the statue in Daniel 2.

In verse 17 Daniel was told that the four beasts coming out of the sea represented four kings who would arise out of the earth. In verse 23, Daniel was told that the beasts also represented kingdoms. Now it doesn't take much insight into prophetic Scriptures to realize that the four beasts of Daniel 7 appear to correspond to the four parts of the statue in Daniel 2. The lion with eagle's wings corresponds to the head of gold of the statue, representing Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon. Both the lion and the eagle were used by ancient Babylon as symbols of strength and speed. The plucking of the lion's wing and then the lion being made to stand as a man with a human mind probably represents Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience and then his restoration (Daniel 4).

The bear raised up on one side corresponds to the chest and arms of silver of the statue. The bear represents the Medo-Persian Empire, which ultimately became the Persian Empire. Thus the bear was raised up on one side. The three ribs in the bear's mouth probably represent the three sub-kingdoms or regions that were incorporated into the Persian Empire.

The leopard with four heads and four wings (for speed) corresponds to the stomach and thighs of bronze in the statue, and represents the rapidly expanding Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. The four heads of the leopard represent the four divisions of the Greek Empire that took place after the death of Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great died when he was only thirty-two years old. He had no sons, so his extensive empire was divided among some of his generals.

Daniel especially wanted to know about the fourth beast because it was dreadful and terrifying with its iron teeth and horns. The ferocious fourth beast corresponds to the legs of iron of the statue in Daniel 2 and represents the Roman Empire that crushed all opposition. We believe that the ten horns of this beast correspond to the ten toes of the statue's feet of iron and clay, and represent the revived Roman Empire of the future (as we mentioned in our study of Daniel 2).

That future kingdom will be comprised of ten nations (or subdivisions) with ten kings, and will be controlled by the Roman beast. The Roman beast of Revelation 13 and 17 is described as having ten horns, and has the number 666. This godless leader is the “little horn” here in Daniel 7. In the vision, the little horn grew up and took over.

We believe that the “time, times, and half a time” (v25) are the 3 ½ years of the future Great Tribulation period. After that time period the revived Roman beast will be judged and destroyed and given to the burning fire (v11), clearly a reference to hell. The first four kingdoms of Daniel 7 correspond to the metals of the statue in Daniel 2.

2. The fifth kingdom of Daniel 7 corresponds to the mountain that replaced the statue in Daniel 2.

Daniel kept watching in his night visions until all the beasts were gone and the Ancient of Days, from His heavenly throne, gave a worldwide kingdom to the Son of Man (v13). This glorious worldwide kingdom will in turn be given to the saints of the Highest One by the Son of Man (v22, 27). We believe that the “Ancient of Days” is a description of God the Father, and the “Son of Man” is obviously the eternal Son of God. “Son of Man,” of course, was our Lord’s favorite way to describe Himself. This title comes primarily from here in Daniel 7, and it emphasizes both the humanity and deity of the incarnate Son of God.

The glorious worldwide kingdom, composed of all peoples and nations, corresponds to that great mountain of Daniel 2 that replaced the statue and filled the whole earth. Remember when the stone that was cut out without hands came in like a missile, struck the statue on its feet, ground it to powder and blew it away? The stone was replaced by a large mountain that filled the whole earth. In the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the mountain represented the **literal worldwide kingdom of Christ** that will be established on this earth. That glorious kingdom will never be conquered! The fifth kingdom of Daniel 7 corresponds to the mountain that replaced the statue in Daniel 2.

Practical Application

Let’s have God’s view of the kingdoms of this world!

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the kingdoms of this world, Nebuchadnezzar saw a very impressive statue made up of different metals, including gleaming gold and silver. In Daniel’s dream, on the other hand, Daniel saw the kingdoms of this world as four **beasts!**

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream we have man’s view of the kingdoms of this world. Man sees the kingdoms of this world as quite impressive. Do you remember in the temptations of our Lord, the devil showed Christ all the kingdoms of this world and “their glory?” There is a glory associated with the kingdoms of this world, but it is not God’s glory! The world’s glory is the **glory of man and man’s accomplishments apart from God.**

In Daniel’s dream we have the divine perspective of the kingdoms of this world. God sees through the worldly glories of the kingdoms of this world that have turned away from Him. He sees these godless kingdoms as beasts that are on their way to destruction. Let’s have **God’s view** of the kingdoms of this world!