

"Daniel Had a Dream" (Part 1)

Daniel 7:1-28

Introduction: The first 6 chapters of Daniel were primarily historical (with the exception of the chapter 2 – Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image), while the last 6 chapters are primarily prophetic. In the first 6 chapters, generalities are revealed; while in the last 6 chapters, specifics are given.

An interesting note to be seen at this point is that the first 7 chapters are written originally in Aramaic, the language of the Babylonians, because those chapters had more to do with the Gentile world at the time; while chapters 8-12 are written in Hebrew because they deal more with Israel and would have been more for them than the Gentile world. This makes chapter 7 the pivot point of the book.

"In the interpretation of biblical prophecy, the seventh chapter of Daniel occupies a unique place. As interpreted by conservative expositors, the vision of Daniel provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament." (John Walvoord)

The seventh chapter of Daniel gives a more detailed look at the four kingdoms that are mentioned in Daniel 2, with the emphasis being on the final stage of Gentile world history.

I. INTRODUCTION OF THE DREAM – VS. 1-2, 15-16

A. Vs. 1 gives us when the dream was – "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon"

1. Considering what is known of world

history, this would have probably been 553 B.C. – 14 years before the fall of Babylon.

2. Nabonidus (son of Nebuchadnezzar) was installed as king in Babylon upon the death of his father in 562 B.C.
3. In 556 B.C. he appointed Belshazzar as his coregent in control of Babylonia itself while he conducted military maneuvers in Arabia.
4. With this in mind, it is clear that the event of chapter 7 occurred chronologically between chapters 4 and 5 of Daniel.

B. It also uses a peculiar phrase in vs. 1 where it states that Daniel had a "dream and visions in his head upon his bed" – this indicates he had a vision (a revelation) in a dream – the first vision that is given directly to Daniel.

C. Vs. 2 gives the first scene of his dream – "the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea."

1. "The four winds of the heaven"
 - a) "These represent the heavenly powers and forces by which God sets the nations of the world in motion." (Keil)
 - b) The "four" winds could represent, symbolically, peoples from the "four corners" of the earth – all peoples from all regions.

[Revelation 7:1](#)

¹ And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

- c) The wind is a symbol of the sovereign power of God striving with sinful man. God often used the wind as a means to attain His ends.

Genesis 8:1

¹ And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;

Exodus 14:21

²¹ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

Exodus 15:10

¹⁰ Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Numbers 11:31

³¹ And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.

- d) Of more than 120 references in the Bible to wind (more than 90 in the OT and about 30 in the NT), well over half are related to

events and ideas which reflect the sovereignty and power of God.

2. "The great sea"

- a) Considering the four beasts come out of the "great sea," it is seen that the sea represents the whole of the heathen world.
- b) There are several similarities between Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 – where the "sea" is mentioned in relation to a beast with very similar descriptions as here.

Revelation 13:1

¹ And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Revelation 17:15

¹⁵ And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whole sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

3. It says the four winds "strove upon" the great sea.

- a) This is God, and the heavenly forces, striving with the peoples of the earth.
- b) The winds are seen as bursting upon, rushing over the sea from all quarters, throwing it into wild commotion.
- c) God, as the One in control of all that happens on earth, is seen as sending the wind – His plan, His will – over the sea – all of mankind – and stirring up conflict so as to create the need for someone to take

control of the world. This is seen as being accomplished by the four beasts that come out of the sea.

D. Vs. 15 begins the interpretation of the dream Daniel had.

1. It says he "was grieved" in his spirit "in the midst" of his body.

a) "Grieved" – indicates the great trouble he had with the vision, indicating he did not fully understand the meaning of the vision, as well being fearful of what it seemed to mean.

Habakkuk 3:16

¹⁶ When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

b) "In my spirit" – the Chaldean (Aramaic) word for spirit here is more akin to the word "soul" in the Hebrew, and is speaking more of the heart and mind (specifically, the mind) of man than what we think of when we see the word "spirit."

c) "In the midst of my body" – the "body" here is a word translated "sheath" and is indicating that the spirit (the soul, heart, mind) is sheathed, or housed, in the body, kept securely there – one thing this demonstrates is the need to guard our mind against the forces of evil that come against us.

2. And that "the visions" of his head

"troubled" him – his thoughts were in great turmoil over what he saw, and over what it could mean.

E. Vs. 16 – Daniel asks one of the angels (vs. 10, 13) that were around the throne what it all meant, and he was given the interpretation.

II. INTRODUCTION OF THE FOUR BEASTS – VS. 3, VS. 17

Vs. 3 begins the main points of the vision – that being, the "four great beasts" that "came up from the sea, diverse one from another."

A. The fact that there are four would point us back to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 (the principle of first mention in the book, as well as the principle of repeated mention would allow us to draw that conclusion).

B. Coming from the sea, from the heathen peoples of the earth, would point to the fact that these represent Gentile world rulers.

C. The term "beasts" has been viewed by some as what we would call monsters – they are called beasts because of their tyranny and oppression, emerging from the wars and commotions of the world.

[Revelation 13:1-3](#)

¹ And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of

blasphemy.

² And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

³ And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

NOTE: The beasts are seen as coming up in succession – one after the other, not all at the same time.

D. Vs. 17 states for us that the four beasts represent four kings – that's how we know they represent four separate, yet subsequent, empires.

III. THE FIRST BEAST – VS. 4 – REPRESENTS THE EMPIRE OF BABYLON UNDER NEBUCHADNEZZAR



A. "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings"

1. This first beast represents the Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar, and

corresponds to the head of gold of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel two.

Daniel 2:37–38

37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

2. As pointed out on our study of chapter two, the Babylonian empire, although not the largest of the world empires (Rome was), it was the most finite and totalitarian of them all. Nebuchadnezzar was the strongest of all the dictators of the four world empires.
3. The lion is a common representation of royal power – it's called the king of the beasts for a reason.
 - a) Solomon had 12 lions on either side of the steps leading up to his throne.

1 Kings 10:18–20

18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.

19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.

20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps:

there was not the like made in any kingdom.

- b) Winged lions guarded the gates of the royal palace of the Babylonians, according to history.
4. The eagle was the king of the birds of the air – in Ezekiel a great eagle is used as a picture first of Babylon and then of Egypt.

Ezekiel 17:3

³ And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

Ezekiel 17:7

⁷ There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

B. The rest of vs. 4 gives a symbolic representation of Nebuchadnezzar's experience (given in chapter 4) when he was humbled before God and made to realize that, even though he was a great ruler, he was only a man.

1. "I beheld" – the vision was so amazing that he could nothing else but continue to gaze upon the beasts.
2. "The incident signifies that, as nearly as it is possible for a beast to become like a man, so nearly did Babylon lose its

beastlike nature." (Leupold)

3. After that episode in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, he changed from being beastlike in his nature, from being a ruthless dictator, to being more like a man, more like someone who could be changed by the power of God.

C. Not much is said here of Babylon as to its demise (as described in chapter 5), the decline of Babylon and the rise of the Medo-Persian empire is implied.

"Other prophets spoke at length on the fall of Babylon. From the reference to the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, there is no biblical mention of Babylon until the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel discuss Babylon's future. Isaiah describes the fall of Babylon as similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Is 13:1-22), with particular mention of the Medes in Isaiah 13:17-19. A future destruction of Babylon at the second coming of Christ seems to be indicated in Isaiah 13:20-22 (cf. Rev 17). Another extended prophecy about Babylon is found in Isaiah 47. Jeremiah who witnessed the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians refers to Babylon throughout his prophecy, of which the most important sections are Jeremiah 25:11-14; 29:10; 50:1-51:62. The last three long chapters of Jeremiah are devoted entirely to Babylon. Ezekiel, himself a captive, is occupied with Babylon (Eze 17:12-24), and predicts like Jeremiah Babylon's conquest of Egypt (Eze 29:18-20; 30:10-25; 32:1-32). Daniel, writing later, ties together these prophecies about Babylon."

John F. Walvoord. Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation: A Commentary (Kindle Locations 2263-2268). Kindle Edition.

IV. THE SECOND BEAST – VS. 5 – REPRESENTS THE MEDIA-PERSIA EMPIRE UNDER DARIUS AND CYRUS



A. "And behold another beast"

1. "And" – in sequence, not at the same time
2. "Behold" – Daniel is seen intently looking (now that the first beast was seen and was so unique) for what was to come next.
3. "Another beast" – although it appeared as a bear, the words "another beast" would indicate that this wasn't an ordinary bear.

B. "A second, like to a bear"

1. "A second" – again, indicating it wasn't an ordinary bear but something more beastlike that appeared in the form of a bear.
2. "Like a bear"
 - a) The bear is not normally related to symbolism in the Old Testament.
 - b) The simple meaning of this, and the most obvious, would be that the second empire would be powerful, like a bear, ferocious, but less majestic, less swift, and less glorious.

Isaiah 13:17–18

¹⁷ Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.

¹⁸ Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

The bear is noted as especially fierce when hungry, or when robbed of its whelps. Jerome (on Hosea 13:8) remarks, "It is said by those who have studied the nature of wild beasts, that none among them is more ferocious than the bear when deprived of its young, or when hungry." Compare 2 Sam. 17:8; Prov. 17:12. The characteristics of the kingdom, therefore, that would be denoted by the bear would be ferocity, roughness, fierceness in war, especially when provoked; a spirit less manly and noble than that denoted by the lion; severe in its treatment of enemies, with a mixture of fierce and savage cunning.

Hosea 13:8

⁸ I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

2 Samuel 17:8

⁸ For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.

Proverbs 17:12

¹² Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

- c) The description of the bear clearly depicts the Medo-Persian Empire – it wasn't as glorious as Babylon (the head of gold as opposed to the arms and breast of silver in Daniel 2) but it was more ferocious in its annihilation of its enemies, as history records for us.

C. "And it raised up itself on one side"

1. Some commentators say that the bear was lying down and began to rise up – demonstrating it was about to devour its enemies.
2. However, considering these beasts are seen coming out of the sea (vs. 3), the bear would have already been in a walking position, and it would seem that the bear raising itself up on "one side" would indicate either it stood up on its hind legs,

like bears do that want to demonstrate their fierceness, or it rested on one of its forefeet while the other was reached out to swing at its prey, as bears do that are attacking a prey, which would raise the body on that side.

"This position would naturally denote a kingdom that had been quiet and at rest, but that was now rousing itself deliberately for some purpose, as of conquest or war - as the bear that had been couching down would rise when hungry, or when going forth for prey." (Albert Barnes)

Daniel 8:4

⁴ I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

Daniel 11:2

² And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.

D. "And it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it"

1. Much has been debated on this and nothing can be said for certain as to what it means, since God chose not to tell us.
2. Considering that fact, the simplest explanation is usually the best – the ribs simply indicate the fierceness of this kingdom's power, and the desire it had for

destruction, and the fact that they are seen as just ribs (no meat mentioned) it would indicate that this symbolizes past conquests.

3. Many commentators see the nations that the Medio-Persian empire destroyed and combined to form their empire – Lydia, Babylonia and Egypt – represented by these three ribs; as well as a reference to the three-fold dominion of the second empire – Media, Persia and Babylonia.

NOTE: It should be stated at this point that one thing not to miss in looking at every little detail of Daniel's vision is that by dwelling so much on the details we lose sight of a very important truth – that God is seen in all this as in control of every detail of life on earth, and that His will is going to be done, regardless of what man says or does.

E. "And they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh"

1. Nothing is indicated as to who the "they" are that are heard speaking – we can only speculate (could be the Lord, could be angels, could be the rulers of the country – Darius and Cyrus).
2. What is important is what they said.
 - a) "Arise" – points to the bear either standing up or raising up to strike with a front leg.
 - b) "Devour much flesh" – even after the beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire in the defeat of Babylon and Egypt, history records that they defeated, with great

ferociousness, many other nations and lands before they succumbed to Greece.

- c) Again, it shows that God is control of all things on earth, and, regardless of who the voice was, it's clear that the directive came from the Lord and that He ordained it to happen – Jer. 50:21-32.

V. THE THIRD BEAST – VS. 6 – REPRESENTS GREECE (MACEDONIA) UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT



A. "After this I beheld, and lo another" – as he was astounded by the first two, and was, in his vision, earnestly looking at the sea, another beast came out.

B. "Like a leopard"

1. The leopard speaks of speed and agility.
2. It points to Alexander the Great in his rapid rise to power, and the swiftness by

which he conquered – dying one month shy of his 33rd birthday.

3. "The leopard in contrast to the lion, the first beast, is less grand and majestic, but it is swifter and was much feared as an animal of prey in Old Testament times. The swiftness of the leopard made it the standard of comparison in Habakkuk 1:8 where the horses of the Chaldeans are described as swifter than leopards. Leopards characteristically would lie in wait for their prey (Jer 5:6; Ho 13:7) and then pounce upon their victims with great speed and agility." (Walvoord)

Habakkuk 1:8

⁸ Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.

Jeremiah 5:6

⁶ Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.

Hosea 13:7

⁷ Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them:

4. The leopard was not near as powerful as the bear, but no less efficient in its conquest. The kingdom of Greece under Alexander was not as powerful as that of

Media-Persia under Darius and Cyrus, but no less efficient (and, in fact, it was larger in scope and size – just not as powerful).

C. "Which had on the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast also had four heads"

1. The four wings, again, speak to the speed of the leopard – the impression being that of even emphasizing the speed by which Alexander would conquer.

"With the swiftness of a leopard, Alexander the Great conquered most of the civilized world all the way from Macedonia to Africa and eastward to India. The lightning character of his conquests is without precedent in the ancient world, and this is fully in keeping with the image of speed embodied in the leopard itself and the four wings on its back." (Walvoord)

2. The four heads refer to intelligent direction, indicating that the third empire would have four governmental divisions with corresponding leaders.

"When he was asked who should succeed him, Alexander said, "The strongest", which answer led to his empire being divided between four of his generals: Cassander, Ptolemy, Antigonus, and Seleucus (known as The Diadochi or 'successors')." (encyclopedia article by Joshua J. Mark)

Daniel 8:8

⁸ Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones

toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel 8:21-22

²¹ And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

²² Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

D. "And dominion was given it" – again, pointing to the fact that God is in control and nothing happens on earth (past, present or future) without His ordaining it.