

## DANIEL - The Four Great Beasts – Daniel 7 (Part 1)

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### DN-09

#### *Preface to Daniel 7-12*

There are four visions in the last half of the book, giving an outline of world history from Daniel's time to the end of the world. As we focus on the first of these four visions, here recorded in Daniel 7, we will find this "repeat and enlarge" pattern from the original Daniel 2 image, again and again through the successive chapters of 7, 8, 9 and 11.

"The basic revelation of these visions is the effort of the evil one to gain control of the world, but his successive defeats will culminate in the utter collapse of what he has been endeavoring to set up and in the final setting up of Christ's eternal kingdom. For a time, Satan appears to have the upper hand and to be on the verge of success. For a period of 1260 years his power of darkness will dominate but at the time of the end that will be brought to a halt, light will shine, and the final events of world history will take place." –Edwin Thiele, *Outline Studies in Daniel*, p. 56.

#### Daniel 7— The Four Great Beasts

We have now come to the beginning of the last half of the book. The last half of Daniel is known as the prophetic segment of the book. The historical drama storyline of the first six chapters we have concluded. It is now time to seek God especially for divine wisdom in comprehending these important prophetic visions of Daniel. We will now realize over the next several weeks why Daniel 7 is so vital to the remnant movement.

We stand in awe of what the Most High has accomplished for His servant Daniel, a man with an excellent spirit through many decades of service as a captive in a foreign land. One of the great prophets of the Bible, through all the play and counter play of the drama in chapters 1-6, Daniel has remained true to God declaring from the den of lions to King Darius, "forasmuch as before him [God], innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." {Dan 6:22}. We admire such a remarkable individual who so fully made God His trust in all things, that God could trust Him with the prophetic picture of the future.

But praise God, we are greatly blessed to stand on the work of generations of Bible scholars and students and those of our own faith who have laboriously and prayerfully focused their minds on understanding these vitally important chapters in Daniel and recording them for future generations. The Holy Spirit has rewarded them and will do so for us as we now turn our attention to these visions of Daniel 7, 8 and 9.

#### DANIEL 7

*Daniel 7:1-3 "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. 2 Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another."*

**Vs.1 -In the first year of Belshazzar...** - It was in the first year of King Belshazzar that Daniel had a vision and wrote down all that he saw, with the interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Commentators will tell us that Daniel 7:1, which occurred "in the first year of Belshazzar" happened in the year 553 BC. Thanks to the SOP we know this can't be true, since Babylon fell in 539/538 BC. Belshazzar was only 15 years old {YI 5/19,1898; cf PK 553.2}.

**Vs.2 -Four winds of heaven** - It is quite obvious as we go down through this prophecy that the Bible uses a number of symbols to describe what is taking place. We must let the Bible be its own expositor, when it comes to studying prophecy.

In Jeremiah 25:31-33 we see that when a great \_\_\_\_\_ is raised up it wreaks death and destruction upon those it comes against. Also in Jeremiah 4:13 we find that the chariots that spoiled the people, (this being a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the hand of Babylon vs 5, 6), were likened unto a whirlwind. So it is easily seen that winds are a symbol of \_\_\_\_\_, strife, \_\_\_\_\_, and trouble. Four being from the four quarters of the earth or the four points of the compass {see Jeremiah 49:36}.

**Strove upon the great sea** - Seas are a symbol of multitudes, nations, tongues, and peoples. (Rev.17:15, “the multitude of many people,...like the noise of the seas.” Isaiah 17:12; cf Ps.46:3)

A couple online commentaries stated the following re. the “four winds which strove” or “were stirring up the great sea:”

- The winds come from the four corners or quarters of the earth. These “point to the various political and social agitations which disturb the world’s history, and lead to the changes and revolutions which mark its progress as it tends towards the end.” *Ellicott’s Commentary on Dan. 7:2*
- These [winds] denote those “commotions in the world, and that troublesome state of affairs, out of which empires and kingdoms commonly take their rise.” *Benson Commentary on Dan. 7:2*

**Vs.3 -Four great beasts came up from the sea** – A beast is a symbol of a \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, so too is a horn. (Daniel 7:17; 23-24) Already we are seeing a picture of what Daniel is being shown. Strife, war and bloodshed is upon the nations as kingdom conquers kingdom to rise to world supremacy. Notice how the beasts rose up out of the sea, thus showing that each kingdom rose out of a densely populated area. We are looking at world events as it comes from all directions, all encompassing.

**Diverse one from another** - The people in each controlling nation were different, the laws and customs were different, and even the administration of the kingdoms was different.

**Daniel 7:4** “*The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.*”

**Vs.4 – “The first** - This shows that all the kingdoms came in succession, as they are known as the first, second, etc.

**Was like a lion, and had eagles wings** - A lion is strong and very courageous, and it is also known as the king of the beasts. We have the support from the book of Daniel in (2:38) who this lion represents, but Jeremiah 4:5-7 also indicates a prophecy regarding the coming destruction of Judah and Jerusalem as “evil from the north” “a lion from the thicket”—an obvious reference to Babylon and how it conquered. (Dan. 1:1 indicates that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came and besieged Judah and Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim.)

Wings are a symbol of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ as seen in Habakkuk 1:6-9. It is also interesting to note that in these verses it is prophesied of the rise of the Chaldeans/Babylonians whilst they were still an Assyrian province. Their horsemen were to be like an eagle that hasteth to eat, that is, fast, showing their speed of conquest. The “winged lion” symbol is found on many Babylonian objects of art and also upon the Ishtar gates, which were the gates of entry for the triumphant armies. This symbol is utilized by Bible prophets in talking about Babylon.

***Wings were plucked...made stand upon feet as a man...man's heart given...*** - Here we see a change taking place in the Babylonian power. No longer was it swift to fly upon its enemies or quick to defend its territory like the king of the beasts, the strong courageous heart of a lion was replaced by a weak and wicked heart of a man, and made to stand as a man.

*The prophet describes Babylon as the glory of kingdoms, and in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar it was represented by the head of gold. But although it was the greatest kingdom of the earth, the prophet had declared: "I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son and nephew, saith the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts." {ST, December 29, 1890 par. 4}*

*Babylon, shattered and broken at last, passed away because in prosperity its rulers had regarded themselves as independent of God, and had ascribed the glory of their kingdom to human achievement. . . . The kingdoms that followed were even more base and corrupt; and these sank lower and still lower in the scale of moral worth. {CC 250.4}*

In the time of the downfall of Babylon under Belshazzar's reign, the kingdom was reduced to the walls of Babylon itself. With the conquering spirit gone and regarding that their power came from their god's. (Habakkuk 1:11, Jeremiah 50:38) God had abandoned them and the Babylonian kingdom fell with Belshazzar being slain in the middle of a drunken feast. {Dan.5}

**Daniel 7:5** "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh."

***Another beast*** - We are now introduced to the next kingdom rising to power.

***Like a bear...raised up on one side*** - A bear is very vicious, ferocious, also blood thirsty. But this one is raised up on one side showing that one side is being \_\_\_\_\_, thus being weaker.

This is a very good description of the Medo-Persian Empire. They were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. (Isaiah 13:15-19) Also they were partly strong and partly weak. Darius the Mede and Cyrus his nephew came together so as to go up against Babylon. The Persians were much stronger than the Medes, hence the bear raised up on one side, with the Persians ruling the kingdom for the majority of the time.

***Three ribs in its mouth*** - This bear has been devouring other beasts as it has three ribs in its mouth. These three ribs can represent the three kingdoms that the Medes and Persians conquered as they were rising to power, these are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

***Arise devour much flesh*** - The Medo-Persian empire was much larger than the Babylonian empire. They ruled over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. (Esther 1:1) Medes and Persians ruled from 538-331 B.C.

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As we can begin to understand Daniel 7 we see the focus of the same nations or empires, but using animals to convey the characteristics of each. {These characteristics will last all the way to the end of time, but will be assumed under the 'Little Horn' power, we will begin to study next week.

We will look at the last two of these beasts and their characteristic in detail in our next session and more clearly take note of the 'repeat and enlarge' principle which plays so largely in the prophetic understanding of this book.