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MINISTRIES

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The Exiled Prophet, Part 8: The Four Beasts (Daniel 7)

Welcome back to our study on the book of Daniel. In our last teaching, we covered Daniel chapter 6, where Daniel was accused of treason because he prayed to God. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, but God protected him. The king then promoted Daniel and fed the men who had accused him to those same lions.

In this teaching, we’re going to cover Daniel chapter 7. In chapter 7, Daniel has a vision where he sees four great beasts. He sees God sitting on his throne, and a judgment is issued which takes away the dominion of the beasts, and completely destroys the fourth beast. Everlasting dominion is then given to “one like a son of man.” The rest of the chapter explains what these beasts represent and gives more details concerning the fourth beast.

As we’ve mentioned previously, the book of Daniel contains a “chiastic structure,” where there are significant similarities between some of the book’s stories. Chapters 4 and 5 form the center of that structure, where both chapters describe the humiliation of an arrogant king. Moving outward from that center, chapters 3 and 6 both describe God’s protection of his people when they chose to obey God instead of unrighteous kings. Now, in chapter 7, we are on the outer edge of that structure. Chapter 7 has many similarities to chapter 2. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of a statue made of four different metals (Daniel 2:32-33); here in chapter 7, Daniel receives a vision of four different beasts. In chapter 2, those metals represent different kingdoms (Daniel 2:37-40); here in chapter 7, the four beasts represent kingdoms as well. In Daniel 2, those kingdoms are destroyed and replaced by a new kingdom that will “stand forever” (Daniel 2:44); the same destruction and replacement happens to the four beasts here in chapter 7. So these two chapters are describing the same kingdoms, and the same events, but using different symbols to represent those things. Chapter 7 contains a much more detailed description of those kingdoms and events, but we will be able to refer back to chapter 2 to help us interpret this chapter. So, let’s start reading and digging into these details.

Daniel 7:1

[In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he](#)

lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.

Daniel receives this vision “in the first year of king Belshazzar.” This tells us that the book of Daniel is not written in chronological order. Back in chapter 5, Belshazzar died, so Daniel had this vision before the events of chapters 5 and 6. This means that he already knew at that time that both Babylon and Persia were going to be overthrown. Perhaps this knowledge contributed to the faith and assurance that he had when he was in the city of Babylon while it was being sacked in chapter 5, and then when he was thrown into the lion’s den in chapter 6. Let’s continue:

Daniel 7:2-3

Daniel declared, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

The four winds of heaven is a term used to describe the exile of the Israelites after they were captured by the Assyrians and Babylonians (see Deuteronomy 30:4; Zechariah 2:6; Mark 13:27). It is connected to the phrases “ends of heaven,” “ends of the earth,” and “four corners of the earth,” which typically refer to all of Mesopotamia (Isaiah 11:12; 41:8-9; 49:5-6; Revelation 7:1, 9). We see this terminology used by non-Israelites as well; for example, the Persian king Cyrus called himself “the king of the four corners of the world” (*Cyrus Cylinder*, www.livius.org). Daniel mentions both the four winds of heaven and also the great sea. The phrase “great sea” in the Bible is usually a reference to the Mediterranean Sea, which is on Israel’s western border (Numbers 34:6-7; Joshua 1:2-4; 9:1; 15:12, 47; 23:4; Ezekiel 47:10, 15, 20; 48:28). So, it would seem that these four beasts, these four kingdoms, are going to rule over the whole world that Israel was exiled to, as well as Israel itself, next to the great sea. Daniel’s vision, then, is focused on how these beasts relate to Israel during the time of their exile. Daniel proceeds to describe these beasts:

Daniel 7:4-8

The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

What Are The Four Beasts?

Let’s establish the identities of these four beasts. Later in this chapter, Daniel explains that these beasts are “[kings who shall arise out of the earth](#)” (Daniel 7:17). Again, these four beasts represent the same things as the four metals that are part of the statue in Daniel chapter 2 (Daniel 2:37-40). So, the first beast represents the first kingdom that would conquer both Israel and the four corners of the earth.

Who was this first beast? It was the same as the “head of gold” from Daniel chapter 2; it was the

kingdom of Babylon, under the rulership of king Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:37-38). This beast was “[like a lion and had eagles’ wings](#)” (Daniel 7:4). Winged lions with human heads, or sphinxes, were common in both Assyrian and Babylonian art (E.C. Ravenshaw, “On the Winged Bulls, Lions, and Other Symbolical Figures from Nineveh”, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* Vol. 16 (1856), pp. 93-117). The appearance of this beast could also symbolize that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Mesopotamia with the ferocity of a lion and the swiftness of an eagle. Babylon started as just a city, but started expanding their kingdom in 625 B.C.E. (Karen Rhea Nemat-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998] p. xxi), and by 586 B.C.E. Nebuchadnezzar controlled most of the Mesopotamian region (Yuval Levavi, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire: The Imperial Periphery as Seen from the Centre”, *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History*, Vol. 7 Issue 1, 27 July 2020, www.degruyter.com). Within forty years, they went from a single city to a world-spanning empire. This beast had its wings plucked off, and then was given the mind of a man. This seems to be a reference to Daniel chapter 4, where God punishes king Nebuchadnezzar with the mind of a beast, and then later restores him to having the mind of a man (Daniel 4:13, 31). So, the symbology of this beast fits Babylon very well.

The second beast, the bear with the three ribs in its mouth, was the next kingdom to rule the region: the Medo-Persian empire, under king Cyrus. The prophets had foretold that the Medes would overthrow Babylon for many years (Isaiah 13:17-19; Jeremiah 51:11, 28-29). Some scholars take this to mean that the Medes should be considered completely separate from the Persians; that the Medes are one beast, and the Persians are a different beast. However, both Daniel chapter 8 and secular history shows that the Medes and Persians together formed a single kingdom at this time (Daniel 8:20; Herodotus, *Histories* 1:190–191; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.5.1-30). In fact, the Persians conquered the Medes and incorporated them into their kingdom before Babylon was ever attacked. As we read about in Daniel chapter 5, king Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.E. (Stephen Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great: Conqueror, Liberator, Anointed One* [Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing Company 2020] pp. 160-180). His kingdom is depicted as a bear holding three ribs in its teeth. Bears are mentioned in the Scriptures, alongside lions and leopards, as ferocious beasts (1 Samuel 17:34-37; Proverbs 28:15; Isaiah 11:6-8; Lamentations 3:10; Hosea 13:7-8; Amos 5:18-19). The “three ribs” in the bear’s mouth may represent the three nations that the Persians conquered in order to secure their kingdom, those nations being Media, Lydia, and Babylonia (R. Schmitt, “ACHAEMENID DYNASTY,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/4, pp. 414-426). Some believe that the three ribs refer instead to Babylonia, Lydia, and Egypt, although the Persians conquered Egypt much later (see John Walvoord, *Daniel*, edited by Charles H. Dyer & Philip E. Rawley [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012], p. 193). This bear was told to “[arise](#)” and “[devour much flesh](#)” (Daniel 7:5). The phrase “devour flesh” is usually used when God causes one group of people to bring his judgment upon another group of people (Deuteronomy 32:42; Isaiah 9:18-21; Zechariah 11:7-16; Revelation 17:15-18). In John’s vision in the book of Revelation, a beast devours the flesh of a woman (Revelation 17:16), and this woman is called “Babylon the great” (Revelation 17:5). So, the phrase “devour much flesh” here in Daniel is probably a reference to God using the Medes and Persians to bring judgment upon Babylon (Daniel 5:24-28; Isaiah 13:17-19; Jeremiah 51:11, 28-29). Again, we saw this judgment play out when the Persians captured Babylon back in Daniel chapter 5. Persia ruled Mesopotamia for about two hundred years, until they were overthrown by the next beast.

The third beast corresponds to the kingdom of Greece, under the rulership of Alexander the Great (Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander*). Daniel 8 indicates that Greece is the kingdom being depicted here; in that chapter, Daniel is told explicitly that the Medo-Persian empire will be defeated and replaced by the Greek empire (Daniel 8:20-21). So, if the bear, the second beast from chapter 7 represents Medo-Persia, then the leopard, the third beast, must represent Greece. Again, Alexander the Great was king over Greece when they defeated the Persians and acquired their kingdom. Alexander was

technically from Macedonia, but he ruled over Greece as well, and he called himself a “Greek man” (Tim Whitmarsh, “Alexander’s Hellenism and Plutarch’s Textualism”, *The Classical Quarterly* Vol. 52 No. 1 (2002) p. 174). Alexander completed his conquest of the Persian empire in 330 B.C.E. (Waldemar Heckel, *Osprey Guide to the Wars of Alexander the Great* [London: Bloomsbury Publishing 2014] p. 14). The Greek beast is depicted as a leopard with four wings and four heads. Like the bear, the leopard is described in the Scriptures as a ferocious beast (Isaiah 11:6; Jeremiah 5:6; Hosea 13:7). The four heads are probably a reference to Alexander’s four generals who inherited different parts of Alexander’s kingdom after his premature death (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.1.1). The four wings may be a reference to the incredible speed with which Alexander conquered the four corners of the earth; Alexander conquered all of Persia’s land in just ten years. We’ll discuss Alexander’s kingdom more in the next teaching when we cover Daniel chapter 8.

The identity of the fourth beast, the terrifying one with iron teeth and ten horns, is not given in Daniel, but we know from history that the next nation to conquer both Israel and the rest of Mesopotamia was Rome. Rome had been slowly expanding out of Italy for centuries, but they captured Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. (www.jewishencyclopedia.com), and by 31 B.C.E., they had uncontested control of the entire Mediterranean Sea (David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* [London: Penguin Books 2012], pp. 198, 208; Olga Tellegen-Couperus, *Short History of Roman Law* [London: Routledge 1993] p. 32). The fourth beast was said to have “iron teeth” (Daniel 7:7), which reminds us of the feet of the statue from Daniel 2:

Daniel 2:40

And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these.

Rome did “break and crush” the nations it conquered (David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* [London: Penguin Books 2012], p. 198; John Walvoord, *Daniel*, edited by Charles H. Dyer & Philip E. Rawley [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012], p. 199), especially Israel. Daniel 7 says that the fourth beast “*devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet*” (Daniel 7:7). The word used for “devour” can also mean “to accuse” (e.g., Daniel 3:8; 6:24). Under Roman rule, the Jews faced numerous accusations, which led to persecution, violence, or exile (e.g., Acts 18:2; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 60.6.6-7; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.3.5; 18.8.1; *Wars of the Jews* 7.3.2). Also, while Rome occupied Israel, they devoured much of its wealth (*Ant.* 14.7.1; 14.9.3; 15.1.2; 17.8.1). They also broke it in pieces by dividing it up into separate districts (*Ant.* 14.5.4) and scattering its inhabitants (*Ant.* 18.3.5). Finally, they stomped on what remained of it by engaging in continuous brutal suppression of its people (*Ant.* 17.10.2; 18.3.2; *Wars* 2.18.1). There are even more aspects of Rome that fit this fourth beast; we’ll discuss those aspects more later on in the chapter, when this beast is mentioned again.

Let’s quickly recap these four beasts: the first beast, the lion with eagles’ wings, represents Babylon. The second beast, the bear with three ribs in its mouth, represents Medo-Persia. The third beast, the leopard with four heads and four wings, represents Greece. And, the fourth beast, with iron teeth and ten horns, in our opinion, represents Rome. As we mentioned when we covered Daniel 2, these kingdoms all had polytheistic religions involving idols, and as we’ve seen in this chapter, they all ruled over both Israel and most of the known world for a period of time. With that established, let’s keep reading through Daniel 7.

The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

Daniel 7:9-10

As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

So, after seeing four beasts rise from the sea, Daniel sees this “Ancient of Days” take a seat at his throne, where books will be opened, and judgment will be rendered. The imagery in this passage is found in many other scriptures. Having hair like wool is mentioned in the book of Revelation, describing Yeshua (Revelation 1:14). Angels are sometimes described as having clothing that is “white as snow” (Matthew 28:3). Wearing clean white clothes generally tends to symbolize righteousness (Revelation 3:4-5; 19:8, 14). God’s throne is associated with fire in several places (Ezekiel 1:26-28; Revelation 4:5), and fire itself often symbolizes judgment (Isaiah 10:16; 66:16; Amos 7:4; Matthew 5:32; Hebrews 10:27; 2 Peter 3:7). God is often depicted as being surrounded by tens of thousands of holy beings who serve him (Deuteronomy 33:2; Jude 1:14; Numbers 10:36; Genesis 24:60; Deuteronomy 33:17). Also, “the books being opened” is another reference to judgment; numerous scriptures describe a “book of life” that contains the names of the righteous (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:27; Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28). Those whose names are found in the book will live. All of the imagery here points toward God as a judge in a court executing righteous judgment. But, who exactly is being judged? The next few verses tell us:

Daniel 7:11-12

I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

So, after the scene of God’s court is established, Daniel refers back to the fourth beast, which had a horn that was “speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8). This beast is killed, and it is implied that this killing is a punishment, a judgment for the “great things” that its horn was speaking. Revelation 13 also describes a “beast” that was speaking “blasphemies” (Revelation 13:1, 5-6), and was later judged (Revelation 19:20), which fits this same pattern. Again, we will return to this subject when Daniel gets more details about this fourth beast after verse 19. For now, the thing to note is that the beast is judged, and the “dominion” of all of the beasts was taken away. The next verses tell us who that dominion was given to:

Daniel 7:13-14

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And 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 one that shall not be destroyed.

So, the dominion that was taken away from the beasts—taken away from the pagan kingdoms that conquered and ruled Mesopotamia—was given to “one like a son of man.” The first thing to note is that this “son of man” would be the same as the “stone” from Daniel 2—the stone that destroyed and replaced the statue made of four metals (Daniel 2:44-45). As we pointed out in chapter 2, this stone represents the Messiah, Yeshua. The second thing to note is that this “son of man” came with the clouds, was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, and was presented before the ancient of days, who wore

snow-white clothes and was surrounded by angels while he was declaring judgment upon the beasts. All of these elements are seen again in a very significant event: the transfiguration of Yeshua. We find that event in Matthew 16 and 17:

Matthew 16:27-17:5

For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. And after six days Jesus [Yeshua] took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus [Yeshua], “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

Again, this transfiguration has many of the elements of the vision from Daniel 7: The son of man (Matthew 16:27; Daniel 7:13) coming in a cloud (Matthew 17:5; Daniel 7:13), with pure white clothes (Matthew 17:2; Daniel 7:9) for the purpose of judgment (Matthew 16:27; Daniel 7:10) and to establish his kingdom (Matthew 16:28; Daniel 7:14). The other gospels include additional details that align with Daniel 7: Mark’s record says that this kingdom will come “in power” (Mark 9:1), which refers to the “dominion” that was given to the son of man in Daniel 7:13. Luke mentions that the son of man will come “in his glory and the glory of the father and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26), which parallels the glory mentioned in Daniel 7:14. Everything about the transfiguration tells the disciples that Yeshua is the “son of man” prophesied in Daniel 7. This same thing is told to John in his vision from the book of Revelation:

Revelation 1:4-7

...Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are **before his throne**, and from Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua], the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be **glory and dominion** forever and ever. Amen. Behold, **he is coming with the clouds**, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Revelation 1:12-18

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. **The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow.** His eyes were like a **flame of fire**, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Here, again, we have imagery from Daniel 7: one like a son of man, with white hair like wool, who has glory and dominion and comes in the clouds of heaven bringing judgment. Also, his face “shines like the

sun,” which points back to the transfiguration (Matthew 17:2), which itself points back again to Daniel 7.

Yeshua’s transfiguration showed that he was the son of man prophesied in this chapter of Daniel. He also referenced Daniel 7 in his own prophecies. In Matthew 24, Yeshua said this:

Matthew 24:29-31

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see **the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Revelation describes something very similar. It speaks of angels holding back the four winds, and a great multitude being gathered.:

Revelation 7:1

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

Revelation 7:9-12

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.

What Daniel, Yeshua, and John are all describing is the establishment of God’s kingdom upon the earth—an event spoken of by many of the prophets. In this event, God gathers Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, unites them under the leadership of the Messiah, brings judgment upon the nations who oppressed his people, and establishes his own government on earth (see Ezekiel 37, Jeremiah 30-31, Isaiah 11, Ezekiel 34, Joel 2-3, Hosea 2:14-3:5; Zechariah 14). There is much to be said about this amazing prophecy, but the aspect that Daniel seems to be emphasizing most is the transfer of power from these “beast-kingdoms” to the kingdom of the Son of Man. These other kingdoms are temporary kingdoms; they seem strong and ferocious, but ultimately they are doomed to die. However, the kingdom of the Son of Man will last forever. When we discussed Daniel chapter 2, we mentioned that these four kingdoms shared a common flaw: they all served idols instead of serving God. God says that this kind of behavior will lead to death; that those who serve idols will perish:

Deuteronomy 30:16-18a

If you obey the commandments of the LORD [YHWH] your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD [YHWH] your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD [YHWH] your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish.

Hosea 8:4b

With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.

(see also: Exodus 20:4-6; Leviticus 26:27-33; 2 Kings 17:14-18; 2 Chronicles 24:18; Psalm 135:15-18; Ezekiel 6:4-10; Revelation 2:20-27)

So, even if we did not have these prophecies from Daniel, we could still know that these kingdoms would eventually fall. It's the inevitable result of disobeying God. However, the kingdom headed up by the Son of Man will serve God, not idols. There will be no death because there will be no sin. So, this kingdom will stand forever. As David wrote:

Psalm 45:6

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.

And, as the prophet Nathan declared:

2 Samuel 7:13

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

And, as the angel Gabriel said to Mary:

Luke 1:32-33

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Dominion will be transferred from these idolatrous nations to the nation of Israel, under the rule of the Messiah, Yeshua. Israel will turn back from idolatry, serve God, and live forever. It will be a wonderful kingdom, and it's one we can enter into right now by turning away from our sins and back to God. To learn more about this, please see our series, [What Is The Gospel](#).

The Fourth Beast and Its Horns

After seeing this astonishing vision, Daniel is troubled, so he begins to ask questions:

Daniel 7:15-18

As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'

As we mentioned, these beasts represent kingdoms—kingdoms that will ultimately be possessed by God's people. After receiving this explanation, Daniel inquires further about the fourth beast:

Daniel 7:19-22

Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

This beast had “teeth of iron” and “claws of bronze” (Daniel 7:19). This terrifying rule of iron and bronze was also foretold by Moses:

Deuteronomy 28:23-29

And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. The LORD [YHWH] will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed. The LORD [YHWH] will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away. The LORD [YHWH] will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed. The LORD [YHWH] will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind, and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you.

As we mentioned earlier, we think that this fourth beast is Rome. Historically, many of Rome’s features paralleled the features of this fourth beast. For example, the Roman emperor Vespasian did many of the things that are described by this prophecy about the horn. If you count Julius Caesar as Rome’s first “king,” then Vespasian was Rome’s tenth king, which would account for the ten horns. Vespasian was the fourth emperor of the year 69 A.D., the so-called “year of the four emperors,” so like that horn, he replaced three other kings. One little-known fact about Vespasian is that he was proclaimed to be the Messiah from Judah! Here is what Josephus, the Jewish historian, said about him:

"about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth." The Jews took this prediction to belong to them selves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea.

- Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 6.5.4, Translation from William Whiston, *Josephus: The Complete Works* [Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library], p. 1486

The Roman historian Suetonius said the same thing, that Vespasian was the Messiah promised by the Hebrew scriptures:

There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated for men coming from Judaea to rule the world. This prediction, referring to the emperor of Rome - as afterwards appeared from the event - the people of Judaea took to themselves.

- Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian* 4.5

There was even a story about Vespasian miraculously healing a man with a withered hand, and curing another man who was blind (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXVI 8.1). So, just like the horn from Daniel 7:20, Vespasian certainly had a mouth that spoke great things. Also, like that horn, he made war with Israel (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10.24-25), and in 70 A.D., he prevailed over them, with his son Titus personally overseeing the destruction of the temple (*Wars* 6.4.1-8). So, just this one Roman emperor fits many of the descriptions of the little horn of the fourth beast.

Now, to be clear, we don't think the emperor Vespasian is the ultimate fulfillment of the fourth beast or the tenth horn. Daniel's prophecy ends with the fourth beast being judged, and the saints possessing its kingdom. This, historically, did not happen to Vespasian, or to any other Roman emperor. But he does fit into parts of the prophetic pattern that Daniel described. Later Roman emperors, such as Hadrian, also blasphemed God, made war with Israel, and prevailed (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 69.12-13). This was the pattern of Rome's behavior for many centuries. The history of Rome's brutal treatment of both Jews and Christians is well-documented. But we think that the final judgment upon Rome is still yet to come.

On that note, we should address one of the popular ideas that runs counter to ours. Some argue that all of these prophecies from Daniel 7 have already been fulfilled. They think that when Rome officially endorsed Christianity in the fourth century A.D., that fulfilled the prophecy of the overthrow of the fourth beast, because the saints "possessed" the Roman kingdom at that time. There are, however, many problems with this idea; we'll point out just a few.

For one, just like most other Biblical prophecies, Daniel's prophecies center around the land of Israel (e.g., Daniel 8:9-14; 9:16-19, 24-25). The one place that all four of the beasts controlled was Israel, not the city of Rome. So, Daniel's kingdom of the saints should be based in Israel, not in Rome or anywhere else. Second, Rome's supposed conversion to Christianity did not cause them to stop persecuting either Jews or Christians. The Roman church excommunicated Christians who celebrated Passover (Canons of Laodicea 7) or any other Biblical feast day (Canons of Laodicea 37-38), and who rested on the sabbath (Canons of Laodicea 29, Canons of Second Council of Nicaea 8). They also didn't treat Jews any better than Rome did when they were officially pagan. So the Roman church continued the beast's policy of persecuting God's people. Third, another common factor among the four beast-kingdoms was idolatry, and so presumably the kingdom of the saints would obey God and not have idols. However, the Roman church did not eliminate idolatry. While the so-called Christian Roman empire did crack down on idolatry outside of church services (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.4), at the same time they set up literal graven images *inside* of church services. In 787, the Second Council of Nicaea declared this:

...like the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross, the revered and holy images, whether painted or made of mosaic or of other suitable material, are to be exposed in the holy churches of God, on sacred instruments and vestments, on walls and panels, in houses and by public ways, these are the images of our Lord, God and saviour, Jesus Christ, and of our Lady without blemish, the holy God-bearer, and of the revered angels and of any of the saintly holy men. The more frequently they are seen in representational art, the more are those who see them drawn to remember and long for those who serve as models, and to pay these images the tribute of salutation and respectful veneration.

- From the Second Council of Nicaea, translation provided by www.papalencyclicals.net

So, the Roman church wasn't based in Israel, didn't stop the persecution of the fourth beast, and didn't destroy the idolatrous religion of Rome. Instead, they continued the persecution, and they also continued the idolatry that already existed by incorporating it within the church. They did not bring judgment upon

the fourth beast; on the contrary, they continued the fourth beast's reign. In fact, 2,000 years later, we are still waiting for Daniel's final judgment to fall upon the fourth beast. We don't claim to know exactly how or when that judgment is going to be carried out, but we do think that it is yet to come. Yeshua is going to return in power and glory, and he will judge the nations and establish his own eternal kingdom.

This chapter of Daniel finishes with some more details about this fourth beast.

Daniel 7:23-27

Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

There are several additional details about the fourth beast in this passage, but there are two that we will focus on: one, the beast's horn will "change the times and the law," and two, "they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." This language is quite vague, but it is possible that Daniel chapter 9 clarifies it for us. Daniel 9:26-27 speaks of a "prince who is to come" that destroys the city and the sanctuary. This same prince puts an end to sacrifice and offering for half of a week. Traditionally, the "weeks" in Daniel 9 are considered to be seven-year periods, so half of a week would be three and a half years. If the "times" here in Daniel 7 correspond to years also, then "time," "times" and "half of a time" would be one plus two plus one-half years—three and a half years. So, then, it may be that the "times and the law" that are changed in Daniel 7 are the same as the "sacrifice and offering" that are ended for three and a half years in Daniel 9.

Another interesting point is that Vespasian caused the daily offering in Jerusalem to cease after three and a half years of besieging Jerusalem (William Whiston, *Works of Josephus*, footnote to *Wars of the Jews* 6.2.1). Now, to be clear, it is not certain that Daniel 7 and 9 are describing the same event, and even less clear that they are both referring to Vespasian, but we think this detail about the sacrifices is at least worth mentioning. There are also other historical examples that fit this three-and-a-half-year pattern, and we will examine those when we cover Daniel chapter 9.

Lessons for Us

As we've seen, Daniel 7 is packed with history and symbology. We barely scratched the surface of all of the details and references to other scriptures that are present in this chapter. But, in the midst all of these complex symbols and prophecies, we don't want to lose sight of the lessons this chapter is teaching us. Here are three that we think stand out.

First, just like the rest of the book of Daniel, this chapter reminds us that the powers of this world are temporary, and their plans are ultimately going to come to nothing. God's kingdom is eternal, and his will is going to prevail in the end. There is no political scheme, no military conquest, no device of

human imagination that God did not see coming. He has seen and planned for all of it. Not just that, but sometimes he gives us a glimpse of his plans, just to reassure us that he has everything under control. While we don't necessarily understand every single detail, we can see from the historical accuracy of the prophecies about the beasts that Daniel is a reliable source. We can rest assured that the last part of this prophecy, where God conquers all, will come to pass as well.

Second, one of the implications of the fact that God will win in the end is that we should do what God says. Would we rather be part of these beast-kingdoms that will be destroyed, or part of God's kingdom that will last forever? As David wrote:

Psalm 84:10-12

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD [YHWH] God is a sun and shield; the LORD [YHWH] bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD [YHWH] of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

And as Paul wrote:

Galatians 6:7-9

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

So, let's seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first, so we can reap an eternal reward.

And, speaking of seeking God's kingdom first, the final lesson we want to focus on is the identity of our king. When Yeshua was transfigured, that was a sign that he was the prophesied son of man, the one who will receive dominion over the world after the beasts are judged. Since he is the king, we should follow his example, and be his ambassadors. We should heed the voice from heaven that said, "Listen to him." He was appointed king long ago, and he is going to rule:

Revelation 17:12-14

And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

Yeshua is going to be the king over all nations forever. We might as well get used to serving and following him now. Let's keep the "founder and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2) front and center in our hearts and minds.

In the next teaching in this series, we will examine chapter 8 of the book of Daniel. We hope to see you there.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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