

The Four Beasts

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series – Daniel

Text: Daniel 7:1-2

The first six chapters of Daniel were primarily **history**. The remainder of the book contains visions that Daniel had that are prophetic. The first two came during the Babylonian Empire and the other two later during the Persian rule. Chapter seven actually happened during the reign of Belshazzar, about ten years before the fall of Babylon.

Verse two references the “four winds of Heaven”. This indicates that human history falls within the **divine** will of God. The ‘Great Sea’ refers to the Mediterranean Sea. In the Bible the “Sea” prophetically represents people’s and nations.

Daniel 7:3-4

There is a direct connection between this vision and the one from chapter two. God showed King Nebuchadnezzar the Gentile nations that would dominate the world through the centuries.

- Head of Gold – Babylon
- Shoulders of silver – The Medo Persian Empire
- The trunk of brass – the Greeks
- The legs of Iron - The Roman Empire
- The feet mixed with clay and iron – our civilization today. The interconnectedness of all nations.

The first creature in Daniels’s vision was a beast coming out of the sea. It was a lion with eagle’s wings, this is **Babylon**. Archeologists found sculptures of this at the gate of the king’s palace in Babylon. The lion represents the absolute power of Babylon over the known world at that time and the wings represent the speed and might with which this kingdom would dominate.

As Daniel watched the wings were **torn** off and made to stand as a human. This happened to the King because of his pride, and it represented that this kingdom was not divine but merely human.

Daniel 7:5

The second beast was like a bear. This beast didn’t have the majestic bearing of either the lion or the eagle. A bear is slower, stronger, and more crushing than a lion – and this bear had a voracious **appetite** for conquest (Arise, devour much flesh!). A few decades after Daniel had this vision the Medo-Persian Empire overwhelmed Babylon. The three ribs represent their three great military conquests: Babylon, Egypt and Lydia.

We remember from Biblical history that God used Queen **Esther** to keep the Jewish people alive during the reign of the Persians. The slow, crushing armies of the Medo-Persian Empire were well known. They simply overwhelmed their opponents with superior size and strength. The Medes and Persians are compared to a bear on account of their cruelty and thirst after blood.

Daniel 7:6

The leopard represented the **Greek** Empire. Alexander the Great quickly conquered the civilized world by age 28. Nothing in the history of the world, was equal to the conquests of Alexander the great. He was born in 356 B.C. and followed his father, Phillip II, at age 20. Remember that Paul and Silas ministered in **Philippi**, named after Alexander's father. This Empire reached from the Adriatic Sea all the way into what is modern India.

After his death at age thirty his empire was divided into four parts (four heads). Specifically, the four heads were Casander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy, all generals who inherited Alexander's domain after his death. They **divided** Alexander's kingdom among themselves.

Remember that Daniel received this information from God centuries **before** the empires came to pass. This is a significant reason why we know the Bible is a supernatural book.

The Fourth Beast – With Ten Horns – Daniel 7:7-8

This beast was the **Roman** Empire, which was the largest, strongest, most unified and enduring of them all. Rome built the largest empire in human history. From Italy to Great Britain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany to the borders of India and into the Middle East including Israel. The fourth beast was indescribable, and uniquely horrific in its power and conquest. Rome was **driven** by a relentless policy of expansionism. Rome crushed, murdered and subjugated people.

This beast had ten horns: In the ancient world horns expressed the power and fearsomeness of an animal. This fourth beast was so strong it had ten horns. Different people picture this in different ways. Some suggest that the ten horns were actually two five-pointed antlers, rather than ten separate horns. There is an unmistakable correspondence between these horns and the ten toes of the dream image from chapter two. From Rome comes the ten horns or **governmental** units.

Among the ten horns, three are replaced by one horn that was conspicuous for its dominance. Three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. Having eyes like the eyes of a man, indicates intelligence and vision and plan. It indicates not just a country but a **specific** leader. Its boastful talk (speaking pompous words) indicates he will be well spoken, charismatic, prideful and confident. This little horn represents the **antichrist**. His arrival on the world scene will have to do with the shifting powers of Europe. The world will "worship" him as a strong political and economic leader, but many will literally see him as the world's "savior".

It is important to understand the coming of the antichrist, of the little horn, does not happen until after the **rapture**. The antichrist may start his rise to power while we are still here, but we will be taken to heaven before the start of the seven years of God's judgement and wrath known as the **tribulation**. Although God's people may endure severe trials before the Lord comes the church will be Raptured before the time of God's wrath is poured out on a Christ rejecting world.

2 Thessalonians 5:9

Christians are repeatedly told in the New Testament to be watchful for the Lord's appearing. Never are we taught to watch for the Great Tribulation or for the appearance of the antichrist. We are to wait for the Son from heaven, not the seven years of wrath. **1 Thessalonians 1:10** Throughout God's word, He consistently removed His people before a time of Judgement on the world. God did not send the flood until Noah and his family were on the ark. He did not destroy Sodom until Lot was taken out. He has promised the same for us.

The Ancient of Days – Daniel 7:9-10

When the Apostle John saw heaven, he also saw thrones, but he also saw those who sat on those thrones – the 24 elders described in **Revelation 4:4**. Daniel made no mention of these elders, perhaps because the 24 elders represent the church, and the church was an unrevealed mystery to Old Testament saints **Ephesians 3:1-7**.

The Ancient of Days is obviously God, the white garments and white hair stress the eternal character of God the Father. Notice the glory, majesty and fire that surround the throne of God. This was a brilliant manifestation of God's splendor and the fierce heat of His judgment. There seems to be something lava-like in the stream of fire pouring from the throne; it was like a river of vast destructive power. A throne is a place of decision and action. This is God in all of His splendor and authority carrying out righteousness. **Isaiah 66:15-16**

The thousands standing before the throne represent angels and those from humanity who have made Jesus Lord. Thousand times ten thousand is 100 million. Angels and saints surrounding the throne. (Remember this is a vision of us). We are the redeemed we will be in this crowd.

The Bible describes several books before God, and any of these or combination of these could be meant.

- The book of the living **Psalm 69:28**
- The book of remembrance **Malachi 3:16**
- The Book of Life **Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5; 20:11-15**

Daniel 7:11-14

Jesus is not going to put up with this counterfeit Christ. The Son of Man is Jesus Christ Himself.

This great passage describes the transition from *human* dominion on earth to divine dominion. This happens as the Son of Man comes and exercises dominion over the earth. The Son of Man succeeds the reign of the fourth beast.

The "little horn" of the fourth beast again speaks pompous words. The final human dictator we commonly call the antichrist will be characterized by his boastful, blasphemous speech.

Revelation 13:5-6.

Because of the distinction between the fourth beast and the horn, some speculate that the beast of Revelation is not the antichrist but his government or administration. If this is so, it is a small distinction. To a large extent, a man does represent and personify an entire government or system.

The fourth beast is destroyed, and the others may continue, but without dominion of their own. When Jesus sets up His kingdom, the empire of the antichrist will be completely crushed, yet some nations will continue into the **millennium**. The reign of Jesus does not last 1,000 years – it is **permanent**. It is an everlasting, eternal Kingdom. **Psalm 90:2** However, Jesus will rule over this earth before it is remade, with Satan bound for 1,000 years.

Daniels response to the vision – Daniel 7:15-16

Daniel is literally shaken to the core of his being. It not only amazes him, it **troubles** him deeply.

The Vision revealed – Daniel 7:17-20

The divine interpretation of the dream shows that this vision covers the same material as Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 2, which also described the rise of four empires, which are succeeded by the kingdom of God. Daniel's vision was different, seeing the kingdoms from God's **perspective** and not man's. When man writes his own history, there is often much self-congratulation and man seems to be on the verge of paradise. When God writes human history, a different vision is presented.

Daniel 7:21-28

The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth: This initial description of the fourth beast fits well with the Roman Empire of ancient history. It did devour the whole civilized earth and dominate it completely for about a thousand years. The ten horns represent a **revived** Roman Empire. Many identify this as the current European Union.

The little horn or the Antichrist will speak blasphemous words against the Most High and seek to wear out the saints. To wear out the saints means to harass them continually so that life becomes a wretched existence. Such **continual** and protracted pressure far more effectively breaks the human spirit than the single moment of crisis that calls for a major decision. It is easier to die for the Lord than to live for him under constant harassment and strain.

This little horn will intend to change times and law, traditions and **seasons**. We are actually witnessing the beginning of this in our day. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time: The power of the little horn over the saints is limited. It will last for three-and-one-half years (time and times and half a time). This phrase is used in Revelation 11:2-3, 12:6 and 13:5 to refer to half of the last seven-year period of man's rule on this earth known as the Tribulation. (the seventieth week of Daniel). The last three- and one-half years is known as the **Great** Tribulation.

In the day of persecution by this blasphemous ruler, the Messiah will establish His kingdom for His people. Because the kingdom of Jesus immediately succeeds this fourth kingdom, no event in the **past** answers this prediction in the smallest degree.

Notice again Verse 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.'**

This certainly brings to mind the truth that one day every knee shall **bow**. **Philippians 2:10-11**

It is interesting to note that this encounter with an angel and the vision had a profound effect on Daniel. So much so that he wrote it down but kept the matter to himself. When God greatly uses someone even the good and powerful revelations will shake you to the core; this is a good and **necessary** thing. It teaches us the power, majesty and glory of God OVER everything. Because God could trust Daniel with these visions, He gave him more as we will see as we continue to study the book of Daniel.