

BOOK OF DANIEL

FOUR GREAT BEASTS (DAN. 7:1-8) – COREY STARK

I. OUTLINE OF DANIEL 7:1-8

- A. Introduction (7:1-3)
- B. First three beasts (7:4-6)
 - 1. First beast – Lion (7:4)
 - 2. Second beast – Bear (7:5)
 - 3. Third beast – Leopard (7:5)
- C. Fourth beast with 10 horns and a little horn (7:7-8)

II. OVERVIEW

A. Daniel 7 is the first of Daniel's four visions contained in chapters 7-12. God choose to use four world empires and the dynamics related to their succession, as the context to bring forth the Messiah that would release world redemption, including the salvation of Israel, while preparing them for world leadership, purifying His Church, bringing both Jew and Gentile into "one new man" (Eph. 2:15) and establishing His kingdom on the earth (Rev. 11:15). This is the Father's master plan to bring human history to a desired end.

Dan. 2:20 Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. 21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings...

B. Daniel 7 reveals the *certainty of victory* (7:18, 22, 27) and *intensity of the battle* that Israel and the Church will face in the end times as they *stand together* against the evil that will manifest in the Antichrist Empire.

Dan. 7:21 I was watching; and the same horn [Antichrist] 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.

C. In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar (603 BC), God revealed his dream to Daniel in a night vision (Dan. 2:19). In the first year of Belshazzar (553 BC), about 50 years later, Daniel received his first of four visions (Dan. 7:2-14). If Daniel was about *15-20 years old* when he received insight into Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2), then he was about *65-70 years old* when he had his first vision (Dan. 7).

III. FOUR GREAT BEASTS (DAN. 7) AND THE GREAT IMAGE (DAN. 2)

A. Daniel's vision (Dan. 7) confirms and elaborates the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2). We gain more understanding by comparison. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a succession of four world empires from the *human perspective* of a glorious man, like gold and silver. In his vision, Daniel saw the same four kingdoms, but from God's *divine perspective* of cruel wild beasts that devoured everything without mercy.

Dan. 2:31 "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image!... whose splendor was excellent...

Dan. 7:2 "I saw in my vision by night, and behold... 3 four great beasts came up from the sea...

B. Daniel uses two languages – Hebrew (Dan. 1:1-2:4a); Aramaic (Dan. 2:4b-7:28); Hebrew (Dan. 8:1-12:13). This creates a chiasmus in the Aramaic section that confirms the parallel relationship between the bookend chapters Dan. 2 and Dan. 7. *A chiasm presents a series of ideas and then repeats them in reverse order, which results in a mirror effect, highlighting the contrast between each idea by its' opposite reflection. Chiasms often include a main emphasis that is set in the middle of the repetition (i.e. ABCBA). This is Dan. 4:34-37.*

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IV. DANIEL’S VISION OF FOUR GREAT BEASTS (DAN. 7:1-8)

A. Daniel saw four winds stirring the Mediterranean Sea, bringing upheaval to the nations (7:1-3).

Dan. 7:1 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.

1. The first year: Belshazzar’s reign over Babylon began in 553 BC. This was 15 years before Israel was freed from Babylon (538 BC). This vision gave Israel hope in the midst of their Babylonian captivity.
2. A dream: Daniel’s dream contained multiple visions. He only wrote down the main facts of the dream.
3. The Great Sea: Scripture describes the Mediterranean Sea as the Great Sea (Num. 34:6-7; Josh. 1:4; 9:1; 15:12, 47; 23:4). The empires highlighted in this vision are comprised of the nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, including those in the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa.
4. Four winds of heaven: These winds are Holy Spirit-driven spiritual forces, comprised of both good and evil angels that stirred up the nations around the Mediterranean Sea. This is where the epicenter of the end time drama unfolds surrounding Jerusalem. This represents God’s orchestration of history in appointing nations to rise and fall, as He sets the context for His kingdom purposes to come to pass (Dan. 2:20-21).
5. Four great beasts: Daniel saw four wild beasts, representing a succession of four world empires surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, which would persecute Israel and cause great turmoil in the region.

B. First beast: Like the “head of gold” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2:32, 37-38), this lion with eagle’s wings (7:4), refers to the Babylonian Empire (605–539 BC). The lion (Jer. 4:7; 49:19; 50:17, 44) and eagle (Jer. 49:22; Lam. 4:19; Ezek. 17:3; Hab. 1:8) are both used in Scripture to describe the Babylonian Empire.

Dan. 7:4 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.

1. A lion: The lion is the king of beasts of the field and speaks of royalty, majesty, courage and strength. More than 120 lions decorated the “ProceSSIONal Way” through the Ishtar Gate of the ancient capital city of Babylon. Ishtar, worshipped by the Babylonians was a Mesopotamian goddess represented by a lion.
2. Eagle’s wings: The eagle is king of birds of the air and speaks of military speed and keen insight.
3. Its “wings being plucked off”, being “made to stand on two feet like a man” and “a man’s heart was given to it,” is reflected in Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling experience (Dan. 4). In it, Nebuchadnezzar was given the heart of a beast and made to walk on all fours. Here a beast is given the heart of a man and made to stand up on two feet. His new insight was the central point in the Aramaic chiasmus Dan. 4:34-37.

Dan. 4:25 They shall drive you from men... and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.

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C. Second beast: Like the “chest and arms of silver” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2:32, 39), this fierce bear (7:5) refers to the Medo-Persian Empire (539-331 BC) that would succeed Babylon, yet be “inferior” to it (Dan. 2:39). The Medo-Persian Empire was cumbersome like a bear, yet with steady military progress.

Dan. 7:5 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!’

1. A bear: The bear, after the lion, was the second most dreaded predator in the region at the time. The bear was much larger in size and more cumbersome than the lion, yet had great crushing strength.
2. Raised up on one side: This speaks of the Persian dominance over Media. In 550 BC, Cyrus the Great conquered the Medes, and Persia took control of the empire.
3. Three ribs: Daniel’s next vision interprets the “ribs” as directions of authority west, north, south (8:4).

Dan. 8:4 I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast [nation] could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will...

4. Arise, devour much flesh: God divinely ordained this empire to arise in power and conquer the surrounding nations. The “they” making this prophetic declaration are the angelic forces described as the “four winds of heaven” that were “stirring up” the nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea (Dan. 7:2).
5. Inferior: Daniel chapter 2 emphasized Medo-Persia’s inferiority to Babylon, as *silver is inferior* to gold in both value, weight and glory or as a *bear is inferior* to a lion in majesty and mobility (Dan. 2:39a).

Dan. 2:39a But after you [Nebuchadnezzar] shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours

D. Third beast: Like the “belly and sides of bronze” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2:32, 39), this leopard (7:6) refers to the Grecian Empire (331-146 BC) that would succeed Babylon, bearing “rule over all the earth” (Dan. 2:39). Alexander the Great became king at twenty-one years old and in twelve short years conquered more geographic territory in that amount of time than any previous king. He died suddenly at 32 years of age.

Dan. 7:6 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.

1. A leopard: The leopard was known for its speed and its cunning, being fierce, quick and agile in attack.
2. Four wings: Having “four wings of a bird” speaks of the Greeks amazing speed in military conquest.
3. Four heads: Following the death of Alexander (323 BC), roughly fifty years of wars ensued between his various successors known as the Diadochi. Ultimately, four of his generals divided up the once unified Grecian Empire into four separate dynasty’s – Ptolemaic, Seleucid, Lysimachean, Cassandrian.
4. Dominion: The Grecian Empire swiftly attained unprecedented domination of the ancient world, as dominion was given to it by God (Dan. 2:20-21; 4:17, 25-26, 32; 5:21; Jn. 19:11; Rom. 13:1-7; Rev. 13).
5. Rule over all: Daniel chapter 2 emphasized the Grecian Empire’s vast dominion as well (Dan. 2:39b).

Dan. 2:39b Then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

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E. *Fourth Beast*: Like the “legs of iron” and “feet and toes of iron and clay” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2:33, 40-43), this unidentifiable beast (7:7) refers to a fourth world empire that would not only succeed Babylon, but would be as “strong as iron” and literally “crush all the other” preceding empires (Dan. 2:40). In the history of the middle eastern region surrounding Babylon from the fall of the Greek Hellenistic period (31 BC) until the early 1900’s there has only been *one empire* that could fulfill the two-fold criterion, concerning the rise (Dan. 2:40) and demise (Dan. 2:34-35) of the fourth empire – the historical Islamic Caliphate.

Dan. 7:7 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.

1. *Composite beast*: According to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, this fourth kingdom must literally “crush all the other” kingdoms that preceded it (Dan. 2:34-35, 40), making it a composite beast of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece that contains not only their geographic territory, ethnic people and natural resources, but their wicked traits as well. Revelation confirms this fourth kingdom as a composite beast (Rev. 13:2).

Rev. 13:1 A beast rising up out of the sea... 2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard [Greece], his feet were like the feet of a bear [Medo-Persia], and his mouth like the mouth of a lion [Babylon].

2. *Dreadful and terrible*: Daniel was deeply grieved and troubled by the terror of this unnatural beast (7:15, 28). Unlike the previous three empires, described in terms of natural animals that are common to the earth (i.e. lion, bear, leopard), this kingdom is unlike any beast that Daniel had ever seen before.

3. *Exceedingly strong*: The strength of this empire was far beyond the brutality of anything Daniel has witnessed, which says a lot since he lived through the Babylonian invasion of Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC).

4. *Huge iron teeth*: Massive iron teeth speak of this empire’s supernatural ability to crush and devour everything. Daniel 2 highlighted its crushing strength through the imagery of “iron legs” (Dan. 2:40).

5. *Trampling the residue*: This speaks of continuing to trample a nation after it has already been defeated. This fourth empire will show no mercy toward the people that have been conquered, erasing their culture and religion, as they rape the nations’ natural resources to further their military advancement. Adolf Hitler trampled the ethnic people and used their natural resources to further the Nazi war machine. Daniel chapter 2 alludes to the trampling nature of this empire through the imagery of its’ “feet” (Dan. 2:33).

6. *Different*: Daniel emphasized four times that this empire is different from all other kingdoms (7:7, 19, 23, 24). It will function in a whole new order of evil, cruelty, and supernatural power. One aspect of this world empire and leader, making them completely unnatural and *different* from every other kingdom is the unique relationship that both the king and his kingdom have with Satan (Gen. 3:15; Dan. 2:43; 2 Th. 2:9; Rev. 13:2). Revelation reveals the scarlet beast (Rev. 17:3) like the red dragon empowering it (Rev. 12:3).

Rev. 13:2 The dragon [Satan] gave him [Antichrist] his power, his throne, and great authority.

7. *Ten horns*: Yet another aspect of this beast, making it completely unnatural is its possession of ten horns. Twice the ten horns are interpreted as *ten kings* (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 17:12). Daniel chapter 2 also alludes to these ten kings through the imagery of the “ten toes” on the great statue (Dan. 2:41-44).

Dan. 7:24 The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom.

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F. *Little Horn*: While focusing on the ten horns, Daniel saw another horn appear, but it was a little one (7:8).

Dan. 7:8 I was considering the [ten] 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.

1. *Little horn*: This horn is another king (Dan. 11:36) or political leader who starts out “little,” as a seemingly insignificant regional leader with a small sphere of authority and influence. The fact that the little horn is mentioned four times (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 21) tells us how important this detail is.

a. The “little horn” of Daniel 7 is the same “little horn” of Daniel 8:9, the “despicable person” of Daniel 11:21 and “man of sin” that Paul described (2 Th. 2:3). He is the “wicked prince” who takes away the daily sacrifice (Dan. 8:11; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Mt. 24:15) and called the “beast” 36 times.

b. Adolf Hitler is an example from recent history who started out as an insignificant regional leader (i.e. little horn) who became a major world leader (i.e. big horn). In 1928 he ran for political office in Germany and received only 2% of the vote. Then, within five years, he became chancellor of Germany, in 1933. The politicians and merchants in Germany put Hitler in power because they thought he was insignificant, eccentric and controllable. Within 30 days Hitler declared a police state, killed some of those leaders and silenced the newspapers. His surprising rise to power came suddenly.

2. *Coming up among them*: The Antichrist will first come up “among them” (Dan. 7:8) as a peer among the ten kings; then he will “arise after them” (Dan. 7:24) and seize control of the ten-nation confederation.

3. *Three horns plucked out*: Three of the first horns (i.e. kings) will be “plucked out by the roots” or killed in a violent overthrow as the Antichrist enters the political world stage. Being “plucked out by the roots” speaks of all of their influence and everyone associated with them being removed. This unprecedented political event will alert the prophetic church to the emergence of the Antichrist (3x Dan. 7:8, 20, 24).

4. *Eyes like a man*: “Eyes” speak of wisdom, intelligence and supernatural insight. Eyes “like a man” speak of having creative and exciting ideas that will solve complex problems, inspire the pride of man and resonate with multitudes. He’ll have unusual skill to meet people’s needs, giving him instant credibility.

5. *Mouth speaking pompous words*: The Antichrist will speak pompous and arrogant words that will create fear through his *threats* and/or excitement by his *false promises* in the nations. His arrogant words are emphasized four times in this chapter (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25).

a. He will speak blasphemies with terrible boldness against the true God of Israel with no fear of consequences (Dan. 11:36). He’ll claim things about himself that are shocking (2 Th. 2:4), and speak “great things,” so unique and extraordinary, as well as new things never heard of before (Rev. 13:5).

Dan. 11:36 The king... shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods.

Rev. 13:5 He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies... 6 He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

b. Hitler is again an example of a political leader who spoke arrogant words, creating fear through threats and excitement by speaking of the greatness and destiny of the oppressed German people.

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V. THREE STAGES TO THE FOURTH BEAST – ISLAMIC CALIPHATE

A. Another dimension to the fourth empire that makes it “different” from every empire that preceded it (Dan. 7:7, 19, 23, 24) is that it has *three distinct stages* within its historical and revived phases:

1. *Historical Islamic Caliphate* (632–1923 AD): The Islamic Caliphate began with the Rashidun Caliphate in 632 AD, shortly after the death of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, and culminated in the Ottoman Empire, which officially came to an end in 1923. It’s geographic territory spanned three continents and grew to include much of the Middle East, southeastern Europe and Northern Africa.

2. *Revived Islamic Confederation* led by ten kings (Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7, 20, 24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12-14, 16-17). The revived Islamic Caliphate will initially emerge under a ten-nation confederation led by ten kings. These ten kings will arise from the geographic territory and ethnic people groups that originally comprised the historical Islamic Caliphate (Dan. 7:24).

Dan. 7:24 The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom [historic Islamic Caliphate]...

Rev. 17:12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings... 17 [who] give their kingdom to the beast...

3. *Revived Islamic Empire* under the dictatorship of the Antichrist (Dan. 7:7-8, 11, 23-25; Rev. 13:1-4; 14:9-11; 17:3-17; 19:19-21; 20:4, 10). The Antichrist will “arise after” the ten kings are in power (7:24), then seize control of the ten-nation confederation by having three of the kings killed, described as “plucked out by the roots” (7:8), “falling before” the little horn (7:20), and “being subdued” (7:24).

Dan. 7:24 Another [horn] shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones [ten kings]...

Rev. 17:12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings... 13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast... 17 For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

VI. CONCLUSION: WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR (DAN. 7:1-8)

- The fourth empire is a composite kingdom (Rev. 13:2).
- The fourth empire will trample the nations.
- The fourth empire will be different from all preceding kingdoms.
- The fourth empire will revive from its’ historical roots.
- The fourth empire is the Antichrist Empire.
- Islam is the epitome of the antichrist spirit, as it denies the incarnation (i.e. Jesus came in flesh), the Godhead (i.e. relationship of Father and Son) and the crucifixion (1 Jn. 2:22-23; 4:2-3; 2 Jn. 1:7).
- The Antichrist is the “little horn.”
- The Antichrist will have supernatural insight.
- The Antichrist will speak pompous words.

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DANIEL 2	DANIEL 7	EMPIRE / KING
Head of gold	Lion	Babylonian <i>Nebuchadnezzar</i>
Chest and arms of silver	Bear	Medo-Persian <i>Darius and Cyrus</i>
Belly and sides of bronze	Leopard	Grecian <i>Alexander the Great</i>
Legs of iron	Fourth beast	Historical Islamic Caliphate
Feet and toes of iron and clay	Ten horns	Revived Islamic Caliphate <i>Ten-king confederation</i>
	Little horn	Antichristic <i>Dictatorship of Antichrist</i>
The Rock	Son of Man	Messianic

Endnotes:

1. Joel Richardson, *Mideast Beast*, pg. 82.
2. Joel Richardson, *Antichrist Islam's Awaited Messiah*, pg. 125
3. Joel Richardson, *Antichrist Islam's Awaited Messiah*, pg. 125