

Daniel: *Dual Book of History & Prophecy*

Chapter 7 – Daniel’s Dream of Future of World History

Chapter 7 is the last of Daniel written in Aramaic, and is a transition between chapters 2-6 and 8-12. The early chapters focus on the course of *Gentile* history and dominions from the perspective of man, and the later chapters prophesy about the *Gentile & eternal* kingdoms from *God's* (Israel's) viewpoint. Another transition in Chapter 7 is that Daniel's writing changes from third person to first person.

Here is the chronological order of Daniel chapters (all dates B.C.): **1** (605), **2** (602), **3** (~597-585), **4** (~570-563), **7** (c.553), **8** (c.551), **5** (539), **9** (539), **6** (c.539), **11** (539), **10** (536), **12** (c.536),

Daniel’s Vision of the Four Great Beasts (Verses 1-3)

1 The first year of Belshazzar ^{Daniel 5:1} (c.553 B.C.) places these events between Chapters 4 & 5. Daniel had a dream and visions ^{Ezekiel 40:2, Daniel 1:17} while he was on his bed ^{Psalms 4:4, Daniel 4:13}, and he immediately took the time to write down “the substance of his dream” ^{Jeremiah 36:4}.

2-3 Daniel began his report by saying “the four winds of heaven [churned] up the great sea”: the four winds symbolize the omnipresence of God’s power ^{Jeremiah 49:36, Revelation 7:1}, the sea represents the world people/kingdoms ^{Matthew 13:47, Revelation 17:1,15} and the churning illustrates the inevitable turmoil of worldly life ^{Isaiah 17:12-13}. He saw four great beasts come from the sea, similar to another beast, the Antichrist, who will also rise “out of the sea” ^{Revelation 13:1}.

Daniel explains later ^{v.17} that the four beasts are actually representations of worldly kingdoms.

Some commentators have equated the sea as the Mediterranean, because of the kingdoms’ proximity.

The First Beast: Babylon (Verse 4)

4 A lion, with wings of an eagle, standing like a man and given a man’s heart:

The lion symbolizes the king of beasts ^{1 Kings 10:18-20, Revelation 10:1-3a} and the eagle denotes the king of the air (like Nebuchadnezzar ^{Ezekiel 17:1-6} and Babylon ^{Deuteronomy 28:49-50}), both indicating royal power. These symbols, along with the description of the transformation of the king from an animal to a man, are mindful of Nebuchadnezzar’s fulfilled dream ^{Daniel 4}.

Winged lions were found at the gates of ancient Babylon (and can be seen in the British Museum).

The Second Beast: Medo-Persia (Verse 5)

5 A bear with one side raised up and a mouth full of flesh:

A bear is dangerous ^{1 Samuel 17:34-37, Proverbs 28:15} and ferocious ^{2 Samuel 17:8, 2 Kings 2:24}, yet not as majestic or swift as a lion. The sequence of events ^{v.4,5} (strongest/most value, then strong/less valuable) is parallel with the chronology of the kingdoms in the earlier dream

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of King Nebuchadnezzar ^{Daniel 2:39}. The dominance of one side of the bear is similar imagery to the unequal ram's horns as seen by Daniel in a later vision ^{Daniel 8:3}, and undoubtedly indicates the superiority of Persia over Media. The three ribs probably represent Babylon, Lydia and Egypt – the three kingdoms they conquered during the Medo-Persian reign.

The Third Beast: Greece (Verse 6)

6 A leopard with four wings and four heads:

Both images, the leopard ^{Hosea 13:7} and the wings ^{2 Samuel 22:11, Psalm 104:3, 1}, indicated the swiftness of Alexander the Great as he conquered from Macedonia to Africa to India during 334 to 330 B.C. The four heads represented the four Greek kings who succeeded Alexander: Lysimachus (Thrace and Bithynia), Cassander (Macedonia and Greece), Seleucus (Syria, Babylonia and the eastern territories) and Ptolemy (Egypt, Palestine and Arabia Petrea).

The lion devours its foe, the bear man-handles its enemy and the leopard springs upon his pray.

The traits of a leopard, a bear & a lion (notice the order) were later attributed to Satan ^{Revelation 13:2}.

The Fourth Beast: Rome (Verses 7-8)

7 A terrifying, powerful beast with iron teeth and ten horns:

The fourth beast in Daniel's vision ^{Ezekiel 40:2} was so horrible, he could not even think of an earthly animal to represent it. The Roman empire began with the occupation of Sicily in 241 B.C., grew gradually (including general Pompey's conquering of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.) until its height in about A.D. 117 and slowly began declining (beginning in the third century) until the last Roman ruler was killed in A.D. 1453. The iron teeth illustrate the ruthlessness of the Roman conquering armies ^{Daniel 2:40} (they "crushed and devoured its victims and trampled ^{Daniel 8:6,10} underfoot [what] was left"). The Bible uses ten horns to represent both great power in an individual ^{Revelation 12:3, 13:1} and earthly kings ^{v.7,20,24, Revelation 17:3,7,12,16}. The use here ^{Chapter 7} is in reference to future kings ^{Revelation 17:12-14} during the End Times.

8 There was "another horn" ^{Daniel 8:9} who was boastful ^{Psalm 12:3} and "eyes like a man".

This "little horn" is a reference to the Antichrist ^{Daniel 11:36-39, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Revelation 13:1-10}.

The Vision of the Ancient of Days (Verses 9-10)

9 Daniel saw the "Ancient of Days" ^{Isaiah 43:13} with white clothes ^{Matthew 28:3} and hair ^{Revelation 1:14}, as well as a throne and wheels ablaze ^{Ezekiel 10:6-7} (God the Father on His Heavenly throne).

Note that this verse not only mentions a singular throne (God's) ^{1 Kings 22:19, Revelation 4:1-3,5-6}, but also speaks of multiple thrones. These thrones are reminiscent of the twenty-four thrones with (church) elders seated on them that John later saw in his vision into Heaven ^{Revelation 4:4, 20:4}.

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10 A river of fire ^{Psalm 50:3, 97:1-5, Isaiah 30:27} flowed from Him (God the Father) as “the court was seated and the books were opened”, indicating the judgement in the future of the fourth kingdom (representing all the kingdoms of the world ^{Revelation 17-18}); meanwhile, a multitude of saints and angels attended to and stood before Him ^{Deuteronomy 33:2, Jude 1:14, Revelation 5:11}. Scripture details a judgment of nations ^{Rev.17-18} and 2 judgments of individuals ^{2 Corinthians 5:10, Rev.20:11-15}.

The Destruction of the Beast (Verses 11-12)

11 As mentioned above ^{v.8}, the Antichrist (“the horn”) will be “boastful” ^{Revelation 13:5-6}; however, at Armageddon ^{Revelation 19:11-19} (pre-Millennium), he and the False Prophet will be the first two thrown into “the lake of burning sulfur” ^{Revelation 19:20} – Satan is third (post-Millennium).

All of mankind who, during their earthly lives, chose to reject God and His great gift of salvation and follow the way of pride (Satan’s way) will face the Great White Throne Judgement ^{Revelation 20:11-15}. After being shown they cannot be justified by their lives ^{Galatians 3:10}, they will all be thrown into hell.

12 This parenthetical statement is challenging, but the most widely-accepted interpretation is that characteristics of the first three kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece) were allowed to exist even after their power was removed. However, once the fourth kingdom is destroyed, culminating in the reign of the Antichrist, worldly kingdoms will no longer exist.

The Fifth Kingdom: the Son of Man from Heaven (Verses 13-14)

13-14 Daniel had a vision of the end of the worldly kingdoms and the beginning of the eternal heavenly kingdom (i.e., the “day of the LORD” ^{Isaiah 13:6, Zephaniah 1:14, Malachi 3:2, 4:1}). He saw the “son of man” ^{Matthew 8:20, Revelation 1:13, 14:14} (the first Biblical reference to Jesus, the Messiah, in this way) going to the “Ancient of Days” (the Father), who gave Jesus sovereign rule over everything ^{Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:9-11} (as was promised by the Father ^{Psalm 2:6-9}), followed by everyone worshipping Jesus ^{Isaiah 45:22-23, Philippians 2:9-11}. The Kingdom of God, headed by Jesus ^{Isaiah 16:5}, will “endure forever” ^{Exodus 15:18, Daniel 2:44-45, 4:3, 1 Timothy 1:17}.

Clouds are associated with Jesus coming to ^{1 Thessalonians 4:17, Revelation 1:17} and going from ^{Acts 1:9} Earth.

The Interpretation of the Four Beasts (Verses 15-18)

15 The visions (four terrible beasts, judgement, etc.) greatly troubled Daniel ^{Job 4:15, Daniel 4:19}.

16-18 Daniel asked for help in interpreting the vision ^{Daniel 8:16, 9:22} from a heavenly being (“one of those standing around the throne”). He was told the four beasts represented four worldly kingdoms, but they will “perish” ^{Isaiah 60:12-14} and the following eternal Kingdom will be given ^{Luke 12:32, Hebrews 12:28} to the saints ^{Psalm 16:3}, who are co-heirs with Christ ^{Romans 8:16-17}.

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Daniel was possibly helped by the same person who was standing near the throne that aided John in the interpretation of his vision thousands of years later ^{Revelation 5:1-5}. He was one of the elders on the twenty-four thrones around the throne of God that John saw in Heaven ^{Revelation 4:1-6}.

Daniel Requests More Detail About the Fourth Beast (Verses 19-22)

19-20 Daniel did not inquire about the first three beasts, but asked to know more ^{Zechariah 1:9} about the fourth terrifying beast, and continued to ask questions about the ten horns ^{see v.7}, the three fallen horns, and the other horn, the Antichrist, who "spoke boastfully" ^{see v.8}.

21-22 The boastful horn waged war against and defeated (conquered) the saints ^{Revelation 13:7-8}. Ultimately, however, God wins – sin ^{1 Peter 2:24} and Satan ^{Hebrews 2:14-15} were defeated by Jesus on the cross and His followers ("saints of the Most High") "possessed the kingdom".

Reading verse 21 should raise questions in anyone who knows the teachings of Jesus ^{Matthew 16:13-19}. There is an obvious difference between OT saints (the remnant of Israel ^{Isaiah 10:20, Revelation 12:13-17}) and the NT saints (the church, the body of Jesus Christ ^{1 Corinthians 1:2-3, Colossians 1:24-26}).

The More Specific Interpretation of the Fourth Beast (Verses 23-25)

23-24 The heavenly helper explained the vision to Daniel by saying the fourth beast (kingdom) is like no other before it, ultimately putting the whole world in submission to it ^{Daniel 2:40}. The ten horns ^{v.7} symbolize ten kings ^{Revelation 17:12} (or crowns ^{Revelation 13:1}) that will ascend, and three of the ten kings were subdued by the "little horn" (the Antichrist) ^{v.8}.

25 The Antichrist will speak out against the "Most High" ^{Genesis 14:18, Luke 1:34-35} beginning at the "abomination that causes desolation" ^{Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 36, Matthew 24:15} in the middle of the Tribulation. His efforts will include trying to change God's plans (others claim to know when key events will happen ^{Luke 21:8}, but only God determines the times ^{Daniel 2:19-23} and others are not allowed to know ^{Acts 1:7}). The "little horn" will have great power over the saints ^{v.21} for the last half of the Tribulation ("a time, times and half a time" = 3½ years).

There are several reasons to be confident that "times, time and half a time" ^{Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 12:14} literally represents 3½ years (this time is referred to as the "Great Tribulation" ^{Revelation 7:14}):

- In ancient Hebrew and Aramaic, the word "times", when used by itself to refer to years, is not a plural, but it is a dual (similar to the word "both" in English). To illustrate this point, the only other text in the OT that uses "times" to refer to years is earlier in Daniel and has a number associated with it: seven times ^{Daniel 4:16,23,25,32} = the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's trial.
- This time frame is also referred to as 42 months ^{Revelation 11:2, 13:5} and 1260 days ^{Revelation 11:3, 12:6}.

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The Establishment of the Everlasting Kingdom (Verses 26-28)

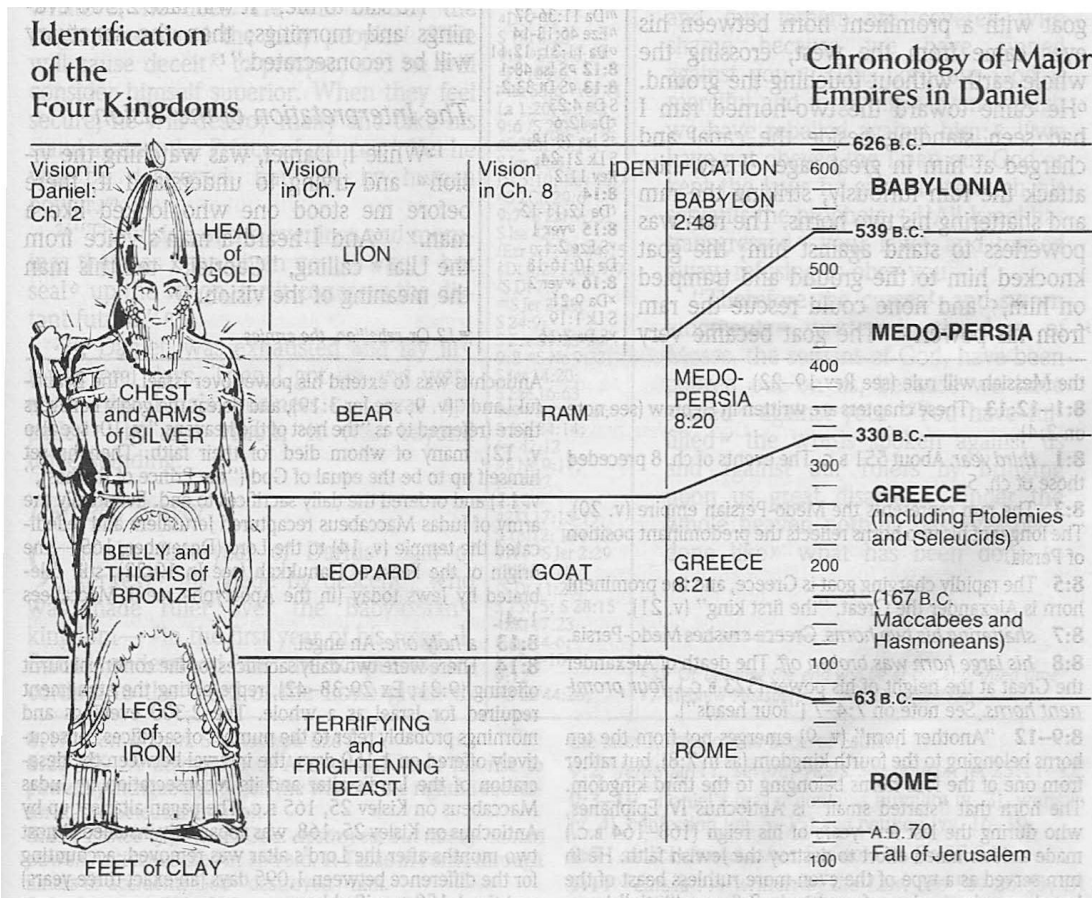
26 As discussed earlier ^{see v.11}, the power of the little horn will be "taken away", and both he and the False Prophet ^{Revelation 13:11-17} will be "destroyed forever" ^{Revelation 19:20}, not through a major battle, but simply by the "breath" from the mouth of "the Lord Jesus" ^{2 Thessalonians 2:8}.

27 The kingdoms of the earth will all be put under submission to Jesus ^{Luke 1:29-33} and the "people of the Most High" ^{Isaiah 14:2}. Jesus will rule ^{Psalms 22:27, 72:11} over God's Kingdom (the throne of David ^{2 Samuel 7:13}), a kingdom lasting forever ^{Psalms 145:13a, 1 Peter 1:10-11}.

The fourth ("Roman") kingdom will not end until it is replaced by the "Kingdom of our Lord" ^{Revelation 11:15}.

28 Emotionally and spiritually exhausted from the intense vision, Daniel struggled with his thoughts of what he had seen ^{Psalms 13:2}, leading to a sense of distress ^{Isaiah 21:2-4, Daniel 4:19a}.

Chapter 2 and this chapter contain essentially the same comprehensive prophecy of future events (presented as four kingdoms), and the most detailed to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar saw the four Gentile empires as a stately/noble image of a man/king, whereas in chapter 7, Daniel's vision presented the same Gentile kingdoms as ravenous, wild beasts. In contrasting the early chapters with the later chapters of Daniel, the different perspectives illustrate that the things most highly esteemed among men are abominations in the sight of God.



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