



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

THE REMARKABLE PROPHECY OF WORLD EMPIRES Daniel 7:1-8

This chapter begins the second section of the book of Daniel. The first six chapters deal with history while the last six chapters record prophecies given to Daniel by God. The historical accounts in the first section contain a bit of prophecy and the prophetic section in chapters seven to twelve also contains a bit of history. In the first section, Daniel interpreted dreams given to the king; in the second section, Daniel himself received revelations through dreams interpreted by angels. The dreams, visions and prophecies in Daniel reach beyond the lives of individuals or the destiny of a single nation. They focus on Gentile world powers that were to rule in many centuries till the end of time. These prophetic revelations are pre-written history of great kingdoms until they are replaced by Christ's eternal kingdom, to be set up by the Lord of heaven at the culmination of all things. In chapters 7 and 8, Daniel gives an accurate portrayal of the history of great world emperors and their empires. The details of the rise and fall of Alexander the great, Antiochus epiphanes, leading to revelations on the Antichrist, written before any of these kings was born could only have been received supernaturally. God, Who knows the end from the beginning revealed the future events to Daniel (Isaiah 46:9-11; Acts 15:18).

THE FIERCE SEA OF BATTLING GENTILE KINGDOMS

Daniel 7:1,2; Job 33:14-16; Isaiah 17:12,13; 5:26-30; Jeremiah 25:31,32; 6:22,23; 50:41-44; 51:40-42; Ezekiel 26:3; Revelation 17:15.

Daniel's dream and vision came to him in the first year of Belshazzar before the account written in chapter 5. He had this dream much before his experience in the lions' den (chapter 6). This dream which Daniel "**wrote**" down was no ordinary dream; it is of great significance. In the first six chapters, Daniel wrote in the third person; in the last six chapters he wrote in the first person. In his vision Daniel saw that "**the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.**" The number, four, refers to the cardinal points of a compass: north, south, east and west. The striving of the four winds has reference to conflicts and commotion from all directions on earth; the unrest and agitation on the sea of humanity. "**The multitude of many people, make a noise like the rushing of nations, like the rushing of mighty waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind**" (Isaiah 17:12,13). "**Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth**" (Jeremiah 25:32). Through the vision, Daniel beheld the revolutions of the governments of Gentile nations striving for mastery and domination of one another. He saw the contentions of the kings of the nations in violent battles and wars. This world is like a stormy tempestuous sea, tossed and torn. How terrible are its conflicts; how violent its travails. "**The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked**" (Isaiah 57:20,21). Only through Christ and in Christ can we have peace (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14; Luke 1:77-79; John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15; Isaiah 26:3; 48:18). Daniel "**wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.**" The Jews in captivity had misunderstood the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They had hoped that after the Babylonian captivity there would be an unending period of peace and prosperity, whether they turned to the Lord or not. Daniel's vision was to show them that such thoughts would bring disappointment. There were still times of suffering, oppression and tribulation ahead. Only in the Kingdom of God will there be eternal, unending peace. Only when Christ establishes the kingdom of grace and godliness and when He comes with the Kingdom of glory will there be an eternal, uninterrupted period of peace and tranquility. Daniel both wrote and spoke the prophetic revelation. It is through both the **written** and the **spoken** Word that God's people will be encouraged and edified. God's ministers in their teaching and preaching must TELL the sum of the matters that are WRITTEN "**in the Scripture of truth**" (Daniel 10:21).

THE FOUR SYMBOLIC BEASTS FOR THE GENTILE KINGS

Daniel 7:3-7; Jeremiah 4:7,13; Habakkuk 1:6-8; 2:5-10; Daniel 8:3,4; Hosea 13:8; Isaiah 13:17; Daniel 8:8,22; Hosea 13:7; Daniel 10:20; 2:40,41; 7:19,23.

“And four great beasts came up.” The Gentile kings and their kingdoms are represented by beasts because they often rise to rule and reign by brutish rage and tyranny. These beasts are **“diverse one from another”**, different in appearance, strategies and military genius. The first, represented by a lion with wings, is the Babylonian king. The lion-hearted warrior-king was fast and fierce; he fought and conquered many nations with great rapidity. He was daring and deadly, cruel and courageous. He ruled with beastly brutality until he was judged and conquered by divine Omnipotence. The second beast, a bear, symbolized the Medo-Persian kingdom. Though inferior to the Babylonian kingdom (Daniel 2:39) it was still beastly, brutal, rapacious and ravenous. **“Raised up on one side”**, the Persian side was stronger than the Medes. In its voraciousness **“it had three ribs in the mouth”** – it had conquered Egypt, Lydia and Babylon. Wicked and cruel, the Medo-Persian kingdom arose, conquered and devoured much. The third beast, a leopard, represented the Grecian kingdom. Instead of two wings, the leopard had four wings, symbolizing its great speed and swiftness. This winged leopard, symbolized Alexander the great, the Grecian king. Swift and powerful, he conquered the whole empire of Persia and other nations within thirteen years. **“The beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.”** When he died at the age 33, his empire was divided among his four chief captains – Seleucus Nicanor, Perdiccas, Cassander and Ptolemeus. The fourth beast was more fierce than any other the world had ever seen. It had no comparison in craft, cruelty and conquest. This dreadful and terrible beast represented the Roman empire. **“And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise”** (Daniel 2:40). **“And behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it”** (Daniel 7:7). The commanders and the armies of the Roman Empire, the dreadful, terrible, strong, iron-empire conquered the world with brutal, irresistible force. This godless world is always hoping that a good king or leader will arise to replace a current cruel one. After the reign of **“the beasts”** when **“the Son of Man”** (Daniel 7:13,14) comes to rule and reign without a rival all the hopes and aspirations of man will be realized.

THE FINAL STRANGE BEAST OF THE GENTILE KINGS

Daniel 7:7,8; 2:40; 7:23-26; Revelation 13:1; Daniel 8:10-12,23-25; 11:36-39,45; Revelation 17:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7; Ezekiel 35:12-14.

“After this I saw and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.” The final beast was terribly different from the preceding ones. The number of its horns, the springing up of a new horn, the eyes on the horn, its mouth speaking great things, the might and terror of the beast, the long duration of its dominion upon the earth made it fearfully peculiar. This fourth and final beast represents the Roman Empire which **“shall devour the whole earth”** (Daniel 7:23). The beast with **“iron teeth”** with which he will devour the prey will be an exceedingly fierce kingdom of savage ferocity. **“The great teeth of iron”** are used as the symbols of cruelty. **“There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men”** (Proverbs 30:14). **“And stamped the residue with the feet of it”** (Daniel 7:7). This denotes the rage and wrath of the kingdom, having a determination to crush all in its way, in its pursuit of universal dominion. **“And it had ten horns.”** **“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise”** (Daniel 7:24). Out of the final kingdom, ten kings will spring out. Eventually, a **“little horn”** will rise up to defeat and destroy the others. This **“little horn”** is identified with the future Antichrist who **“shall speak great words against the most High”** (Daniel 7:8,25). The fourth beast represents the Roman Empire. The Roman dominion fell apart in AD 476 but will be revived and will return to great unified form before Christ’s Second Coming. The Revived Roman Empire will be comprised of ten unified parts out of which the **“little horn”**, the Antichrist, will rise. The old Roman Empire is already being revived and regathered. The second Coming of Christ is imminent. Let us watch and pray. **“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”** (Matthew 24:44).

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