

Bestial Governments (#1)

Daniel 7:1-8; Romans 11:25-27

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Government can be a great blessing to a nation when it is God's servant and applies the justice found in Scripture to its people. Or government can be a great judgment to a nation when it is God's enemy and applies the injustice found in the evil heart of man to its people. Government can be a servant to its people. Or government can be a beast to its people.

We pray not for a Great Reset that will oppress and tyrannize those that would be faithful to King Jesus and His holy commandments. Rather we pray for a Great Reformation that will acknowledge Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords over the nations and will renew faithful national covenants with Him and establish righteous laws agreeable to God's Law.

This Great Reformation will only come through the proclamation of the good news of Christ in first turning the hearts of people from their sin unto the forgiveness and righteousness found in Jesus alone. This does not happen at the end of a gun, but through the mighty work of salvation wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit. The people must first be converted to Christ and then must appoint godly leaders who will then enact righteous laws and constitutions. To merely impose a Taliban Christianity from the top down upon an unconverted nation is to prepare for a blood bath and reign of terror rather than the glorious and peaceful reign of Jesus Christ over a nation. Jesus will bring all Gentile nations and Israel to Himself to be Christian nations as promised (Romans 11:25-27).

Daniel's dream in Daniel 7 concerning four bestial kingdoms is parallel to Nebuchadnezzar's dream (in Daniel 2) concerning four metallic kingdoms that composed a great image. In fact, the four bestial kingdoms follow in the same order as the four metallic kingdoms of that great image: (1) The Lion (Daniel 7:1-4) Is Parallel to the Head of Gold (Daniel 2:32)—Babylon; (2) The Bear (Daniel 7:5) Is Parallel to the Chest and Arms of Silver (Daniel 2:32)—Medo-Persia; (3) The Leopard (Daniel 7:6) Is Parallel to the Belly and Thighs of Brass (Daniel 2:32)—Greece; (4) The Terrible Beast (Daniel 7:7-8) Is Parallel to the Legs of Iron (Daniel 2:33)—Rome.

I. The Lion (Daniel 7:1-4) Is Parallel to the Head of Gold (Daniel 2:32)—Babylon.

A. As we begin Daniel 7, we move from the historical section of Daniel (Daniel 1-6) to the prophetic section of the book (Daniel 7-12).

1. We move from the dreams God gave to Nebuchadnezzar (the great image that was crushed by the stone cut out of the mountain in Daniel 2 and the great tree that was cut down in Daniel 4) to the four prophetic revelations God gave to Daniel (Daniel 7, Daniel 8, Daniel 9, Daniel 10-12).

2. We move from the prophetic and historic description of the four great empires of the ancient world (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome) as pictured in this glorious, enormous image composed of various metals (in Daniel 2) to the prophetic and historic description of the same four great empires of the ancient world pictured as cruel beasts that crush and oppress all surrounding kingdoms (Daniel 7). Daniel 7 gives in prophetic symbols a panoramic view of world history in nations that have oppressed God's people (from Babylon until that time in which Jesus subdues all bestial nations to Himself).

3. Daniel 2 portrays these ancient empires from the earthly perspective of their human pride and glory in exalting themselves above all nations, whereas Daniel 7 portrays these same ancient empires from the heavenly perspective of their bestial cruelty and tyranny as they crushed and enslaved weaker nations.

4. Every nation and person is viewed from the same two perspectives—from an earthly perspective as man sees that nation and as we see ourselves and from a heavenly perspective as God sees that nation (Proverbs 14:34) and as God sees us (Romans 3:23). It is God’s perspective that is always true no matter what the majority think. Every nation and every person needs Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Acts 4:12).

B. This divine vision given by God to Daniel is dated in the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon (Daniel 7:1; ca. 555 B.C.—about 50 years after Daniel was led captive from Jerusalem to Babylon).

1. This vision occurs chronologically before Daniel 5 (which is the last night of Belshazzar’s reign and life). Daniel 7 gives us the content of this divine vision in symbols and its interpretation.

2. Daniel sees the four winds blowing from the east, west, north, and south, and converging upon the “great sea” (Daniel 7:2—the Mediterranean Sea, to which the following four empires extended). This is a symbolic picture of a mighty tempest upon the sea of nations and violent conflicts between nations (Isaiah 17:12). Out of these bloody wars arise four empires, symbolized as overpowering beasts (Daniel 7:3).

C. The first beast is signified by a lion with eagle’s wings. This is the Babylonian Empire (Jeremiah 4:7,13). This was a popular symbol of Babylon found in the excavations of ancient Babylon. Babylon was like a lion as to strength and like an eagle as to swiftness in conquering surrounding nations (especially under Nebuchadnezzar). It ruled supreme over the nations from 605-539 B.C.

1. Daniel then saw in the vision that the wings were plucked from the lion, signifying that the days of rapid conquest came to an end.

2. When did that bestial thirst for the blood of other kingdoms subside? When God humbled Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and took away his reason for seven years and removed him from the throne to wander about as an ox in the field (Daniel 4). When he was restored to his right mind, he was like the lion whose wings were plucked from him and was made to stand on his feet and given the heart of a man. It would appear from that point on, his desire for greater conquests in advancing his power was changed (not necessarily converted, but changed by what God taught him in that period of humiliation).

3. God even humbles heathen kings that glory in their own pride and act as hungry lions in eating up the people they are supposed to serve on behalf of the one true living God. And personally, when we will not learn by the word of God’s instruction to us (through the reading and preaching of His Word), God also takes us through trials that humble us and that show to us our pride in thinking ourselves better, wiser, smarter, and holier than others. He knows how to pluck our wings to slow us down and take inventory of our arrogance and pride. Let us learn the easy way (by His Word) rather than having to learn the hard way (by His rod). Either way, God our Father will love us and teach us.

4. Jesus, on the other hand, did not have to be humbled, but humbled Himself. His humiliation was voluntary. He willingly humbled Himself in His incarnation in taking to His divine person humanity so as to suffer the reproach, rejection, false accusations, stripes, thorns, nails, and cross for the sins of those whom He loved from all eternity (Philippians 2:3-11). Christ’s humiliation is our salvation. We can never humble ourselves to the extent that Jesus did, but dear ones, we can and we must follow His example in humbling ourselves to serve God and others.

II. The Bear (Daniel 7:5) Is Parallel to the Chest and Arms of Silver (Daniel 2:32)—Medo-Persia.

A. We come now to the second empire that ascends from the bloody conflicts within the sea of nations. This second bestial empire is signified by the crushing power of a bear that stalks its prey and overpowers it with its huge body and mighty claws. The bear signifies the Medo/Persian Empire.

1. The Medo-Persian Empire far extended the boundaries of the conquered Babylonian Empire in reaching to India in Asia, to the Middle East, to Northern Africa, and to Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

It pounced like a bear upon all nations and ruled as supreme in the world from 539-333 B.C.

2. The Greek historian, Herodotus, records that Persia had over 2.5 million soldiers, 1,200 war ships, and 3,000 lesser fighting ships and supply ships. By its vast fleet and mighty army it was able to conquer a great portion of nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. It was the military machine at that time that ruled the world.

B. Daniel observed the following characteristics about this bear-like empire.

1. As it lay on its side one side was higher than the other side which signified that Persia was to become greater in this empire than Media (Daniel 8:3). Darius was a Mede in reigning over Babylon (Daniel 5:31), but Cyrus was a Persian in reigning over the whole empire (Daniel 6:28). It was the Persian kings that ruled supreme over the empire.

2. The bear had three ribs in its mouth and between its mighty teeth were the prey that it had overcome, signifying three kingdoms that it conquered (Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia).

3. Daniel then heard voices (probably voices of the angelic watchers as in Daniel 4:23—cut down the tree). After feeding upon those three kingdoms, the bear is told, “Arise, devour much flesh.” In other words, the conquering of those three kingdoms was just the beginning of the devouring/conquering of many other nations.

4. When Daniel received this vision in about 555 B.C. the Medo-Persian Empire had not yet been formed, and yet details concerning this world power are given to us in symbols here in Daniel 7. The God who called forth these bestial nations out of the sea of nations and through His angelic watchers ordained their boundaries and times of rule is King of the nations. The One who calls forth nations is greater than the nations called forth (Daniel 4:34-35; Jeremiah 10:7). That is why we need not panic over the plots, plans, and actions of bestial governments that think they can trample upon the crown rights of Jesus Christ and violate His holy laws with impunity in not falling under His righteous judgment (which we see all around us). Just as our God raised up and put down these ancient nations, so He likewise does even now. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our hope is in the living God—not in nations, governments, or leaders.

B. Application.

1. These empires were mighty while they ruled. They were supreme, dominant, and crushed all nations around them. They were wealthy, powerful, and it probably seemed to them that their power would never end—but end it did by God’s purpose and plan (and so will every nation that seems to be at its zenith regardless of the nation).

2. But if that is true of every nation, let us not miss the obvious—it is also true of each of us. Regardless of what achievements, riches, power, property, or fame we gain in this life, we will not be able to hold on to it. Our lives upon earth will fade away as did Babylon and Medo-Persia.

3. Even if we live to be 100 years, it is a drop in the bucket—just like the empires of Babylonia and Persia. Where are they now? They are gone, and so will we one day.

4. If our life is not built upon Christ who transcends death, who has gone to prepare a place for us in the glories of heaven with Him, we have nothing in this life and worse, nothing after death—except God’s righteous judgment (Luke 12:15). Build your life upon the Rock and not upon shifting sand that the waves and storms of life will destroy. There is only hope in that which transcends death—Jesus Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life.

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