

Bestial Governments (#2)

Daniel 7:1-8

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As a young Christian that was excited to learn how prophecies in Scripture were being fulfilled in current events today, I found there was no lack of books or lack of teachers to fill my curiosity. As I look back at so many of those alleged interpretations of biblical prophecy, I now understand that what was missing by most of those prophetic gurus was the alone infallible rule of interpretation of biblical prophecy: namely, the Scripture itself (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:9):

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture, is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

Very simply, Scripture interprets prophecy. History confirms prophecy (it doesn't interpret). We don't even know what to look for in history by way of fulfillment if we have not properly interpreted the symbols and meaning of those symbols by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

As we have now begun to consider the prophetic section in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 7-12), seeking to understand these prophecies from a study of other portions of Scripture will be the key used to unlock their meaning, and then looking in history for the fulfillment. Some sermons don't move us to tears, but move us to understanding. May this be such a sermon.

This is the second part to the sermon began last Lord's Day wherein we began looking at the night vision given by God to Daniel in which four beasts ascend from great conflicts/wars among the nations (Daniel 7:1-3). These were beasts we covered last Lord's Day: (1) The Lion (Daniel 7:4) Is Parallel to the Head of Gold (Daniel 2:32,38)—Babylon; (2) The Bear (Daniel 7:5) Is Parallel to the Chest and Arms of Silver (Daniel 2:32)—Medo-Persia. This Lord's Day we will consider the last two beasts: (3) The Leopard (Daniel 7:6) Is Parallel to the Belly and Thighs of Brass (Daniel 2:32)—Greece; (4) The Terrible Beast with Ten Horns (Daniel 7:7-8) Is Parallel to the Legs of Iron with Ten Toes (Daniel 2:33)—Rome.

III. The Leopard (Daniel 7:6) Is Parallel to the Belly and Thighs of Brass (Daniel 2:32)—Greece.

A. Daniel's night vision in Chapter 7 describing four different bestial kingdoms is parallel to the four different metallic kingdoms that composed the enormous image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2).

1. We are clearly told in Daniel 2:38 that Babylon is the first kingdom revealed (as the head of gold). The succeeding kingdoms proceed one after the other: **Babylon** (605-539 B.C.), **Medo-Persia** (539-333 B.C.), **Greece** (333-63 B.C.), **Rome** (63 B.C.-476 A.D. united, but then divided among ten toes).

2. So likewise the revelation of beasts in Daniel's night vision (Daniel 7) begins with **Babylon** (a lion with wings—Jeremiah 4:7,13); **Medo-Persia** (a bear raised higher on one side than the other—Persia, the greater of the kingdoms); **Greece** (a leopard with four wings and four heads); **Rome** (a terrible, indescribable beast united, but then divided among ten horns a little horn). That's an overview, but having already considered these kingdoms in Daniel 2, we can readily see their parallel in Daniel 7 (beginning with Babylon to Rome).

3. The lives of these beasts and their boundaries was not determined by the beasts, but by the Lord (the King of the nations—Jeremiah 10:7; Acts 17:26). What comfort this brings to us as we witness more and more this bestial nature in nations that murder the unborn and born, that mutilate the young for the cause of transgenderism, that promote immorality that would make Sodom and Gomorrah blush, that

hate biblical Christianity, and that promote a one world government. It is not their plans that shall succeed, but God's purposes (Psalm 33:10-12). God laughs at their vain attempt to overthrow His Son, Jesus Christ (Psalm 2). Jesus will be victorious (Daniel 7:13-14).

B. The third beast that arises out of the conflict in the great sea of nations is described in Daniel 7:6 (which is the Greek Empire). At the Battle of Issus Alexander the Great defeated Darius III in 333 B.C. Note the characteristics of this bestial kingdom.

1. This beast was a leopard—another beast that hunts and crushes its prey (like the lion and the bear).
2. This leopard had four wings (not just two wings like the Babylonian lion in Daniel 7:4). It was swifter than any of the ancient empires in its advance against the enemy. Within three years (336-333 B.C.), Alexander the Great had defeated the mighty bear (Persian Empire) and then extended it until his death (323 B.C.). Though smaller in size, the Greek army moved more swiftly and strategically against its foes.
3. This leopard had four heads (heads in prophetic literature signify kings/kingdoms, Revelation 17:9-10—seven heads are seven kings). The four heads on the leopard of Greece is confirmed in history by the four divisions of the Greek empire at the death of Alexander (323 B.C.): (1) Greece (Antipater), Asia Minor (Lysimachus), Syria (Seleucus), and Egypt (Ptolemy). Compare Daniel 8:3-8. This is amazing!
4. Dominion "was given" to this beast—given to it by God. Alexander gained the whole world, but he lost his own soul (Matthew 16:26). What in this world do we consider to be more valuable than our immortal soul? Wealth, possessions, the approval of others, health, security, relationships? What do we pursue most in this world: Jesus and His riches or the world and its riches? Clinging more tightly to the things of this world does not mean we will not lose them (like sand in the hand).

IV. The Terrible Beast with Ten Horns (Daniel 7:7-8) Is Parallel to the Legs of Iron with Ten Toes (Daniel 2:33)—Rome.

A. United Rome.

1. There are two distinct stages or periods that must be considered in regard to this fourth beast—there is the united period of the Roman Empire (63 B.C.-476 A.D.) consisting of the legs of iron during the time of the Caesars of Rome (Daniel 2:33,40) and observed in this one terrible beast. During the rule of these Caesars of Rome, with its iron teeth they devoured and crushed all that stood in their way and extended the empire until the last Emperor of Rome (Romulus Augustus) was removed from the throne by the barbarian king, Odoacer (476 A.D.).
2. Within this united Roman period, there was a Pagan period (63 B.C.-313 A.D.) and a Christian period beginning with Constantine at the Treaty of Milan (313-476)—Revelation 6:12-17.

B. Divided Rome

1. This is represented in Daniel's dream by ten horns on the head of this terrible beast and by the ten toes of the feet composed of iron and clay in the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:33,40-43). This indicates that there will come a time in Rome's history in which its united power, language, and culture will be divided and weakened like the mixture of iron and clay. When did this happen?
2. Horns in biblical prophecy do not signify things that you honk, but speak of the powerful horns on vicious animals, signifying mighty kings/kingdoms (Daniel 7:24). Kings or kingdoms? Kings and kingdoms are used interchangeably (Daniel 7:17,23; Daniel 2:44).
3. God makes known to Daniel hundreds of years before these major events occur in history that the mighty united Western Roman Empire will cease and from within it would be raised up ten kingdoms that will be divided one from another, yet occupying the territory once occupied by a united Western Roman Empire. When?

4. There is a period of time in which the barbarian kingdoms rose up to divide among themselves the Western Roman Empire (primarily in the 5th and 6th centuries). These ten barbarian kingdoms included: the **Heruli**, **Ostrogoths**, and **Lombards** in various parts of present Italy; the **Visigoths** in what are presently parts of Hungary, Austria, Croatia, and Serbia; the **Suevi** in what is presently Spain and Portugal; the **Franks** in what is presently France; the **Burgundians** in various parts of Europe at different times, including Scandinavia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and northern France; the **Anglo-Saxons** in what is presently Britain; the **Vandals** in what is presently part of Italy; and the **Alemanni** in what is presently Germany. These were the ten main barbarian kingdoms that infiltrated the Western Roman Empire, divided it, and weakened it.

5. Some interpreters identify these ten horns of this beast with ten Roman emperors from Augustus to Titus (Emperor at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.). However, the Apostle John states that at the time that he was writing the Book of Revelation, these ten kings/kingdoms had not yet received power to rule (Revelation 17:12). Thus, we should not be searching for these ten kingdoms before the time of John or at the time of John, but after the time of John (after the 1st century). This is exactly what God fulfilled in the 5th-6th centuries.

6. There then appears a “little horn” (Daniel 7:8) on the head of the terrible beast (Western Roman Empire). This little horn is contemporaneous with the ten horns for it arises among them, beginning little in power in comparison to the ten kingdoms and three of these horns (kingdoms) fell into oblivion during the time that this little horn is growing in power.

a. Some interpreters believe Antiochus Epiphanes (the arch enemy of the faithful Jews in the second century B.C.) is the little horn (Daniel 8:9). The little horn in Daniel 8:9 is out of the Greek Empire not the Roman Empire. Also, if the ten horns have not received power to rule at the time of John in the first century A.D. (Revelation 17:12) then neither has the little horn that appears among them.

b. Some interpreters believe the little horn is Nero (the arch enemy of the faithful Christians in Rome). But again, if the ten horns have not received power to rule at the time of John in the first century (Revelation 17:12), then neither has the little horn that appears among them.

c. Some interpreters believe the little horn is a yet future world leader (a future antichrist). Let me suggest that this view though very popular today breaks up the historical continuity that we find in Daniel 7—the unity of the fourth beast—the division within the fourth beast by ten horns—the little horn arises among those ten horns when the Western Roman Empire is divided. Why skip thousands of years into the future to find the little horn when he appears at the time in which the ten horns (kingdoms) divide the unified Western Roman Empire (especially when there is a perfect candidate for the little horn at that time historically)? Futurists do likewise with Daniel’s 70 weeks.

d. Some interpreters (with whom I agree) believe the little horn is the kingdom of Papal Rome that began small and without political power in comparison to the other kingdoms, but grew exceedingly through the centuries that followed (the papacy is antichrist). Before the Papal kingdom fell three of the kingdoms—not to be restored: The Heruli were wiped out in 493, the Vandals in 534, and the Ostrogoths were eliminated in 538. Daniel will give more information later on in this chapter concerning this little horn that “has the eyes of man” (man’s wisdom) and has “a mouth speaking great things” about himself (that he is God on earth, that he is Christ on earth—the vicar of Christ is the Latin for the Greek antichrist, “in place of Christ” or a substitute Christ. We will have to wait until later on in Daniel 7 to say more about this little horn and its identity with the papal kingdom of Rome.

7. The Apostle Paul likewise identifies one who speaks great things about himself and misleads many to everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:4). God grant us not the eyes of man but the eyes and mind of Christ that we not join the world in following this little horn. He makes war against the saints not only by violent persecution, but also by attacking the supreme authority of Scripture/the gospel/pure worship. Copyright 2023 Greg L. Price.