

## DANIEL'S VISION OF WORLD HISTORY

### **TEXT: DANIEL 7:1-7**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. While Daniel 1-6 is mostly historical, Daniel 7-12 is strictly prophetic.
2. The second half of the book of Daniel consists of a series of visions. All of them were given to Daniel, and all of them are interpreted.
3. Daniel chapter 7 provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. It should be studied carefully along with the book of Revelation.
4. Daniel the prophet had an incredible dream (7:1), and in the record of this dream, Daniel traces the course of four great world empires -- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
5. Daniel concludes with the second coming of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the eternal kingdom of God, represented as a fifth and final kingdom which is from heaven.

#### **I. THE IMPORTANCE OF DANIEL 7**

1. Daniel chapter 7, along with Daniel 2, which describes King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, provide a major outline of future events to which additional details are given later in the book of Daniel, and in the New Testament, especially in the book of Revelation.
2. For example, Revelation 13 parallels the final stage of Daniel's fourth empire, the revived Roman Empire. Daniel 7:7 says the fourth beast was dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly "and it had ten horns." These ten horns correspond with the ten toes in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (cf. Daniel 2:41, 42).
3. Revelation 17:3 says the great whore will sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, "having seven heads and ten horns" (cf. Rev. 13:1).
4. And Revelation 17:12 says, "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast."
5. The "beast" referred to in Revelation 17 is "the little horn" in Daniel 7:8 and 7:19-26. He is the antichrist, the man the apostle Paul called "that man of sin" and "the son of perdition" (II Thess. 2:3).
6. Our Lord said in John 5:43, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

6. The visions of Daniel chapters 2 and 7 are to be interpreted the same way. The four kingdoms, symbolized in chapter 2 by the different parts of the human body, from the head to the toes, are the same as those which were symbolized by the four great beasts rising up out of the sea in chapter 7 -- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
7. Daniel 7:17 says the four beasts "are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." They correspond with the four metals in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 -- gold (Babylon), silver (Media-Persia), brass (Greece), and iron (Rome).
8. Daniel 2 is from man's perspective -- "This great image, whose brightness was excellent...and the form thereof was terrible" (2:31).
9. Daniel 7 is from God's perspective -- "four great beasts came up from the sea" (7:3).
10. Lehman Strauss said, "Man sees the kingdoms of this world as great exhibitions of human prowess; God looks upon them as being bestial in character" (*Daniel*).
11. John Walvoord put it this way: "Chapter 2 considers world history from man's viewpoint as a glorious and imposing spectacle. Chapter 7 views world history from God's standpoint in its immorality, brutality, and depravity. In detail of prophecy, chapter 7 far exceeds chapter 2 and is in some sense the commentary on the earlier revelation" (*Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*).
12. John Walvoord also wrote, "Such a panorama of future events is of great importance to the student of prophecy, as it provides a broad outline to which all other prophetic events may be related. Conservative interpreters are agreed that this is genuine prophecy, that it is futuristic, that is, related to future events from Daniel's point of view, and that its culmination is in the kingdom which Christ brings."

## **II. DANIEL'S AMAZING DREAM (7:1-3).**

1. Daniel's dream occurred in the first year of King Belshazzar (7:1), around 553 B.C., fourteen years before the fall of Babylon.
2. In the vision, four winds are seen striving on a great sea (7:2).
3. The Mediterranean Sea is often referred to in Scripture as "the great sea," and many expositors see the "great sea" in verse 2 as a reference to the Mediterranean Sea.
4. It is a fact that all four of these great empires bordered the Mediterranean Sea. However the language in Daniel 7 is symbolic and more likely the sea represents the great sea of humanity.

5. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The 'sea' in Scripture imagery stands for the populace, the mere unorganized mass of mankind (Matthew 13:47; Revelation 13:1)."
6. In Revelation 17:1 the great whore is pictured sitting "upon many waters." In Revelation 17:15 we are told, "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."
7. We have therefore a twofold application -- literally this is the great Mediterranean Sea, which touches Israel on its eastern shore; and symbolically the sea represents the great unorganized mass of mankind. This is what our Lord meant in Matthew 13:47 when He described a dragnet being cast into the sea.
8. The turbulence of the sea signifies the strife and unrest of Gentile world history. Isaiah 57:20, 21 says, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."
9. Since the beasts represent the succeeding forms of world power, the sea must represent that out of which they arise, that is, the whole heathen world.
10. Referring to the four winds in Daniel 7:2, C. F. Keil said, "The winds of the heavens represent the heavenly powers and forces by which God sets the nations of the world in motion" (*Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*).
11. The wind also suggests conflict -- "the winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea" (Dan. 7:2).
12. Lehman Strauss said the four winds "symbolize a clash between heavenly agencies and satanic forces," and "the confusion and conflict among the nations" (*Daniel*).
13. In Ephesians 2:2, Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air."
14. In Revelation 7:1, four angels are pictured as standing on the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that these fierce winds do not hurt the servants of God.
15. The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah all mention the four winds of heaven (Jer. 49:36; Ezek. 37:9; Zech. 2:6), and the four winds of heaven are referred to three times in the book of Daniel (cf. 8:8; 11:4).
16. The winds represent the sovereign power of God striving with the nations and ultimately bringing them into subjection when Christ returns to reign.

17. The Lord Jesus Christ said that He would send His angels to gather together His elect "from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27).
18. The number "four" also has symbolic meaning, representing people from all four corners of the earth, that is, all peoples and all regions.
19. Revelation 13:1 describes the antichrist as a beast rising up out of the sea, which could mean that the beast will come from the great mass of humanity, that is, the Gentile nations.
20. Some think "the sea" is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea, and that the beast will arise from the area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. Both views could be true in that the beast could be a Gentile who will come from the area near the Mediterranean Sea.
21. Revelation 13:1 also describes the antichrist as a beast having seven heads and ten horns. The symbolism of the seven heads and the ten horns identifies the beast with the dragon (Rev. 12:3), and the revived Roman Empire (Daniel 7:7, 24), and the one-world harlot church (Rev. 17:3, 7).
22. Revelation 13:2 says, "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard (Greece -- Daniel 7:6), and his feet were as the feet of a bear (Media-Persia, Daniel 7:5), and his mouth as the mouth of a lion (Babylon, Dan. 7:4).
23. The fourth empire is Rome (Dan. 7:7). The revived Roman Empire will combine all these elements and characteristics, but will be far more dreadful in its power and blasphemy than the preceding empires.
24. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The three animals, leopard, bear, and lion, are found in Daniel 7:4-6 as symbols of the empires which preceded Rome, and whose characteristics all entered into the qualities of the Roman empire: Macedonian swiftness of conquest, Persian tenacity of purpose, Babylonish voracity."
25. Daniel 7:7 says the fourth beast was "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly..."
26. Walvoord says, "The beasts selected, as many have pointed out, are typical of the revived Roman Empire in the great tribulation, having the majesty and power of the lion, the strength and tenacity of a bear, and the swiftness of the leopard, so well illustrated in the conquest of Alexander the Great. In addition to these natural symbols of strength is the added factor of satanic power coming from the dragon, Satan himself" (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*).

27. The four winds of heaven, the great sea, and the four great beasts indicate universality (7:2, 3). The sea represents the nations and the four great beasts represent the four great world empires.

### **III. BABYLON COMES FIRST (7:4).**

1. Daniel describes the first beast as being like a lion but having the wings of an eagle. As Daniel beheld, he saw the wings plucked from the beast, the beast lifted from the earth, made to stand upon his feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it (7:4).
2. In Scripture, a man's heart symbolizes a man's mind or nature. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 14:33 says, "Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding."
3. Daniel 7:4 corresponds with Daniel 2:38. Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold."
4. Chapter 7 covers the same four empires, and the order is the same -- Babylon comes first. The beast is compared to a lion with eagle's wings. Statues of winged lions have been recovered from the ruins of ancient Babylon, and winged lions guarded the gates of the royal palaces of the Babylonians.
5. Isaiah 50:43, 44 says, "The king of Babylon...shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan."
6. The lion is a common representation of royal power. For example, King Solomon had twelve lions on either side of the steps leading up to his throne (I Kings 10:20; II Chronicles 9:19).
7. The lion is considered the king of the beasts, and in like manner, the eagle is the king of the birds of the air. In Ezekiel 17:3, 7, a great eagle is used as a picture first of Babylon, and then of Egypt.
8. Daniel in his vision sees the wings plucked off the lion, and the lion made to stand upon his feet as a man, with a man's heart given to it.
9. This symbolizes King Nebuchadnezzar's experience in chapter 4 when he was humbled before God, and dwelt with the beasts of the field, and made to eat grass like an ox.
10. Daniel told proud King Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar's experience should have been a lesson for him (5:18-22).
11. King Nebuchadnezzar's lion-like character was his only at God's pleasure. Daniel told Belshazzar -- "The most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour" (5:18).

12. Daniel in this vision does not dwell on the fall of Babylon. That is recorded in chapter 5. However the decline of Babylon, and the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire is implied (7:5).

13. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel spoke at length on the fall of Babylon.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Though world leaders do not understand it or believe it, the Bible teaches that the movements of the nations are in accordance with the providence of God.
2. No matter what takes place in this dangerous, wicked world, we can have confidence that God is behind the scenes directing world history.
3. On June 18, 1815, Napoleon and his armies faced a great alliance of armies led by the Duke of Wellington.
4. Before the battle commenced Napoleon, speaking to one of his commanding officers, said "We will put the infantry here, the cavalry over there, and the artillery in that spot. At the end of the day, England will be at the feet of France, and Wellington will be the prisoner of Napoleon."
5. The officer responded, "But, we must not forget that man proposes and God disposes."
6. Napoleon arrogantly replied, "I want you to understand, sir, that Napoleon proposes and Napoleon disposes!"
7. Victor Hugo, the famous French writer, wrote these words concerning that famous battle, "From that moment Waterloo was lost, for God sent rain and hail so that the troops of Napoleon could not maneuver as he had planned, and on the night of the battle it was Napoleon who was prisoner of Wellington, and France who was at the feet of England."
8. Referring to the raging sea in Daniel 7:2, W.A. Criswell said, "Our destiny out of that raging sea, is not one of defeat, and despair, and disintegration, and death, and corruption, and the grave. We are not looking forward to darkness and night and defeat. But we are looking forward to a kingdom that shall never end, to an empire that shall never be destroyed, to a reign that shall be everlasting. We are not looking forward to death and corruption and the grave; we are looking forward to resurrection, and to heaven, and to glory; and to the fellowship of the saints and angels in heaven, now, tomorrow, for ever, world without end. That is the message of the Book of Daniel."

