

Daniel Chapter 7

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6/6/2010

The seventh chapter of Daniel is similar to the second chapter. Both describe the four successive world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Each affirms that God's kingdom would be established during the days of the Roman empire. However, the latter text also discusses Satan's furious but futile attempt to destroy the kingdom of God.

2) The great sea represents the realm of mankind, the mass of humanity, out of which arises nations and empires (Isa. 17:12-13; Rev. 17:1, 15); the four winds of heaven symbolize God's hand in human history: controlling, guiding, exalting, destroying (Jer. 49:35-37; 51:1-2; Zech. 6:1-8).

3-7) Four great beasts represent four successive world empires. The first, like a lion with eagle's wings, represents Babylon. After its wings were plucked, it was lifted up and made to stand like a man; it was also given a human mind. This imagery may suggest Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation and subsequent exaltation (cf. Dan 4).

The second, like a bear, represents Medo-Persia. Raised up on one side, with three ribs in its ravenous mouth, it was commanded, "Arise, devour much flesh!" Possessing an insatiable appetite, the Persian empire conquered vast regions, stretching from the Occident (West) to the Orient (East).

The third, like a leopard with wings of a bird and four heads, represents Greece. This imagery may suggest the rapidity of Alexander's conquest, plus the subsequent four-fold division of the Macedonian empire.

The fourth, non-descript except for its huge iron teeth, was dreadful, terrible and exceedingly strong. This last beast represents the Roman Empire. It had ten horns. A little horn displaced three horns, plucking them out by the roots. This little horn had eyes of a man, and spoke boastful/pompous words.

8) In apocalyptic literature, certain concepts are associated with numbers: *one* suggests unity; *two* symbolizes strength; *three* brings to mind the Godhead/Deity (Father, Son & Holy Spirit); *four* represents the earth (north, south, east, west); the numbers *seven* and *ten* suggest sacred perfection/completeness.

In this context, two possibilities exist: (1) the beast (i.e., the Roman Empire) had ten horns (i.e., a full or complete set of emperors). Of these, the three (i.e., good and godly rulers) were uprooted by the one (i.e., perverse and persecuting rulers). (2) Alternatively, the number three may simply represent a sufficiently large number to signify success (cf. vs. 5).

9) The Ancient of Days refers to the One True God, Creator of heavens and earth, who has existed from all eternity (Dan. 7:9, 13, 22; cf. also Psa. 90:1-2; 102:25-27; Mic. 5:2).

His vesture (white as snow) and hair (like pure wool) signify divine purity (Isa. 1:18; Rev. 1:14; 14:14; 20:11).

The throne of fire suggests divine omnipotence, i.e., God possesses sufficient power to punish evildoers (cf. Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 4:5; 8:5-7; 9:18; 10:1; 11:5; 14:18; 15:2; 19:12, 20)

10) “The books were opened” is indicative of God’s righteous judgment, either in time, as here, or eternity (Rev. 20:11-15).

11-12) The domination of world empires ended with the demise of Rome. Nevertheless, civil government continued to serve its divinely-ordained purpose, but on a more restrictive and limited basis.

13-14) The Son of Man. Jesus Christ is both the Son of God (i.e., fully divine) and also the Son of Man (i.e., fully human).

As is typical of apocalyptic literature, concepts receive more emphasis than chronological order. God’s kingdom was established on the first Pentecost following the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Messianic prophecies were fulfilled “during the days of those kings” (Dan. 2:44), i.e., during the period of Roman dominion, not after its demise and fall. Christ was given dominion after he ascended to the Father (Acts 1:9-11; 2:29-36; Eph. 1:18-23). In like manner, the book of Revelation speaks of the fall of Rome as an accomplished fact, centuries before it actually occurred (Rev. 14:8).

18) In the Messianic era, the saints would receive and possess the kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 18, 21-22, 27). The New Testament views these promises as a present reality (Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28-29; Rev. 1:6).

21-22) The little horn, i.e., perverse and persecuting rulers, waged war with the saints (Dan. 7:18, 21-22, 25, 27); yet, God remains in control (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21).

25) The proper role of civil government (praising good & punishing evil) would be reversed (praising evil & punishing good) (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14).

Time, times, and half a time equals 3 ½, an indeterminate and incomplete period, half of the perfect number seven (Dan. 7:25; 12:1, 5-7; Rev. 12:13-14). This measurement also equates to forty-months (Rev. 11:1-2; 13:3-5) or twelve-hundred and sixty days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6).