

Daniel 7

The Vision of the Four Beasts

Fact or forgery?

Liberal scholars often claim that Daniel's visions were forgeries written around 167-164 BCE during the Jewish oppression by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ruled the Syrian section of the Greek Empire. Consider:

- No writings after _____ (450-430 BCE) were included in the canon or recognized Scripture by the Jewish people.
- The Dead Sea scrolls included copies from the Book of Daniel dated in the _____ BCE.
- The Septuagint, translated from _____ BCE included the Book of Daniel.
- The Aramaic sections of Daniel match the official court _____ from the 6th century BCE rather than the Maccabean period.
- Jesus quoted Daniel in Matthew 24:15 and called him a _____ from God (not a liar or forger!)

The Setting

The 1st year of Belshazzar's reign, approximately 552 BCE. He was the co-regent (son) of Nabonidus, the last ruler of the Babylonian Empire.

- Nebuchadnezzar's statue dream happened some _____ years earlier.
- It was about _____ years before the Babylonian empire would fall.
- Daniel was being _____ in his influence.

The Set-up

The set-up in verse 2: *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea."*

Most likely meaning: This describes the constant _____ of the Gentile nations during the "times of the Gentiles". It is from these nations that world leaders and empires arise.

Players in Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts

Lion-like beast	Bear-like beast	Leopard-like beast	Terrifying Beast	Ancient of Days	Son of Man
Had wings like an eagle	1 side higher than the other, 3 ribs in it's teeth.	Had 4 wings and 4 heads.	Had iron teeth, bronze claws and 10 horns.	Brilliant white clothes and hair.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Wings torn off. ▸ Helped to stand on it's back legs. ▸ A human mind was given to it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Instructed to get up and eat its fill of flesh. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ It was given authority to rule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Crushed and devoured some, trampled underfoot all else. ▸ Smaller horn displaced 3 horns, had eyes and a mouth ▸ This horn became imposing, boastful, blasphemous and oppressed the saints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Thrones set up, takes His seat on a throne of fire with wheels. ▸ River of fire flows from the throne. ▸ A multitude of of beings attended to Him. ▸ Court is convened, books were opened. ▸ The terrifying beast is killed and thrown into fire. ▸ Other beasts allowed to live but without any authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Coming accompanied by clouds. ▸ Appeared before the Ancient of Days. ▸ Was given authority over entire earth. ▸ Was worshipped by all. ▸ His kingdom never ends.

The Interpretation of Daniel's Vision of the 4 Beasts.

Daniel's vision included a review of past/current times, an overview of coming times, and a preview of the end times. We know from vs.17 that these four beasts are four kings that will arise in successive order. This vision parallels the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's statue dream in chapter 2, so we gain some insight into the meaning of the beasts from this.

A _____ of past times.

- The first beast is Nebuchadnezzar and the _____ Empire (626-539 BCE). This beast corresponds to the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2.
 - The lion is regarded as the king of the beasts, while the eagle is regarded as the king of the birds.
 - The plucking of the wings refers to Nebuchadnezzar being humbled by insanity for 7 years (chapter 4).
 - The standing up on back legs like a man and being given the mind of a man refer to Nebuchadnezzar's conversion after his humbling.

A _____ of coming times.

- The second beast is Cyrus and the _____ Empire (539-331 BCE). This beast corresponds to the torso of silver in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2.
 - The bear is powerful but not as majestic or skilled as the lion.
 - One "raised side" refers to the alliance between the Medes and Persians, but with the Persians being the more powerful.

- ▶ The 3 ribs in the teeth symbolize their conquest of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.
- The third beast is Alexander the Great and the _____ Empire (331-146 BCE).
 - ▶ The leopard is a feared predator for its speed, which is amplified by having 4 wings. Alexander conquered from Macedonia to Africa to India in lightning speed.
 - ▶ Alexander the Great died unexpectedly in Babylon on his return from India at the age of 32.
 - ▶ Alexander had no legal heir. The 4 heads on the leopard refer to:
 - His 4 generals (Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip, and Antigonus).
 - The 4 kings of each sections that the Roman Empire was divided into after Alexander: Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy.
- The fourth beast is the _____ Empire (146 BCE to 476 AD)
 - ▶ The Romans were brutal in conquest.
 - They completely destroyed cities that resisted.
 - They killed many and enslaved the rest.
 - They used fear to quash rebellion, including mutilating prisoners and massacring men of military age.
 - ▶ The reach of the empire was extensive.

A _____ of the end times.

Some unique qualities of prophetic and apocalyptic literature:

- Two related but distinct things are referenced at the _____.
 - ➔ Sometimes this involves talking about one thing but at the same time making reference to something else.

Example: Ezekiel 28 speaks to the King of Tyre, but at the same time is referring to Lucifer, or the devil.

- ➔ Sometimes future events are presented without identifying time gaps or intervening events so two events can appear as a singular event.

Example: Hosea 11:1 refers to Israel as a child being loved by God and called out of Egypt. But this is also applied to Jesus in Matthew 2:15.

The 4th beast is also the _____ and a revival of the _____ Empire during the Great Tribulation.

Why this interpretation?

- Some elements of the vision have not yet been _____. (After vs. 7)
- Time _____ in Daniel's vision between vs. 7 and vs. 8.
- The use of the number _____ makes reference to the Roman Empire.

- The detailed explanation of the 4th beast corresponds to passages in the book of _____.

Theme	Daniel 7 reference	Revelation 13 reference
Human eyes and mouth	Daniel 7:8	Revelation 13:5–6
Great/boastful words	Daniel 7:8, 20, 25	Revelation 13:5–6
War on the saints	Daniel 7:21, 25	Revelation 13:7
Ten horns / kings	Daniel 7:7, 24	Revelation 13:1
Global dominion	Daniel 7:23	Revelation 13:7–8
3½-year period	Daniel 7:25 (“time, times, half a time”)	Revelation 13:5 (“forty-two months”)
Final destruction	Daniel 7:11, 26	Revelation 19:19–20 (beast destroyed)

What happens in this revived Roman Empire?

- There is a 10-king _____ . (vs. 24)
- A king emerges that _____ 3 kings.
 - ➔ This king becomes dominant. (v.20, 25)
 - ➔ This king is arrogant. (vs. 8, 11)
 - ➔ This king blasphemes God. (vs. 25)
 - ➔ This king will try to change set times and the law. (vs. 25)
 - ➔ This king oppresses all who follow Jesus for 3.5 years. (vs. 21, 25)

The identity of this king: The _____.

The 5th and final kingdom is the Kingdom of _____.

- There is a mighty _____. (vs. 9-10, 26 depicts a royal courtroom coming into session.)
 - ➔ The judge is seated. This is God the Father. (Isaiah 43:13)
 - The brilliant white clothes and hair speak of holiness.
 - The throne of fire with wheels refers to absolute justice.
 - The river of fire speaks of this justice flowing out into the world
 - ➔ Additional thrones are set in place.
 - ➔ There are multitude of attendants
 - ➔ The books were opened and judgment was rendered.
 - The judge found in favor of the saints of the Most High. (vs.22)
- There is a _____ of power.
 - ➔ The Son of Man is brought before the Ancient of Days. (Vs. 13)
 - ➔ The Son of Man is given supremacy. (Vs. 14a)
 - Supreme authority.
 - Supreme glory.

- Supreme sovereignty.
- Supreme worship.
- ➔ All earthly kingdoms are subdued.
 - ▶ The anti-Christ is defeated and thrown into a blazing fire.
 - ▶ Other earthly kingdoms allowed to survive temporarily, but without any power.
- The Son of Man is given a kingdom that _____. (Vs. 14b)
 - ➔ The saints of the Most High rule with Him.
 - ➔ The saints of the Most High worship and obey Him.

The grand angelic summary in verse 17-18:

The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever!

Reflection and Discussion Questions

- ▶ What do the four beast reveal about the nature of human kingdoms and power? Where do you see this operating in world powers today?
- ▶ Why is the contrast between the four beasts and Son of Man so important? What does this tell us about God’s rule vs. man’s rule?
- ▶ What stands out to you about the Ancient of Days and the scene of judgment? Why?
- ▶ If God’s kingdom ultimately wins, how should that affect the way you live?

Before the next session: read Daniel chapter 8 at least 3 times in 3 different versions of the Bible. (Recommended versions: ESV, NIV, NLT)