

## SESSION NINE

### DANIEL 7:1-8

#### *Beasts from a Strange Zoo*

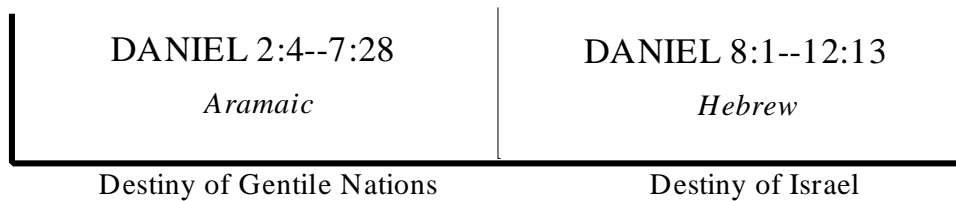
### INTRODUCTION

1. The Chronological Placement

Dan 7:1 is dated in the first year of Belshazzar. Implication: ch 7 precedes chapters 5 & 6.

2. The Literary Structure

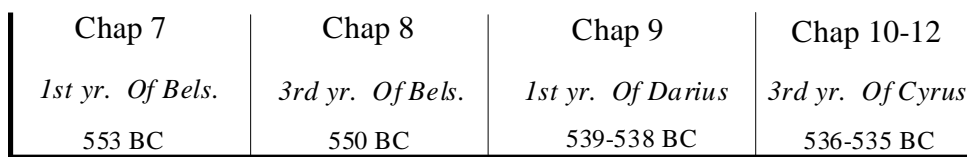
a. From the Perspective of Language: ch 7 is a crucial turning point!



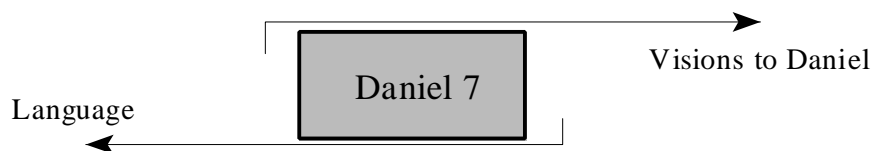
b. From the Perspective of Content:

Observation: Starting with Dan 7, we have a series of visions given directly to Daniel.

Note the chronological order!



c. The Overlapping Perspectives



d. Conclusion: Daniel 7 is the pivotal point of the book!

Chapter 7 wraps up the focus on the Gentile powers and how they unfold in history, and yet it begins to reveal more of how Israel as a nation will fit into history (she will be the target of persecution by the "little horn" although eventually finding triumph in the kingdom given to the "Son of Man").

3. Daniel Two is Parallel with Daniel Seven

a. There are several similarities between Dan 2 and Dan 7:

- 1) Both chapters portray a sweep of successive Gentile powers in four stages beginning with the kingdom of Babylon.
- 2) Both culminate in Gentile powers being replaced by a kingdom of God which triumphs over them.
- 3) Both chapters elaborate more on the 4th kingdom than the first three.

b. Yet there is a difference of perspective between Dan 2 and Dan 7

"The vision of chapter 2 was seen by a pagan king and therefore portrayed history as man would view it, each empire having at least some intrinsic value. The vision of chapter 7, however, was given to a man of God, and to him God reveals the nations of history as they really are inwardly. They are portrayed as God sees them--wild, ferocious beasts, continually fighting and devouring one another."<sup>1</sup>

4. The Main Focus of Daniel 7

- a. The first three kingdoms are treated in only three verses, whereas a great deal of attention is given to the fourth kingdom and the related aspects to it. Compared with ch 2, further details about the 4th kingdom are provided, especially in regard to the revelation about the "little horn" that arises out of the 4th kingdom.
- b. Whereas both chapter 2 and 7 portray the culmination in God's kingdom, chapter 7 advances this aspect by providing more specific revelation about the "son of man" who receives the kingdom.

5. The Structure of the Chapter

VISIONS		INTERPRETATION	
<i>The Beasts</i>	<i>Judgment Before the Ancient of Days</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>Specifically in Re-gard to the 4th Beast</i>
vv 1-8	vv 9-14	vv 15-18	vv 19-28
<b>7:1-14</b>		<b>7:15-28</b>	

**A. THE INITIAL VISIONS (7:1-14)**

(note: part two in vv 9-14 will be dealt with in the next session)

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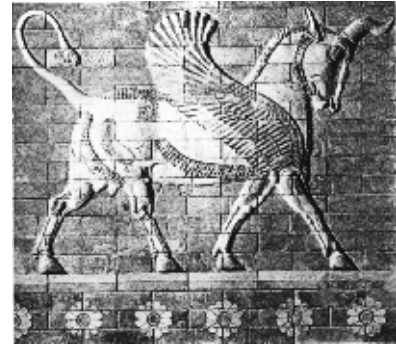
<sup>1</sup>Donald K. Campbell, Daniel; God's Man in a Secular Society, 106.

## 1. The Vision of the Beasts (7:1-8)

- a. The vision involves unnatural animal figures -- animals with bizarre characteristics.

(1) Such characteristics were not uncommon to their society. The people were accustomed to both distortions of appearance and to symbolic values being associated with such characterizations.

(2) The animals are symbols for both kings and the kingdoms associated with them (see 7:17, 23).



**Winged Bull relief from a 5th century BC palace at Susa.**

- b. Point of the animal visions

Like chapter two, this vision of four beasts serves to trace the Gentile powers that have dominion over God's special nation of Israel until that time in which she is elevated in God's plan in Messiah's kingdom.

- c. Introduction to the First Vision (vv 1-3)

(1) "*the four winds of heaven*"

"The winds *of the heavens* represent the heavenly powers and forces by which God sets the nations of the world in motion."<sup>2</sup> This probably refers to God's providential actions in the affairs of men through angels (cf. Rev 7:1; 9:14-15).

(2) "*stirring up the great sea*"

(a) Some have felt that the "great sea" looks at the Mediterranean (Num 34:6-7; Josh 1:4), and thus the vision relates specifically to the Mediterranean world. However, that may be foreign to the context here, and Dan 7:17 interprets the sea symbol as "the earth."

(b) In Isaiah 17:12-13, the sea metaphor is used to depict the nations of the world in perpetual turmoil and unrest (cf. Isa 27:1; Rev 13:1).<sup>3</sup>

- d. 1st Beast - Like a lion (v 4) = Babylon

(1) Just as the image in Dan 2 had a head of gold which depicted the grandeur of its majesty, so the first beast is symbolized by the king of beasts (lion) and the king of birds (eagle).

(2) The lion and eagle are biblical symbols for Babylon



<sup>2</sup>C. F. Keil, *Book of Daniel*, 222.

<sup>3</sup>Archer states, "The sea (v. 2) is symbolic of polluted, turbulent humanity (cf. Isa 57:20) as they try to exploit and govern in their own wisdom and strength" ("Daniel," *EBC*, vol. 7, 85).

- (a) Jer 4:7 - Judah's attacker is compared to a lion
  - (b) Ezek 17:2-3,12 - Babylon was also compared to an eagle (Deut 28:49; Jer 48:40; 49:22).
  - (c) In Babylon, the processional way leading from the north to the Ishtar Gate was ornamented with some 120 lions in glazed-brick relief (the lions were symbols of Ishtar).
- (3) *"its wings were plucked"*
- The wings depict the pride of the all-powerful kingdom, particularly as manifested in the life of her great king, Nebuchadnezzar. The plucking of the wings would then refer to the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar in ch 4 by the sovereign hand of God (notice that the "lifting up" follows).
- (4) *"lifted up . . . and made to stand"*
- This refers to the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar after he was made to realize his weakness. God's discipline was effective (he was brought low to the ground), and the king saw himself as a man and realized that "it is heaven that rules." He was also given a "human mind" (lit. *heart*), which refers to the restoration of his sanity after his seven year dementia.
- (5) Prophecies of Babylon's downfall
- See Jer 25:11-14; 29:10; 50:1--51:62. Note: these prophecies may have a partial fulfillment with Babylon in 539 BC as well as a further fulfillment in the Tribulation prior to the return of Christ (see Rev 17--18).

e. 2nd Beast: like a Bear (v 5) = Medo-Persia

- (1) Critical scholars interpret the 2nd beast as Media and the 3rd beast as Persia, but the evidence is clearly in favor of the interpretation that the 2nd beast is Medo-Persia.



- (a) Dan 5:28 predicted that Babylon would be replaced by the Medes and the Persians.
- (b) Chapter Six with its reference to the "law of the Medes and Persians" (6:8,12,15) viewed these two peoples as forming one empire.
- (c) Media had ceased to exist as an independent empire before Babylon was defeated (Cyrus led the Persians in overcoming the Medes in 550 BC). Point: no independent kingdom of Media between Babylon and Persia!
- (d) In chapter eight (see vv 3, 20), Media and Persia are viewed as one power under the figure of a two-horned ram.
- (e) In chapter eight, the kingdom which follows Medo-Persia is Greece (represented by the male goat). The four horns of the goat (Greece) in ch 8 parallel the four heads of the 3rd beast in ch 7.

- (f) The interpretation of the critical scholars leaves "Rome" out, but this is doubtful since Rome is part of the picture in Dan 9:26.
  - (g) The fact that Darius was Median indicated his race, but it does not mean that the empire itself was Media.
  - (h) The details of chapter 7 do not fit the critical position
    - i) The fact that the 3rd beast is a leopard (7:6) implies swiftness, and this characterizes the campaign of Alexander the Great more than anyone else.
    - ii) If you take the 3rd kingdom as Persia, it is difficult to identify the 4 heads, but the 4 heads make perfectly good sense with Greece (cf. 8:21-23).
    - iii) The ten horns connected with the 4th beast are difficult to reconcile with the Seleucid dynasty or political leaders following Alexander.
- (2) The figure of the bear could stress its "ferociousness" and "power", but the figure more likely is meant to depict its appetite in light of the actions which follow in v 5.<sup>4</sup> The Persian Empire could never be content with its huge domain, and its appetite for conquest led her into repeated conflict with Greece.
- (3) "*it was raised up on one side*"  
 This should be interpreted in light of the figure in ch 8:3 where the ram had 2 horns, one longer than the other, and the longer one came up last. Although the 2nd kingdom was composed of both the Medes and the Persians, it was not a balance of power: the Persians came to dominate over the Medes.
- (4) "three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth"  
 The bear had found its victim, to which the ribs attested. This looks at three crucial conquests of Medo-Persia under the leadership of king Cyrus and his son Cambyses:<sup>5</sup>
- (a) Lydia (western Asia Minor) in 546 BC
  - (b) Babylon in 539 BC
  - (c) Egypt, acquired by Cambyses in 525 BC
- (5) Told to "*devour much meat*"

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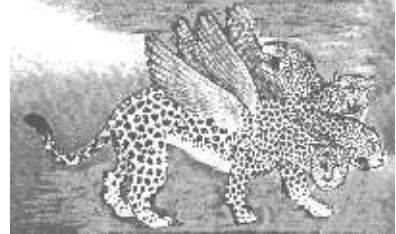
<sup>4</sup>Walvoord remarks that this 2nd empire was "powerful like a bear, ferocious (Is 13:17-18), but less majestic, less swift, and less glorious" (*Daniel*, 155).

<sup>5</sup>Most commentators view the three ribs as three conquests, but other suggestions have been made as to their identity. Walvoord suggests that this "probably referred to the three provinces of Babylonia, Persia, and Media" which were reduced to a single realm (*Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, 231) as had Jerome many centuries ago. Pentecost mentions another possibility: the preceding kingdoms of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1350).

Medo-Persia was operating by divine appointment. "In devouring other kingdoms and extending its territory into a vast empire, the bear was fulfilling God's purpose."<sup>6</sup>

f. 3rd Beast: like a leopard (v 6) = Greece

- (1) The figure of a leopard combined with wings looks at the characteristic of "swiftness." This is particularly appropriate of Alexander the Great and his rapid conquest.



- (a) He took the throne of Macedon (Greece) in 336 at age 20.
- (b) During the years 334-331 BC, he conquered Egypt and Persia, a realm that took decades to build.
- (2) "the beast also had four heads"
- (a) This looks at the division of Alexander's kingdom upon his untimely death (cf. 8:8,22)
- i) 323 BC - Alexander died at age 33
  - ii) 323-301 - Power struggle for his kingdom
  - iii) 301 BC - Cassander overthrew Antigonus at the Battle of Ipsus
- (b) Alexander's kingdom was parceled out among 4 generals:
- i) Lysimachus: Thrace and Bithynia
  - ii) Cassander: Macedonia and Greece
  - iii) Seleucus: Syria, Babylonia, and land to the east
  - iv) Ptolemy: Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia Petrea

f. 4th Beast: Dreadful with Iron Teeth (vv 7-8) = Roman Empire

Note: In contrast to Greece which acquired its power rapidly under Alexander, the Roman Empire acquired dominion very gradually (from about 241 BC until the height of its power in AD 117). Alexander conquered by the rapidity of his troop movements, whereas Rome conquered by the ruthless crushing of other peoples ("*it devoured and crushed, and trampled*" - v 7).



- (1) Observations
- (a) The 4th kingdom is differentiated from the previous three in that it is not likened to any specific animal but is simply described as being "*dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong.*" There is no animal fierce enough to portray this kingdom.

<sup>6</sup>J. Dwight Pentecost, *Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, 1350.

- (b) This 4th beast/kingdom does involve stages:
    - i) Dan 7:24a - The 10 horns arise after the 4th beast
    - ii) Dan 7:24b - The "*little horn*" arises after the ten
  - (c) This 4th beast/kingdom has both a near and remote fulfillment:
    - i) The "4th beast proper" is the Roman Empire (paralleling the 4th part of the Image in Dan 2).  
 Note: The element of iron is common to the 4th part of the image and the 4th beast ("*large iron teeth*").
    - ii) However, the Book of Revelation makes clear that the 10 horns and "little horn" are yet future - reserved for the Great Tribulation (Rev 13, 17 & 19).
    - iii) Therefore, the 4th beast covers a vast expanse of time, but with a "time gap" involved.<sup>7</sup>
  - (d) Despite the fact that the 4th beast has the additional features of the 10 horns and the "little horn" (with a time gap involved), there is a strong connection between the historic Roman Empire and the eventual fulfillment in the "end times."
    - i) The text refers to this as one beast (7:3 & 7:17).
    - ii) Dan 7:24 specifically says "*out of this kingdom ten kings will arise.*"
- (2) Focus on the "Horns"
- (a) The "horn" as a symbol - The horn is symbolic of power (1 Kgs 22:11; Zech 1:18ff.), particularly that of the reigning house (Ps 132:17; Ezek 29:21). In Dan 7:24, the horns are clearly seen to represent kings.
  - (b) The "little horn" is a symbol of the future Antichrist who will rise up in the Great Tribulation prior to Christ's Second Coming (see next session).

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<sup>7</sup>The idea of there being a "time gap" involved in the fulfillment of the symbol should be seriously entertained for at least three reasons:

- 1) In Dan 8:9, the "small horn" comes out of one of the four horns. This involves a time lapse between Seleucus in 312-280 BC and Antiochus Epiphanes (the "small horn") in 175-164 BC.
- 2) A time gap is involved in the "Seventy Weeks" prophecy of Dan 9:24-27.
- 3) Some OT verses refer to both the 1st coming and 2nd coming of Christ in one broad sweep, even though separated by nearly 2000 years (e.g., Isa 61:1-2).