

Picking up from last week, let us now consider the Roman Scheme, given in the table below ...

ROMAN SCHEME			
Chapter 2	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Identity
Head of gold	= Lion with eagle's wings		= Babylonian empire
Breast and arms of silver	= Bear with three ribs, etc.	= Ram with two horns	= Medo-Persian empire
Brass belly and thighs	= Leopard with four wings	= Goat with one horn followed by four horns	= Greek empire of Alexander and his successors
		Little horn which sprang up out of one of the four horns	= Antiochus Epiphanes
Iron legs, with feet and toes partly iron, partly clay	= Beast with iron teeth and ten horns		= Roman empire
	Little horn which sprang up among the ten horns and uprooted three of them		= The temporal power of the Papacy ¹

Of interest in Boutflower's depiction (remember when he wrote and what his theological persuasion was) of the Roman Scheme is the assignment of the little horn to the Roman Catholic Church. The vast majority of conservative scholars would see the little horn as the antichrist; though we are a long way away from using this term at the moment (remember, we know nothing of the NT yet), so we will be content to use the terms "the little horn of Daniel 7, willful king of Daniel 8, prince in Daniel 9," etc., for quite a while.

Notice the major differences between the Grecian and the Roman scheme. The Roman scheme sees the combined Medio-Persian empire as the bear of chapter 7 and the ram of chapter 8. It is also interesting that, according to the Grecian scheme, the two kingdoms, Media and Persia are two separate beasts in chapter 7 ... but are one ram in chapter 8! Curious. A clear demonstration of the old adage ... "necessity is the mother of invention."

Daniel 7 is not only one of the most important chapters in the prophetic OT, it is a pivotal portion of the book of Daniel itself. In that chapters 1 through 6 provide generalities, the chapters that follow, 7 through 12, provide detailed specifics that were missing from the previous content. We will see that many details concerning the end of the Gentile kingdoms (predicted in Daniel 2), the relationship of Israel to world history and the specifics concerning the final seven years of human history (Tribulation).

We shall look at all of these details we now walk through Daniel chapter 7.

Daniel 7:1

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind *as he lay* on his bed; then he wrote the dream down *and* related the *following* summary of it.



¹ This is the view of Charles Boutflower, the Vicar of Essex who wrote *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, circa 1923.

Recall that Belshazzar was the king of Babylon between chapters 4 (end of Nebuchadnezzar) and his ultimate end in chapter 5. Daniel had this dream in chapter 7 in the years between those two chapters. The first year of Belshazzar probably was around the third year of Nabonidus, his father. How do we determine this? Well, fortunately the “Verse Account of Nabonidus” states:

When the third year was about to begin, he [Nabonidus] entrusted the “Comp” to his oldest (son), the firstborn [Belshazzar], the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command). He let (everything) go, entrusted the kingship to him and, himself, he started out for a long journey.

Nabonidus began his reign in 556 BC, so the third year of his reign would have been approximately 553 BC. How old was Daniel when he received this vision? If he was taken into captivity at 15 years of age in 605 BC, he would be sixty-seven years old at this time. How old was Belshazzar? This is harder to determine. Best guess ... Belshazzar was about thirty-seven when he became the coregent. It is worth considering whether there was any reason why God choose to give Daniel this follow-up dream to Daniel 2 during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign. The text does not tell us ... but it may have been that the exiled Jews were concerned about their status under what they considered a vastly more wicked king than Nabonidus. Perhaps the vision was meant to give assurance that, with the new kingship transferring (remember, Medio-Persia is rising) and subsequent new kingdom, that the nation of Israel as a people would be preserved and their future existence was secure.

As Daniel was sleeping, the text here says he saw a dream that also involved visions. So put yourself in Daniel’s position. You’re asleep but you begin to see a vision. Naturally, when Daniel woke up, he recognized that the vision was important enough to write down and he is now relaying a “summary” of it to us the reader of his text. Though Daniel 7 begins in the third person, “Daniel saw a dream ...” it continues in the first person, ... “I was looking ...” beginning in the next verse and continuing all through the rest of the book (with the exception of Daniel 10:1).

Daniel 7:2–3

² Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea." ³ And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

Before we try to understand the vision that Daniel has here, it is important to remember that the things that Daniel saw, since they were in the form of a dream, were symbols of actual things and events. When we are interpreting symbols, we need to pay attention to the underlying context that may actually provide the meaning of the symbols. (For example, ... You, O King, are that head of gold ...) Baring that, often times symbols are used in the prophetic scriptures in a similar, though not unique, but consistent manner.

Our first interpretive issue we encounter here is the meaning of the great sea (we will get to the four winds in a minute). If this was not a dream and we were looking for a literal “great sea,” from a geographical standpoint, what would the great sea be to a Jew living in Israel ... or even a Jew living in Babylon? The Mediterranean Sea would be the most literal understanding. But we do not see any context that would suggest the Mediterranean Sea is in mind here. What do I mean by that? In the next verse, Daniel tells us that four beasts were coming up from the sea. Later on, when the angel provides the interpretation (in verse 17), “these great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth.” So, there is some understanding that the sea here represents *something other* than a literal body of water; i.e., it is a symbol of something else.

There is a variety of interpretive opinion on the matter here for the great sea, but a first guess at the symbology here would be to consult the prophetic scriptures prior to the time of Daniel for some insight. For this, we can peruse Isaiah 17 ... where the peoples and nations are compared with the roaring and rumbling of the sea (Isa. 17:12–13). We also have Isaiah 57:20, in which the “wicked are like the tossing sea ...” Since we know that the four beasts represent kings, i.e., rulers of peoples and nations, it seems reasonable to view the great sea as the peoples and nations of the earth out of which these kings rise. Other interpretations include ...

The sea ... is symbolic of polluted, turbulent humanity ... as they try to exploit and govern in their own wisdom and strength. Driver describes this sea as “the agitated world of nations.” Thus the peoples of the earth are portrayed as a great sea of humanity in a constant state of unrest, chaos, and turmoil—an apt description of today’s world.²

² Miller, Stephen R., *Daniel*, The New American Commentary, B&H Publishing Group, 1994.

This seems to make the best sense as the beasts represents the Gentile world kingdoms, the sea would represent that out of which they arise, namely, the whole heathen world of peoples and nations.

Now, a critical question ... does it truly matter that we get the meaning of the “great sea” correct here? As we go through the vision and the angel provides the interpretation to Daniel, it will become apparent that the meaning of the “great sea” is not the focal point of the prophecy. This is a concept that we as evangelicals often ignore as it is our natural inclination to want to have everything tied up in a nice neat package without any issues left to solve.

What about the four winds which stir up this great sea? Usually, the four winds in the prophetic scriptures refers to the cardinal directions North, South, East, West and is a euphemism for “all over the world.” For example, Matt. 24:31 ... “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” But in this Daniel passage, the winds are actually causing the “stirring up” of the great sea. It seems unlikely the four winds are referring to “all over the world.”

Archer believes “the four winds represent God’s judgments, hurling themselves on the ungodly nations from all four points of the compass.” While it is true that other OT passages the four winds have that meaning, however, in this context ...

the figure seems rather to denote factors of all kings that produce turmoil among the earth’s nations throughout history. This must be the case, for the winds continually stir up the sea during the rise and fall of all four empires. God’s judgments are involved, but the turmoil described primarily results from the activities of persons who do not know God and the operation of Satan’s forces upon humanity. Wood correctly states “The winds stand for various forces which play upon the nations, serving to bring about strife and trouble.”³

Walvoord also brings a cogent meaning for the four winds ... since the wind is seen as “striving” with the great sea, he sees this as God’s power striving and in conflict with sinful humanity. Again, since the four beasts will be the focus of the vision, it is not critical that we precisely identify the great sea and the four winds churning up the sea.

What about the phrase “different from one another?” What could that mean? Certainly, the animals portrayed are different in size, strength, and speed; but it seems unlikely that is what is meant. If we recall the metals in the image of chapter 2, there was a definite progression of worth and strength, possibly symbolizing their moral character declining as they go on. Montgomery believes that they would vary in worth and points out that each beast is successively meaner than its predecessors. The four Gentile kingdoms represented by these beasts differed in size, power, and in many other ways.

Daniel 7:4

"The first *was* like a lion and had *the* wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

The first beast to rise out of the great sea was a lion; however, this was no ordinary lion ... it had the wings of an eagle. Now, it is certainly reasonable that because Daniel had this vision during the Babylonian empire, and Daniel himself said Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, that this first beast represents the kingdom of Babylon. A number of other factors lend support to this interpretation ... First, Nebuchadnezzar himself was symbolized as a lion and an eagle elsewhere in the OT. For example, he was referred to a lion set out to destroy Judah (Jer. 4:7, 49:19, 50:17, 44). He was also referred to as an eagle in Jer. 49:22, Lam. 4:19, Ezek. 17:3. Second, statues of winged lions have been uncovered in Babylonian excavations. Lions adorn the Ishtar Gate. It appears that the winged lion was the national symbol that represented the Babylonian empire.



³ Miller, Stephen R., *Daniel*, 196.

Now, neither the text nor the angelic interpretation which follows gives a meaning for the rest of the verse. We will have to do a little constructive speculation. Our underlying assumption would be that these aspects (wings plucked, lifted up, made to stand on two feet, human mind given to it) somehow relate to king Nebuchadnezzar himself and we look to the text of Daniel 1-4 for help. First it says the wings of the lion were plucked. If the wings represent the speed of the first beast, i.e., the speed of Babylon ... it could refer to the eventual slow-down of Nebuchadnezzar's conquests, which are known to have diminished as his kingdom progressed in years. But it could also represent the time in Nebuchadnezzar's life where he was judged of God and he became insane and lost his ruling power for a time. We know that God Himself was responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's restoration, and it could be that this is what was meant by "was lifted up from the ground." His restoration is aptly described by "made to stand on two feet like a man." He was "given a human mind," could refer to the more humane rule of king Nebuchadnezzar after his insanity and restoration. Again, all this is speculation but it seems to fit the life of Nebuchadnezzar from the text of Daniel 1-4.

Daniel 7:5

"And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'"

The second beast to come up from the great sea resembles a bear. There are a few more details about this bear that, again, may require some speculation and correlation. We are also going to stick with the orthodox view and insist on the two-member alliance of the Medio-Persian empire for the second beast. Why would the bear, with its various descriptions, be an apt depiction of the Medio-Persian empire? The bear was certainly known for its fierceness in battle and would thus be an adequate symbol for the kingdom. We will also see that the composite Medio-Persian empire is also in view by the ram of chapter 8. Since the ram will be interpreted for us ("the kings of Media and Persia" – Dan. 8:20) it lends credence to the view that this second beast is the Medio-Persian empire, not a separate and distinct Mede empire.

What about the "raised up on one side?" Probably one of two things is in view here. One, the more esoteric view, is that the one side of the bear was larger than the other or that one side was higher because the legs on that part were raised for the purpose of going forward. It's possible the land size of the Medes versus the Persians is in view here; the Medes being a smaller geographic area than the original Persian empire.

But another view makes more sense (at least to me) ... and that is that the one side of the bear was raised up higher than the other side because it was more prominent or powerful. It is certainly the case that the higher side would symbolize Persia, which rose to a position of dominance in the alliance of these two empires.



What about the three ribs? Well, since these four beasts represent the four Gentile kingdoms, it seems reasonable that this bear has devoured three other beasts and all that remains is the ribs of the three creatures it has just consumed. Are there three other beasts (empires) that the Medio-Persian empire devoured in its day? Yes, certainly Babylon (539 BC) would be one of the kingdoms that the Medio-Persian empire "devoured." The other two could be Lydia (546 BC) and Egypt (525 BC). Other interpreters make little meaning out of the three ... being content to just assume "many."

The decree "Arise, devour much flesh" is not the part that gives me pause. It's the "and thus they said to it ..." My question is "who is they?" I don't have an answer, and I don't see many commentaries that addresses this. Since this is a command, perhaps this is a veiled command from the Lord Himself (they = trinity) ... or perhaps a command from God through the agency of angelic beings (they = multiple angels), which appear on the scene soon to give Daniel the interpretation of the dream. I don't know ... but the command is to keep devouring flesh. Presumably, the flesh represents other beasts that the second beast will consume ... and the vision hints that the Medio-Persian empire would continue conquest of nations and peoples during its reign. The Medio-Persian empire was the largest empire in the-then known world. It would continue for several hundred years until the time of Alexander the Great.

Reminder: Gone the next two weekends ... taking a seminary class and seeing the Ohio sons!