

THE FOUR GREAT WORLD-EMPIRES AND WESTER LITTLE HORN

Chapter 7

We now enter upon the second part of our book; and in this chapter we have a new beginning, as you will readily see by referring to the chart. Chapter seven covers practically the same ground as chapter two. It takes in the whole course of the Times of the Gentiles, beginning with Babylon and ending in the overthrow of all derived authority and the establishment of the kingdom of the Son of Man. But the difference between the first and second divisions is this: In what we have already gone over we have been chiefly occupied with prophetic history as viewed from man's standpoint; but in the second half of the book, we have the same scenes as viewed in God's unsullied light. In the second chapter, when a Gentile king had a vision of the course of world-empire, he saw the image of a man a stately and noble figure that filled him with such admiration that he set up a similar statue to be worshiped as a god. But in this opening chapter of the second division, Daniel, the man of God, has a vision of the same empires, and he sees them as four ravenous wild beasts, of so brutal a character, and so monstrous withal, that no actual creatures known to man could adequately set them forth.

There is something exceedingly solemn in this. If you read history as viewed simply by the natural man, you will find that a great deal of space is given to congratulating humanity upon their marvelous exploits; and one would suppose that we have now almost reached perfection, so far as human government or political economy is concerned. Civilization and the progress of the race are presumably at the zenith of their glory. But if one reads history in the light of Holy Scripture, with the Spirit of God illuminating the page, it gives one a very different impression indeed. We then begin to realize that the things that are most highly esteemed among men are abominations in the sight of God; and, concerning the great ones of the earth who wield power over the nations, we are reminded of what is written in psalm 49:12, "Man being in honor abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish."

In Daniel's visions he was given to see the course of each of the empires which these wild beasts figure. That is, each wild beast is of such a character as to picture the leading features in the entire history of the empire which it represents. For instance, the whole course of Babylon is set forth in the winged lion, which afterward had its wings plucked, a man's heart given to it, and was made to stand erect upon its feet. Then the whole course of Medo-Persia is pictured in the vision of the bear with three ribs in its mouth, which lifted itself up on one side. The entire history of the Grecian empire and its four-fold division is set forth in the four headed and winged leopard. And the course of the Roman empire right on down to the Time of the End (a condition which has not yet been reached) is depicted in the beast, dreadful and terrible, with the great iron teeth and the ten horns. It is important to see this. Some take it for granted that, as the Roman empire has passed off the scene, all that is connected with this Roman beast is gone too, and so it has no further interest for us who live in the gospel dispensation; but the contrary is the truth.

But now, for a moment, look at the 17th verse. There the four beasts are said to be "four kings which shall arise out of the earth." The context makes it plain, however, that the angel did not mean four individual kings; but in prophetic scripture the term "king" is very frequently used for "kingdom." In verse 23 we read, "The fourth beast shall be the fourth *kingdom* on the earth." Necessarily the principle applies to all; though, on the other hand, I would have you notice that in connection with each of them, one king comes out prominently, in each case but the last, the

one under whom the kingdom first attains the dignity of a great world-power. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar comes before us as the one who stands distinctively for Babylon; just as he was told in chapter two, "Thou art this head of gold." But the winged lion represents both the glory and debasement of the Chaldean empire. Its wings were plucked, it lost its lion heart, and was given instead the weak heart of a man. Cyrus the Great is the leading figure when we think of Medo-Persia. He it was who destroyed the chief cities of Babylon, of which the three ribs in the mouth of the bear seems to speak. The leopard clearly suggests Alexander the Great, the four wings speaking of the almost incredible swiftness of his conquests. But the four heads set forth the four-fold division of his dominions made among his leading generals after his death. But no great potentate in the past epitomizes in himself the Roman authority. We look to the future for one to arise who shall do this even "the Beast" described in Revelation, chap. 13, who will obtain sway over Europe just prior to the establishment of the kingdom of the Son of Man, when all authority, power and glory will be headed up in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though these kingdoms are successive in their rising, one does not necessarily completely destroy the other; but the four great monarchies, with their characteristic features, are to run on in some form until Jesus comes. Till the dawning of that glorious morning without clouds, this world will never be free from strife and bloodshed, pestilence, misgovernment, and kindred ills. All these things, Scripture shows us, are going to continue; while evil in the professing Church will increase and abound until the long-looked-for hour of the establishment of the liberty of the glory.

Sometimes people say, "I do not see how you can charitably desire the Son of God to come back the second time if it is really true that when He returns the day of grace will be over for those who have rejected His word." But we know that the only hope of this poor world is the return of the true King. Matters will never be put right down here until they are put right by judgment. The preaching of the gospel is never going to establish the kingdom; nor did God intend that it should. After nineteen hundred years of gospel preaching, there are far more heathen in the world than there were when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared the first time. Those who are really Christians are just a little handful compared with the multitude that know not God. The gospel is not God's way of bringing in the kingdom and converting the world. This will be brought about only through judgment; and while we shrink from the awful thought of what is coming upon this poor scene, yet we realize it is the only way to the blessing creation is groaning for; and so, we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus;" for we know that He *is* the only hope for its deliverance. Every conflict between nations, every struggle between class interests, every cruelty that is practiced upon the weak and defenseless, all these things lead us to cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." For when He comes, He is going to put an end to it all; when He comes, He is going to dry the tears of the oppressed; when He comes, He is going to give men a righteous rule, as Daniel saw pictured in the last of these visions. First, the four world-kingdoms, all of a brutish character, must run their course. Then, upon the utter breakdown of power in the hands of man, the world-kingdom of the Christ of God is to be set up, when righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. And we may rest assured that our Lord will not come while there is one soul out of Christ who is yet anxious to be saved.

Notice that the first three beasts are passed over in the interpretation given to Daniel. It has to do almost entirely with the fourth beast, dreadful and terrible; for this beast has to be in control both at the first and second advent of our Lord.

But I now desire to notice the whole chapter a little more carefully. It was in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, that Daniel had a dream, and visions of his head upon his bed. He saw the four winds of the heavens striving upon the great sea. The great sea was of course the Mediterranean; and it is well known that every one of the empires described in the prophecy borders upon the shores of the great sea. The kingdom of Babylon embraced the shores that stretched along the eastern and southeastern edge of the Mediterranean; Medo-Persia did the same; while Greece took in also the northeastern shores, and the Roman empire completely surrounded it; hence its name, meaning "Midst of the earth." That was the sea Daniel was looking upon in his vision; and in a very real literal sense every one of these empires seems to spring up from the great sea.

But if we turn over to the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, a book which dovetails prophetically with the book of Daniel, we get a mystic interpretation of the sea. In verse 15 we read, "He saith unto me, the waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Isaiah too tells us that the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. So, we are clearly justified in interpreting the sea as a picture of the troubled nations. In other words, out of the unsettled state of the nation's surrounding the Mediterranean Sea these great empires should arise.

The four winds striving upon the sea would indicate providential agencies working upon the minds of the people. You will find the figure of the winds also used in that way in the book of Revelation. Of course, though men little realize it, all the great movements of the nations are in accordance with the actings of God's providence. Thus, in a very real sense, as another has aptly said, "All history is His story." No matter what the movements going on among men, God is above them all. He may be hidden behind the scenes; but, as shown so clearly in the book of Esther, He is moving all the scenes that He is behind.

In the rise of Babylon to the dignity of the first dominion, we see the providence of God working among the nations to take away royalty from Judah, because of their sins. The race lapsing into idolatry after the flood, God committed the headship to Abraham. But when Abraham's seed violated the covenant, He took up Nebuchadnezzar, and set him over all nations; but he also failed, though brought to own the power and mercy of God at last.

In his vision Daniel saw four great beasts coming up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagles' wings, speaking of majesty, ferocity, and swiftness. It was in a marvelously short space of time that Babylon subdued all the surrounding nations, and brought them beneath its sway. But as Daniel looked, he saw the wings plucked, and the beast lifted up from the earth and made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart given to it. Thus, all progress was at an end and majesty had departed, for one can scarcely think of anything more awkward and ungainly than a lion thus erect. The heart of a man tells of weakness such as we see displayed in Belshazzar. In fact, after Nebuchadnezzar's death declension at once set in, and continued till the days when the Medes and Persians wrested the kingdom from his inglorious

grandson. When this vision was given to Daniel, the last stage had almost been reached; Belshazzar was already reigning. In the second instance Daniel saw a beast like to a bear come up from the sea, that raised itself up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth, between its teeth, and a voice said. " Arise, devour much flesh." It was after the decay of the Babylonian empire that the Medo-Persian union was consummated. At first Media was the stronger, but it soon becomes evident that the Persians were to have the superior place. Thus, the bear raised itself up on one side. The three ribs between the teeth speak of it having already destroyed its prey. It had destroyed the Babylonian lion, and the three ribs might stand for the three chief cities of the Chaldean empire, Babylon, Eebataua, and Borsipja, which were all taken by the united armies of Cyrus and Cyaxares. The command to arise and devour much flesh indicates the extreme cruelties often practised by the Persians, and the wide extent of their conquests.

The third beast had the appearance of a leopard, with four wings of a fowl upon its back, and with four heads. It sets forth a synopsis of the history of the Grecian empire. Something over three hundred years before Christ, Alexander the Great, as he is now known, was born as heir to Philip of Macedon. This was but one of the petty kingdoms of Greece; but after Alexander's accession to the throne, Macedon, and through it all Greece, took a place in the affairs of the world and of nations that it had never taken before. He welded together the Grecian states and Asiatic kingdoms of the West, and then turned eastward, where he met and subdued the haughty Persians completely, and caused himself to be proclaimed emperor of the world, and had divine honors paid him. But his glory was short-lived, for he died, as a result of licentious living and debauchery, in his early thirties. His dominions were shortly afterward divided among his four leading generals. The marvelous progress of Alexander, even greater than that of Nebuchadnezzar, is indicated in the vision; for the beast that stood for Babylon had two wings, while the Grecian leopard had four.

There is an interesting story related by Josephus, to the effect that when Alexander was inarching through Syria, after the conquest of Tyre, with his armies headed toward Jerusalem, which he intended to destroy, the high priest and his companions robed themselves in their priestly garments and marched in solemn procession out of the city to meet the conqueror. Alexander is said to have recognized the high priest as one whom he had seen in a vision. From his hand he received a copy of this book of Daniel, in which the prophecies concerning himself were pointed out. Because of what was there written, he accepted the submission of the Jews, granted them religious toleration, and left their city unharmed. While we have no means now of deciding as to the truth or falsity of this story, we can readily see that it is not at all unlikely.

The fourth beast is described in verses seven and eight: " After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth. It devoured and brake in pieces and stamped the residue with the feet of it. And it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."

In its turn, the Grecian empire was over thrown; and, about half a century before Christ, Rome became the mistress of the world. The very birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem was brought

about, humanly speaking, by a decree going forth from Csesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed (registered for a census). This brought Mary and her husband Joseph to the city of David, foretold by Micah as the birth place of Him " whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." Upon the chart, I have represented this beast as of a composite character, for I take it that it answers to the beast described in Revelation, chap. 13, as having the head of a lion, the body of a leopard, and the feet of a bear; thus, including in itself the chief features of all the kingdoms pictured by the other beasts. It was the boast of the Romans that they never destroyed a civilization when they Conquered the people; but they took from it everything of merit and combining all into one, produced the greatest civilization the world had ever known. The course of this last beast has not yet been fully run. In the book of Revelation, it is described as having seven heads, one of which was wounded to death, and afterwards healed. The seven heads are paid to be seven kings or forms of government. In John's Day, five had already passed away; the sixth or imperial form, was then in existence. The other had not yet come, nor has it appeared up to the present time. It will have its fulfilment in the union of imperialism and democracy which we have already seen is to take place in the Time of the End. But as the interpretation of this vision is given farther on in the chapter; we will not go into it now.

Daniel next saw thrones set up. You will notice that the Authorized Version says: " The thrones were *cast down*." This literally renders the Chaldean expression here used, which implies the casting down of rugs and cushions to be used as an oriental divan-throne. But the English translation would seem to imply the *destruction* of thrones, so it is better rendered " set up." He continues: " And the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set and the books were opened. "Daniel then saw that because of the blasphemous words of the little horn, the last beast was slain and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. The other beasts had not been dealt with so summarily; they had their dominion taken away, but a prolonging in life was given them, as the margin puts it, thus agreeing with what we know as to their history.

The Son of Man is then seen coming with the clouds of heaven unto the Ancient of Days who gives him " dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. "This completes the vision: the interpretation follows.

Daniel was deeply exercised in spirit over all that he had seen; but an angel seems to have been standing by, and to him he applied for light as to " the truth of all this." He tells him that the four beasts represent four kings or kingdoms, as we have already seen: but " the saints of the most-high (places) shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." But Daniel desires fuller information as to the meaning of the fourth beast, and especially of the little horn " that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things; whose look was more stout than his fellows; " who rooted up three of the ten horns, and who made war with the saints and prevailed against them; " until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most high (places) ; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." The angel explains that out of the fourth kingdom shall arise ten kings, clearly at one time. From among

these another shall arise after them who shall be diverse from the first, and shall subdue three of them. He will be characterized by blaspheming the name of the Most-High. He can be none other than the Beast of Revelation chaps. 13 and 17. He will persecute the saints of the Most-High places, the Remnant-saints, of whom, as we have already noticed, Scripture has much to say in connection with the last days. He it is of whom we read in the ninth chapter, who shall confirm a covenant with the Jews for seven years, but who shall violate his covenant in the midst of the specified period; and, as here stated, "shall think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time:" that is, he will be the persecutor of the Jewish Remnant for the last three years and a half of the Time of the End. But at the expiration of that time, the judgment shall sit, the Lord Himself shall return from heaven, and his dominion shall be taken away and he himself, as we learn in Rev. 19, be cast alive into the lake of fire.

Then "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most-High, whose kingdom is an everlasting dominion, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." Thus, will be brought in that everlasting kingdom for which the groaning earth has been waiting so long.

I am quite aware that there are many interpreters who think they see in the little horn, as in the king of chap. 11:36, the papacy, which pretended to universal dominion after the down fall of the Roman Empire. But the little horn is not to rise up until after that empire has reached its ten-kingdom condition; and this we have already observed has never been the case in the past. At no time after the dismemberment of the empire, did ten kingdoms formed from its fragments unite in one. And then it is also important to remember that the papacy existed before the break-up of the empire; so that the pope, instead of rising up upon the head of the beast after all the other horns had obtained their strength, came up before the ten horns existed at all, which is clearly contrary to what is here stated as to the blaspheming little horn. And it is further to be observed that the little horn is wielding supreme power on earth at the coming of the Son of Man to set up His kingdom; whereas it is evident that the papacy has not been supreme, nor indeed recognized as a world power for many years.

In the Revelation, the papal church is represented by the scarlet woman, riding the beast; but, in the Time of the End, the ten horns are to unite in seeking and carrying out her destruction. Notice carefully that in chapter seventeen, verses twelve and thirteen, it is written: "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* These have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." Whereas, in the sixteenth verse, we learn that their power shall be used for the destruction of Babylon the Great: "And the ten horns which thou sawest, *and* (not upon) the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." Thus it should be plain to any careful reader that the little horn of Daniel is the Roman, beast of Revelation, and that he will be acknowledged as supreme arbiter of Europe in the coining day of tribulation, by the ten kingdoms; and he will be permitted to prosper and to persecute the faithful remnant of Israel, after the Church has been translated to heaven, until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints for the destruction of those who have refused His word.

It is with the events of this brief season, called the Time of the End, that the great bulk of prophecy has to do. The present age is one never referred to in the Old Testament, save in the most general way; for the calling out of the Church was a mystery hidden in God throughout all past ages, and *only* revealed in this dispensation for the obedience of faith. The Church may now be completed at any moment, and then the next great event will be the descent of the Lord in the air and the translation of His bride, thus preparing the way for the things that are coming upon the earth.

In the last verse of our chapter, Daniel tells us that he kept these things in his heart. May we do the same. Surely, as Christians, nothing will give us to understand our own present place and portion so well, as to have a clear apprehension of the place that Israel and the nations have in the mind of God, as revealed in His word. In the present age it should be accounted a happy privilege to pass through this scene as strangers and pilgrims, sharing with Christ in His rejection. For us, this is the time to suffer for righteousness' sake; the time to rejoice if accounted worthy to endure shame for His name's sake. The glory is coming when He returns to take His great power and reign. Till then be it ours to "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

O unsaved one, it is well that you too ponder these things in your heart; that you be not blinded by the false and deceitful glare of the tinselled glory of this world. It is all doomed to pass away, and unhappy will be your lot if you, in that day, have no interests in a more stable scene. "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal." See to it, I plead with you, that you are numbered among those who have part in the everlasting kingdom so soon to succeed all the passing dominions of this world. God has, in grace, given His Son to die for your salvation; but remember that it is written: "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and, unto them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." If you would hail His promised advent with joy, you must know Him now as Saviour. Otherwise, His return to this earth to reign would find you numbered among His enemies, to be destroyed from before His face.