

XII. Daniel in Biblical Perspective  
Daniel's First Vision – The Four Beasts  
Daniel 7

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I'd like to start off our time in prayer. Father, thank You for these moments in Your Word. We pray that You would continue to guide us and teach us. Thank You that this Word is true. It is inerrant. It is sufficient. We don't need another word. We just need You to help us understand this Word, Your Word that is effective to equip us for every good work. We thank You that all Scripture is profitable so Lord would You come now and be the Teacher by Your Holy Spirit, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

I want to take this text in Daniel 7 and divide it up into three sections. Section one is just setting it up in Daniel 7:1. So let's put the setting together in Daniel 7:1. Then in Daniel 7:2-14 you have the first vision given to Daniel in the book of Daniel. After that in Daniel 7:15-27 you have the interpretation of that vision and then there is a concluding remark in Daniel 7:28.

In our study of the book of Daniel we have covered the first six chapters. Note the title of this study has been the Memoirs and Messages of Daniel. Memoirs are records of the events of someone's life. We began our study of Daniel by looking at his life and we are given the memoirs of his life in Daniel 1-6. Daniel 1-6 cover Daniel's life from about the time he is 14 years of age in 605 BC, when he is taken into captivity along with other Jewish exiles and that will be followed up by another captivity in 597 BC and that will be followed up by another captivity in 586BC. There are three captivities in which Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire reach into this conquered state of Israel and God has made it clear that He has raised them up for this purpose because His people had been disobedient to His Word. Therefore He took a people who were not His people and brought those people to refine and discipline His people. That discipline would be for 70 years according to the prophet Jeremiah and Ezekiel. So they have now taken them away in three installments in captivity.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and others had been taken away in the first captivity. These were particularly the young professionals that had been the subject of the first captivity. With those three captivities we have been studying the life of Daniel. In Daniel 1-6 when Daniel is taken away by the age of about 14 in 605 BC we covered his life in six chapters until he was 80 plus years of age. In Daniel 6 when he is 80 plus years of age he is dealing with a man by the name of Darius and before that it was a man by the name of Cyrus who is the Emperor over the Medo-Persian Empire. Cyrus had conquered a man by the name of Belshazzar who was the co-regent under a king by the name of Nabonidus. Nabonidus replaced the first king Nebuchadnezzar.

Now let me back up and go the other way. When they went away into the Babylonian captivity it was under king Nebuchadnezzar. After his death he is replaced by a man named Nabonidus. Nabonidus is away doing emperor stuff like going around conquering people and while he's away he puts underneath him his son Belshazzar. Some critical scholar said there was no such person as Belshazzar but interestingly later there was a discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder. In it is chronicled the life of

Nabonidus and how he put his son Belshazzar over Babylon proper and over part of his army. Then Belshazzar is defeated and killed in Daniel 5. Daniel had come in and interpreted the writing on the wall which said *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN* and that meant that this day you are found in the balance where the kingdom will be taken away and you will be killed. That very night Cyrus came in and Belshazzar was killed. The Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire under the rule of Cyrus and Cyrus put in as a vice-regent underneath him in Babylon, Darius.

Having said this and laying this out, what happened is our study of the memoirs and the life of Daniel took us all the way through two kingdoms – Babylon and the Medo-Persian Empire. We have gone from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar to Cyrus to Darius. We have gone from about age 14 to age 80. Now we get to Daniel 7 and we have to rewind the tape and go back to Belshazzar. He was the man Daniel dealt with back in Daniel 5. Daniel 7 picks up under the first year of the reign of Belshazzar. Daniel 7:1 says *I In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.*

So we have the memoirs of Daniel in Daniel 1-6 that takes him through a couple of kingdoms and a number of kings. Now we are looking at the messages given to Daniel. Some of you are thinking this isn't the first vision because there have already been two visions. This is the first vision given to Daniel. The other two visions had been given to Nebuchadnezzar. Then there was the event of the hand writing on the wall to Belshazzar but Daniel had not yet received a vision until now. So we will now see a series of visions that are given to Daniel and you have to put them all together so don't expect Daniel 7 to explain everything in this study. Because there will be a series of vision not everything will be explained in this one study. We will cover the first one here and this is a key one. It is an overarching vision that's given to him. It is one that spreads out the future all the way to the first and the second advent of the Messiah, the Son of Man. It is given to Daniel as he lay upon his bed. This vision he wrote down and gives it to us.

But when did he get this vision? The last time we heard the name Belshazzar was the last day of his life. On the last day of his life they were having this big party while they were surrounded by the Medo-Persians and God communicates with a hand writing on the wall. God basically says, "This is it. You've been tried and found wanting." So back in Daniel 5 we had Belshazzar in the last day of his life because as soon as that interpretation had been given the Medo-Persians came in through the canal, up over the wall, defeated the Babylonians and killed Belshazzar. In Daniel 7 we go all the way back to the year 556 BC. Daniel is about 64 or 65 years of age at this time since we have gone back in his life and he's just in the prime of his life.

I want to get this historically set for you. Nabonidus has been ruling for about 3 or 4 years. He's away and he needs to make sure that the capital is taken care of. So he has now raised his son up to be the king over Babylon proper. Nabonidus is the emperor over the whole empire but he has now put his son just over Babylon and a key portion of the army. This is the first year that Belshazzar has this limited reign underneath his father, Nabonidus. It is in the context of that first year that Daniel gets a dream but Daniel doesn't give it to Belshazzar. Daniel writes it down and keeps it to himself but we get to read what he wrote down. Now let's take a look at the vision itself.

Daniel 7:2-8 says **2** Daniel declared, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. **3** And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. **4** The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. **5** And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ **6** After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. **7** After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. **8** I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Does this vision sound vaguely familiar to you? It may not sound so much like the vision in Revelation 13 but go backwards again. Do you remember one of the visions of king Nebuchadnezzar? There was a vision of the big image which had a head of gold. It had a chest and arms of silver. The waist and thighs were of brass or copper. Then it had legs of iron but feet and toes of iron and clay. The image/beast was top heavy and tumbles down. While there is ascending value in the medals, there is descending weight to the medals in that the iron is stronger than the brass but the brass and copper is stronger than the silver and the silver is stronger than the gold yet it topples over. There was a small stone cut from mountain that became bigger and bigger. It smashed that image and the image toppled over. That was in our study of Daniel 2. That little stone was the Kingdom of God. It started small cut from a mountain, Mount Calvary. That stone grew and grew and it is that stone that defeats not only those four kingdoms of the pagan world but it is also the stone that will defeat all kingdoms raised up against it. For the Kingdom of God is forever. The head of the image was Babylon. The arms and chest were Medo-Persia. The waist and the thighs were Greece. The legs and the feet of iron was the Roman Empire. Does this sound familiar to you?

The parallels are unmistakable. First there is this first beast that comes up. It's interesting to see that this vision makes use of some common ideas in that world of that day. There was the notion that things are coming up out of the sea. There is the notion of the winds that stir it up. This is different. Notice, where do the winds come from? They don't come from the sea but they come from heaven upon the sea and there are four winds from the north, south, east and west. The four winds descend upon the great sea. That would have been another term for the Mediterranean – that stormy sea. If you are thinking Biblically from the Old Testament sea is bad. River is good. The sea represents the chaos, confusion, death and being overwhelmed. The river represents the work of the Gospel, the river of life. So coming up out of this sea are the Gentile pagan kingdoms of the world stirred up from the winds of heaven.

They rise up in sequence. There is the first beast, then the second beast, the third and then the fourth. The first beast rises up like a lion. It's not just any lion. It's a lion that has wings like an eagle and the wings are plucked which means it's then rendered incapable of its movements. Here is this lion with this extraordinary feature of wings like

eagles but then the wings get plucked and the lion is cast down. Then it says it is lifted up and is able to be no longer cast down as an animal but now stands up like a man. This is looking at the Babylonian Empire of which Daniel is at this moment a part of. It's looking back to the grandfather of the present ruler, Belshazzar. It is looking back at Nebuchadnezzar who was the lion who roared throughout the Middle East conquering nation after nation after nation and then rose up in pride. He is this lion with eagle's wings soaring through everywhere victoriously. Then the eagle's wings were plucked and he was humbled.

Does that sound familiar? Do you remember the seven years that Nebuchadnezzar was like an animal in the fields, feeding and looking like an animal? He was humbled and then God lifted him up. Nebuchadnezzar said, "O Lord, my reason has returned to me. You are sovereign in the heavens and upon the earth. You do as You please in the heavens and upon the earth and no man can stay Your hand. I, Nebuchadnezzar, my reason returned to me when I declared the One, true, most Holy and exalted God is sovereign throughout the nations." Then he stood up like a man. So in this case the vision isn't looking forward. The vision is looking back to Belshazzar's grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire.

Now that empire will be succeeded by another empire and now we're going to the future. Belshazzar is still apart of the Babylonian Empire but now we'll look at the next beast that will replace it. He said this next beast will be like a bear, this hulking bear. This bear will be lifted up on one side. What are we looking at here? We are looking at the next empire. What's the next empire? Think about the image Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of. It went from the head to the chest and arms which was a two-pronged empire. It was the Medo-Persian Empire. So the Babylonian Empire will be replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire.

The Medo-Persian Empire is represented as the bear but notice how it is only raised up on one side. Why? It may have been Medo-Persian but there was a whole lot more Persian than there was Medo. The nation of Media was the junior partner in this empire. Persia one was much more supreme which was the one in which Cyrus came from. Darius was from Media but Cyrus was the Emperor over all. So the Persian side is lifted up. There are three ribs sticking out of his mouth. Those are the first three nations that this empire will conquer which are Egypt, Lydia, and Babylon. Then it says that this large bear is to "devour much flesh." So it isn't going to stop with Egypt, Lydia, and Babylon. It is going to expand even larger than the Babylonian Empire. It will devour even more nations.

That then leads us to the empire that will replace it. It's pictured as a leopard. Daniel 7:6 says "*After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.*" Here we are fast forwarding again. What empire will replace the Medo-Persian Empire? It will be the empire of Greece under Alexander the Great. The leopard is not only mighty, a good hunter but it's also fast. It's rapid. Its speed is accelerated by having four wings. What will Alexander the Great do? He will conquer the known civilized world by the time he is 32 years of age. With great rapidity and speed he will not only conquer the Medo-Persian Empire but he will go far beyond it. They say he even died of a broken heart because there were no more worlds to conquer. What about the four heads? Alexander the Great will die and the kingdom will be divided into four sections among

his sons. It will not last long because it will then be conquered by the fourth beast that rises up out of the sea.

The fourth beast is something different than the others. This one is not described as an animal. This one is described as an unstoppable force. It has teeth like iron. It devours and defeats everything and it doesn't just defeat. It tramples under its feet those that it conquers. Notice the picture given to this beast in Daniel 7:7, 8; *7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

So this empire is the Roman Empire. It is the empire of iron. It is one that is terrifying and exceedingly strong. It is another cut above in power, in terror and in domination. It is beyond the other three. It is stated to have ten kings that represent it. Of those ten kings another one rises up that seems to be smaller but is greater than the ten and in fact plucks up by the roots three of them. The idea of a horn is the idea of strength, like a ram with its horns or the bull with its horns. That represents strength in the Bible. So here are ten kings of strength but there's one that looks smaller yet becomes bigger. Its bigness is such that it plucks up three by the roots. This one has the eyes of a man which represents in this symbolic language intelligence and awareness. It is highly intelligent and it has a mouth that speaks great things. It is boastful and the idea is it is one of arrogant boasting. Now that's the vision that is given to us.

The question that immediately arises is what are the ten horns and what is the little horn? We will try to build on this as we go to the interpretation. This chapter is attached mercilessly by the critical scholars. Some scholars say it is a chapter that was added many years later and why would they say that? It is because supposedly its given in the days of Belshazzar in which one of the beasts is already there but the other three had not yet come and so how can that be true? It must have been written later because when you're critical and you don't accept the premise that God reveals then you can't accept the premise of prophecy. Prophecy is no big deal for God and it's not simply because God knows the future. It is because God declares the end from the beginning. It is just God with broad strokes pre-writing history. That's all that prophesy is. It is pre-written history in broader strokes for us. It is in symbolic language for us. So God is recounting the Babylonian Empire and what happened with Nebuchadnezzar and then He's giving us the three empires of the future.

Then when you get to the ten horns and the little horn we have whole other group of people that read this which are the mystical people that begin to put their spin on it. But I'm not going to speculate. I'm not going to go into fanciful speculation. That's what always gets people in trouble in prophesy. The Scripture will interpret the Scripture for us and that's as far as I can go. The Scripture interprets the Scripture and then fulfillment will bring clarity as God fulfills it. Some of this God has obviously fulfilled. The Medo-Persian Empire was fulfilled. The Grecian Empire, He has fulfilled it. The Roman Empire, He has fulfilled it.

So what about these ten horns? You either have ten emperors or ten kings leading up to the emperors in the Roman Empire and that would be pretty safe because basically

there were ten major emperors. There were actually twelve emperors but two didn't last for very long. So that could be the ten or ten can be a symbolic number. Ten means completion. That God's allotted emperors for this kingdom will be established but out of what this empire starts will rise up another king with a kingdom that will supplant that kingdom. It will be an arrogant kingdom. It will be one led with extraordinary intelligence, skills of communication and boastful. That's what we know from the text.

Now the text then pauses and the vision now shifts. Daniel 7:9, 10 says **9** *"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. 10 A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.* Now we have been ushered into a courtroom of heaven. Notice how the Ancient of Days is referring to his wisdom and his purity with whiteness. The beard is representing age. The Ancient of Days as wisdom and eternity and he sits upon a throne. There are other thrones that are set also. It says that a thousand, thousands served him. Who is that referring to? It is referring to the angels. Then it says ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. What is that? That is all of humanity that stands before Him in judgment. Then how will He judge them? He will judge them from the books.

It goes on to say in Daniel 7:11, 12; **11** *"I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.* In Daniel 7:11 the fourth beast was utterly destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. In Daniel 7:12 it is saying the other kingdoms ended but they ended gradually but this fourth one was brought to an end abruptly, completely and finally and it was being led at the end by this horn with great words that were speaking. Let's look further in the text.

What does the Ancient of Days do? Daniel 7:13, 14 says **13** *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* So here is this king that comes from the Ancient of Days and He is the Son of Man. What was the favorite term Jesus loved to use about Himself? It was the Son of Man which came right out of this text. It is Christ the Son of God that is sent as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to bring a Kingdom that is unstoppable.

Do you get the picture back in Daniel 2 of Nebuchadnezzar's vision? It had the four representations of the empires and see how this compares to the four beasts. Then there was this little stone that was cut away from a mountain that destroys it. Here you don't have a stone but you have the Rock Himself, the Son of Man, the One whom the Father sent, the King of Kings. His Kingdom will destroy all the kingdoms and His Kingdom will last forever. Now there is one thing that has been added in this vision which is enlarging upon Daniel 2. The one thing you don't have is that little horn represented in any way back in Daniel 2 but you do here in Daniel 7. So what is he there

for? What does this communicate to us? It is telling us that growing out of that final beast is a Kingdom led by One that uproots everything. He goes on to explain this. Let's look at the interpretation.

Daniel wanted to know about the fourth beast. Daniel 7:15-28 says **15** *“As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. 17 ‘These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’ 19 “Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, 20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. 23 “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.’ 28 “Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”*

This fourth beast, these ten horns, that little horn and what is the time, times and half a time? What is this little horn with this kingdom that supplants the other kingdoms and makes war against the saints, changes law, changes everything? Our current President, Obama, had a phrase that said “Change you can believe in.” This king has change you don't want to believe in. You don't want to believe in this change, not at all but he will attempt to change everything. He will make war against the saints and he will seek to destroy them but there is a King who shall defeat him. This King shall be forever and ever. So what are the answers to those? I can't wait to tell you in the next study of Daniel. I don't have time in this study to do it.

I do want you to think about this that we have covered. Daniel has been greatly affected by this. He said his color changed. You can just see the color rushing out of his body. You can see him overwhelmed. He's depressed. He doesn't even go tell anybody about this. He just writes it down. He is hearing that all of these kingdoms are going to rise up and it's all going to lead to this that stands against the King of Kings and will make war against the people of God. You would think Daniel would be depressed to the

point of disengaging but Daniel will not disengage. Daniel will continue to be involved as a political figure and leader in the Babylonian Empire and the Medo-Persian Empire.

We know where this is headed. We know where it's going to end but that does not mean we disengage from the affairs of this age. We are just like Daniel. He received this vision. He heard what was happening but he stayed engaged in those kingdoms. He stayed engaged as an instrument of the Lord. He didn't retreat, flee, despair or back out. He didn't say, "Well I know it's all going to end in this way." He stayed engaged serving the Lord every single day in those kingdoms for the honor of the Lord.

The second thing I want you to see is as these kingdoms rise up out of the sea of chaos and confusion, they rise up because of the four winds. Where do the winds come from? They come from heaven. There is no king or kingdom that stands without God's appointment and purposes. They didn't come up out of the sea on their own and it wasn't the sea that produced them or the wind. It was from on High that God had appointed them for His purposes and every king and kingdom is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it where so ever He desires to accomplish His purposes.

The third thing to think about is as we move through Daniel 7 and come to the conclusion to see how this impacts passages like 2 Thessalonians, the book of Revelation, and the book of 1 John, this text becomes a real key to the New Testament in Revelation that we're going to see in five different passages when we return to this study. It wasn't hard to see the fulfillment of the Babylonian prophecy of that beast because it had already been done but yet every single one of these – the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, the Roman Empire and even this empire that stands against the King Himself and the Kingdom of God – have all unfolded just as God said they would.

God's Word is true. Every promise and prophecy is yes and amen in Jesus Christ. Just as much as there was a Medo-Persian Empire, a Grecian Empire, a Roman Empire and it did give rise to now what is an empire against the Lord Himself that the Lord is bringing to a conclusion that He will throw into the fire and be burned up, even though there is seeming success for time, times and half a time, it is the Lord who is the Victor and that victory is sure. Now, who is on the Lord's side? Who will serve the King of all Kings? In the midst of whatever happens, we will not despair. I know how it ends. The King wins. The King of glory, the Son of Man, sent from the Ancient of Days, wins the victory. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in this study. Thank You for the opportunity to start into this chapter. I pray You will give us the ability to work our way through this in a way that honors Your Word and is faithful to it. Father, as You have set the table from this chapter we look forward to see how it lands in the New Testament and how it is fulfilled in Christ, but in the meanwhile would You let us be like Daniel? We don't know the future to sit and wait for it but we know where all of history is headed so that we might serve You and be engaged just like Daniel. With absolute surety Your Word will be fulfilled, not one jot or tittle shall pass away until all is fulfilled. Father, how we thank You that our King is Jesus. We do not rest in the empires of this world or the kingdoms of this world. We will live for You as good citizens but we belong to a greater Kingdom. We belong to the Kingdom of our God. We are citizens of the Kingdom that lasts forever and may the King be exalted. I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.