

## ***Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts***

### **I. Daniel's 4 Beasts are a Recapitulation of Nebuchadnezzar's Statue Dream**

- a. In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a metallic statue that represented a succession of four Middle Eastern empires. Each part of the statue was made of a different type of metal, which represented one of the four empires (***Daniel 2:36-45***).
  - i. Head of Gold (***Daniel 2:36-38***) – The Neo-Babylonian Empire
  - ii. The Chest & Arms of Silver (***Daniel 2:39a***) – The Medo-Persian Empire
  - iii. The Belly & Thighs of Bronze (***Daniel 2:39b***) – The Greek Empire
  - iv. It's Legs of Iron (***Daniel 2:40-41***) – Islamic Caliphate
- b. Daniel also mentions that there is a “latter days” implication to the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had (***Daniel 2:28-29***). There's a fifth part to the statue; the feet/toes of iron & clay. This fifth part of the statue speaks of a revived Islamic Caliphate that will emerge at the end of the age. However, the last part of the dream mentioned a “*stone, not cut with human hands*” coming to crush the feet/toes of iron and clay, leading to the complete destruction of the entire statue (***Daniel 2:44-45***). This stone, speaks of the coming kingdom of Jesus and institution of His millennial reign.
- c. King Nebuchadnezzar had this dream when Daniel was a young man. By the time we get to Daniel chapter 7, Daniel is now an older man (around 70 years old). In ***Daniel 7***, Daniel writes of a dream and night visions that he had involving four terrifying beasts. The context helps us to understand that these four beasts are a recapitulation of the four empires mentioned in ***Daniel 2***. ***Daniel 7*** gives us a different perspective of those empires and gives more details related to the fourth empire. One of those details given in ***Daniel 7*** is that the Antichrist will emerge from the revived fourth empire (Islamic Caliphate).

***(Daniel 7:17 NASB) “These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings [kings/emperors rule kingdoms/empires] who will arise from the earth.”***

### **II. Daniel 7 Backdrop**

***(Daniel 7:1-3 NASB) “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 told the following summary of it. 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.***

- a. The four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea – The “four winds of heaven” are remarkable spiritual forces/agitations often related to judgment that brings transition to nations (***Jeremiah 49:36; Zechariah 2:6; Matthew 24:31; Revelation 7:1***). The “great sea” should be understood as the Mediterranean Sea (***Numbers 34:6-7; Joshua 1:4; 9:1, 15:12,47, 23:4***). The point denotes the fact that this storyline is a Middle Eastern centric storyline. ***Revelation 17:15*** tells us that the “waters” can be symbolic for “nations of the earth”.
- b. Four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another – These empires are shown to Daniel as terrifying beasts arising from the Middle East, yet having certain uniqueness to them. The details of each beast are meant to lead us into Bible study, historical awareness, and conversations with God in order to grow in understanding related to these beasts in order to be watchful and ready.

***(1 Peter 4:7 NASB) “The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”***

III. The First Beast – A Winged Lion (The Babylonian Empire)

***(Daniel 7:4 NASB) “The first was like a lion but had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and set up on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.”***

- a. A lion is a suitable symbol for Babylon. Ancient Babylonian art includes drawing of lions with wings. One of the main ancient goddesses of the Babylonians was also represented by a lion. Jeremiah referred to Nebuchadnezzar as a “lion from the thickets of the Jordan” (***Jeremiah 49:19***). A lion represents strength, courage, and majesty.
- b. The lion in Daniel’s dream had the wings of an eagle. This speaks of the Babylonian Empire’s military speed and efficiency to maneuver quickly. The wings being “plucked” speak of the Empire being humbled or conquered (***2 Kings 25:1-25***).
- c. This lion’s wings were plucked and it was lifted up from the ground and set up on two feet like a man and given a human mind. This is an obvious prophetic explanation of what happen to Nebuchadnezzar in ***Daniel 4***. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar and then restored reason to him and softened his heart. From this point forward, we can be very confident that if this first beast speaks of Babylon, the following three empires are the same one talked about in ***Daniel 2***.

***(Daniel 4:24-25 NASB) “This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the animals of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.***

***(Daniel 4:30-34 NASB) “The king began speaking and was saying, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?’ 31 While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the animals of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ 33 Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. 34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever”***

IV. The Second Beast – A Lop-Sided Bear (The Medo-Persian Empire)

***(Daniel 7:5 NASB) “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 they said this to it: ‘Arise, devour much meat!’”***

- a. The second beast was a bear raised up on one side. This speaks of the Medo-Persian Empire of which the Persian portion was stronger than the Median portion. The Bear speaks of the Empire’s ferocity and slow yet steady military pace.
- b. The three ribs in the bear’s mouth might speak of a few different things. It could refer to the three provinces of Media, Persia, and Babylon or it could speak of the three major kingdoms conquered by the empire: Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt. It’s challenging to say for certain what the three ribs represent, but we know it’s knit to the Medo-Perisan empire devouring other nations.
- c. It’s important to remember that at the time Daniel received this dream, the Medo-Persian Empire had not yet conquered Babylon. This dream would have been a prophetic warning. The voice that says,

“*Arise, devour much meat*” is likely the voice of God declaring His judgment on Babylon by allowing the Medo-Persian Empire to devour the Babylonian Empire.

***(Daniel 2:21 NASB) “It is He who changes the times and the periods; He removes kings and appoints kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to people of understanding.”***

V. The Third Beast – A Four-Headed Leopard (The Greek Empire)

***(Daniel 7:6 NASB) “After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.”***

- a. Leopards are fierce, agile, fast, and crafty. This characterizes the dominance of the Greek Empire, specifically under Alexander The Great. Alexander The Great conquered an Empire of over 3,000 miles in just 13 short years. The four wings speak of the amazing military speed and ground quickly covered.
- b. The four heads speak of the four divisions of the Greek Empire that ruled after Alexander The Great’s death.
- c. Dominion was given to this third beast. This speaks of the influence of Greek culture in the regions it conquered; Hellenization.

VI. The Fourth Beast – Dreadful, Terrible, and Extremely Strong (The Islamic Caliphate)

***(Daniel 7:7-8 NASB) “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 While I was thinking about the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the previous horns were plucked out before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like human eyes, and a mouth uttering great boasts.”***

- a. This fourth beast is repeatedly emphasized as a kingdom that would devour, crush, and trample, much like the Islamic Caliphate during their 1300-year reign. Wherever Islam has spread it typically is a destructive force to the peoples and cultures it conquers. The book of Revelation tells us that the Beast (Antichrist) looks like a composite of the 4 beasts in Daniel (***Revelation 13:2***).

***(Daniel 7:23 NASB) “This is what he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth which will be different from all the other kingdoms, and will devour the whole earth and trample it down and crush it’***

***(Revelation 13:2 NASB) “And the beast [Antichrist] that I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne, and great authority”***

- b. The 10 horns speak of the 10-nation confederation that will make up the Antichrist’s Empire. This fourth beast is a depiction of not only the historic Islamic Caliphate, but also the end time Caliphate that will arise. The book of Revelation gives us insight into the 10 horns by defining them as 10 kings who will receive a kingdom at the end of the age and give their authority to the beast.

***(Revelation 17:12-13 NASB) “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. 13 These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.”***

***(Daniel 7:24 NASB) “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom [the fourth beast] ten kings will arise and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will humble three kings.”***

- c. The little horn (eleventh horn) that emerged is the Antichrist. He will utter great boasts and speak against The Most High and the saints of The Most High. Daniel tells us that the little horn will grow bigger than the other horns and will humble three of the horns by “plucking them out”. I think this means he will likely assassinate three leaders in his coalition of nations.

***(Daniel 7:11 NASB) “Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was killed, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire.”***

***(Daniel 7:20 NASB) “and [I desired to know] the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three of the horns fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates.”***

- d. The Antichrist will wage war against Israel and the saints in the last days. The primary target of Satan’s aggression at the end of the age will be the Jewish people and the Nation of Israel. This war will last for a period of 3 ½ years (1260 days; 42 months; time, times, half a time, The Great Tribulation). The primary opposition the church will face during the Great Tribulation will be from Satan, The Antichrist, and his Empire.

***(Daniel 7:21 NASB) “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and prevailing against them”***

***(Daniel 7:25 NASB) “And he will speak against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time.”***

***(Revelation 12:13-17 NASB) “And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] who gave birth to the male Child [Jesus]. 14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time, times, and half a time, away from the presence of the serpent. 15 And the serpent hurled water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river, which the dragon had hurled out of his mouth. 17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children [gentile believers], who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”***

- e. Despite the intense persecution of the Antichrist Empire, and the war that Satan wages against Jesus and His church, it’s prophesied that the Saints will prevail. The way to prepare for escalating darkness is not mostly about guns and soup; it’s about living a life of endurance, persistence, and partnership with realities of the coming Kingdom.

***(Daniel 7:18 NASB) “But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and take possession of the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.”***

***(Daniel 7:26-27 NASB) “But the court will convene for judgment, and his [The Antichrist] dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 27 Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the empires will serve and obey Him.”***

***(Revelation 12:11 NASB) “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”***

***(Matthew 24:13 NASB) “But the one who endures to the end is the one who will be saved.”***

***(Luke 21:19 NASB) “By your endurance you will gain your lives.”***