

Daniel 7

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 31 March 2017 20:40

In this chapter we can see why Daniel was afraid of what he saw in his visions. He was looking at something he could not comprehend unless God told him the meaning. But, even then, he did not know to whom the message applied.

The visions tell us that a number of terrible rulers will arise, followed by a movement rather than a single ruler, or, single rulers under one head with a widespread dominion. Is this the UN or Rome? We don't yet know. This last rule or ruler will precede the end of time, when Christ will at last take dominion to Himself.

A big lesson for Christians is that we should not assume too much; if scripture does not give us enough clues we may not apply our fixed ideas to what Daniel saw. That is, we must not insist on interpreting when we have nothing to support what we say – which makes it a 'non-interpretation'. Though many will point to this or that rule or dominion with great confidence, there is no way we can do so in reality.

For example, how much of this applies only to the Middle East and to its rulers. How much applies to a more generalized rule, perhaps worldwide? I would say only the latter is of this kind, but I say so because of the text itself, not because I have a favourite way of interpreting! At any rate, we cannot change what God has decreed.

The main point to bring out of this chapter is that many rulers will emerge in history (and we have seen them in our history books) who could fit the descriptions in the chapter. Even in our own days we have witnessed Stalin, Hitler, Chinese despots, Hussein and African thugs. What we have to take from the chapter is not someone specific, but the overall teaching: that wicked rulers will abound, and a final evil rule will be imposed, but only for a season. Then, it will be destroyed and Christ will come as eternal ruler.

In a sense, the 'details' before His rule are not of real significance: rather, we should expect evil rulers to emerge and get worse, as Satan tries his very best to wreak havoc upon the Christian church. Indeed, this is the real aim of all wickedness – to overthrow Christ and His people. This is how we must look at modern wickedness and what rulers are doing today. In almost every case, they want to destroy anything godly and anything Christian. In this we see the working-out of Daniel's visions.

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Verses 1-8

1.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

2.

Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

3.

And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

4.

The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

5.

And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

6.

After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

7.

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.

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8.

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 man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Daniel now goes backwards in time to tell us about a vision given to him during the first year of Belshazzar's reign. There is no reason why he should not do so, and no particular reason why he should move progressively forward in time. For his own reasons, Daniel wanted to keep these visions secret, until later in his life.

Interestingly, the text gives us clues about how God operates. In this case, he spoke to Daniel in dreams and visions "of his head" in the night. That is, internally (whereas John, in Revelation, appears to have seen what he saw externally). After the God-given vision and dream, Daniel wrote down what he saw. (One of my church members wishes to write down his prayers to God in which he asks for something. Then, he will write down the answers when they come. It should be a rewarding experience and a reminder of God's goodness.)

In his vision, Daniel saw the sea whipped up into a frenzy by the winds. Then, "*four great beasts*" arose from the sea, and each one was different from the others. In this text 'great' is a reference to their power. The word for 'beasts',

cheyva'

has a very interesting root

:

chaya'

.

This is the Chaldean for...

"O king, live for ever"

, a term used to greet Babylonian kings! But, it also means to preserve alive.

There is a futile attempt by many to make these visions into something they are not. Therefore, I should say that the sea and the winds have no other significance than those given in the text. And any meaning given is in the text.

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Beast One was like a lion. It had eagle's wings, but most of them were plucked out, and the beast stood on his back feet like a man. He also had the mind and heart of a man.

Beast Two was like a bear. It stood lopsidedly. In its teeth were three ribs he had torn from a victim. A voice from *"they"* ordered the bear to carry on eating many victims, so he acted by command. Bears in scripture are usually linked to slowness of pace, which is more-or-less implied by its root word, meaning to glide gently. A bear is usually displayed as tearing with the idea of violence: depicts a powerful and fierce enemy.

Beast Three was like a leopard (or a tiger). It had four bird's wings on its back. It also had four heads. He had awesome power or sovereignty over people. There appears to be no other meaning, though it may refer mainly to its outward appearance – spots (or stripes), perhaps as an obvious enemy? On the other hand, its root word can mean 'pure', or limpid like a stream.

Beast Four was "dreadful and terrible". Unlike the other three beasts, Daniel did not describe its appearance in terms of a known animal. It was very strong and had huge iron teeth, which it used to tear people limb from limb before eating them. The bodies that were left were crushed under its feet into the dirt. This beast also had ten horns and was very different from the others, which were all identified as various animals. The following texts all speak of this fourth beast.

Daniel looked at the horns in his vision and he saw a smaller horn arising from the beast's head, whilst three of the original ten horns were plucked out in front of it, complete with their roots. The smaller horn that suddenly appeared had eyes and mouth just like a man. The horn spoke "great things" – powerful things. Horns in scripture can be used symbolically to refer to strength.

To this point, Daniel does not give any further clues or meanings. Any that we could give would therefore only be suggestions.

Verses 9-12

1.

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, 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,

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and his wheels as burning fire.

2.

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.

3.

I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

4.

As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down". What thrones? They were the thrones occupied by the beasts, each one being deposed by God, the *"Ancient of days"*,
Who sat supreme where once there were four others.

The 'Ancient' had clothing *"white as snow"*, which represents something splendid and noble. His hair was *"like the pure wool"*; thus his hair, too, was pure white and probably short. The throne he sat on was like *"the fiery flame"* and *"his wheels (were as) burning fire."*

The idea of 'flame' may mean 'fragments' – that is, it only describes the fire as flames. The *"wheels"* may also refer to whirlwinds, though it is more likely that He either sat on a throne built into a chariot, or that he had a chariot nearby, depicting a readiness to war with enemies.

A shining light came from in front of Him, like a powerful stream, because He was so powerful

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within Himself. Around Him were uncountable thousands of servants and many, many more stood in front of Him, waiting for Him to speak. He opened a number of books. As this was happening the small horn on the fourth beast was proclaiming something, but then the great beast was killed and thrown into the burning flames of the throne. This implies that the last threat to mankind was cut down in the midst of his wicked rule. The other beasts had their authority and reigns removed, but they were kept alive for a while longer.

What we see is that former authorities, who all thought they were the rulers of mankind, were removed by God, which agrees with other visions Daniel interpreted. The lesser of the rulers (or, the spirit of their rules) were kept alive for a short while, but the fourth and most terrible ruler was killed and utterly destroyed by the flames of the throne, which suggests they were destroyed by the character and holiness of Almighty God, for nothing of evil can stand against Him and His purity.

Verses 13&14

1.

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

2.

And there was given 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.

After this, Daniel saw Christ coming in the clouds. He came before the Ancient of days, Who is the Father. The Father gave the Son all rule, glory and the kingdom of heaven. Everyone had to serve Him, whether they knew Him or not. This kingdom, unlike the rules of the beasts, is forever, and will never cease or be destroyed.

This is clear: Christ will rule forever, and no human or satanic rule will survive, because the Father will destroy them all. We can make guesses as to the actual names of the beasts, but as they are not given by Daniel it is a pointless exercise. Sufficient to say that a number of powerful and wicked men will claim rule over the people, but they will all be deposed by God, before His Son rules forever.

Verses 15-18

1.

I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

2.

I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

3.

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

4.

But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

Daniel was *"grieved"* by what he saw *"in my spirit in the midst of my body"*. The visions *"troubled"* him.

This is because he did not understand what it all meant. In his vision he approached one of those who stood before the throne - an angel? - and asked him to give him a meaning. So, he did.

The beasts, he said, were four earthly kings (which is where human beings become almost riotous trying to identify who they are!). Scripture does not identify them by name, but there is no point in trying to guess who they are! Suffice to say they ruled with varying degrees of authority and violence, until the final one before Christ reigned fully. Is the fourth beast, then, the antichrist (which need not be a single person)? Is he not identified as any other being because he is not a single person but a wicked movement? Maybe – but it is conjecture. What we really need to know is that though wicked rulers arise, their reigns will stop when Christ returns, and then comes heavenly authority and rule.

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As you see, I am not bothering to give a further interpretation. This is because scripture does not either, and I am not greater than scripture! We need not know who the kings are, only that they are not of God. It is our task to simply be obedient to God.

Verses 19-22

1.

Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

2.

And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

3.

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

4.

Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Daniel saw that the fourth beast was very different from the others, and so he wanted more information. The fourth beast was worse than any of the others and he was extreme in his violence and wickedness. Even the way this beast looked at people was terrifying, too. From this ruler or rule came "*war with the saints*". Note this was the smaller horn that spoke and saw for the beast. It was this small but powerful horn that made its attacks on Christians. And, for a while, it won, and vanquished them. We see several big movements doing this thing to Christians – UN, EU, and so on. But is the UN the small horn? We do not know.

But, then, the Father came and He gave power back to the believers: this suggests we are talking here about the day of judgment. They then judged unbelievers and the wicked and "*poss*

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essed the kingdom”;

earthly rulers were denied power. This is a description of the final days of earthly time. Who is the beast? I do not know... but certain names of people and movements come to mind. Are they the beast? We cannot tell and may only imply, because, for all we know, a completely different godless entity may yet arise. No man can interpret beyond what scripture says.

Verses 23-28

1.

Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

2.

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.

3.

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

4.

But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

5.

And 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 kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

6.

Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

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The one who stood before God said that the fourth beast was the fourth kingdom upon earth. Does this mean that we can trace the other three back in time successively? Or are they connected by time at all? Maybe not. Even if we could do that, we cannot trace backwards unless we know who the final beast is! And we cannot know that until we reach the last day – and that day is kept secret by God!!

We do know that the nature and character of the final earthly ruler will be very different from all others before it. This seems to coincide with what we know about the one world order, or government. If this is to be the last beast, it will indeed not be a single ruler, but a rule by many under one movement, controlled by a powerful 'guide' or influence.

This movement will consist of ten rulers, who must be subservient to the beast. But, another ruler will arise who will get rid of three rulers and speak with authority. Is this the movement initiated by Satan? It cannot be a single man, because he would not live that long! We see here that many kings would arise from this same movement, and then a more powerful ruler. He will take control and cause "three kings" to obey him.

We could easily make many guesses about this. For example, we can see that Europe is gathering as one big super-state. So is all of America, with the south, middle and north, joining as one. Who, then, is the third? It would have to be a joining of the remainder – Russia, China, Asia, and Africa, etc., though the likelihood of this is not logical. On the other hand, if it refers to a movement and not a ruler as such, it might be something like a UN rule. But, that is if the theory is correct! For myself, I refuse to guess, because changes are rife. Though I currently see the UN shouldering its way to world power, it may not, after all, be the beast! Can you see why it is futile to attempt to identify who the last beast is... especially as it appears to be a movement spanning many years?

This last great beast will blaspheme against God and teach against His Name. He will also harm and attack Christians. Today, we see plenty of this happening, but even that is not enough for us to identify the last beast. All we know is that the beast will "wear out" the saints. That is, he will continually harass and trouble them. We see this coming from, say, homosexuals; we see it coming from Muslims; we see it coming from environmentalists; we see it coming from atheists... and more will probably join them in time! Why waste effort guessing?

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On the other hand, these same wicked people are changing *"times and laws"*. The 'times' especially refer to times held holy by saints. The 'laws' are the laws of God, being replaced by false religions. In both cases, Rome comes to mind. But, so, also, do atheistic governments! Again, this is happening with rapidity today and will continue, as hatred for Christians becomes normal. I believe we are entering the days Daniel speaks of, and that we are seeing the beginning of the end. But, we cannot identify the beast for certain; we may only hazard a theologically-educated guess.

These changes will occur and will repeatedly occur "a time and times", and the beast will have control for a short season. The *"dividing of time"* means a half. Therefore, this might be construed as the three and a half years (because the word 'time' can mean a duration, or a year) referred to in prophecy. On the other hand, we cannot say this for certain, despite the zeal of some. All we can tell is that the final ruler within this rule of the beast, comes just before the end of time.

Though the final beast thinks he has total control, he will suddenly be deposed by God, Who will hand him over for judgment to the saints. They will judge him and he will fall, his kingdom destroyed. Instead, the people of God will take the rule for themselves, under Christ, and the rule will last forever. All other rules will then obey the Lord. *"Every knee shall bow"*.

That, says Daniel, is the end of the matter! Daniel tells us his thoughts troubled him causing him to be worried or even depressed; but he did not tell others – he kept his thoughts hidden. So, he did not tell anyone about his vision until he wrote it for public reading in his book.

The Beasts and Christ's Kingdom

We cannot give an accurate time-line for the events spoken of in Daniel 7, because we cannot properly identify who the beasts are... not even the final awful beast. We can, however, identify the characteristics:

Beast 1. A single ruler?

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Beast 2. A single ruler?

Beast 3. A single ruler with four sub-rulers or complicit individual rules.

Does this mean the start of a movement?

Beast 4. Definitely a conglomerate or widespread, worldwide rule. Probably under one head (the 'small horn')? The most wicked rule of them all.

Under this wicked ruler, or within this worldwide movement, will be (or are) ten subservient rules. Three of them will be removed by, or to make way for, the 'small horn'. The EU is doing this today, but so is the UN. Rome is also jostling for some kind of dominion, but is keeping its activities very secret. We do know it is attempting to rule over Jerusalem and despite its outward voice is also secretly seeking a form of union with Islam.

There is no final description of this beast, because it is not one ruler but many, under a single movement with a single voice.

We know, however, that this final beast will not run the course of its rule, but will be suddenly removed by God.

Christ's Kingdom. By mentioning His kingdom we have the only real clue as to the other beasts. We know His kingdom will come into full force when the last day of time arrives. Therefore, the fourth beast must be in power immediately before that happens, and the other three beasts must arise and fall before the fourth beast takes power.

In other words, we only know the time (but not the date) when the *fourth* beast will be eradicated... the others will remain alive but without power,
after
this fourth beast is removed... and that fact makes any guesses very difficult indeed!

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