

Daniel

VII (⌘) – Daniel’s Dream of Four Beasts

- Ch.7 marks somewhat of a division in the book: previous ch.s recorded significant events and experiences of D. throughout the first 65 years of his life in exile; ch.s 7-12 record “a series of revelations [given to D.] in the latter part of his career,” G. Archer, *Daniel*, EBC, 84;
 - **Q.** NOTE the date – chronologically before or after the previous ch.? **A.** Before – actually, before ch.5 (the writing on the wall; before the fall of Babylon; before being cast into the lions’ den);
 - The whole ch. is the substance of what D. dreamed; and it parallel’s Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of ch.2, nearly exactly, though w/ some additional information;
 - BTW, this fact places it squarely in that pattern of revelation, established by Joseph’s experience before Pharaoh (Gen.41); Recall Pharaoh’s two dreams of wheat and cows which J. interprets...
 - “*The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon,” Gen.41:32;*
 - So the pattern of repetitive dreams speaks of certainty and immediacy:
- A. Daniel’s Dream, vv.1-14:**
- 1. The Churning Sea and Four Beasts, vv.1-8:**
- V.2 gives us the setting, READ;
 - a. The Sea:**
 - “*The great sea*” is that which produces or simply out of which the beasts of D.’s dream arise;
 - Quite often in the Bible the designation “*the great sea*” refers to the Mediterranean Sea in contrast to the lesser seas of Galilee and the Dead Sea;
 - Theologically, the sea is symbolic –
 1. In a general sense of that which opposes God’s purposes in creation: during the creation week it was removed at the outset (day 3; Gen.1:9-10) to bring out dry land; it was removed again in Gen.8:1 to bring forth the new creation of the post-flood world; it was removed to make way for God’s people fleeing Egypt at the Exodus (Exo.14:21); and again when Israel crossed the Jordan R. entering the Promised Land;
 2. More specifically the sea is symbolic for “the ever changing gentile world,” *ibid.*, 85; “world powers that are hostile to God and Israel,” Leupold, Exposition of Daniel, 284; cf. Isa.17:12f; **Luke 21:25f**; Rev.17:1, 15; 21:1
 - b. The Four Winds:**
 - The sea was being churned by “*the four winds of heaven*”;
 - The presence of wind is often mentioned along w/ that of the waters and represents the power of God driving it back or, here, stirring it up (Gen.1, 8; Exo.14);
 - Recall that the wind was involved in Neb.’s vision of the statue: toppled, crushed, blown away...
 - The phrase “*the four winds*” often simply indicates the four points of the compass – the ends of the earth; though in Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones (37:9) it specifically refers to the power of God’s Spirit giving life; (Rev.7:1 is “*four winds of earth*”);
- 2. The Four Great Beasts, vv.3-8:**
- Out of the churning sea D. sees “*four great beasts*” emerge;
 - a. The First Beast, v.4:**
 - The first is described in v.4, READ;
 - The winged lion is a well known representation of the Babylonian empire found commonly in archaeological digs;
 - What happened to the lion leads us to believe that it is not Babylon in general represented by the beast, but specifically Nebuchadnezzar as the quintessential Babylonian king – he is stripped of his

wings/made to stand like a man (a ref. to his humiliation); the beast is given the heart of a man (a ref. to his repentance/conversion) – both in Dan.4;

- The winged lion, then, corresponds to the head of gold from Neb.’s dream in ch.2;

b. The Second Beast, v.5:

- The second beast is described in v.5, READ;
- Presumably, this bear-like creature represents the Medo-Persian alliance –
- That it is “*raised up on one of its sides*” giving it an asymmetrical appearance reflects the fact that w/in this alliance, Persia was the dominant partner;
- The “*three ribs in its mouth*” most likely refer to the three principle conquests in the rise of the M/P empire – “the Lydian kingdom in Asia Minor (which fell to Cyrus in 546), the Chaldean Empire (which he annexed in 539), and the kingdom of Egypt (...acquired in 525)” Archer, 86;
- This bear-like creature corresponds to the chest and arms of silver from Neb.’s dream;

c. The Third Beast, v.6:

- A third beast is described in v.6, READ;
- **Q.** WHAT quality comes to mind when you think of a winged leopard (4 wings!)? **A.** Speed!
- This attribute alone aptly describes the nature of how the Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered the ancient world;
- **Q.** WHAT else is notable about this beast? **A.** It had four heads!
- At the height of his power Alexander died; and since he had no heir, the lands of his kingdom were divided between his four top generals – Antipater, Lysimachus, Seleucus, Ptolemy;
- Clearly, the third beast represents the Greek Empire and corresponds to the belly and thighs of bronze;

d. The Fourth Beast, vv.7-8:

- Finally, D. beholds a fourth beast arising from the sea in vv.7-8, READ;
- We can assume that this one corresponds to the legs and feet of iron (and clay) and therefore to the Empire of Rome;
- And here, as in ch.2, much more information is given about this fourth beast than about the others;
- **Q.** WHY might this be (more info about this kingdom than the others in both ch.2 and 7)?
A. Because in each vision the 4th kingdom forms the immediate setting for the appearing and establishment of God’s Kingdom; as such it is also that kingdom which God’s Kingdom conquers and so there is warfare between the two;
- The first thing said about the beast, however, instead of a description of it, seems to be the immediate impression it made on D. – it was “*terrifying, frightening, and very powerful*”; (D. doesn’t seem to be affected by the first three beasts, but this one clearly disturbs him);
- Very little physical description is given of it other than **1**) it had “*large iron teeth*” and (v.19) “*bronze claws*”; **2**) that “*it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left...*” and **3**) “*It was different from all the former beasts...*” – in what way we’re not told; and one other thing, **4**) “*it had ten horns*”;
- **Q.** These ten horns immediately remind us of WHAT? **A.** The ten toes of the statue and it seems natural to link them together;
- While D. considers the horns, another little horn emerges in the midst of the ten (= 11) uprooting and displacing three (making for eight total);
- From this description it seems that the horns exist all at the same time, instead of being a series of individual horns;
- That D. says “*This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully*” leads us to see the horns as individual rulers in this 4th kingdom;
- So the government or kingdom which the 4th beast represents would then be some sort of confederation (perhaps of smaller states);
- This would correspond to the statement in ch.2 regarding the feet of iron mixed w/ clay, “*this will be a divided kingdom...so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay,*” (2:41, 43);

3. The Appearance of God's Kingdom, vv.9-14:

a. The Ancient of Days, vv.9-10:

- While D. watched the 4th beast something new happened in the dream, vv.9-10, READ;
- “*Ancient of Days*” a ref. to God used only in Dan.7 (vv.9, 13, 22);
- This appearance of God coincides w/ that in ch.2 where “*the Rock cut out but not by human hands*” appears and is the establishment of God's Kingdom (Dan.2:44);
- **Q.** WHAT is the tone or mood of His appearing? Joy or judgment? **A.** Judgment; His throne is ablaze w/ fire and a river of fire flows out from it (the source of the Lake of Fire in Rev.20:10, 14-15); an innumerable multitude stand before Him; the court is seated and the books are opened;
- In ch.2(v.34) when God appears, “*the Rock cut out, but not by human hands*” strikes the statue at its base, i.e., at its feet of iron/clay; here, again the conflict is w/ the 4th beast;
- V.11, it is slain and cast into the blazing fire; cf. Rev.19:20; 20:10;

b. The Son of Man, vv.13-14:

- Just as in ch.2 there were two aspects to the establishment of God's Kingdom – the Appearance and the Action of the Rock – 1) it was cut out but not by human hands; 2) it destroyed the statue and replaced it;
- So here we have two aspects or stages to the appearance of God's Kingdom: in addition to the Ancient of Days, is the *Son of Man*;
- That this is God's chosen King is seen from the fact that “*He was given authority, glory and sovereign power...*” v.14, READ;
- This last corresponds to Dan.2:35, “*But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth*” i.e., became a worldwide kingdom;

B. The Interpretation of the Dream, vv.15-28:

- D. is troubled, and seeks help to understand what he's seen, vv.15-16, READ;

1. The Meaning of the Beasts, vv.17-18:

- The four beasts are what we suspected – four kingdoms of earth that give way to the kingdom of Heaven, vv.17-18, READ;
- Remember that not all nations which will arise from the earth are portrayed – only those Gentile nations that exercised political sovereignty over Jerusalem in place of the fallen house of David;

2. The Meaning of the Fourth Beast and Its Ten Horns, vv.19-25:

- It seems D. sought help to understand while the dream was taking place; since in vv.21-22 he sees the fourth beast in action, READ;
- The interpretation given doesn't contain much more information than what we've inferred from its parallel w/ ch.2 – 1) the 4th beast is a 4th kingdom, v.23a; 2) it will be different from the others; 3) from it ten kings will come, and after them a different king who will subdue three of the kings;

a. The Kingdom's Difference:

- We are told that it was “*different from... the former beasts,*” v.7c; v.23b;
- It is in regard to this kingdom's difference that its importance emerges;
- **Q.** WHAT makes it differ from the others? (Speculative...)

1) In the Transition to the Kingdom of Heaven:

- One, would be to recall that in both the dream of the statue and here the transition between the first three kingdoms is portrayed in a definite before/after sense – one kingdom ends, another begins, e.g. vv.6, 7;
- In contrast to this ch.2 (v.44) tells us “*in [not after] the days of those kings*” God will establish His kingdom – there is a definite overlap; IOW, the 4th kingdom and the Kingdom of Heaven exist at the same time;
- The same picture seems to be given here – vv.21, 22;
- Historically, God's kingdom was inaugurated when Jesus came; He is that Rock “*cut out but not by human hands*”; and He came “*in the days of those kings*” – in the days of the kings of Rome;

- Yet, imperial Rome endured as the dominant political/military power for nearly 500 years afterward!;

2) In its Duration and Transformation:

- That fact leads us to consider another way in which the 4th kingdom might differ from the others – in its duration and transformation;

a) Duration:

- Regarding its duration – ch.2 tells us the kingdom of Heaven is inaugurated “*in the days of these kings*” but we’re not told of the 4th kingdom’s demise – until here (7:11);
- Historically Rome went on nearly 500 years more but during that time it was Christianized;
- Furthermore, when the political state of Rome fell (475 A.D.) the Church of Rome provided stability and continuity in what became known as the Holy Roman Empire;
- This entity eventually became Christian Europe;
- The culture of this society becoming what we call today “the West”;
- The point is – the 4th kingdom did not disappear; it has morphed into something different and may be in a sense dormant; but it will arise again in the very last days to become a power much more assertive and hostile to God’s people;

b) Transformation:

- Regarding this transformation – In ch.2 it is first a kingdom solely of iron; it changes into one of iron mixed w/ clay – which ch.2 tells us is a mixture of peoples (vv.41, 43);
- In ch.7 we see transformation in terms of the leadership – from a federation of 10 kings to a dictatorship (?) of one;
- What many are looking at is the United States of Europe – the EU;
- However, many object NOTING the EU is composed of 27 member nations, **BUT** those nations are represented by an EU parliament composed of 8 political groups: 1) the European People’s Party; 2) the Socialist Group of the EU; 3) the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; 4) the Union for Europe of the Nations Group; 5) the Group of the Greens / European Free Alliance; 6) the Confederal Group of the United European United Left – Nordic Green Left; 7) Independence Democracy Group; 8) the Identity, Tradition, and Sovereignty Group;
- This #8 is significant in light of 7:7b-8;
- Interestingly, the EU just celebrated its 50th anniversary – the treaty which created the EU was called “the Treaty of Rome”;
- It may be the EU or it may be a broader coalition including those states who are economically and politically united under those values of the Western world – IOW, capitalist democracies (including nations as diverse as Japan and the USA) which will, under some circumstances, become united under a world dictatorship;

3) In its Demise:

- The one way ch.7 does seem to indicate a difference between the fourth beast and the others is in vv.11b-12, READ;
- Ch.7 portrays the demise of the 4th empire by the hand of God – this is said to be in contrast to the former beasts who “*were allowed to live for a period of time*” (which seems contrary to what has been said of them in ch.2...);
- But in v.27 we READ, “*Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.*”
- IOW, the former beasts were allowed to live in the sense that the sovereignty, power, and greatness of the kingdoms of men did not pass into the hands of God’s saints – the time of Man was not yet over until now at the end of the 4th empire;