

***The Long War Against God: Introduction to Daniel -
Daniel's Prophetic Revelations Regarding Messiah - Part 3***

Some Key Verses:

[READ] Dan. 7:1-8

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.

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.

Dan. 7:13-14

13 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.

14 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.

Review:

- *Last time, as we continued our studies in “The Long War Against God” we continued to examine the prophecies the Lord God gave through Daniel. In chapter 2 we have seen how through a dream given to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and through Daniel’s interpretation of that dream, the great Babylonian kingdom would soon come to an end, all in God’s timing.*
- *Some time later, while king Belshazzar was king in Babylon, Daniel received himself a vision from the Lord God. This one parallels as we saw the one that had gone before, but with even more details provided in this vision than had been given in the dream of the former king.*
- *So Chapter 2 of Daniel contains an “outline” for the later chapters. Chapter 7 provides some details that we will look into today even more carefully than before. In this chapter Daniel the prophet God reveals the “interpretation” of that vision. We provided an outline of several different approaches to Biblical interpretation and I will summarize them again today, since our focus today will be on Biblical interpretation of these prophetic revelations found in the book of Daniel.*
- *There are, as I said in our last meeting, several approaches to the interpretation of Biblical prophecy. The real issue here is to what degree the prophetic scripture is to be interpreted literally.*
 - *Three Majority views defined: (From <http://www.end-times-prophecy.org>):*
 - *PRETERISM (non-literal) - “This is the belief that the prophets wrote for the most part regarding a very short period of history, describing events that would end by AD 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem. People who hold to this view believe John is describing the challenges of the early church in overcoming the Antichrist power of pagan Rome and the influence of Judaism.” [my paraphrase]*
 - *HISTORICISM (non-literal) - “This is the belief that the prophets were writing future history as it would unfold from their day to the end of time, detailing the events of the church*

and major world powers all the way through to the second coming of Christ. Interestingly, this is the view that most of the great Protestant reformers used in their teachings.” [my paraphrase]

- *FUTURISM (predominantly literal) - “This is the belief that prophecy is primarily about events that have yet to occur, even in our day. Including the future rise of the Antichrist. . . Preterism also does the same job and was invented for the same reason.” [my paraphrase]*

- *Only the “futurist” view allows for a very literal interpretation of prophecy and therefore the fulfillment literally of Israel’s promises. It should be crystal clear that promises made to Israel must have had a literal meaning in many cases (as so many were fulfilled literally), and the promises not yet fulfilled must therefore also be kept literally or the word of God has no meaning for those to whom it was and is written. Any other view of God’s promises makes God a liar and his word cannot really be understood and therefore cannot be trusted.*

- *Additionally, the dispensational understanding of the scriptures requires us to take the futurist view of Biblical prophecy, since God’s entire program for Israel as a nation (namely, the Tribulation and the Kingdom) still remains to be fulfilled. Furthermore, that program is not being fulfilled now. The implications of this for Israel are profound indeed.*

- *No, before we proceed, there is also, in addition to the principle of interpreting prophecy literally if at all possible, an additional helpful principle: The Principle of Near and Far (or Partial and Complete):*
 - *This helpful principle allows for a “partial” fulfillment that by*

necessity is somewhat less than fully “literal” in that it indicates a less than complete fulfillment. A good example of this is in Isaiah 61:

- **Isa 61:2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;**
 - **The Lord quoted the first part of this verse from Isaiah (Lk. 4:19) as that part was fulfilled, but the later part he did not quote since that would have to wait for 2000 years or more for its fulfillment.**
- **Partial fulfillments of prophecies that will eventually be completely fulfilled are very common in scripture, especially in the New Testament. A realization of this would help to resolve some of the issues that the proponents of the Preterist and the Historicist views take as serious objections to the Futurist view.**

[Your comments]

Transition:

- **Again, as we said last time, our approach to prophetic interpretation is a very important subject indeed. For it makes all the difference to believers that prophecy (or promises!) be taken as meaningful, that is, as literal statements of truth, since we are enjoined most seriously to take God at his word. Beginning with the gospel, that has been true for us all. We took God at his word regarding the truth of the gospel and that made all the difference (as we have believed).**
- **As we continue here today, I should add that the “common” interpretation of the the first three beasts is this (preterist, historicist, and futurist all mostly agree here): These beasts represent the successive ancient kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. But regarding the fourth beast in the vision and its interpretation, the other non-literal approaches are in total disagreement with the literal, futurist view. We shall see that in our future studies.**

I. The Visions Interpreted: The First Beast - the Lion:

- *2: 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou [art] this head of gold.*

- *7:4 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.*
 - *“Lion”:*
 - *“Eagle’s wings”:*
 - *“A man’s heart”*

- *There is little doubt as to the proper interpretation here. Not only does chapter 2 and verse 38 identify Nebuchadnezzar with the “head of gold” from the king’s dream, the rest of the description in chapter 7 fits perfectly with the historical king. It is clear therefore that the first beast in Daniel’s dream is Nebuchadnezzar himself although in a larger sense, as king of the Babylonian empire, the downfall of the king foretold here speaks to the downfall of the kingdom as well (meaning those that would follow Nebuchadnezzar such as Belshazzar). This king and his kingdom had been set up by the Almighty God and they were enabled by his power to rule so absolutely in the earth -- and equally quickly would they fall - in God’s timing to be sure. The king had already fallen, by the time this prophecy was given to Daniel (“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon”, Dan. 7:1), and was either still in the fields living as an animal (a lion?) or was in co-regency with Belshazzar and in no way possessed of total dictatorial rule over his kingdom as has been true previously.*

[Your comments / questions?]

II. The Visions Interpreted: The Second Beast - The Bear

- *2:39a And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee,*

- *7:5 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.

- *"Like to a bear":*
- *"Raised up on one side": The Medes and the Persians will rule, but one (the Persian) would be far more powerful.*
- *"Three ribs": Compare this with "This image's head [was] of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass . . ." Dan. 2:32 There would be three components to this kingdom, the Persians, the Medes, and the Babylonians who had been conquered, but whose strength would continue in some measure.*

III. The Visions Interpreted: The Third Beast - the Leopard:

- *2:39b and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.*
- *7:6 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.*
 - *"Kingdom of brass": Powerful indeed, but not in comparison with iron as we shall see the fourth beast will possess.*
 - *"Like a leopard": one of the fastest animals on earth*
 - *"Four wings of a fowl": The kingdom would be swift in its conquest (as Alexander was). There is hardly any comparison in ancient history!*
 - *"Four heads": But, Alexander did not live long and when he unexpectedly died, his kingdom was split into four parts ruled by his four most powerful generals!*
- *In so many ways this language matches so perfectly with the Greek empire under Alexander and those subsequently ruling generals. In only 10 years Alexander conquered the entire scope of the Persian empire that stretched from northern Africa to Macedonia to Babylon and Persia. Ten years! But just as quickly ("four wings of a fowl") this was all lost as the kingdom divided into four parts when Alexander unexpectedly died in the year 323 B.C. while on a military campaign in Babylon. As he had no recognized heirs, "the strongest" of his generals and assistants fought to gain the*

ascendency and four secured it resulting in the kingdom splitting into four parts. This all took a period of 40 years.

- *In agreement with these historic realities, the interpretation of Daniel's dream / vision had predicted many decades before the unfolding of these historical events that the "leopard" king and kingdom would disappear quickly as it had come into being so rapidly. So what seemed like a difficult to understand and highly symbolic view of the future becomes eminently understandable. In chapter 8 of Daniel there is even more help in this regard:*
 - *[READ] Dan. 8:1-9*
 - 1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, [even unto] me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.*
 - 2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I [was] at Shushan [in] the palace, which [is] in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.*
 - 3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had [two] horns: and the [two] horns [were] high; but one [was] higher than the other, and the higher came up last.*
 - 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither [was there any] that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.*
 - 5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat [had] a notable horn between his eyes.*
 - 6 And he came to the ram that had [two] horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.*
 - 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.*
 - 8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four*

notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant [land].

[READ] Dan 8:20-22

20 The ram which thou sawest having [two] horns [are] the kings of Media and Persia.

21 And the rough goat [is] the king of Grecia: and the great horn that [is] between his eyes [is] the first king.

22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

[Your comments / questions?]

Conclusions / Exhortation:

- ***Throughout Daniel's adult life, the Times of the Gentiles were fully underway. Jerusalem had been destroyed along with the temple and the people of God were in exile. But God was at work. His working was sometimes very visible and often miraculous, but most of it was hidden. We should be at this point so very well aware of that as we continue our studies here in The Long War Against God.***
- ***The royal line concerning the Seed of the Woman still existed, of course. But it existed, as revealed much later in the New Testament, in the family and descendants of David's son Nathan. And it will be through that branch of David's family that the seed of the woman will eventually come forth according to Luke 3.***
- ***So the royal line all the way from Genesis was being preserved even during Israel's captivity in Babylon and in Persia. And now through Daniel's visions and the interpretations of dreams and visions that God gave to Daniel the future history of God's people AND THE NATIONS OF THIS WORLD are revealed. It should be clear that this is all for the encouragement of God's people Israel who will be set aside for most of those many centuries until God finally in his good timing sets up a new***

kingdom on this earth where Christ himself will reign. In this season of the year we often think of this future time, since this season is focused so much on those earthly promises given so long ago to God's people in the Old Testament. The many partial and complete fulfillments of those promises should only be an encouragement to us today also always in need of such encouragement. For the days in which we live a dark and foreboding indeed. But Christ our light has "lightened the Gentiles" and we are the living proof of that. Amen and amen.

- ***For me this is so encouraging? What about you who are living under the abundance of his unlimited grace? Has God and will God keep his promises toward his heavenly people?***