



Daniel

דניאל

Chapter 7

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE GENTILE KINGDOMS

From the beginning of chapter 2 through the end of chapter 7, Daniel has switched from Hebrew to write in the Gentile language of the day, Aramaic (also known as Chaldean). The Aramaic language uses the same letters as Hebrew, but in different order, just as Spanish or English use the same Roman letters differently. Why the change in language?

While most of Scripture deals with history through the lens of Israel (with the Jews and the nation of Israel as the “center point” of the story), these six chapters in Aramaic deal primarily with Gentile history. So it makes sense that Daniel would write them in the common Gentile language to make the distinction obvious.

This vision in chapter 7 is the same one given to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2, but with different idioms used. It is appropriate that Daniel chose to start and end the use of Aramaic with the account of these visions, since they represent the same history.

What makes this chapter interesting is that while Nebuchadnezzar’s vision was given using man’s view of these kingdoms, Daniel was shown God’s view. In Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, a man of precious metal was seen, a story of impressive wealth and superiority. His vision was about man’s push for power and riches, ultimately overcome by Christ. Daniel’s view of the same history shows these kingdoms from God’s point of view, as a series of voracious beasts causing pain and turmoil in their rebellion against God. They are diverse, not unified. They are ugly and disturbing. Rather than precious metals or accomplishment there is only destruction.

DANIEL 7:1-2

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions while he lay upon his bed. He wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

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

- This vision was given to Daniel in the first year of the co-regency of Belshazzar. We don’t know exactly when Nabonidus began to share the kingdom with his son. It was probably about 3 or 4 years after Nabonidus became king. So when Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall the night Belshazzar is killed, he would have already had the perspective of this vision in his mind.



Chapter 7

- The Great Sea was a common term for the Mediterranean Sea, but is used in several places of the Bible to describe the “sea” of humanity in its Gentile sense. For other references, see Isaiah 8:7-8; 17:12-13; 27:1; 57:20; Jeremiah 6:23; 46:7-9; 47:2; Revelation 13:1; 17:1, 15.
- The “four winds of heaven” is also a common term in Scripture. We see it used to describe spiritual forces, both good and evil. The term is used 90 times in the Old Testament, 30 times in the New.

DANIEL 7:3-4

Four great beasts, each different from one another, came up from the sea.

The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. As I looked, its wings were torn off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon its feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.

- From God’s perspective, the empires of man are not pleasant or precious but represent different forms of rebellion against God. No wonder He shows them to Daniel as wild beasts.
- The first beast was “something like” a regal lion, the king of beasts, with wings of an eagle, the king of birds. It wasn’t actually a lion but that was the closest idiom Daniel could find to describe what he saw. Although a lion with eagle’s wings was the symbol of the Babylonian empire, we shouldn’t make the mistake of assuming God was using the commonly known human symbolism for this empire. In any case it clearly represents the Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar. Note the reference to the “heart of a man” given to it, apparently representing Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion as described in Daniel 4. At that point he was no longer a beast in the spiritual sense but a human being under the authority of God.

DANIEL 7:5

And before me was a second beast, like a bear, and it raised itself up on one side, and it had three ribs between its teeth. It was told, “Arise, devour much flesh.”

- The second beast is like a powerful bear. This was the Medo-Persian empire that would follow the Babylonian empire. Whenever a prophet says “like” it means this was not exactly what he saw, but that he is finding a common analogy he can use to describe what he saw as well as possible. In this case, he didn’t see a bear, but it was the closest idiom he could find to the beast he saw.



Chapter 7

- Scholars are divided on the meaning of the three ribs. They may represent the unsuccessful alliance of the Urartians, Mannans and Scythians who tried to stop the Persians, but they are much more likely to represent Lydia, Babylon and Egypt which were the three major conquests of the Persian empire.
- The Persians under Xerxes would later boast an enormous army numbering 2 million men. During a period known as the “Persian wars” they waged brutal military conquests, committing many atrocities, especially against the Greeks.
- Daniel repeatedly says that the empires seen in his vision look “like” certain wild beasts. The use of metaphors is common in prophecy. The prophets didn’t actually see these exact animals but tried to find examples in life that their readers would be familiar with. The apostle John does the same thing in the book of Revelation, when he describes “something like a burning mountain was thrown into the sea.” He didn’t see a mountain but it was the closest thing he could find to describe what he saw. Likewise, Daniel uses wild beasts but can find no suitable idiom for the fourth beast.

DANIEL 7:6

After this I saw another beast, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings. The beast also had four heads, and authority to rule was given to it.

- The third beast was like a leopard, a fast-moving, agile cat. Under the leadership of young Alexander the Great, the Greeks swept from the west into the east and south, decimating the massive military might of the Persians and Egyptians all the way to India. In just 11 years after the battle of Marathon, Alexander conquered the known world. He was said to have fallen on his bed in tears at the age of 29 because there were no more empires left to conquer.
- Alexander had four key generals. After he died at the age of 33, they fought over the empire, killing both his sons. After 22 years of power struggles divided it up into four parts:
 - Cassander took over Greece and Macedonia
 - Lysimachus took Thrace and Bithynia (modern-day Turkey)
 - Seleucus took Syria, Babylonia, Persia and all the way east to India
 - Ptolemy took Egypt, Palestine and Arabia.These were the four wings and four heads of that empire. The struggles for domination between Seleucus and Ptolemy and their descendents fills Daniel chapter 11 in the most incredible detail.



Chapter 7

DANIEL 7:7

After this I saw in the night visions a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and very strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke its victims in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

- The fourth beast is so terrible it leaves Daniel without adequate idioms to describe it.
- Note that it has iron teeth, like the iron of the vision given to Nebuchadnezzar.
- Rome's style was very different from that of the prior empires. While all of them were brutal in military terms, the prior empires respected the cultures and assets of the nations they conquered. They were generally very respectful of the people's religious practices and capabilities. Rome, on the other hand, crushed everything it took, trampling the history, culture, people and religions into oblivion in an attempt to enforce the Roman might on these conquered peoples.
- We tend to think of the Roman empire as having come and gone. After all, nobody wears togas anymore or uses swords or chariots in battle. This is the human version of history. From God's point of view, the Roman empire has never gone away. It was never actually conquered by any other empire but collapsed politically and militarily from within. The Roman Catholic church and many of the nations that made up the Roman empire continued its religious practices to this day. The political system developed by Rome is still in use in most of the western world. In the eyes of God, we are still living in this empire. The last Roman ruler wasn't actually killed until 1453 at the fall of Constantinople! The rest of Daniel's vision describes a future state of a revived form of this Roman empire.
- Rome began with the occupation of Sicily in 241BC. Spain was conquered, then Carthage at the battle of Zama in North Africa, 202BC. The Mediterranean became a Roman lake by the beginning of the Second Century. They subjugated areas north of Italy then moved east to conquer Macedonia, Greece and Asia Minor (the name given by that time to the area we now call Turkey). Pompey swept into Jerusalem in 63BC after destroying what was left of the Seleucid Empire in Syria. The empire eventually controlled Britain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany west of the Rhine. After peaking in AD117, it began to decline slowly. Rome left Britain in 407 and the city was sacked by the Visigoths in 410.



Chapter 7

DANIEL 7:8

As I thought about the horns, there came up among them another little horn, before whom three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. In this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking boastfully.

- The “boastful mouth” is one of the primary descriptions applied to the coming world leader. He is described in several places as uprooting three of 10 future rulers of the empire that was Rome. Note that this is another horn, not one of the ten.
- For other references to the coming 10 kingdoms, see Daniel 2:31-35; 40-45; 7:19-24; Revelation 13:1-2; 17:3,7,12-18
- Daniel uses the term “uprooted” to describe how the coming world leader will remove three kings or rulers from power to take over their nations. The same word is used again in chapter 12. The term “uprooted” represents a gradual process, like the way we might gently pry a weed out of the ground to ensure that we get all the roots. It isn’t a rapid, sudden forceful event. This implies a political process rather than a military one, and fits with the description of the Antichrist as a man of peace in the eyes of the world.

DANIEL 7:9

As I looked thrones were set up, and the Ancient of days sat down, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and its wheels like burning fire.

- There are other places where Jesus Christ and God the Father are described in similar terms. See Revelation 4 and 5. In this particular case it refers to God the Father.
- The “blazing” wheels of the throne of God are also described by Ezekiel. It’s hard to fully understand their appearance.
- Daniel sees many thrones set up, but only the Ancient of Days is seated at this point. Later in Revelation we see these thrones occupied by Jesus and the 24 elders, which appear to be a reference to the raptured church. Besides Jesus Christ and Melchizedek, only we (the church) are described as being both kings and priests. In Revelation 5 the 24 elders refer to *their* salvation (see the KJV or NKJV translations for clarity on this issue, as Westcott/Hort used manuscripts with different wording). The church is hidden in the Old Testament according to Matthew 13:34,35 and Ephesians 3:5,9 so it wasn’t revealed to Daniel.



Chapter 7

DANIEL 7:10

A fiery stream flowed from before him. Millions ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court of judgement was set, and the books were opened.

- Fire is a common metaphor for judgement.
- Note the reference to more than one book. We know of the “Lamb’s Book of Life” in which are recorded the names of those who follows Christ, but there are several others mentioned in the Bible:

The Book of Evil Deeds is mentioned in Isaiah 65:6

The Book of Remembrance is mentioned in Malachi 3:16

There is an unnamed book mentioned in Exodus 32:32,33, and the Book of Truth later in Daniel.

DANIEL 7:11-12

I continued to watch because of the voice of the boastful words which the horn spoke. As I looked the beast was slain and his body destroyed and thrown into the burning flame.

The rest of the beasts had their authority taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

- The other beasts, representing the former kingdoms, continue to survive in some form. Note that virtually all of the nations making up those ancient empires have been revived in recent decades:

Greece was absorbed by Rome in 146BC, but re-emerged as a nation (though not an empire) in 1830

Lysimachus’ kingdom was taken by Rome in 133BC, yet Medea re-emerged as Turkey in 1924

Seleucus’ kingdom—Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Cyprus, Babylonia (Iraq), Persia (Iran), Afghanistan and Pakistan—were absorbed by Rome in 64BC but these nations have emerged again. Afghanistan in 1921; Iran 1925; Lebanon 1930; Jordan 1946; Pakistan 1947; Israel 1948

Ptolemy’s Egypt was taken by Rome in 31BC, yet re-emerged as a nation in 1922

Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonia re-emerged as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq with even the same symbolism!



Chapter 7

DANIEL 7:13-14

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

And there was given to him authority to rule 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 is one that will never be destroyed.

- Jesus Christ receives the Father's gift as described in Psalm 2:6-9. He will rule over all nations as described in Psalm 72:11; Revelation 19:15-16. Daniel was first to use the term "son of man" in reference to the coming Messiah.
- Note the reference to "coming with the clouds of Heaven." See Matthew 17:5; 24:30; 26:64; Mark 14:61,62; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:9,11; 2Thessalonians 2:6-10; Revelation 19, 20:1-4
- Daniel is stunned by what he has seen. But he isn't frozen in fear. He takes the initiative and asks one of the angels there in the vision to please help him understand the terrible and glorious things that have been shown to him.

DANIEL 7:15-19

¹⁵ I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

¹⁶ I came near one of those that stood by, and asked him to explain all this. So he told me the interpretation of the things I had seen.

¹⁷ "The four great beasts are four kingdoms which shall arise out of the earth.

¹⁸ But the saints of the most High will receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever -- yes, for ever and ever.'

¹⁹ Then I asked about the fourth beast, which was so different from all the others and exceedingly dreadful, with its iron teeth and claws of brass; which devoured, crushed its victims, and trampled the residue with his feet;

- Daniel was deeply troubled by the fourth beast. He had already been told that it was a metaphor for an empire, but he was having difficulty getting his head around the reason why any kingdom would be



Chapter 7

so destructive. Until the Romans came along (which wouldn't happen for more than 200 years), kings became powerful by using the resources that were already established. Daniel could not understand a strategy so dramatically different.

DANIEL 7:20-22

I also wanted to know about the ten horns on his head, and of the other horn that came up, and before whom three fell -- this horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very boastful things and whose look was more stern than the others.

I watched, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given in favor of the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

- The horn that represents the coming world leader is waging war against the saints and appears to be winning until interrupted by the return of the Messiah. The Bible tells us in Zechariah 13:8,9 that two-thirds of believers (possibly all Jewish) will fall. Zechariah 14:1-2 predicted that Jerusalem will fall. Some scholars say that this reference to “overcoming” the saints is evidence that this happens after the rapture of the church, since Jesus promised that the gates of Hell would not “overcome” the church. To study this in more detail, see Matthew 16:18 ; Revelation 2, 3.
- The Roman empire does not end in God's sight until after the great and glorious “Day of the Lord” when Jesus returns and judges all mankind.

DANIEL 7:23-26

²³ He answered, “The fourth beast will be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and will trample it down and crush it.

²⁴ And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that will arise. After them another will rise, and he will be different from the earlier ones, and he will subdue three kings.

²⁵ And he will speak boastful words against the most High, and will oppress the saints of the most High, and try to change times and laws. The saints will be given into his hand for a time, times and the dividing of time.



Chapter 7

²⁶ But the court of judgment will sit, and his authority will be taken away from him, and he will be destroyed forever.

- The Great Tribulation will last three and a half years. There are many references to this time period in Scripture to ensure that we don't allegorize it or try to modify its meaning. It's a literal time period: Daniel 12:7 (3-1/2 years); Revelation 11:2; 13:5 (42 months); Revelation 11:3 (1260 days); Daniel 9:27 (half a "week of years"). Keep in mind that throughout the Bible -- from Genesis to Revelation -- God uses 360-day years: 12 months of 30 days each.

DANIEL 7:27

And the kingdom and authority, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, will be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey him.

- The everlasting kingdom is mentioned in too many places to bother listing here. For a few of them, see Deuteronomy 28:1-44; Isaiah 65:17-25; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:6

DANIEL 7:28

"This is the end of the matter." As for me Daniel, my visions troubled me deeply, and my face became pale. But I kept the matter in my heart.

- The first sentence of verse 28 is actually the last statement by the angel begun in verse 23. It really should have been attached to the end of verse 27. Verse numbers were applied to Scripture centuries later. The angel is saying that after Jesus is set on the throne, it ends the entire story of human history as we are meant to know it in the present age.
- Here Daniel changes from the common Gentile language of Aramaic back to Hebrew. The rest of the book views events specifically through the lens of Israel, with the Jews as the center point of the story.