

DANIEL'S VISION OF FOUR BEASTS (KINGDOMS) AND GOD'S KINGDOM: A PICTURE OF THE FINAL KINGDOM TO GOVERN THE EARTH (CHRIST'S KINGDOM) DANIEL 07:01–14

Introduction

The History and Destiny of the Nations finally comes to a close in the great book of Daniel. This is the period of history that Christ Himself called *The Times of the Gentiles* (Luke 21:24). Chapter seven is the most important chapter dealing with end time prophecy in the Old Testament. In this chapter, the very course of future events was laid out for Daniel and his generation. Some of the events have been dramatically fulfilled in the rise and fall of the world's empires, such as the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman Empires. But several of the major events predicted are yet to be fulfilled. These events are...

- the rise of the antichrist and the ten-nation coalition that will strongly support his worldwide rule
- the fiery judgment of God that will fall upon the antichrist and all the wicked of this earth
- the return of Christ, the very Son of Man Himself, to establish God's kingdom on earth

These are the gripping subjects of this great chapter. This is, *Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts (Kingdoms) and God's Kingdom: A Picture of the Final Kingdom to Govern the Earth (Christ's Kingdom)*, Daniel 7:1-28.

- I. Daniel's vision of future events: A picture of Christ's victory over the kingdoms of this world (vv. 1-14).
- II. Daniel's vision interpreted: The assurance that the saints will receive an eternal inheritance (vv. 15-28).

Daniel 07:01–14 Daniel's Vision of Future Events: A Picture of Christ's Victory Over the Kingdoms of This World

The LORD gave Daniel a very special vision of world history. Daniel saw four cruel empires rushing across the surface of the earth, each following and conquering its predecessor. Then a fifth kingdom — the kingdom of God Himself — suddenly appeared and completely destroyed all the evil kingdoms of this world. Since these kingdoms parallel the empires of chapter two, the two chapters should be studied together (see *Antichrist* Dan 7:1-28). Note the span of history the LORD revealed to Daniel:

1. Daniel's vision occurred in the first year of King Belshazzar's reign (v. 1). Remember that Belshazzar was ruling as coregent with his father Nabonidus from approximately 553-539 B.C. (see *Introduction*, Dan 5:1-31). Thus this vision was given to Daniel around 553 B.C., before the events of chapters five and six. Chapter five dealt with the supernatural *handwriting on the wall*, which predicted Belshazzar's death and the fall of the Babylonian Empire that very night. Chapter six detailed Daniel's experience in the lions' den and God's miraculous deliverance of him. Daniel's reason for presenting these events in this order was probably to group his own personal visions together (chapters 7; 8; 9:20-27; 10:1-12:5). Assuming Daniel was taken captive in 605 B.C. when he was about 15 or 16 years old, he would have been about 67 or 68 years old when he received this vision (see *Introduction*, Dan 1:1-21; also see notes, Dan 1:1-7). No doubt realizing its critical importance, Daniel recorded the vision in great detail.
2. In his vision, Daniel saw the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea (v. 2). In the present context, the turbulent sea represents the mass of evil people and nations or kingdoms, of the world, (vv. 3, 17; Rev 13:1; 17:15. Also see Isa 17:12-13; 57:20; 60:5; Eze 26:3.) Other Scriptures tell us that angels control the four winds and that one day they will set the winds loose to execute God's judgment on earth (Rev 7:1; 9:14-15). Thus Daniel's vision was of God's judgment churning up the great sea of corrupt humanity and the corrupt nations of the world. Daniel also saw in his vision the sea of humanity give rise to four fearsome beasts or empires (v. 3).
3. The first beast was like a lion with eagle's wings (v. 4). This beast represented the Babylonian empire, as he did the head of gold of the huge statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:37-38). In Daniel's vision the lion was injured, for its wings were torn off. This is a clear symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity and loss of power due to his sinful pride and refusal to acknowledge the LORD as sovereign God of the universe. However, Daniel saw the lion lifted from the ground and standing upright like a man, and he saw the heart of a man given to it. This was a picture of Nebuchadnezzar being healed and restored to the throne and given a human, more compassionate heart (see outline and notes, Dan 4:1-37, esp. vv. 10-17, 28-36). But despite Nebuchadnezzar's restoration to the throne and his great rule over Babylon, the empire eventually fell.
4. The second beast looked like a bear. Like the silver chest and arms of the great statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:32), this bear represented the Medo-Persia empire that conquered Babylon (v. 5). Daniel saw three notable features:
 - => The bear was ferocious and raised up on one side, suggesting that the empire was an alliance of two major powers with one dominating the other. The Persians were far more powerful than the Medes.
 - => The bear was devouring three ribs or kingdoms, which represented the three major conquests of the Persian Empire: Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylon (539 B.C.), and Egypt (525 B.C.).

=> The bear was encouraged to devour many people, which probably refers to the fact that God allowed the Persians to conquer more territory than any other empire up until that time.

5. The third beast that arose out of the sea of humanity looked like a leopard. But it was a strange-looking leopard in that it had four wings and four heads (v. 6). From the description it is clear that the leopard represented Greece, as did the bronze belly and thighs of the great statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:32). The four wings symbolized the swift conquest of nations by Alexander the Great and the rapid expansion of the Grecian Empire that he achieved. Within a period of just ten years, Alexander conquered the entire empire of Medo-Persia. The four heads of the leopard symbolized the division of Alexander's empire into four kingdoms after his death (323 B.C.). Alexander had no heir to succeed him; consequently, there was an internal struggle among his army commanders to lay claim to as much territory as possible. Eventually the four major commanders divided the empire as follows:

=> Greece and Macedonia were controlled by Antipater and Cassander Tharce and Asia Minor were controlled by Lysimachus

=> Syria, Babylon and much of the Middle East were controlled by Seleucus I Nicator

=> Egypt and Palestine were controlled by Ptolemy I Soter

It should also be noted that the four prominent divisions of the Grecian Empire are clearly shown in the next chapter (8:8, 21-22).

6. The fourth beast did not look like any creature Daniel had ever seen. He could only describe it as terrifying and powerful, far more ferocious than the other beasts or empires. This dreadful beast represented the Roman Empire (v. 7). Daniel saw three significant features about this beast. First, the beast had huge iron teeth that were used to crush its victims. The idea is that Rome would be far more cruel and vicious in its treatment of the victims it conquered.

Second, the beast would trample underfoot many more nations than any empire that had preceded it. As Roman armies swept across the world, the military would subdue and exploit the nations more than any of the other empires.

Third, the beast had ten horns, which symbolize a federation of nations in the last days of human history. Throughout Scripture, *horns* often symbolize kings, rulers, kingdoms or royal authority (1 Sam 2:10; Psa132:17; Zec 1:18; Rev 13:1; 17:2). Also, the angel who later explained the vision to Daniel definitely identified the horns as kingdoms by (vv. 24-26). Note that the horns sit upon the head of the fourth beast. This suggests two facts:

=> the horns or confederation of states are a mere extension of the beast (the Roman Empire)

=> the horns are used to gore its victims as it conquers the nations of the world

Also keep in mind that these horns correspond to the legs and ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. (See note, Dan 2:31-49, esp. point 2, d, vv. 40-43).

7. Suddenly, Daniel saw a *little horn* arise from among the ten horns of the fourth beast (the Roman Empire) (v. 8). The ten horns had actually captivated Daniel's attention, for he says that he was staring and thinking about them when the *little horn* suddenly appeared among them. He stressed that, in the beginning, the *little horn* was very small but it eventually became so dominant that it either destroyed or subjected the other horns. As is seen later in this chapter as well as in other Scriptures, the *little horn* represented the last world ruler, the antichrist (7:24-25; 9:27; 11:36-37; 2 Th 2:3-12; Rev 13:1-10). Daniel described three significant features about the *little horn*.
 - a. First, the *little horn* uprooted three horns, which means that the antichrist will conquer three of the nations that belong to the federation of ten nations (horns). The word *uprooted* suggests that the antichrist will forcefully, violently overthrow these nations. As verse twenty says, he became far more stout, imposing and greater than the other ten horns or federation of nations. Therefore he was able to conquer three of them and to subdue the others, subjecting them under his authority.
 - b. Second, the *little horn* had the piercing eyes of a man, eyes that could scan the horizon, observe, gain knowledge, and become more and more intelligent (Zec 4:10; Rev 5:6).
 - c. Third, the *little horn* spoke boastfully against the Most High God, which suggests that he was arrogant and self-exalting (v. 25; 2 Th 2:3, 8). He will fill the world with his boasting, cursing and blasphemy, exalting himself above every god on earth and speaking unheard of things against the LORD Himself (v. 25; 11:36; 2 Th 2:4; Rev 13:5-6).

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, the *little horn* is clearly identified as the antichrist. In the last days of human history, this ruthless ruler will appear as *that man of sin or the man of lawlessness* or the *son of perdition*. He will oppose and exalt himself above everything that is called God or that is worshipped (2 Th 2:3-4). As has just been discussed above, he will be extremely intelligent and rule over a coalition of ten nations. Other Scriptures describe the antichrist in detail (7:24-25; 9:27; 11:36-45; 2 Th 2:1-12; Rev 13:1-10. Also see outline and notes of the period known as *The Tribulation*, Mat 24:1-14; Mark 13:1-13; Rev 6:1-19:21.)

8. Daniel saw an awesome sight: the *Ancient of Days* took His seat upon the throne of judgment (vv. 9-12). The Ancient of Days is the eternal God who has no beginning or ending and who oversees all the days from eternity past through the eternal future. Daniel described four astounding features:
 - a. Daniel saw *thrones* (plural) that had been *set in place*, not *cast down* as the King James Version translates. Other Scriptures identify these thrones as the thrones upon which believers will sit (see outline and notes, Rev 4:1-5:14; 20:4). One of the great promises of God to believers is that they will be exalted as kings. They will rule and

reign with Christ and oversee the universe in His behalf (see outline and note, Luke 22:28-30; 1 Cor 6:2-3; Rev 3:21-22).

- b. Daniel saw the *eternal God* take His seat upon the throne of judgment (vv. 9b-10a). His clothing was as white as snow and His hair was as pure as wool. Both of these symbolize the LORD's purity, His holiness and righteousness. God's throne and its wheels were ablaze with flaming fire, which symbolizes God's justice to be executed at the Great White Throne Judgment of God (see outline and notes, Rev 20:11-15). Flowing out from God's holy presence was a river of fire or lava, a symbol of His holy wrath to be poured out upon all the wicked of the earth, in particular upon the *little horn* or *the beast* (antichrist) (see outline and notes, Rev 20:9-10).
- c. Daniel saw and described the courtroom scene where the judgment is to take place (v. 10b). Millions of angels ministered to the *eternal God* and hundreds of millions — a countless number — stood before the LORD. Then Daniel saw the court convene, and the books opened. The fact that a complete set of books was opened indicates that this is to be the final judgment not only of the antichrist but also of all the wicked and the unbelievers of the world. As Daniel indicates, the judgment of the antichrist will take place immediately prior to the coming of Christ and the establishment of His eternal kingdom on earth (vv. 13-14. Also see outline and notes, Rev 20:7-10). Other Scriptures tell us that the Great White Throne Judgment is the judgment that will follow the Millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. In that day, the LORD will open the complete set of books in which all the deeds of people have been recorded, and all unbelievers will face the perfect justice of God (see outline and notes, Rev 20:11-15, esp. 20:12. Also see Exo 32:32-33; Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27; 22:19.)
- d. Daniel saw and described the judgment of the antichrist (*little horn*) and all who followed his deceptive ways (vv. 11-12). Up until the very last moment the little horn spewed out his boastful, defiant blasphemy against the LORD. Suddenly, the LORD pronounced judgment upon him and snatched his life away (see outline and note, 2 Th 2:8). His body was thrown into the blazing fire. Revelation says that he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and will be tormented day and night throughout all eternity (see outline and note, Rev 20:9-10, esp. v. 10). The other beasts (or world powers) that have ruled on earth down through the centuries — both their wicked rulers and citizens — will also face the judgment of God. Their authority to rule and live upon earth will be stripped away. But they will be allowed to live for a period of time. God will preserve them someplace in the spiritual world or dimension of being until the day of final judgment, which is known as the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15). This is clearly indicated by Peter the apostle:

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

9. The Son of Man and His eternal kingdom will be the fifth and final kingdom to be established upon earth (vv. 13-14). God's kingdom will come to earth when Christ returns to rule in the Millennium and throughout eternity.

Daniel described three significant features about the Son of Man.

- a. The Son of Man entered the throne room of God in the magnificent clouds of heaven (v. 13). The term "Son of Man" means that Jesus Christ is not only what an ordinary man is, a son of man, but also what every man should be, the Son of Man Himself. He is the *Ideal Man*, the *Representative Man*, the *Perfect Man*, the *Pattern*, the *Embodiment of everything a man ought to be*. Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of a man. Everything God wants a man to be is seen perfectly in Jesus Christ (see *The Son of Man*, Mat 8:20). When Daniel said that he saw a person who looked like a *Son of Man*, he meant that he was far more than merely a man in human form. He was a divine being, the very embodiment of the only living and true God. When Daniel said he saw this person "coming with the clouds of heaven," he was indicating that this person was coming "out of" heaven to earth. He was in heaven with *the Ancient of Days*, the eternal God, but he was now leaving His presence to come to earth. This strongly points toward the Son of Man being both divine and human, the very embodiment of God Himself in human flesh.

To a believer, Jesus Christ is beyond question the *Son of Man*. In the Gospels alone he is called the Son of Man over 80 times. The fact that he will return in the "clouds of heaven" is also continually referred to both by Christ and others.

Mat 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

Mat 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory."

Mat 26:64 Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Mark 13:26 "At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."

Mark 14:62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Rev 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

- b. The Son of Man was given eternal dominion over all the nations of the earth and was worshipped by all peoples and languages (v. 14a). In a dramatic scene, Daniel

saw the Son of Man approach the Ancient of Days to receive the *reward* of eternal dominion over all the peoples and nations of the world (vv. 13b-14a). This scene is described in detail in the book of *Revelation* (see outline and notes, Rev 5:1-4; 5:5-14). Christ is to receive the kingdoms of the world because of His atoning death on behalf of humanity. He and He alone has paid the price of redemption in order to set people free from the bondage of sin and death (Rom 3:23-24; Eph 1:7; Titus 2:13-14; Heb 9:12-14; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Rev 5:9; Isa 53:5-6). After His death on earth, Christ ascended into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, the Ancient of Days. There He will remain until He comes in the clouds of glory to establish God's kingdom on earth. That day is coming.

Mat 28:18 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

Acts 2:34-36 *For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make our enemies a footstool for your feet." "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."*

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Psa 2:8 *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.*

Psa 110:1 *The LORD says to my LORD: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."*

Isa 2:2-4 *In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more.*

Isa 9:6-7 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

Isa 11:1-10 *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD — and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear; their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.*

Ezek 34:23-24 *I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.*

- c. The Son of man will rule a kingdom that will never be destroyed (v. 14b). History has witnessed one bloody war after another and the cruel, devastating collapse of nation after nation. But war with all its devastation and death is coming to an end. When Christ returns to set up God's kingdom on earth, He will set the whole universe free from the bondage of sin and corruption. At last, peace and righteousness will fill the whole universe. And all beings in both heaven and earth will love, worship and serve the Son of Man forever.

Rom 8:18-27 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

1 Cor 2:9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

2 Cor 4:17-18 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Col 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

2 Tim 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

2 Pet 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Rev 22:3-5 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city [New Jerusalem], and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. g