Four Great Beasts, 7:1-8

I. NIV Daniel 7:1 ¶ In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

A. The Context of Chapter 7 is the 1st year of Belshazzar
B. In chapter 5 we studied the last night of his reign — Babylon fell
C. God communicated to him through a dream which he wrote down
D. Prophets tended to write down revelations, Isa 30:8; Jer 36:2; Hab 2:2

II. NIV Daniel 7:2 Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea.

A. Daniel begins by describing the setting — the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea (Mediterranean Sea)
B. Such imagery symbolized human rebellion against God, cf. Isa 17:12; 57:20

III. NIV Daniel 7:3 Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. — as the later descriptions indicate they will be bizarre

IV. NIV Daniel 7:4 "The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

A. Like the image in chapter 2, this vision begins in the present
1. The lion . . . [with] the wings of an eagle = Babylon
2. it stood on two feet like a man it becomes human like
3. the heart of a man was given to it./
B. The lion, king of beasts & the eagle, king of birds = Head of God in chapter 2
C. They are predators
D. Jeremiah compared Nebuchadnezzar
1. To a lion, 4:7; 49:19; 50:17,44
2. To an eagle, 49:22; Lam 4:19; cf. Hab 1:8; Ezek 17:3

E. Winged lions decorated the Processional Way

V. NIV Daniel 7:5 "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

A. The first beast was predatory — the lion and eagle are predators
B. This second beast is also predatory — it had three ribs in its mouth = Persia
C. These three ribs may be identified in different ways:

1. The may represent 3 early victories of the Persian Empire
   a. Lydia fell in 546 BC.
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b. Babylon in 539 BC

c. Egypt in 525 BC

2. The threefold direction of Cyrus' conquest

D. raised up on one of its sides = the double nature of the Empire — Medo-Persian

E. The phrase eat your fill = the consumption of the plunder it has already taken

F. It was to be a slowly developing empire rather than one with blazing speed

VI. NIV Daniel 7:6 "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

A. This 3rd beast is like a leopard with four heads and four wings = exceptionally fast speed, cf. Jer 5:6; Hos 3:7

B. This beast = Alexander the Great who conquered in the Persian Empire in an incredible speed

C. The four heads = the fourfold division of Alexander's Empire upon his death
1. Cassander ruled Greece and Macedonia
2. Lysimachus ruled over Thrace and Asia Minor
3. Seleucus over Syria and the Middle East
4. Ptolemy over Egypt

VII. NIV Daniel 7:7 "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

A. This beast is nondescript except for its terrifying and frightening destructive abilities

B. Its major difference from the others was that it had ten horns

C. Their power and terror are relativized:
   1. Each beast follows another — they are not eternal
   2. They are controlled by another power — God

VIII. NIV Daniel 7:8 "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that
spoke boastfully.

A. He had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully = making of decisions from personal/selfish perspective

B. According to 7:20, Daniel especially "wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up."

C. So do most people!

The Heavenly Court, 7:9-14

IX. NIV Daniel 7:9-10 "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. 10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

A. The Ancient of Days is obviously God pictured sitting in judgment
   1. His clothing was as white as snow = purity
   2. His hair of his head was white like wool =
   3. A river of fire = God's presence; such "theophonic fire" is often used in God’s appearances, Gen 15:17; Exod 3:1-3; 13:21-22; 14:24; 19:18; 40:38; Deut 4:11, 12, 15, 24, 33, 36; 5:4-5, 22-26; Ps 18:9.

B. Judgment is about to begin
   1. Evidence is produce
   2. The recorded deeds are read from books, Exod 32:32; Ps 56:8; 69:28; Isa 65:6; Mal 3:16; Luke 10:20; Rev 20:12
   3. This judgment however is not the final judgment as is often interpreted
   4. Rather it is in reference to the deeds of the four kingdoms and little horn
   5. Even so, the text indicates, "Regardless of the earthly powers that be . . . , God, 'the ancient of days,' is ever on his throne, and he rules in justice coupled with mercy" (Turner, 125).
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X. **NIV Daniel 7:11-12** "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. 12 (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

A. Daniel saw the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire

B. This indicates the destruction of Roman Empire as occurred when it tried to suppress God's kingdom, the church

XI. **NIV Daniel 7:13** "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

A. The vision changes

B. This one was like a son of man

1. Both his humanity and suprahuman character are displayed
2. Just as the beasts were "like" a lion, etc., he is only like a human being
3. This is a clear contrast with the previous beasts
   a. In Genesis 1 Man is given dominion over the beasts
   b. Man is in the image of God; the beasts are not

C. This person came with the clouds of heaven

1. Read closely.
2. Daniel did not see the Son of Man coming on the clouds from heaven to the earth to receive a kingdom
3. Instead he saw the Son of Man ascend on the clouds to the abode of heaven where dwells the Ancient of Days
4. In short, Daniel foresaw that the kingdom of God would be set up, or established during the days of the Roman Caesars, and established by the Son of Man
Jesus was raised and 40 days later "he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight., Acts 1:9"

This fits exactly with the son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven who approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

5. Jesus is reigning now over the only kingdom that will ever be:

XII. NIV Daniel 7:14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

A. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power = the total authority the son of man has

B. all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him = the universal nature of his kingdom

C. dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed = the eternal nature of his kingdom

The Interpretation, 7:15-28

XIII. NIV Daniel 7:15 "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.

A. This is something Daniel often repeated, 7:28; 8:27; 10:2,11,15,17.

B. Receiving visions and understanding of future events was demanding

XIV. NIV Daniel 7:16-18 I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever-- yes, for ever and ever.'

A. Daniel's question (v. 16) received a general reply (vv. 17-18)
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B. The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth — as noted above, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome

C. The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom are referred to in v. 27 as "the saints, the people of the most high," suggesting God's elect, Christians

XV. NIV Daniel 7:19-21 "Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws--the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell— the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them,

A. Much more information is given here regarding the 4th kingdom than in chapter 2
B. Consequently Daniel asks for specific details

1. The true meaning of the fourth beast
2. About the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up

XVI. NIV Daniel 7:22 until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. — whatever it was, the Ancient of Days pronounced judgment in favor of the Saints

XVII. NIV Daniel 7:23-24 "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.

A. Obviously these ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom refer somehow to the Roman Caesars.

B. The Roman Caesars just prior to and during the 1st century are:

1. Pompey, 106-48 BC — was not a Roman Emperor
2. Augustus, 27 BC-14 AD
3. Tiberius, AD 14-37
C. There are several different interpretations:\(^1\)

1. Ten kings, not the Roman emperors, reigned simultaneously and that there can only be a figurative fulfillment of this verse

2. Many identify Domitian as the little horn, but they cannot identify the three horns/kings that were put down by him

3. Premillennialists believe these prophecies can only be fulfilled in a millennial reign of Christ — they are yet to be fulfilled.

4. Vespasian was the little horn who put down the three horns/kings (Galba, Otho, Vitellius)

D. This last interpretation — Vespasian was the little horn who put down the three horns/kings (Galba, Otho, Vitellius) — is the one that fits most of the details, yet it has to make a case for Pompey being the 1st of the 10 horns

1. Short History of the Roman Empire

   a. 275 BC: Rome gained control of Italy

   b. 218 BC: Hannibal crossed the Alps; defeated the Roman armies and remained until 203 BC

   c. 201 BC: Roman conquers Carthage (Hannibal's capital); Carthage became a dependant ally of Rome

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\(^1\)The following discussion is excerpted from Rex A. Turner, *Daniel a Prophet of God* (Montgomery, AL; Southern Christian [now Amridge] University, 1993), 109-122.
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d. 133 BC: The king of Pergamum bequeathed his kingdom to the Roman people
e. 107-100 BC: Marcus creates a popular dictatorship; a conservative reaction occurs under Sulla
f. 100 BC: Following Sulla's death the republic is plunged into conflict among the various army generals
g. 63 BC: The 1st "triumvirate" was formed; consisted of Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus

2. Significance of this history?

a. Prior to 63 BC, Rome was not a world power
b. "The two iron legs of Daniel's prophecy [Chapter II] projected a long-standing division between the Roman senate on the one hand and the popular party on the other hand. In short, the government of Rome underwent a transition from a republican oligarchy to a military dictatorship, with Pompey first and Julius Caesar second, two very popular military generals, and each of whom possessed tremendous popular powers, and served as the catalysts for the transition of Rome from a republican oligarchy to a military dictatorship" (p. 110)

3. Pompey, though technically not an emperor, nevertheless has many qualities that allow consideration of him as the first of the ten horns (7:7,20,24).

a. 67 BC Pompey cleared the entire Mediterranean of pirates in 40 days!
b. 66 BC Pompey is name "Supreme Commander," and given unlimited powers for the prosecution of war against Mithridates and Tigranes, and given unlimited powers over Asia Minor
c. 65 BC Pompey, following the defeat of Mithridates, became master of Asia
d. Later in 65 BC Pompey compelled Tigranes to resign all claim to Asia Minor (Mesopotamia, Gordyene, Syria, and Cilicia).

e. Pompey then moved into Artaxata, 1000 miles farther than any Roman general had ever gone, ultimately wintering in Azerbaijan.

f. Upon his return to Asia Minor envoys were sent from remote nations to profess their submission

g. In 65-64 Pompey reduced the fortresses of Mithridates

h. In 64 BC Pompey became the 1st Roman general to visit the Red Sea

i. In 63 BC took a triumphal journey to Syria, where he exercised the rights of a sovereign by founding new cities, granting freedom for many, and settling disputes

j. Ambassadors were sent to him from Egypt

k. Ambassadors from Judea came asking for help in the civil war between queen Salome's sons (Hyrcanus and Aristobulas)

(1) Each appeared before Pompey, who delayed his decision

(2) Aristobulus became impatient and opened war against Hyrcanus and Pompey

(3) Jerusalem fell and with it nation independence

l. Pompey did the following to Jerusalem

(1) Appointed Hyrcanus as High Priest, depriving him of the title of king

(2) Stripped Judea territory conquered by the Maccabees

(3) Entered the temple, which was a horror to the Jews

4. The above indicates the following:
a. Prior to Pompey, Rome was not—in fact could not have been—in characterized as that fourth worldwide fearful beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth (v. 7).

b. In short, though technically not an emperor, Pompey exercised all powers that would allow him to fulfill the qualifications found in the prophecy of the ten kings.

5. Pompey as the 1st horn/king would allow Vespasian to be the little horn which three of the first horns were uprooted before it. (v. 8)

a. Prior to becoming emperor Vespasian was general in Egypt and Israel

(1) His forces forced the senate's hurried confirmation of him as emperor

(2) So a modest commander, aged 60, ascended the throne to become the greatest emperor that Rome had to that point.

b. Vespasian, in the destruction of Jerusalem, did something no one else had ever done, fulfilling the prophecies of Moses in Deuteronomy 28:

(1) Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem

(2) Quoting Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 Jesus said, "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. Then there will be "great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no
human being would be saved. But for “the sake of the elect those days will be cut short

(3) The Sadducees tended to cooperate with the Roman authorities, while the Pharisees did not

(4) The Essenes tended to withdraw from society altogether, while the Zealots were determined to throw off Roman rule

(5) In 66 several of these groups revolted against Roman rule

(6) Riots broke out on all sides, with Rome determined to put them down

(7) In 67 Nero appointed Vespasian commander of 50,000 soldiers who were to reconquer Judea

(8) Nero committed suicide the following year

(9) Vespasian's troops declared him emperor

(10) AD 69 Galba's troops had declared him emperor, and he was installed as such, but was immediately deposed

(11) AD 69 Otho's had declared him emperor, and he was installed by the Senate, but was deposed

(12) AD 69 Vitellius was declared emperor, but was defeated by Antonius Primus, who had joined with Vespasian's troops

(13) The Senate then declared Vespasian Emperor

(14) Upon hearing of Nero's death Vespasian had postponed his attack on Jerusalem.

(15) Upon his ascension to Emperor, he appointed his son Titus to put down Jerusalem

(16) In AD 70 Titus destroyed the city

c. Vespasian's participation in all of the above

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(1) A little horn . . . came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it (v. 7) — Vespasian put down Galba, Otho, and Vitellius

(2) He will subdue three kings (v. 24) — Vespasian put down Galba, Otho, and Vitellius

XVIII. NRS Daniel 7:25 He shall speak words against the Most High, shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law; and they shall be given into his power for a time, two times, and half a time.

A. Four traits of this little horn

1. Blasphemy — speak words against the Most High
2. Persecution — shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High — see below
3. Suppression of the times & introduction of a new morality — shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law

B. Vespasian did become emperor and through Titus prosecuted the war against Jerusalem, speaking against the Most High and wearing out the holy ones of the Most High (i.e., the Jews and later the Roman emperors did so to the Christians); cf. Josepheus' description

1. "Some of these were indeed, fighting men, . . . but the greater part of them were poor people, who were deterred from deserting, by the concern they were under for their own relations. . . . so they first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures before they died, and were crucified before the wall of the city. . . . So the soldiers, out of wrath and hatred they bore the jews, nailed those they caught. . . to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for crosses, and crosses wanting for bodies. . . . So Titus commanded that the hands of many of those that were caught should be cut off. . . ." Wars 5:11:1-2

2. "When Titus had therefore encompassed the city with his wall, and put garrisons into proper places, he went around the wall, at the first watch of the night, and observed how the guard was kept; the second watch he
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allotted to Alexander; the commanders of legions took the third watch. . . . So all hope of escaping from the Jews . . . Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine. . . . As for burying them, those that were sick themselves were not able to do it . . . . " Wars 5:7:23

3. "Yet did another plague seize . . . for there was found among the Syrian deserters a certain person who was caught gathering pieces of gold out of the excrements of the Jews's bellies; for the deserters used to swallow such pieces of gold . . . Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this; since in one night about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected . . . but it appeared that the love of money was too hard for all their dread of punishment, . . . and no passion is so venturesome as covetousness" Wars 5:8:4-5

a. Jesus had said concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, "How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!, " Matt 24:19

b. These times would be especially difficult for pregnant women

4. "And indeed the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench which was a hindrance to those that would make sallies out of the city, and fight the enemy" Wars 6:1:1.

C. All of the above was in fulfillment of Moses prophecy in Deuteronomy 28:49, 53-57 — If Israel disobeyed

1. 49 "The LORD will bring a nation from far away, from the end of the earth, to swoop down on you like an eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand,

2. 53-57 "in the desperate straits to which the enemy siege reduces you, you will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your own sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you. 54 Even the most refined and gentle of men among you will begrudge food to his own brother, to the wife whom he embraces, and to the last of his remaining children, 55 giving to none of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because nothing else remains to him, in the desperate straits to which the
enemy siege will reduce you in all your towns. She who is the most refined and gentle among you, so gentle and refined that she does not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground, will begrudge food to the husband whom she embraces, to her own son, and to her own daughter, begrudging even the afterbirth that comes out from between her thighs, and the children that she bears, because she is eating them in secret for lack of anything else, in the desperate straits to which the enemy siege will reduce you in your towns."

3. The **ten kings** in the days of Rome prior to and during the 1st century are:

   a. Pompey, 106-48 BC — was not a Roman Emperor
   b. Augustus, 27 BC-14 AD
   c. Tiberius, AD 14-37
   d. Caligula, AD 37-41
   e. Claudius, AD 41-54
   f. Nero, AD 54-68
   g. Galba, AD 69 — — →
   h. Otho, AD 69 — — → three horns, vv. 7, 8, 24
   i. Vitellius, AD 69 — — →
   k. Titus, AD 80-81
   l. Domitian, AD 81-96

D. All of this would continue for a time, two times, and half a time

1. Another way of saying "three and one-half"; either three and one half days, weeks, months, decades, years, centuries

   a. Destruction of Jerusalem — beginning of AD 67 to September 5 AD 70

   b. Centuries — Birth of Jesus 4/6 BC to Council of Nicaea, AD 325

2. By way of summary: "Vespasian did . . . wear out the saints . . . Jerusalem . . . was destroyed in AD 70. In the meantime . . . the gospel of Christ began to be preached on Pentecost . . ., AD 33, and a great number of Jews had already been baptized into Christ. . . . Jesus . . . informed the disciples that soon the temple would be destroyed, that not one stone would be left upon another, and that when they saw the abomination of desolation, the Roman army, as spoken by Daniel, they should flee the city
(Matt. 24:1-28; Luke 19:41-44; Mark 13:1-24). In turn, those Christians took the warning seriously and fled to Pella for refuge when the army appeared. From that time forward a proper distinction was made between Judaism and Christianity. [F]rom the destruction of Jerusalem onward the 'sains' were those believers who had been baptized into the family of God. They would be at the mercy of the emperors of the Roman Empire until a time times and a half time" (Turner, 135)

XIX.  

NIV Daniel 7:26-7 'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. 27 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.'

A. From AD 70 to Constantine's Edict of Toleration in AD 311 ten persecutions of Christians occurred

1. Gallienus (260-268) started a period of 40 years of persecution

2. Perhaps the greatest was that of Diocletian
   
   a. Other persecutions were sporadic and local; this one was universal
   b. All copies of the scriptures were burned; so were churches
   c. Christians were deprived of public office and civil rights
   d. Christians refusing to sacrifice to gods/emperors were executed

B. Constantine stopped the persecution, issued the Edict of Toleration (311), which stopped the persecution of Christians and the Edict of Milan (313), which ordered that all confiscated property should be returned to Christians

C. The Council of Nicaea (325) made Christianity the official religion of the empire

1. So 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.

2. And all rulers will worship and obey him

XX.  

NRS Daniel 7:28 Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale; but I kept the matter in my mind.
A. Daniel did not understand everything
B. He resolved to meditate upon it
C. He was now 63+ years old