

Chapter 7 – Daniel’s Vision of Future History

When Daniel faced cruel dictators and wild beasts, he showed quiet confidence. But his vision of the future was so troubling that it caused him to turn pale. He was the only man able to interpret the king’s dreams; he could not interpret his own. He probably slept better in the lions’ den than the night of this dream. J. Vernon McGee

Events in Daniel 7 & 8 happened during the 23 years between chapters 4 & 5.

At the end of Chapter 6, Daniel was delivered from the lions’ den at age 81.

In chapter 7, we flashback about 14 years, to the 1st year of Belshazzar.

The 1st 6 chapters of Daniel were written as *history*; the last 6 were written as *prophecy*.

Focus of Dan.7-12: end of the times of the Gentiles (Tribulation), Israel's future history.

Daniel 7 is the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy in the Old Testament.

Scribes who hand-copied the Old Testament considered Daniel 7 the greatest chapter.

There are a variety of interpretations, but most conservative scholars agree that:

- Daniel 7 outlines *in advance* the major events of 3 future world empires
- These empires after Babylon are: Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome
- Daniel 7 concludes with the climax of world history – the 2nd Coming of Christ
- This event will inaugurate the 5th and final kingdom – God’s eternal kingdom.

Further details are added to this outline later in Daniel, and for example in Revelation.

At first glance, the prophecies of chapters 2 & 7 seem very similar.

If so, why would Daniel cover the same ground twice? The answer is in the differences.

Both chapters 2 & 7 describe 4 great Gentile empires, followed by God’s kingdom.

Traditionally, the chapter 2 statue and the 4 beasts symbolize the same 4 kingdoms.

Verse	Statue Kingdom	Verse	Beast	Empire	Date BC
2:32	Head of gold	7:4	Winged lion	Babylonian	609-539
2:32	Silver chest & arms	7:5	Bear	Medo-Persian	539-331
2:32	Bronze belly & thighs	7:6	Leopard, 4 wings	Grecian	331-63
2:33	Iron legs, clay in feet	7:7	Iron teeth, 10 horns	Roman	63 - ?

But in chapter 2, a pagan king’s vision portrayed history as mankind would see it.

The chapter 7 vision was given to a man of God, showing the nations *as God sees them*.

Man’s assessment of history: great empires. God’s view: immoral, brutal, depraved.

God knows the nations for what they truly are - beasts devouring each other. Psa.49:12

Chapter 7 also adds information about an evil world ruler *in the end times*.

7:1-3 – 1st Vision: Four Great Beasts

Dan.7:1-3 In the 1st year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. Daniel declared, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the 4 winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And 4 great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

This is the first time a vision was given directly to Daniel (instead of a king’s dream).

It was the 1st of 4 visions that Daniel received over a 17-year period, 553-536 BC.

The 4 great beasts symbolize 4 kingdoms, as explained later in Dan.7:17.

The great sea often refers to the Mediterranean Sea. Num.34:6; Josh.1:4; Ezek.47:10

The sea in general symbolizes the nations. Matt.13:47; Rev.13:1, 17:1, 15; Jer.46:8, 47:2

The turbulence represents the perpetual turmoil of Gentile history. Isa.17:12, 57:20

The 4 winds of heaven represent the forces God uses to set the nations in motion.

The number “4” indicates the four points of the compass – all people in every direction.

The 4 winds & beasts and the great sea indicate a universal, global effect. Rev.7:1

Wind symbolizes the sovereign God striving with people. Gen.6:3; John 3:8

God controls the wind. Gen.8:1; Exo.10:13,19, 14:21; Num.11:31; 1 Kings 19:11

7:4 – The 1st Beast: Babylon

Dan.7:4 The 1st [great beast] was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it.

This beast was like a lion, but with an eagle's wings (until they were torn off).

The plucking of wings is symbolic of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity, the beast in Daniel 4.

God stripped Nebuchadnezzar of power, then restored him from animal to king.

God allowed him to stand up as a man again and gave him a new heart (conversion).

The lion often represents royal power, as in Solomon's throne. Jer.4:7; 1 Kings 10:19-20

The *winged* lion was the *national symbol* of Babylon, on the Ishtar gates.

The eagle was king of the birds, and another symbol of Babylon. Ezek.17:3, 12

The end of Babylon is similar to the end of Sodom & Gomorrah. Isa.13, Isa.47

A future destruction of Babylon at the 2nd Coming is also implied. Rev.18

Jeremiah watched Babylonian soldiers capture Jerusalem. Jer.25:11-14, 29:10, Jer.50,51,52

Ezekiel, a captive with Daniel, wrote of Babylon & God's judgment. Ezek.17:12-24

7:5 – The 2nd Beast: Medo-Persia

Dan.7:5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'

This beast was like a bear, with 3 ribs in its mouth – powerful, ferocious, and greedy.

Archaeology has proven beyond doubt that the empire was Medo-Persian *combined*.

There was no separate Median empire at the time. Daniel calls it Medo-Persian. 6:28,8:20

The bear is the strongest beast after the lion - brute force without majesty and agility.

Raising itself on 1 side represents the one-sided Medo-Persian union. Dan.8:3

Persia was by far the greater, more powerful partner. They quickly absorbed the Medes.

The ram with unequal horns is identified later as the kings of Media & Persia. Dan.8:20

The 3 ribs represent the 3 cultures conquered by Medo-Persia: Egypt, Lydia, & Babylon.

The instruction to devour relates to these Medo-Persian conquests. Isa.13:15-18

This beast had no wings; the Medo-Persian army was huge & powerful but *slow*.

The Persian army included over 2 million men traveling with their families.