

The Four Great Beasts

In Daniel 7, Daniel experienced a dream from God. At the time, Babylon was nearing the end of their reign over the region. God was showing him what would happen in the future.

He was shown several pagan kings and their respective kingdoms that would be granted leadership of the region by God. He was also given insight into the interpretation of the last one in relation to end-time events.

Daniel 7:1-3

¹*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.*

²*Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.*

³*And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another;...*

The interpretation of these beasts is not dependent on the order of their presentation in scripture. We are told that the lion is "first," and the dreadful creature is "last," but the middle two, the bear and leopard, are each simply referred to as "another one." All the beasts are explained here in their prophetic order, which is chronological - in the order of lion, leopard, bear and the dreadful beast, according to Nebuchadnezzar's statue. In so doing, the dream is understood in its prophetic context. All pagan beasts are seen as coming after the reign of Babylon.

The Winged Lion

Daniel 7:4

⁴*The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind was also given to it.*



This lion is symbolic for Medo-Persia. The two wings represent their two kingdoms, whose "wings were plucked" by Greece. The lion has been a symbol of Persia for centuries. In 539 BC, Cyrus became ruler of the entire region on the night that Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall. His army captured the city of Babylon without a fight. Scripture tells us that a governor named Darius was given power at that time. He was likely a regional governor serving under king Cyrus.

This lion is not seen as Babylon, because verse 17 defines pagan kingdoms who will yet arise after Babylon, and Babylon was in power at the time of Daniel's dream.

The Four-Headed Leopard

Daniel 7:6

⁶After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.



This creature represents Alexander the Great and his four generals who would rule over the entire realm of Greece, which included most of the Mediterranean rim and the Middle East. Alexander believed that he was a son of the gods. He was infatuated with the Middle East culture, and even wanted to make Babylon the capital of his kingdom.

This kingdom would be recognized by God as acquiring dominion over the earth in 331 BC, when Greece conquered the Persians. Alexander died at a young age, and he left no instructions on who would inherit the kingdom. It was then split between his four military generals (the four heads).



The Carnivorous Bear

Daniel 7:5

⁵And behold, another beast, a second one resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'

This creature resembled a bear, and is symbolic for Rome. It devoured its 3 neighboring predecessors of Greece, Persia and Babylon in the region of the promise land. The image of this beast is typically thought of as symbolic for the Roman empire's strength and ability to crush its enemies. Roman rule came to the region of Judah in 63 BC, under general Pompey. Rome ruled with an iron fist and brutalized those who did not comply.



The Exceedingly Dreadful Beast

Daniel 7:7-8

⁷After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

⁸While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

This beast is significantly different and more evil than the others. This is not the Roman empire, but is better associated with the end-time false religion coming through Islam and the pagan rule of the antichrist. Why Islam? Because the beasts follow one after another in a succession of power, and Islam is the power base that followed Rome. Islamic forces pushed Rome out of the region in 630 AD, and its influence is seen to this day, now growing stronger worldwide.

The ten horns are best symbolic of 10 regional people groups that are enemies of Israel. These groups are seen in Psalm 83, vs 6-8. The ten "kingdoms" are; Edom, Ishmaelites, Moab, Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia, Tyre and Assyria. This chapter tells us that they will form a confederacy to try to wipe out Israel as a nation, and Islam fits this narrative perfectly. Dan 7:24 tells us that the horns represent "kings" that are represented by this dreadful beast. These would not be kings in the conventional sense, but rather, the rule of radical religious factions across territories (Isis, Al-Qaeda, The Muslim Brotherhood, etc.).

The antichrist (the little horn with eyes and mouth) is not one of them, but is a person that is associated with them, and takes authority over them. He presents false peace (the first 3-1/2 yrs) to a world in chaos. The best way to interpret the image is to think of it as depicting radical, jihadist Islam in the end times.