**DANIEL CHAPTER 7**

**In the study of Dan. Chapter 2, the great image of gold, silver, brass, and iron and clay, was symbolic of the 4 universal empires of: Babylon, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman. The stone cut out of the mountain without hand represented the kingdom of God. The prophecy was that the 4 universal kingdoms would all end or be destroyed and the kingdom of God would fill the whole earth. We saw this fulfilled as the church was established preaching the gospel of a risen Lord Jesus, and spread throughout the far reaches of the empire and world. One of the phenomenal aspects of this prophecy of the world being filled with the kingdom of God was how that the pagan religion of the empire was completely stamped out and forbidden by imperial edict. By the time the Roman Empire had fallen (476), the only allowable religion of the empire was the accepted official religion of the church. We must keep in mind that the church, by this time, had fallen into apostasy and had embraced in her doctrine and practices, many of the ancient pagan beliefs and methods of worship.**

**As we begin the 7th chapter of Daniel, the first verse reads in part: “In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed”. Even though this statement was not a part of the prophecy proper, yet there is an important note for us in determining the time of the prophecy. This kind of information in some instances will help us actually interpret parts of some of Daniel’s visions. The lesson of the great image was from a dream that king Nebuchadnezzar had in the second year of his reign. That would have been about 604 BC. The next time Daniel has a prophetic vision is in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. This would have been approximately 555 to 553 BC, or some 50 years later. There is no record of any other prophetic visions in all of the ensuing years since Nebuchadnezzar. We should also note that succeeding visions of Daniel are earmarked as to the year of some king, thus identifying the time the vision was received. This fact will prove helpful in later lessons.**

**In verse 3, Daniel sees four great beasts come up out of the sea, and each of the beasts are different one from the other. It should strike us as very strange that these beasts are seen to come up from the sea, most especially when we come to realize that these beasts are a lion, a bear, a leopard and a 4th beast dreadful and terrible that is not specifically named. Beasts of this sort, literally, do not grow or travel in the sea.**

**V4-7, gives us further descriptions of each of the beasts, along with their name, or kind. There is a lion which stands up on its feet like a man, and had a heart like a man and also had wings like an eagle. The second beast was a bear, which raised itself up on one side and had 3 ribs in its mouth. The third beast was like a leopard, and it had 4 wings like a fowl and also had 4 heads. What strange creatures Daniel is seeing in this vision. They surely do not look like the lions, bears and leopards we are familiar with in our time.**

**After this a 4th beast arose, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth. It was diverse from all the beasts that were before it. This beast had 10 horns. As Daniel considered this beast, there came up among these 10 horns another little horn, and in this horn were eyes like a man, and it had a mouth speaking great things.**

**Verses 9-10, give us a scene of a judgment that occurs. This has absolutely nothing to do with some supposed judgment at the last day of time, as is taught by many. What Daniel is seeing is a judgment within the structure and time constraints of the vision itself. Somewhere in the process of all of this vision, powers and thrones will fall. Even within this 4th beast, 3 horns are seen to fall before the little horn, and ultimately all 10 of the horns as well as the beast itself will fall.**

**V11. In fact, in this verse, Daniel gets a vision of the 4th beast being slain and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. He continues in V12, that the rest of the beasts (the other 3) also had their dominion taken away.**

**V13-14. Daniel sees one like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven, and come to the ancient of days. There was given to him (the Son of Man) dominion, and glory and a kingdom. This dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away nor be destroyed.**

**V17. This is a key verse in understanding the vision. These great beasts, which are 4, are four kings, which shall arise out of the “earth”. Notice in verse 3, these beasts come up out of the sea, but now in V17, they come up out of the earth. This is something we will have to reconcile in order to have harmony in the scriptures.**

**These 4 beasts are a vision about the same 4 kingdoms that were represented in Dan. 2: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. This means that we will be going back over the same time periods as before. The difference in this vision is two-fold: (1) instead of being symbolized by gold, silver, brass, iron and clay, they are symbolized by beasts, one of which is not described or named, (2) the other difference is that this vision will extend much farther into time then the prophecy of Dan. 2. This means that more detail will have to be identified by additional symbols in order to determine what the extra time is telling us.**

**Several principals of prophecy help us out in understanding this chapter. First, the “key verse” principal as we have noted in verse 17. This identifies for us that we are dealing with 4 kingdoms. As indicated above, these are the same 4 kingdoms as were covered in Dan. 2. Another principal demonstrated here is that of “symbols”. A lion, leopard, bear and a non-descript beast represent or symbolize these 4 kings. In addition, another important principal of symbols is demonstrated here. Beasts are used in this vision to represent kingdoms or civil powers (as opposed to religious systems or powers). Throughout Daniel and the Revelation, “beast” or “beasts” will be found very many times. Here, in the book of Daniel, we have a precedent set where beasts represent or symbolize a civil kingdom or power. Hereafter, when beast or beasts are used as symbols in a vision or prophecy, you can expect it to consistently represent civil powers. Any exception to this rule will have obvious context to show it. Otherwise, to interpret beasts with many different uses would render the principal totally unreliable. As an example, when we later deal with Rev. 13, where John sees a beast rise up out of the sea, we can readily anticipate that the beast of Rev. 13, also symbolizes a civil power. It may or may not be the same civil power as those represented by “beast” in Daniel 7, etc., but a civil power nonetheless. This avoids arbitrary confusion in our interpretations of prophecy, and will help tremendously in coordinating scriptures. Knowing that a beast in prophecy symbolizes a civil power, eliminates a vast amount of guesswork.**

**The principal of “history as the only answer to prophecy’ will, again, aid in our interpretation of this chapter. In addition, the principal of the “time element” of prophecy comes into play here, V25. By comparing the time element used here with history, it will help to confine our application to a given time frame and specified events. Finally, the principal of “repetition” comes into focus here. This prophecy repeats the same time frame and same kingdoms as Dan. 2, covered. It does not begin at the ending of the great image interpretation and continue on into the future from there. Instead, it goes back over the same territory as before, and extends further than Dan. 2. This kind of repetition is a regular occurrence of prophecy.**

**Let us now look at some of the distinguishing characteristics which describe these 4 beasts. The first beast is like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Imagine that, a lion with eagles wings. A lion is the king of the beasts of the jungle. An eagle flies swift and high with its wings. This represents the strength of the kingdom of Babylon as well as its rapid conquests to rule the world. As soon as you hear of Nebuchadnezzar, he is a universal ruler. There conquests of smaller territories was rapid and overwhelming. Then the lion stood upon its feet like a man and a man’s heart was given to it. We know that Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up in great pride of himself and what “he” had accomplished. He said: “Is not this great Babylon that I have built by the power of “my” might?” He had a statue of gold built, presumably honoring himself, that was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. He had a heart like man, not like God.**

**The second beast was a bear. A great and powerful beast, but not king of the jungle. This bear is said to be raised up on one side. One side was higher than the other in its shape. This is a perfect representation of the comparative status of the two combined powers of the Medo-Persian Empire. The Persian element was the dominate power or the one raised up higher on one side. In addition, this “bear” had 3 ribs in its mouth between its teeth. This immediately suggests territories it has conquered. History tells us that, Cyrus the Great, in the various conquests of smaller territories, also conquered 3 significant powers. They were: the Median kingdom (which he conquered and then made peace with); the Lydian kingdom and the Babylonian empire. Cyrus’ vast territory included these 3 powers or kingdoms, devoured as “ribs in his mouth”.**

**The third kingdom is represented by a “leopard beast”. It has two outstanding characteristics. They are: It had 4 wings as a fowl; and it had 4 heads. Already we have seen the lion with wings (which we indicated a demonstration of rapid conquest); now we have a leopard with wings also. Will the wings also represent a rapid conquest by this 3rd beast? Alexander the Great became king when his father, Phillip, died and Alexander was only 20 years old. Before his 33rd birthday, only 12 years thereafter, he was ruler of the known world. This point is further emphasized, if we look ahead to Dan. 8:5. Here we see a goat racing at a ram so fast that he didn’t even touch the ground. Dan. 8:21, tells us this goat is Greece.**

**The leopard beast also had 4 heads. Sounds like something out of Ringling Bros. circus, but it is not. It is a symbol for the 4 divisions of the Grecian empire after the early death of Alexander. Refer to the lesson on Dan. 2, for these 4 generals and their territories.**

**Then (V7) Daniel says he saw in the night visions and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly. He doesn’t say if it is an elephant, a dragon, a tiger or just what kind of a beast it is. So we refer to it as a “non-descript” beast; one without a name. He goes on to say that it has iron teeth, and that it trampled everything under its feet. The he says it was diverse from the (3) beasts before it. Finally, Daniel sees 10 horns on this beast. There is more, but we need to stop here until we can get a grasp as to what this dreadful and terrible beast is.**

**The other 3 beasts have paralleled the outline of the great image, with the first 3 metals symbolizing Babylon, Persia and Greece. We have shown how the characteristics of the first 3 beasts identifies them as being the same 3 empires. For this reason alone we can feel sure that the 4th beast of this chapter, is a symbol of the Roman Empire. In addition, the characteristics of “dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly” adequately describes the Roman Empire. By way of broadening the scope of what we are considering, keep in mind that “terrible” does not mean all bad, but more like awesome. Now it is certain that the Roman empire certainly did have power and often abused it against people, as other empires did. Ps. 66:3&5, speak of God as being terrible in his works, and obvious reference to great or awesome. Ps. 68:35, says God is terrible out of his holy places. There is no doubt that Rome was ‘terrible” in its conquest and relentless pursuit of its enemies, but it was also terrible in its greatness as a world empire.**

**This beast is described as having great iron teeth. Under the symbolism of the great image, iron was the predominant material representing the Roman Empire. Our previous lesson on a brief history of Rome, outlined some significant things that contributed to the greatness of Rome to the world. Things such as the vast diversity of her people; roads; water system; colonization; longevity; government; architecture; armies; games and a vast and systematic religious system. Not that all these things were desirable, but they contributed to her greatness. This 4th beast was diverse from all the others. There are things to come in the later years of “Rome, that really magnifies just how diverse it was. Before we look at the 10 horns of this beast, there is one other aspect of the prophecy to look at first.**

**In verse 3 of this chapter, Daniel saw these 4 beasts come up from the sea. This is a very strange picture, and you wonder what sea it is talking about. To make the question more complex, V17, tells us that these 4 beasts arise out of the earth. In a previous lesson we discussed how the Bible will interpret its own symbols for us. We would have no trouble with the idea that these beasts, symbolizing empires, arise out of the earth. We can see this as a civil power taking shape and coming into existence among the teeming masses of people who ultimately make up such power. Correlating this with a beast rising out of the sea is clarified by Is. 17:12, and Rev. 17:1 & 15. In these instances, seas or waters clearly represents the restless mass of people, rolling like the waves. Thus, these beasts arose from among the rolling, shifting tides of humanity, people and nations. Of course, this is exactly where these 4 universal empires arose from and the symbolism beautifies the prophetic figure. There is no difference in the picture or symbolism of these beasts rising up out of the sea, or from the earth. They both refer to the ascendency of each respective empire from among the masses of people who made up their citizenship.**

**V14 & 18. The saints of the most high shall take the kingdom forever. In the lesson on Dan. 2, the great image, we learned that the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and smote the image on his feet and destroyed it, represented the kingdom of God, founded by the Lord Jesus Christ. We gave specific account as to how the Christian church grew until it filled the empire. Then we noted the deterioration of the true spirituality of the church, followed by the church becoming the official religion of the empire. This was followed by an elimination of paganism in Rome, and the “Official church” (Roman Catholic Church) was the only religion tolerated in the empire, punishable by death to the disobedient. Rather than repeat this again here, you are referred to the notes of the 2nd chapter for more detailed information on this transformation. However, there will be much more to come from this astonishing unfolding process of the suppression of ancient paganism into the recognized church of the dark ages.**

**Even though there is still more to the visions of this chapter, we are going to conclude it here with just a brief outline of what is left. This 4th beast was said to have 10 horns, and after them another little horn, which subdued 3 (of the other) horns. The text (V24-25) identifies these 10 horns as 10 kings. It follows that the little horn also is a ruler, and the text says that he shall be diverse from the others. Then, quoting verse 25: “And he shall speak great words against the most high, and shall wear out the saints of the most high, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and dividing of times”. This little horn is developed much more in chapter 8 and others, so we need to bring all of this together for a clear view of it as it expands from just a “little horn” to a much greater power.**

 **The horns, being part of the beast, and arising, as horns do, out of the head of the beast, represent for us some lesser (horns are smaller than the head) powers, of which there are 10 in this case. We know that they are part of the 4th beast; they are kings; and they are less in stature than the empire itself, but within the empire. Then arises the little horn, of which it is said that it continues for a time and times and half time. This translated into prophetic time is 1260 years. Immediately then, we see that this little horn is not just some passing incident but is a factor to deal with long after the ancient Roman Empire itself is gone. We are left at this point with the task of identifying the 10 horns and there place in the empire. Then we have the task of identifying the little horn, when it came into being and what makes up its long duration. As previously indicated, we will leave this for now and come back to it when the little horn shows up in a later vision.**

**This chapter has brought us from the beginning of the Babylonian Empire to the end of the Roman Empire, approximately 606 BC to 476 AD.**