

DANIEL 1-6

DANIEL 7-12

NARRATIVE SECTION

PROPHETIC VISIONS

Chapter 7: The Four Beasts

Biblical Apocalyptic Writing:

a. How to understand?

Dale Davis: "I would say that biblical apocalyptic is a sort of prophecy that seeks to enlighten and encourage a people despised and cast off by the world with a vision of the God who will come to impose his kingdom on the wreckage and rebellion of human history - and it communicates this message through the use of wild, scary, imaginative, bizarre and head-scratching imagery."

Apocalyptic Literature:

a. How to understand?

b. More like a Picture Book, not a Puzzle Book

Tremper Longman:

"We are dealing with a type of literature that uses images with high frequency. Images communicate truth, to be sure, but not with precision."

"Caution and reserve are virtues in the interpretation of apocalyptic."



Apocalyptic Literature:

- a. How to understand
- b. More like a Picture Book, not a Puzzle Book
- c. Its ultimate purpose

lain Duguid: "The purpose is not to give us nightmares but to calm our nightmares."

Daniel 7: The Four Beasts

- 1. The world we live in is beastly. (1-8)
- 2. The beastly nature will continue to rage and escalate. (15-28)
- 3. The Lord is sovereign and will ultimately prevail! (9-14, note sandwich structure)

Daniel 7: The Four Beasts

The world we live in is beastly.
 (1-8)

Daniel 1:1-8: In the first 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. 2 Daniel
declared, "I saw in my vision by night,
and behold, the four winds of heaven
were stirring up the great sea. 3 And four
great beasts came up out of the sea,
different from one another.

4 The first 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. 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.'

6 After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet.

It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Understanding the 4 Beasts:

The interpretation given in verses 17-18:
'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'

Understanding the 4 Beasts:

- 1. From Daniel's perspective, these are chronological kingdoms from history past:
- a. Babylon, Medes, Persians, Greece
- b. Babylon, Medes/Persians, Greece, Rome

Understanding the 4 Beasts:

2. This is descriptive of earthly kingdoms in human history.

a. The symbolic use of "4" (and "10") to represent completeness:

Examples of symbolic use in apocalyptic writings: 4 Horns (Zech 1:18); 4 Craftsman (Zech1:20); 4 Chariots (Zech 6:1); 4 Spirits (Zech 6:5); 4 Living creatures (Rev 4:6); 4 Horsemen (Rev 6); 4 Angels (Rev 7)

Tremper Longman: "The best way to view the imagery of Daniel 7 is not in terms of four specific evil empires, but as four kingdoms symbolically representing the fact that evil kingdoms (of an unspecified number) will succeed one another from the time of the Exile to the time of the climax of history, when God will intervene and once and for all judge all evil and bring into existence his kingdom."

Galatians 1:4: "...the present evil age"

Evil human kingdoms are like hybrid beasts that seek to devour and destroy.

Takeaways:

1. The Bible does not sugarcoast how evil and broken this world can be.





Takeaways:

- 1. The Bible does not sugarcoast how evil and broken this world can be.
- 2. The Psalms of Lament: "How long, O Lord?"

Daniel 7: The Four Beasts

- 1. The world we live in is beastly. (1-8)
- 2. The beastly nature will continue to rage and escalate. (15-28)

Daniel 7: The Four Beasts (note the increasing power and danger)

- 1. Lion/eagle like the mind of man
- 2. Bear that devours
- 3. Leopard with 4 wings and heads that have dominion
- 4. Beast with 10+ horns, iron teeth, more terrifying and powerful than the rest

Daniel 7:15-28: "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. 17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.' ...

19 "Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, 20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. ...

21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. 23 "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. ...

24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. ...

26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.' 28 "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart."

The beastly nature will continue to rage and escalate.

Thoughts:

1. In history past, present, and future, the "4th beast-like kingdom" is active and present.

lain Duguid: "The message of Daniel 7 is that life in this present world will always be this way until the end of this age...The beasts of the present world order may change their shape as the centuries pass, but their violence and lust for power continues. Nebuchadnezzar turns into a Darius, who becomes an Alexander the Great and then an Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid king who brutally oppressed the Jews in the mid-second century BC. ...

These fierce rules are in turn followed by a Nero and a Domitian. Their fires of persecution continued to be stoked centuries later by the Inquisition. In the last century, we have seen turther manifestations of the beast in the persons of Hitler, Stalin, and Kim Il Jung. The frightening beasts of this age were present at the gas chambers of Belsen, and on the killing fields of Cambodia and Rwanda, and they are still tormenting the saints in Sudan and China, and in other parts of the modern world."

The beastly nature will continue to rage and escalate.

Thoughts:

2. Don't get so caught up trying to figure out how the puzzle fits (ie who is the 4th beast and little horn, is it someone or something from the past? Is it someone or something future? Is it a particular person? Is it a country? Is it AI? I want to know!!!)

When you look at what is told about the 4th beast, it is neither very clear nor very unclear.

lain Duguid: "The description of the time of trial and judgment under the fourth kingdom is vague enough to describe plausibly several historial tyrants, including Antiochus Epiphanes, yet at the same time nonspecific enough to leave the identity of this horn ultimately uncertain. ...

The reason for this vagueness on the angel's part lies in the fact that his primary interest is not in the boastful horn. The angel's answer therefore went beyond Daniel's question about the horn to reiterate his earlier point about the judgment to come and the triumph of the saints (which we will look at in just a moment).

It is as if the angel is saying, 'Daniel, you're missing the point. Yes, the horn will assault God's people and it will be a trying time for the saints, but look beyond the horn. The point of this vision is that the time when the beasts will oppress is limited by God. Beyond it lies the scene of the heavenly court, where the beasts will finally be tamed and destroyed.'"

Remember, this is not like a puzzle book but a picture book!

Daniel 7: The Four Beasts

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The "Sandwich" within the "Sandwich":

The Ancient of Days who judges with power (9-10)

The Defeat of the Beast (11-12)

The Son of Man will be triumphant (13-14)

Verses 9-10: the Ancient of Days:

9 "As I looked, thrones were placed, and
the Ancient of Days took his seat (sanity); his
clothing was white as snow, and the hair of
his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery
flames (holy tury); its wheels were burning
fire. 10 A stream of fire issued and came out
from before him; a thousand thousands
served him, and ten thousand times ten
thousand stood before him (majesty); the
court sat in judgment, and the books were
opened (just fury).

Verses 11-12 - The Beast is <u>defeated</u>:
11 "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking.
And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

Verses 13-14 - The Son of Man:

13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man point us to Jesus who defeats all enemies and triumphs!

Colossians 2:14-15: He (Jesus) took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Revelation 1:12-16: Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

1. Knowing God will triumph, stay faithful.

Tremper Longman: "One cannot help but understand that the vision teaches God's people that, although it looks as if the world is under the power of human evil running rampant and is not under God's control, in this case looks are deceiving. God is in control, and there is no question concerning who is going to win this struggle."

1. Knowing God will triumph, stay hopeful.

Romans 8:31, 37-39: What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Final Thought:

The Takeaway