

THE SECOND AND THIRD BEASTS

TEXT: DANIEL 7:1-7

INTRODUCTION:

1. I mentioned last time that while Daniel 1-6 is mostly historical, Daniel 7-12 is strictly prophetic.
2. The second half of the book of Daniel consists of a series of visions. All of them were given to Daniel, and all of them are interpreted.
3. Daniel the prophet had an incredible dream (7:1), and in the record of this dream, Daniel traces the course of four great world empires -- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
4. Two weeks ago we focused on the first beast, Babylon, pictured as a lion with eagle's wings (7:4), and corresponding with the head of gold in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter 2 (2:32, 37, 38).
5. Tonight we will look at the second and third beasts -- Media-Persia, and Greece.
6. We will look at the fourth beast, representing Rome, next week, Lord willing (7:7). Prophetically Daniel 7:7 has been partially fulfilled, but there will be a revived Roman Empire, which is still future.

I. MEDIA-PERSIA, "LIKE TO A BEAR" (7:5).

1. The second beast of Daniel's vision is described as "like to a bear." The bear raised itself up on one side and Daniel notices three ribs in its mouth between its teeth (7:5).
2. Daniel hears a voice telling the bear to "Arise, devour much flesh" (7:5).
3. Two hundred years before Daniel, the prophet Isaiah prophesied that the Medes would conquer Babylon (Isaiah 13:17-19).
4. "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them (Babylon)... Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eyes shall not spare children."
5. Isaiah's prophecy describes the Medes as dangerous and violent. Likewise, Daniel's prophecy says Media-Persia, the second empire, will be powerful and ferocious like a bear.
6. But though the second empire, Media-Persia, would be powerful and ferocious like a bear, it would be less majestic, less swift, and less glorious than the lion (7:4) and the leopard (7:6).
7. The lion and the bear are presented together in Scripture as very dangerous. David told King Saul, "Thy servant slew both the lion

- and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them" (I Samuel 17:36).
8. Amos 5:18 and 19 says, "The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him."
 9. Interestingly, the prophet Hosea refers to the lion (Daniel 7:4), the bear (Daniel 7:5), the leopard (Daniel 7:6), and "the wild beast" (Daniel 7:7).
 10. "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul (enclosure) of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them" (Hosea 13:7, 8).
 11. The antichrist, the beast of Revelation 13, is said to have all the characteristics of all the previous beasts, and is said to have feet as a bear (Rev. 13:2).
 12. Today the bear is a popular symbol for Russia, and it has been for hundreds of years. It is often used by Westerners, like Great Britain and the USA, to describe Russia as a big, brutal and clumsy beast.
 13. Generally, liberals in the USA do not recognize Russia as a serious threat, but conservatives certainly do. In 1984, when President Reagan ran for reelection he ran an ad on television that pictured a grizzly bear wandering in the forest, accompanied by narration suggesting that the bear could be dangerous and that it would be wise to be prepared for that possibility. President Reagan was mocked by his opponents but recent history has proven he was right.
 14. More recently Sarah Palin, Mitt Romney and other politicians were mocked for their insistence that Russia is still a serious threat.
 15. Leaving politics and current events aside, the Bible definitely describes Russia as a threat. Ezekiel 38 and 39 predict Russia and her allies will invade Israel. This invasion could take place very soon.
 16. Note: I am not suggesting the bear in Daniel 7:5 is Russia, but I do believe Russia is identified with Gog, the land of Magog in Ezekiel.
 17. In Daniel 7:5, the bear is pictured as lying down and as raising itself up on one side. Such an action is typical of an awkward animal like the bear.
 18. The Scriptures do not explain why the bear raises itself up on one side. It may represent the one-sided union of the Persian and Median Empires.
 19. Persia, although coming up last, was by far the greater and more powerful and had eventually absorbed the Medes. This is pictured in

- chapter 8 by the two horns of the ram with the horn that comes up last being higher and greater (8:3, 20, 21).
20. This literal interpretation of Daniel is true to the facts of history.
 21. The bear is described as having three ribs in its mouth. Normally a bear lives mostly on fruits, vegetables, and roots, but bears eat flesh when they are hungry, and then they attack other animals and men.
 22. Scripture does not tell us the meaning of the three ribs. The *Scofield Study Bible* (margin) is probably correct in saying this is "a reference to the three-fold dominion of the second empire, Media, Persia, Babylon."
 23. Therefore, the bear symbolizes the government and military conquests of the Medo-Persian Empire, and the ribs represent the people conquered and subdued by the Medes and Persians.
 24. The bear is instructed to continue its conquest and to "devour much flesh" (7:5). This apparently refers to the additional conquests, of the Medes and Persians in the years which followed the fall of Babylon (e.g., Lydia and Egypt). This too lines up with history.
 25. Daniel's prophecy of the second beast accurately portrays the characteristics and history of the Medo-Persian Empire which, although just beginning to develop in Daniel's day, continued for over 200 years until the time of Alexander the Great, 336 B.C.

II. GREECE -- "LIKE A LEOPARD" (7:6)

1. Next Daniel describes a third beast differing from the first two animals. The third is like a leopard, which had four wings on its back, and also had four heads. This third beast represents the empire of Greece.
2. The leopard (in contrast to the lion, the first beast) is less grand and majestic, but it is swifter than the lion and was much feared in Old Testament times as an animal of prey.
3. The swiftness of the leopard is well-known. Habakkuk 1:8 says, "Their horses also are swifter than the leopards."
4. Leopards are also known to lie in wait for their prey. Jeremiah 5:6 says, "A leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased."

5. Hosea 13:7 says, "As a leopard by the way will I observe them."
6. Normally leopards are very swift, but the leopard Daniel saw "had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl" (7:6), indicating extreme speed.
7. The lion in verse 4 (representing Babylon) had eagle's wings. This strange leopard had four wings and four heads (7:6).
8. John Walvoord said, "The four heads obviously refer to intelligent direction of the beast and indicate, in contrast to the earlier beasts which had only one head, that the third empire would have four governmental divisions with corresponding heads" (*Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation*).
9. The history of Greece under Alexander the Great corresponds precisely to what is described here in Daniel's vision.
10. "With the swiftness of a leopard, Alexander the Great conquered most of the civilized world all the way from Macedonia to Africa and eastward to India. The lightning character of his conquests is without precedent in the ancient world, and this is fully in keeping with the image of speed embodied in the leopard itself and the four wings on its back" (Walvoord).
11. Alexander the Great died in Babylon (present-day Iraq) at the age of 33 after a prolonged drinking binge.
12. Some historians speculate that Alexander believed himself to be a god (many of his subjects believed he was a god), and that is why he had not selected a successor.
13. But within a year of his death, his army and his empire broke into a chaotic multitude of warring factions.
14. There were four principal successors, and that is why the leopard had "four heads."
15. These four generals who succeeded him divided his empire into four divisions (cf. Dan. 8:20-22).

16. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The four empires into which Alexander's empire was divided about B.C. 300; Greece, Asia Minor, including Syria, Egypt, the East."
17. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, when Alexander the Great visited Jerusalem around 332 BC, the Jews welcomed him, and they opened the doors of their city, including the doors of their temple, and one of the men took the Holy Scriptures and showed in the book of Daniel where Daniel had prophesied concerning the coming of Alexander the Great.
18. Alexander was very pleased to see this, and he allowed the Jews the privilege to live according to their ancient customs, and gave them some special privileges such as not paying tribute every seven years.
19. Alexander didn't stay long in Jerusalem because at that time he was leading his forces on to Egypt.

III. "AND DOMINION WAS GIVEN TO IT" (7:6b).

1. "And dominion was given to it" -- by God!
2. Once again we are reminded that kingdoms come and go; kingdoms rise and fall, but God is over all.
3. David said in Psalm 68:34, "Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds."
4. And as we see repeatedly in the book of Daniel, God is not only governing the affairs of Israel; He is governing the affairs of all the nations.
5. Psalm 47:2 says, "For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth."
6. The book of Daniel emphasizes that the LORD is a great King over all the earth, and that conquests of kings and kingdoms are supported by the providence of God (7:6b; cf. 2:20, 21; 4:17, 35; 5:18-21).

CONCLUSION:

1. Now is the time to proclaim the Gospel and win souls because the Lord will soon return in judgment (7:9-12).
2. W.A. Criswell said, "God looks upon them (nations) as beasts and as beasts do they act toward one another. Lenin said, 'What would it

matter if two-thirds of the population of the world were destroyed, if only the remaining third were communists?' While the theologians debate whether hell is a real lake of fire, the great super powers of the earth are stockpiling hell bombs to drop over agonizing humanity. This is a picture of the world."

3. Our job is to, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).