

## Daniel 7 – the ‘Quartet’?

This fascinating chapter of Daniel has had a traditional interpretation that matches its four main characters to four of the five elements in Daniel's vision of chapter two. The match is really quite good except for a couple verses that seem to throw a proverbial monkey-wrench into the whole thing. Because of that, I'm going to offer another possible explanation which seems to make more sense.

In researching this chapter, I found another author who reflected my sentiments: "With the events happening in the Middle East transpiring at an alarming rate, I am placed into a situation I care not to be in. ... Of all the articles I have written from a faith perspective, I have steered away from that which is controversial... The truth is controversial enough." As a pastor and Bible teacher, I've always asserted that you should be leery of anyone who claims to have an authoritative personal interpretation of prophecy, i.e. one that doesn't synch with the scriptures and which has no support from other sincere scholars/believers. I'll reiterate that. I don't offer this as authoritative. However, neither is it speculative. If nothing else, my hope is that it will stir you to soberly consider the days in which we live and scrutinize the scriptures yourselves in Berean-like fashion.

The chapter begins with Daniel telling us that he recorded the main facts of a vision he had during the night. He spoke, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea." The four winds of heaven

indicate that this is a global movement versus one local to Daniel. The Great Sea has always been synonymous with the Gentile nations in scripture as well as to the ancient Jewish mind. So the preface of the vision is that it centers around a global gentile concern.

Daniel continues, "And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other." Now traditional explanations assert that, in this chapter, we're going to be looking at the same entities as are represented in the chapter two image of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay, minus the clay. It says that in chapter two, we are observing these four entities as man sees them and that the descriptions in chapter seven are from God's perspective. Now, I'm less comfortable with this for the initial reason that I don't see this 'duality' as a pattern elsewhere in scripture. In any event, on to the next verse...

*"The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it."* The word 'first' implies a chronological order. Traditional scholarship says that this is the kingdom of Babylon. This is because of the similarity to Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon who God humbled. He was made to eat grass like an ox and his hair eventually resembled eagle's feathers. He was later restored to sanity and gave glory to God. Also, one symbol of Babylon was a lion-like creature. So, clearly, there are similarities.

"The modern day country whose symbol is of a lion is England.

England at one point was such a vast empire that it was said that "the sun never sets on the British Empire".

... Now out of the Lion came Eagles wings. The modern day country whose national symbol of the Eagle is the United States. We came out of England, fought the revolutionary war against England. We claimed independence from England and became a superpower." (George Whitten)

I'd like to add to this statement that, in scripture, eagles wings are associated with the Lord's provision and His saints. He told the children of Israel that He had taken them out of Egypt "on eagles wings" (Ex 19:4) and in Isaiah, the prophet says, "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles..." (Isa 40:31) Also, in Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37 eagles are likened unto the believers gathering around the 'Body' that is, Christ. Now, most of America's national ballads sing of God's grace and blessings. Also, America, rightly or wrongly, is known world wide as a Christian nation, founded on Christian principles.

Thus, I am inclined to agree with Whitten. This beast could represent the British-originated American superpower which we could say began in 1776. The wings being plucked off could indicate a violent act aimed at grounding or lessening

the power of the beast except that the word used here means to make bare or polished as opposed to "plucked" in verse eight or in Daniel 11:4 where other words are used

which do imply a destructive rooting out. Also, the verse continues with a blessing – the beast is then **lifted up**, made to **stand upright** and **given a new heart**. Could this then speak of **rapture, uprightness** and

**transformation?** (1 Cor 15:51,52 and 1 Thes 4:16,17) Also, the word "given" in "given a new heart" can mean "paid for" which makes good sense (See Mat 13:45,46; 1Cor 6:20). More on this later.

*"And suddenly, another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said to it 'Arise, devour much flesh!'"* This second beast appears suddenly and looks like a bear. Traditionally, this is said to be the Medio-Persian empire which conquered Babylon. We gather from history that the Persians were stronger than the Medes and thus we could liken that to the bear-like creature raising up on one side.

"The modern day country whose national symbol is the bear is Russia. When the Medes and Persians came to seize power from Babylon and conquered the city, they came and killed Belshazzar and the royal family. When Lenin and Trotsky led the Bolshevik revolution



in Russia the first thing they did was kill the Russian Czars and their families. Another similarity is that the Medes and Persians had seven kings. The collapse of the USSR occurred in the reign of their seventh premiere, Mikhail Gorbachev. This beast was to devour much flesh... The Russian people suffered some of the worst persecution known to mankind under the reign of premieres like Stalin. Stalin killed more Jews than Hitler, yet this fact still escapes most of the known world. Christians during the era of the communists were slaughtered by the thousands, because of non-conformity to governmental standards." (Whitten)

The Bolshevik revolution was in 1917 and happened quite "suddenly". The formerly docile Russia quickly became a threat to the whole world for the Soviet

Union had obvious global aspirations. Now, in the vision, after the bear appears, it rises up on one side giving the impression that, as the traditionalists say, it is



stronger on one side, or as I'll propose, that it is wounded. The mighty Soviet Union was wounded, it became lame, when the Union crumbled and left only Russia as a strong military power. As for the ribs, the word for 'rib' in the Hebrew originates from the primitive verb "**to curve**". It is actually in Aramaic in this verse though and is pronounced, 'al-ah' (as in Allah). Hmm.

Recall also that Russia, the land called Magog in Ezekiel 38, 39 is pulled down into a Middle Eastern war by "hooks" in its jaw (curved instruments). Could this be a picture of Russian involvement with Arab nations motivating it to fulfill prophecy? Remember that the crescent (curved) moon is a universal sign of Islam for Allah is the moon god.

Also, this bear has already devoured much flesh – Stalin alone killed more than 10,000,000 of his own countrymen. And there may be more to come.

Moving on, "After this I looked, and there was another, 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."

Traditionally, this is likened to the Grecian empire which was created as Alexander the Great raced across the Middle East as far as India conquering all. His four generals split the empire up after his death. All that seems to fit the prophecy well, however, there's a problem with the last part – "and dominion was given to it." Alexander was not given dominion (or authority), he took it forcibly.

Now, one of the keys to understanding this passage, I believe, is to keep in mind that these four beasts are wrangling over Israel. This is quite evident in verses 17 and 18, "Those great beasts, which are four are four kings (or kingdoms) which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive

the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." Though Israel was somewhat of a problem for Babylon and Rome, none of the four empires the traditionalists cite really wrangled over Israel and especially not with each other over this comparably militarily impotent nation. However, we know from Zechariah 12:2,3 that Israel and specifically Jerusalem will become a real problem for all nations in the last days.

Leopards are known for spots -- lots of spots on one body. A congregation of spots so to speak.



"The leopard is found throughout sub-saharan Africa and southern Asia. It is the most adaptable and widely distributed of all the big cats. They have beautiful spotted coats -- even black leopards (also called black panthers) have spots, although they are difficult to see." (leopardsetc.com) Also, this creature has four wings and four heads. There is wide agreement among Bible teachers that 'four', in the Bible, generally pictures the world and thus, this could picture worldwide mobility and worldwide leadership. We know from other scriptures that the last days global environment will be divided into four major spheres relative to Israel – the king of the north, the king of the south, the kings of the east and the western EU based AntiChrist government. Thus, I'll suggest that we're looking at a beast representative of a **worldwide entity**

which is **given authority**. Sounds like it could be the UN to me. Chronologically, this is accurate also as the UN was formed shortly after WWII.

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns,

and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words."

This fourth beast is traditionally said to be Rome (the iron legs of Daniel 2) but is also said to foreshadow the Antichrist government (the iron and clay feet and toes of Daniel 2) which arises out of the old Roman empire (principally Europe and the Arab dominated Middle East and North Africa). I think this creature does indeed picture the Antichrist government which I'll suggest will arise out of Europe (which, by the way is particularly supportive of the Arab world).

Now, the EU (European Union) is still coalescing. Recently they have adopted a common currency, common passports, a parliament,

soon, a common judicial court, and just recently, they have been trying to create what I think may be the AC's position – an EU presidency. At the same time, the EC (European Commission) head has just been trying to form an inner circle of up to ten special ministers to 'run the show' and wants for himself the role of the EU Presidency. Opposing his plans are the heads of Britain, Spain and France who want their own presidency plans to be adopted. Hmm, ten ruling ministers and three nations in opposition? Interesting.

Verses nine and ten then portray the judgments of the Ancient of Days in heaven – definitely an end time event. Then, in verse eleven, the beast (the AC government) is slain and its body is given to the "burning flame". This may not be the same event, but it is probably tied to the one described in Revelation 19 and 20 where the AC and his false prophet are cast into the lake of fire.

And here's the biggest reason I don't fully concur with the traditional view – verse twelve: "As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." This makes no sense if you're considering these beasts as Babylon, Medio-Persia, Greece and Rome. However, if you consider them to be contemporaries, last days powers -- perhaps, the US, Russia, the UN and the EU-based AC government -- all striving over Israel, and bear in mind that during the millennium, the elements of these first three will be in subjection to Christ's rule, it makes sense. Also, many scholars believe that people's lives will likely be prolonged during the millennium (refer to Isaiah 45:20).

So what happens to the first beast? Is it the US? Well, if we consider the tribulation beast of Revelation 13, we see something interesting, "Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion...." We see that the AC has assimilated the leopard, the bear and the lion into his government. "The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority." But what's missing? The eagle or more specifically, the eagle's wings which were plucked off. Could it be that the rapture wipes out America?

In conclusion, I'll refer you to this edited article published by the United States Mission to the European Union and you can decide for yourself if it's relevant:

**UN, EU, RUSSIA AND U.S. SAY  
MIDEAST SOLUTION  
POSSIBLE IN THREE YEARS  
Date: July 16, 2002**

*Following their meeting in New York July 16, the **Quartet group consisting of the United Nations, Russia, the United States and the European Union** expressed strong support for the goal of achieving a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

*In a joint statement released July 16, the Quartet welcomed President Bush's commitment to active U.S. leadership and said a final settlement "with intensive effort on security and reform by all, could be reached within three years from now."*

*Participating in the meeting were United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security*

*Policy Javier Solana and European Commissioner for External Affairs Chris Patten.*

**Following is the text of a joint statement issued by the "Quartet" following their meeting in New York:**

*Consistent with President Bush's June 24 statement, the UN, EU and Russia express their strong support for the goal of achieving a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement which, with intensive effort on security and reform by all, could be reached within three years from now. The UN, EU and Russia welcome President Bush's commitment to active U.S. leadership toward that goal. The Quartet remains committed to implementing the vision of two states, Israel and an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as affirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 1397. The Quartet members, in their individual capacity and jointly, pledge all possible efforts to realize the goals of reform, security and peace and reaffirm that progress in the political, security, economic, humanitarian, and institution-building fields must proceed together, hand-in-hand. The Quartet reiterates its welcome of the initiative of Saudi Arabia, endorsed by the Arab League Beirut Summit, as a significant contribution towards a comprehensive peace.*

*The Quartet reaffirms that there must be a negotiated permanent settlement based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. There can be no military solution to the conflict; Israelis and Palestinians must address the core issues that divide them, through sustained negotiations, if there is to be real and lasting peace and security. The*

*Israeli occupation that began in 1967 must end, and Israel must have secure and recognized borders. The Quartet further reaffirms its commitment to the goal of a comprehensive regional peace between Israel and Lebanon, and Israel and Syria, based upon Resolutions 242 and 338, the Madrid terms of reference, and the principle of land for peace.*

Please understand that the study of prophecy is NOT a retrospective-only endeavor. If so, then prophesies like Christ's of Luke 21:20-22 or nearly the whole book of Jeremiah would be unnecessary. Some prophecy does indeed glorify God in its exacting precision when viewed historically such as Daniel 2 and 11. Others are given as a warning such as those mentioned above as well as most of the last days prophesies.

Whether or not the "Quartet" spoken of here is indeed prophesied in Daniel 7 clearly remains to be seen. **"I think Dr. Scofield points out that all the symbols of modern nations are representations of birds or of beasts of prey. Our own nation is symbolized by an eagle, a bird of prey. The British Empire is a lion. Russia is a bear. The prophet sees these nations struggling together culminating in the powerful reign of a single individual over the whole of this Western world."** -- Ray C. Stedman

In any event, let's not let our Bibles gather any dust nor our hearts any crust. These are the last days and we need to be more passionate for the Lord and obedient to Him than ever!