

Appendix A

Daniel 7: New Interpretation Needed

Eagles, Lions, Bears, Leopards and other Horrible Beasts

Traditional interpretation of Daniel 7:1-7 suggests the first three beasts are three ancient empires. My intention is to show that Daniel is describing nations now present on the world scene; that they are contemporary and why this passage does not apply to ancient history.

The first question is, can we find the empires of Chapter Seven anywhere in history or the future? There are two choices; either they are in the time continuum, which is my premise, or the whole passage has to be spiritualized (allegorical - having some message other than events in time and space). So, with joy I say let the words of Daniel 7:1-7 be heard!

(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 night 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.

(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.

(5) "And 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!'

(6) "After 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.

(7) "After 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."

The Three Contextual Possibilities

Daniel appears to describe four world class empires. The fourth empire appears to crush the other three literally but that is not positively clear at this point in our discussion. At any rate, the fourth empire controls all the others when Jesus returns.

The question is what time slot does the crushing action fit into? If we accept the premise that these empires can be found in space and time; somewhere between the beginnings of Babylon and the second coming of Christ, there seems to be just three practical, contextual interpretations. Each empire is either ancient historic, current historic, prophetic, or some

combination of the above.

(1) One or more of the first three empires is ancient historic, and the fourth is prophetic; such that the fourth empire tramples the *vestiges* of the first three. This option suggests the fourth beast tramples modern countries which originally came from the first three ancient kingdoms.

(2) The first three kingdom/empires are ancient historic and the fourth is divided into an earlier phase that is ancient historic and a later phase that is prophetic; the Fundamental Conservative Position. These believe the later Phase of the fourth beast tramples everyone around them but that the first three beasts (Lion/Eagle, Bear, etc. are not the nations trampled.

(3) The first three kingdoms are current historic and the fourth prophetic such that the fourth tramples the others directly and literally. All four are contemporaries of each other.

All these interpretations center around the issue of concurrent existence. Do all four beasts exist at the same time or do they not? I guess the best we can do is to look at the facts and you discern for yourself if truth exists herein. A friend once quipped, "That which is most believable is that which is most consistent with the facts." Just remember, if these three points of view are indeed all the contextual possibilities, then one of them must be the truth. Thus whichever best fits the facts is probably the truth. Let's look at possibility one, the vestiges option.

Vestiges?

As you will remember, possibility One maintains that one or more of the first three kingdoms is ancient historic and the fourth is prophetic such that the fourth empire tramples the vestiges of the first three, but not the three themselves. They realize the fourth beast tramples somebody at the end time but that it can't be the ancient historic kingdoms. These folks get around the issue of concurrent existence by substituting a modern vestige of an ancient empire to get around the 2000 year span they see between the third and fourth beasts.

For this view to be valid, they would have to show how today's world powers are vestiges of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece to provide candidates that could be trampled; or believe the

ancient kingdoms could be world powers again someday; and, believe that God has ignored the current contemporary world powers.

We know that God has not ignored current contemporary powers because Russia is mentioned in Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39. Thus there is a Biblical precedent for mentioning other contemporary world powers.

With respect to the vestiges idea, could someone show how the current contemporary powers are vestiges of the ancient empires? Could the vestiges of the ancient world powers (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Greece, and Italy) become world powers again? Maybe, but there are three reasons why Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece are *not* present world power antecedents.

(1) They are not world class powers but the language of the text and other scripture demands they be;

(2) It is not likely these ancient countries could become world class powers again because it is known to be near the time of the end;

(3) The C.I.S. (USSR) has never been a part of the four empires but it is involved in end time events per other scripture.

To accept this "Vestiges" option is to believe that God would focus on the remnant of the ancient kingdoms when the U.S., Russia and others are many times more powerful. This notion is inconsistent with the following Chapter Two strength model.

We see a definite increase in the strength of each empire as the Second Coming approaches. John Walvoord, President of Dallas Theological Seminary, comments concerning the poly metallic statue of Chapter Two:

"The descending value of the metals, however, permits their ascending strength, which suggests increased military might during the times of the Gentiles, leading to the final world conflict of Revelation 16 and 19 to which Daniel refers (11:36-45)."¹

Not only is the vestige idea contrary to the strength model, but it doesn't seem logical for God to ignore more powerful and significant empires in favor of ancient empires that have little influence in the future consummation. For

1. "Daniel - The Key to Prophetic Revelation", p.66.

these reasons, the truth must lie in some other alternative.

The Accepted Fundamental Conservative Position

John Walvoord, in the introduction of his commentary on Daniel Chapter Seven, states Possibility No.2; the accepted fundamental conservative position.

"In the interpretation of biblical prophecy, the seventh chapter of Daniel occupies a unique place. As interpreted by conservative expositors, the vision of Daniel provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the old Testament. Although its interpretation has varied widely, conservative scholars are generally agreed, with few exceptions, that Daniel traces the course of four great world empires, namely, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, concluding in climax of world history in the second coming of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the external kingdom of God, represented as a fifth and final kingdom which is from heaven.

"Interpreted in this way, the chapter forms a major outline of future events to which additional details are given later in the book of Daniel and in the New Testament, especially in the Revelation. Such a panorama of future events is of great importance to the student of prophecy, as it provides a broad outline to which all other prophetic events may be related. Conservative interpreters are agreed that this is genuine prophecy, that it is futuristic, that is, related to future events from Daniel's point of view, and that its culmination is the kingdom which Christ brings."²

This view is widely held by many conservative scholars today including Lehman Strauss,³ Tim LaHaye,⁴ Clarence Larkin,⁵ and H.A. Ironside.⁶ Their position, as I understand it, is the four beasts of Chapter Seven correspond to the four parts of the statue of Chapter Two which interpreted corresponds to the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Rome is divided into an earlier phase that conquers Greece and a later phase that produces the end time Antichrist. Then Jesus comes and destroys the kingdom of the Antichrist.

There is no doubt that Chapter Seven is similar. Four beasts come up out of the sea; the fourth tramples the other three and Jesus comes back to take over the world. Some of the names can even be correlated; a case can be made for the "Lion" being the national symbol of Babylon. It seems that the similarity of the two chapters (2 and 7) has led scholars to the idea that the two chapters mean the same thing but are just expressed in different terms. That is a reasonable line of thinking. The lack of a better explanation probably also plays a part in shaping previous interpretations. However, in the next section I will point out some differences in the two chapter's facts that demand a different explanation.

Problems of the Accepted Fundamental Conservative Position

The problems seem to center around the issue of concurrent existence. The first shows up in Chapter Two where Daniel relates the vision of the poly metallic statue.

It had a head of Gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. As the King gazed at the statue, a rock came flying through the air and hit the statue on its feet. The statue collapsed and was crushed to powder. The powder was blown away by the wind after which the rock became like a mountain and filled the whole earth. Concerning the interpretation, verses 34-35 read:

"You (Nebuchadnezzar) continued

3. "The Prophecies of Daniel", pp.206-210.

4. "The Beginning of the End", p.157.

5. "The Book of Daniel", p.121.

6. "Lectures on Daniel the Prophet", pp.125-129.

2. .Ibid, p.145:

looking until a stone (Jesus) was cut without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found." (Parenthetical explanations added for clarity.)

These verses demand concurrent existence of the Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Iron/Clay (four empires) at the coming of Jesus unless you spiritualize the expression "at the same time".

Accepted conservative expositors are forced to spiritualize this expression in order to support the notion that the gold, silver, etc. only represent ancient empires. If they were to take the expression literally, they would have to show how Nebuchadnezzar (the head of gold; verse 38) could exist at the Second Coming or admit the gold, silver, etc., has other figurative meaning. They choose to spiritualize the words "...at the same time,..." This is a problem because verse 45 prevents spiritualization.

"Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy."

To me, the Holy Spirit is reiterating that the events are literal and it is the "Rock" that crushes the gold, silver, etc.

The rules of interpretation say you should not spiritualize unless it is necessary to make sense. Is it necessary? It would be appropriate to enter here the conservative expositors comments but Ironside, DeHaan, Walvoord, Newell and Strauss were silent on this point. Why do they ignore such a blatant point?

I believe it is not necessary to spiritualize these verses because there is an alternative view, Possibility Three, that permits a literal interpretation.

If we interpret the gold, silver, etc. to be figurative, as other conservative expositors do, but not limit the meaning to just Babylon, Medo-Persia, etc.; then these verses become a type or model of two sets of events future to the visions of Daniel. I discuss these in detail in Chapter Ten of this book.

Succeeding and Concurrent Empires

The next part of this problem shows up in verses 38-40 where we see succeeding empires. Daniel is talking to King Nebuchadnezzar in verse 38.

"You are the head of gold.

39 "And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

40 "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron;"

The words "after you" (Aramaic: Athar, "to follow") and "then" (Aramaic: Edayin, "then") imply that one succeeds the other.

History since has shown that indeed the Medo-Persian empire overthrew Babylon, and Greece under Alexander the Great, overthrew the Medes and Persians. After Alexander's empire was divided among his four generals, the Romans took world control from them. Verse 40 goes on to talk about the Roman empire.

These empires existed separately and in no case did more than two exist together at any time with significant world class status. However, this is *not* the picture we get in verses 34-35. As we just discussed, they all exist at the same time unless you spiritualize the words "at the same time".

To summarize, we see Chapter Two having verses that imply both succeeding and concurrent empires. In verses 38-40 the empires succeed each other. Verses 34-35 and 44-45 imply the empires exist at the same time.

The literal explanation is the gold, silver, etc. represent in one case Babylon, Medo-Persia, etc. and in the other case empires other than Babylon, Medo-Persia, etc. Thus, Chapter Two implies two sets of future empires; the ancient

and the modern.

Similar but not the Same

As Walvoord brought out, conservative expositors view Chapter Seven as a repeat of Chapter Two. They would say Chapter Seven means the same as Chapter Two but uses different symbols. I would like to suggest that they are similar but not identical. If we can show they are similar but not identical, then it is easy to believe the two chapters may each mean something different.

In Chapter Two, conservative expositors view the first three statue sections (gold, silver and bronze) as Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. They view the legs of iron as ancient Rome, and the feet of iron/clay as the revived Roman empire.

In Chapter Seven, they view the first three beasts (Lion/Eagle, Bear, and Leopard) as Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. The fourth beast as future to 2008.

I do not view the first three beasts as ancient historic. However, I see the fourth beast of Chapter Seven as existing presently.⁷ Now that we have the facts summarized, let's look at the differences between the two chapters.

In Chapter Two, we all agree that the legs of iron and the feet of iron/clay have a connection. The legs of iron represent the old Roman empire, and the feet of iron and clay symbolize a future revived Roman empire. Thus we interpret these verses to imply a long span of time between the old Roman empire and the revived Roman empire nearly 2000 years later.

In Chapter Seven, we see no such implication. There are simply four beasts representing four empires. The text makes no mention of a divided or split fourth beast. Thus the two chapters are similar but not identical. The Chapter Seven text implies, if anything, just the opposite. It reads as if all four empires exist concurrently.

In Chapter Two, the interpretation of the poly metallic statue begins with Babylon and ends with Jesus at the Second Coming. In the dream interpretation, only the identity of the first

and last empires are named specifically: Babylon first (verse 38) and the reign of Jesus Christ last (verse 45). The identity of the other empires has been inferred from the context. I believe conservative expositors are justified in seeing Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome in these verses but since the empires are not named specifically and the reign of Jesus (end times) is in view, they are not justified in limiting the interpretation to just ancient empires. That is because, Chapter Two may be a type; of which, Chapter Seven is a fulfillment.

This is Possibility Three which is the subject of Chapter Ten in this book. The four beasts of Daniel Seven are not necessarily ancient empires. Maybe the four beasts are modern empires ending with the Second Coming. If the fourth beast, as Walvoord says, is 20th century, maybe it is not so far fetched that the other three beasts are modern empires. There is certainly no text that rules out this probability.

Ancient kingdoms not the "Remainder"

Agreeing that the fourth beast is 20th century, we can go on to the main problem. It has to do with interpreting the first three beasts (Lion/Eagle, Bear and Leopard) as Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. As Daniel is visualizing the ocean, he says, "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea," He describes the four; then about the fourth he says in verse seven, "It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; ..." Again verse 19 reads, "... trampled down the remainder with its feet." There is no doubt that the fourth beast tramples somebody. Walvoord comments:

"As Daniel watched, the beast was observed to devour and break in pieces and stamp the residue of the preceding kingdoms."⁸

You can interpret these verses in one of two ways. Either there is a group of four defined or a group of three defined. The meaning is quite different in each case.

If I define a group of three, then the

7. It was future when Walvoord wrote but is on the world scene now in the form of the ten nation European Economic Community (EEC).

8. "Daniel - The Key to Prophetic Revelation, p.161.

"remainder" is leftover from the three; namely a vestige of the three. But if I define a group of four, the "remainder" is leftover from the four; namely the three.

If I understand Walvoord correctly, he is saying the fourth beast tramples what is left over from the previous three beasts not including the fourth beast.

Now, if you define a group of four, and you say the fourth crushed the remainder; then since four were defined, the three others must be the remainder. And, if I read the passage right, it says the fourth beast tramples the remainder of a group *including* the fourth beast. Which would clearly indicate the other three beasts. And that would mean they would have to exist concurrently with the fourth beast. Thus the first three beasts could not be ancient kingdoms. The difference of the two interpretations gives an entirely different meaning to the passage. Which interpretation fits the text better?

Increased Strength

Is it conceivable that God could view the modern empires as insignificant compared to the ancient empires? Some would say yes. Is there any doubt that the U.S. is stronger, of more Godly heritage, or more protective of Israel than the ancient empires (those things that God would say is important)? Could anyone show how and why the ancient kingdoms could be more significant than the modern empires? I doubt it.

Now is the climax of history; the most important time of any age. Because Jesus is about to claim His throne in power and great glory! He will triumph over the strongest of the strong of all time. Let's look at the significance question.

Daniel 2:32-33 points out the problem. Looking at Nebuchadnezzar's statue, we see the head of gold, arms and chest of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and clay. This series of materials suggests a logical sequence. Notice the decreasing value and specific gravity, while at the same time, there is an increase in the strength of the metals. As Walvoord said before:

"The descending value of the metals, however, permits their ascending strength, which suggests increased military might during the

times of the Gentiles, leading to the final world conflict of Revelation 16 and 19 to which Daniel refers (11:36-45)."⁹ It appears we agree that this scripture is suggesting the modern empires are stronger than the ancient kingdoms.

How about our relationships? Could Israel survive against the Russian "Bear", humanly speaking, if the United States "Eagle" did not protect her? Hardly! If the U.S. had not agreed to protect Israel, Russia would have been there long ago. Thus God would have had to intervene long ago. Doesn't most of the world's missionary funds come from the U.S.? Isn't the Russian "Bear" known, from Ezekiel 38 and 39, to be significant in end time events? Someone will have to show me why the modern empires are less significant than ancient. Because that idea simply does not fit the Biblical or scientific facts that I see.

Future Kings

This problem is also time related. In Chapter Two, Daniel tells King Nebuchadnezzar that he is the "head of gold". Thus linking the gold of the statue with the king of Babylon. And, as we have just seen, conservative expositors link Babylon with the first beast of Chapter Seven. In my view, Babylon cannot be the first beast of Chapter Seven. Chapter Seven, verse 17 reads, "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth." Since Nebuchadnezzar died at least four years before Daniel wrote Chapter Seven, he cannot possibly be one of four future kings. Therefore, if Nebuchadnezzar cannot be linked with Babylon in Chapter Seven, then it is not very likely Daniel is talking about Babylon in Chapter Seven. You might ask, couldn't Babylon be rebuilt? It doesn't seem possible according to Jeremiah 25:12, 50:39-40, and 51:62. Besides, if we take that tack, we sail right back into the "vestige" problems.

Different National Symbols

Conservative expositors suggest that the national symbols of the Chapter Seven empires (lion/

9. Ibid p.66.

Eagle, Bear and Leopard) point toward the ancient empires as the subjects of that chapter. That idea seems to conflict with Daniel, Chapter Eight.

The national symbols given for Medo-Persia and Greece in Chapter Eight are not the same national symbols given in Chapter Seven to represent the nations depicted there. This means either God has assigned two national symbol/animal designations to one empire in two different scripture references, or the national symbols represent two different empires or nations. Chapter Eight, Verse 20, defines the "Ram" symbol as representing Medo-Persia. Historically, the image of a ram's head was stamped onto the coins of the empire, and they were used on the head dress of the Persian Emperors.¹⁰ It was their national symbol.

By contrast, the second beast of Chapter Seven, the Bear, is not very close in likeness, character or actions to that of a ram. When God wanted to show that an empire was made up of several other nations, He used the name of more than one animal to describe it.

For example; the fourth beast of Daniel Seven, and its parallel passage, the beast of Revelation 13,¹¹ have the animals named in the same verses. They are the Lion, Bear and Leopard. Thus more than one animal name per empire probably does not apply to Medo-Persia and Greece as individual national entities.

Likewise Greece, defined in Chapter Eight as a "goat", is the third world empire in Chapter Two. Could it also have a twin designation (Leopard) very diverse from the other? A better explanation is different symbols - different empires.

A Summary

We have looked at verses implying concurrent existence (2:34-35, 45) which do not fit the conservative view.

The popular conservative view suggests Daniel 7 is a repeat of Chap. 2. However, I have shown that Chap. 7 is different, in that there is no implication of a split fourth beast as in Chap. 2. And, that only the empires of Babylon and Jesus are specifically named. All the

others are implied from the context which leave their identities open to debate.

The conservative view does not adequately deal with how a modern 4th beast (empire) of Daniel 7 can crush and trample supposed ancient (first three) Beast/empires. Nor do they suggest who actually gets crushed.

No scholar that I know of suggests reasons for God ignoring modern world class empires in favor of politically insignificant ancient empires at the consummation. We have seen that the ancient empires interpretation violates the ascending strength model of the Chap. 2 statue vision.

If the Lion/Eagle is really Babylon, as conservative expositors say, Then how can Nebuchadnezzar, who was dead at the time Chap. 7 was written, be one of four future kings (7:17)? That seems impossible!

If the Bear and Leopard of Chap. 7 represent Medo-Persia and Greece, and Medo-Persia and Greece are specifically represented as a Ram and Goat in Chap. 8, then why has God given each of those countries *two* national symbols? That appears to be inconsistent. A better explanation is different symbols - different empires.

Any one of these reasons alone might not be reason to doubt the fundamental conservative interpretation of these verses. But taken together they form a foundation for the need of a better interpretation. Therefore, I suggest the first three kingdoms are the U.S., C.I.S., Arab-Africa alliance and the fourth the E.E.C., not politically solidified yet. And that the fourth kingdom, the EEC, will trample the others directly and literally.

10. "The Prophecies of Daniel", pp.235-236.

11. "Ibid", p.211.

