

LESSON 22

Question: “I know that there is a great deal of people in the brotherhood that love and respect you and others such as Wayne Jackson so what do you tell people when they point out that the two of you don’t exactly agree when it comes to the book of Daniel and Revelation?”

Answer: The short answer is that you should study both views and decide for yourself! The longer answer is that there are a number of different views on Daniel and Revelation in the brotherhood — Wayne Jackson, Jim McGuiggan, Foy Wallace, *Gospel Advocate Commentary*, to name a few. I am certainly confident in my own views on the subject (which are closest to McGuiggan’s from the previous list), but it is certainly not a case of my way or the highway. Each of those views has its strengths and weaknesses (with some having more weakness than strength!). Most differ primarily in timing, which is why I try to pay such close attention to the time frame of each prophecy. But with that said, there are other views from both inside and outside the brotherhood that violate the Scripture, and we can’t bend so far that we give any legitimacy to those views (such as premillennialism from outside the church or the AD 70 Max King theory from inside). And I am certain Wayne Jackson would agree with me on that because I have read his books on those two topics. Alexander Campbell was a post-millennialist who believed that a thousand years of peace would precede the coming of Christ, which is why his magazine was called the *Millennial Harbinger*.

Verse 3 Continued

Here in verse 3 these four beasts come up from the sea. Later, in verse 17, we will see that they also come up from the earth (which, of course, also includes the sea).

Coming from the sea stresses that these beasts will arise from the restless nations of the world. Coming from the earth stresses that these beasts are of human origin. This fact is also stressed by the number four, which appears twice in these two verses. The number four denotes the world. Four is the number of the great elements: earth, air, fire, and water. There are four directions: north, south, east, and west. There are four seasons of the year: fall, winter, spring, and summer.

When we see the number four we should generally look for something of worldly origin that will most likely be contrasted with something of heavenly origin. Here we see four great beasts, which we will soon learn are four great kingdoms (verse 17) — and we have already seen four great kingdoms in Daniel 2. And we know what those four kingdoms were contrasted against — the eternal kingdom from God that we saw in Daniel 2:44. Those four kingdoms are of human origin. The eternal kingdom, by contrast, was not cut out by human hands (Daniel 2:45). There is a great dividing line in this book between the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of God.

These four beasts are not all the same, but instead they are diverse from one another. We are about to find out how they differ.

Daniel 7:4

4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

The first great beast is like a lion, but it also has eagle's wings. But those wings are plucked, and the lion is made to stand as a man, and is given a man's heart. What kingdom is represented by this first beast? It must be Babylon. Why?

First, as we will see, Chapter 7 is closely related to Chapter 2, and in Chapter 2 we saw four kingdoms represented by the giant image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Those four kingdoms were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Here we also see four kingdoms, so we should not be surprised if Chapter 7 turns out to be showing us the same four kingdoms but from a different perspective.

Second, a winged lion was a very common symbol for Babylon, especially during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. One of the most common images for Babylon (still seen today in many museums) is that of a winged lion with a human head.

Third, ALL commentators agree on this point, and, although that unanimity might make us justifiably a bit nervous, here it turns out to be correct. (Interestingly, ALL or virtually all commentators agree that the Babylon of Revelation refers to Rome — but many of those commentators fail to see Rome in Daniel 7 even though many portions of this chapter are directly parallel to what we see in Revelation.) Just as Revelation uses a symbol for Rome that no one can possibly miss (a woman seated upon seven hills), so Daniel 7 uses a symbol for Babylon that no one can possibly miss (a winged lion).

Fourth, like Babylon, this first great beast is hindered and humiliated by God. Its wings are plucked, and it is made to stand up and act like a man rather than act like a lion. In historical fact, the king of Babylon was a man who was humiliated by being given the heart of a beast. In this vision, Babylon is pictured as a beast who is given the heart of a man.

Daniel 7:5

5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

The second beast is like a bear. It is raised up on one side, it has three ribs in its mouth, and it is told to devour much flesh. If we are correct that these four beasts represent the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, then this second beast should be Medo-Persia. Do these descriptions apply to Medo-Persia? Yes.

First, the historical order is correct. The Medo-Persian empire followed the Babylonian empire, and in fact in Chapter 5 we saw the very day when that transition occurred. Medo-Persia was the second kingdom in Daniel 2, so it should not surprise us that it is the second kingdom in Daniel 7. Daniel and secular historians are in complete agreement on this point — the combined Medo-Persian empire followed the Babylonian empire.

Second, one side of this bear is higher than the other side. That part of the image stresses another historical fact about the Medo-Persian empire — the Persians were dominant.

Third, this bear is told to continue eating even before it has finished its last meal. It is voracious and greedy, and that image is a perfect description of the Medes and the Persians.

But what about the *three* ribs? Usually when we see the number three in apocalyptic language we should look for a reference to God, but that is very hard to see here,

unless perhaps it is just a reminder that God is behind all that is occurring here with these kingdoms.

I think a better explanation may be either that these three ribs simply add to the picture of the greedy starving bear, or that they may depict the three major Medo-Persian conquests that occurred under Cyrus and his son Cambyses.

- The conquest of the Lydian kingdom in 546 BC.
- The conquest of the Chaldean kingdom in 539 BC.
- The conquest of Egypt in 525 BC.

If it is the latter, then this may be an example of where we take a number figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise. That is, the three major campaigns of Medo-Persia are so closely tied to that kingdom, that we decide the number three here must be a *literal* reference to those three campaigns. We are about to see something similar with Greece.

Daniel 7:6

6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

The third beast is a leopard that has four wings and four heads, and dominion is given to it. If we are correct that these four beasts correspond with the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, then this leopard should be Greece. Do these descriptions apply to Greece? Yes. (And keep in mind as we continue that these prophecies were

written long before Greece under Alexander the Great conquered the Persians in 331 BC.)

First, as with a leopard, Greece was known for its speed. It moved and conquered very rapidly.

Second, this beast has four wings and four heads. Yes, the number four usually stresses the worldly nature of something, but here (as with the three ribs) I think there is another reason why we see the number four. After the death of Alexander, Greece was split into four pieces that were ruled by his four generals: Cassander in Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus eastward in Thrace and Asia Minor; Ptolemy in Egypt, Cyprus, and nearby Asia Minor; and Seleucus to the Indus River. (The number four is associated with Greece in the same way that the numbers 50 and 1776 are associated with the United States. The numbers are literal, but they can also be used as symbols because of their close association with what they describe.)

This use of four seems to be another example where it seems most logical to interpret a number literally rather than figuratively even though the number appears in an apocalyptic section.

We will see similar usage later in the book. Here in Daniel 7:6 Greece is depicted as a beast with four heads. Later in Daniel 8:8 Greece will be depicted as a goat with four horns. In Daniel 8:21-22 we will find out that those horns denote kings or kingdoms. (We should pause here and note that heads and horns are sometimes used to denote both kings and kingdoms. This point will be very useful to remember as we continue.)

So, the second beast is Medo-Persia, and this third beast is Greece. But the liberals would have us believe that this third beast is Persia (with the second beast being just the Medes). Does that make sense? No. This third beast shows us a divided kingdom — it has four heads! Persia remained unified until its end when Alexander the Great conquered it. Greece, however, ended as four kingdoms. This third kingdom is Greece.

Why won't the liberals agree, despite all of the evidence, that this third kingdom is Greece? Because of the fourth kingdom. If this third kingdom is Greece, then the fourth kingdom must be Rome, and if the fourth kingdom is Rome, then we have before us unmistakable and unassailable evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures — and that is something no liberal can tolerate!

And the arrogance of these liberal critics is unbounded. Instead of admitting that they are mistaken, they insist that Daniel must have mistakenly thought that Persia would be split into four pieces!

What is meant by the end of verse 6 — that dominion was given to it? That is a reminder that God is controlling things here. There is only one explanation for how Greece conquered Persia, and that is because God wanted it to happen. Why? Because God was creating the perfect cradle into which his son and his kingdom could be born — Roman peace combined with Greek language and culture.

As Horace famously stated, Rome may have conquered Greece, but Greek culture conquered Rome. The combination of Greek culture with Roman might created the perfect cradle for the coming of Christ and the beginning of his kingdom, and it was not by accident! The Greeks brought reason, rationality, logic, and language. Rome brought peace, roads, trade, law, and communication.

Although Roman religion later brought emperor worship and persecution (which Daniel will also be told about), initially it was open and tolerant, particularly during the time when Christianity was viewed simply as a Jewish sect and allowed to freely spread across the known world.

Daniel 7:7

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured

and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

And finally we meet the fourth beast. It is dreadful and terrible. Unlike the three prior beasts, there does not seem to be a known creature to which it can be compared. It is exceedingly strong, it has great iron teeth, it devours, it brakes in pieces, and it stamps the residue from its feet. It has ten horns.

Even if we had not seen Chapter 2, we would know the identity of this fourth beast. With that description it can be none other than the mighty Roman empire. Yes, mighty, but as we saw in Chapter 2, it had feet of clay.

Rome, like this beast, was different from the beasts that came before it. The world had never seen anything like Rome.

And this beast has ten horns, which we will discover in verse 24 denote ten kings. Which ten kings? We will answer that question when we get to verse 24.

As with the rise of Greece, the only way to explain the rise of Rome is that God wanted it to occur. And, in fact, God had told Daniel that it would occur hundreds of years before it happened. How else can we explain the rise of Greece under Alexander the Great? How else can we explain the ascendancy of Rome over such great powers as Carthage, and the Hellenistic kingdoms of Macedon, Syracuse, and the Seleucid empire? Listen to a few sentences from the introduction to the recent book, *Rome and Her Enemies: An Empire Created and Destroyed by War*:

Lying at its heart is a mystery as profound as any in the records of human civilization. How on earth did the Romans do it? How did a single city, one that began as a small community of cattle-rustlers, camped out among marshes and hills, end up ruling an empire that stretched from the moors of Scotland to the deserts of Iraq?

These secular historians ask why — the answer to their question is that it happened because God made it happen, just as God had already told Daniel long before that it would happen.

Daniel 7:8

8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Daniel considers the ten horns of verse 7, and, while he does, something happens. An eleventh horn (called a little horn) arises up, and three of the other horns are plucked up by the roots (which would leave us with eight horns). This eleventh horn has eyes like a man, and a mouth that speaks great things. Who is this little horn? We will discover that when we get to verses 24 and 25, but let's note a few things about it here.

First, that final phrase in verse 8 should ring a bell with us. We will see it again in Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:5 — *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

Why 42 months? How many years is 42 months? Three and a half years, a broken seven!

Second (and particularly when we get to verses 24-25), we might also be reminded of something Paul wrote:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 — *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

We often say today (correctly) that Jesus can return at any moment, but was that true in the first century? No. In fact, Paul just told us that it was not true — “that day shall not come” expect there come something else first. What was that something else? The thing Paul mentions was the coming of the son of perdition. Why? Because Daniel had prophesied that such a person would come (we are reading about him here in Daniel 7), and that prophecy had to be fulfilled before Jesus could come again. That is exactly what Paul was saying in 2 Thessalonians 2.

Who is this son of perdition? Who is this little horn? We will find out when we get to verses 24-25.

Daniel 7:9-10

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand

times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Here we have a great judgment scene in which the ancient of days sits at the head of an enormous court in which the books are opened and judgment is rendered. To which judgment does this refer? There are many different judgments in the Bible. The two leading candidates for this judgment are the judgment of Rome and the judgment of the world at the end of all time. Which choice fits better with the context? That question sort of answers itself, doesn't it? What have we just been looking at? Rome.

The difficulty with language of judgment is that there are many judgments and the same language is used to describe them. Remember one of our interpretive rules — similarity of language does not prove identity of subject.

Before we look at this example, let's look at another example — the judgment of Jerusalem in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:27-31 — *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his*

elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

That language sure sounds like the end of the world — but we know that the end of the world is not what is being described there. How do we know that? Because of verse 34.

Matthew 24:34 — *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

The word “generation” in Matthew 24:34 is the same Greek word found in Matthew 1.

Matthew 1:17 — *So all the **generations** from Abraham to David are fourteen **generations**; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen **generations**; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen **generations**.*

The Greek word used there and in verse 34 does *not* mean “race,” despite what some of the modern versions may suggest in their (dishonest) footnotes. The Greek word for “race” is different and is found, for example, in 1 Peter 2:9 (“elect race” in the ASV).

Whatever is being described in Matthew 24:27-31, we know with certainty that it happened in the first century — and in fact that event was the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70, and verses 27-31 describe that judgment using figurative apocalyptic language.

Could such language also be used to describe the final judgment at the end of the world? Yes, and such language is used elsewhere in the Bible for that purpose, but not here. Here it describes the judgment of Jerusalem, and the time frame in verse 34 (remember our rule about time frames!) leaves no other choice.

Now let's come back to Daniel 7:9-10. We see language of judgment that is used elsewhere to describe the final judgment — just as it is used elsewhere to describe earlier judgments. What judgment is being described here? The context and the time frame point to Rome. This is the judgment of the fourth beast, and the fourth beast is Rome.

Verse 11 tells us that after this judgment the fourth beast is slain and burned with fire. Verses 21-22 tell us that this judgment was against the little horn who was waging war against the saints. Verse 26 tells us that this court would take the dominion away from the little horn.

Revelation 20 contains another great judgment scene similar to what we see here. (It also contains thrones, books, and fire.) John wrote that the judgment in Revelation 20 would come to pass soon after the book was written (Revelation 1:1; 1:3; 10:6; 22:6; 22:10). Revelation was written during the Roman persecution. Thus, the context suggests that the judgment scene in Revelation 20 also applies to the judgment of the fourth beast from Daniel 7 — the Roman empire. The judgment scene in Daniel 7 and the judgment scene in Revelation 20 both apply to the same judgment — the judgment of Rome.

Did Rome fall in the first century? Yes and no. The Roman empire did not, but the evil dynasties that are the focus of this prophecy (the first dynasty that ended with Nero, and the second dynasty that ended with Domitian) did fall in the first century. In any event, was Rome judged and sentenced by God during the first century? Absolutely yes! And, in fact, Daniel had been told about that sentence long before it was given and long before Rome did the evil deeds that caused that sentence to be given.

But this language looks so much like the end of the world! How can it apply to something else? We know from Matthew 24 that similar language is used elsewhere to apply to something other than the end of the world. We also know that from Revelation if we accept the oft repeated time frame for that book. And we know that from the Old Testament where similar language is used to describe the fall of Baby-

lon, Tyre, Assyria, Egypt, and others. If we lift these verses out of context and interpret them without regard to the surrounding verses, then we have no hope of properly understanding them.

Daniel 7:11-12

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

The judgment of the court was that the fourth beast be destroyed, and this event is pictured in verse 11. The beast is burned with fire and utterly destroyed. Keep in mind that this fourth beast is Rome — first century Rome in particular — and so, as always, we need to keep that time frame in mind.

The other three beasts (Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece) have lost their power (their dominion was taken away), but they are pictured as still being around — their lives are prolonged for a season and a time. Why? Because they will soon hear their fate as well. They are shown as awaiting their own judgment.

The first three beasts lived on in the fourth beast. They had the same ungodly ways and goals. What did they have in common? They were all earthly kingdoms that were trying to take the place of or destroy the work of God.

We saw this already in Chapter 2, where all four kingdoms were shown by a single giant statue — and all four were destroyed by the same stone made without hands. God is showing us here in Chapter 7 the same event that he showed us in Chapter 2. These four beasts are that giant statue, and once again they are being destroyed.

We also see this same image in John's description of Rome:

Revelation 13:1-2 — *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a **leopard**, and his feet were as the feet of a **bear**, and his mouth as the mouth of a **lion**: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

In Revelation 13, the beast (Rome) is like a leopard, a bear, and a lion. Where have we seen those three animals before? In Daniel 7, we just saw a lion, a bear, and a leopard (in that order). In Revelation 13, John mentions a leopard, a bear, and a lion (in the reverse order). Daniel and John are both looking at the same three kingdoms, but Daniel is looking FORWARD through time whereas John is looking BACKWARD through time!

The language we see here is very common in the Bible. A great enemy of God's people comes on the scene, and God rescues his people and judges that great enemy. That judgment is very often described using apocalyptic language, and very often that language reminds us of language that could be applied to the final judgment at the end of the world, but similarity of language does not prove identity of subject! We need to look at that language in context and pay close attention to the time frame. When we do that here, what we find is that the fourth beast is the Roman empire, which means that these judgments occurred long ago — just as Matthew 24:34 tells us that the judgment of Jerusalem (a different judgment described using the same language) occurred in the first century.