

## Daniel 7

If we inquire of the various schools of interpretation as to how they identify the different beasts of Dan 7, we will discover that all are agreed that the lion represents Babylon (v 4). The historicist and futurist schools identify the bear as Medo-Persia, while the preterist school, which is essentially comprised of critical scholars, identifies it as Media only (v 5). Thus while the historicist and futurist schools continue in the sequence to identify the leopard and the non-descript beast as Greece and Rome, the preterist lags one step behind, identifying them as Persia and Greece (vs 6-7).

Historicists and futurists finally diverge when they come to the little horn. The former identify it as the papal horn which came out of pagan Rome. The latter, holding to a gap in the flow of prophetic history, identify it as the final and still-future Antichrist (v 8). Since they end their fourth beast series with Greece, preterists identify the little horn growing out of this beast as Antiochus IV.

There are, of course, variations in the applications made by individual commentators within each of these schools of prophetic interpretation, but these variations are not of real significance to us here. The essential difference for our present purpose is the divergence that has developed over the interpretation of the second beast and the consequences that flow from that divergence into the interpretation of the subsequent beast-nations.

By dividing Media from Persia, preterists have shortened this prophetic scheme to the point where Antiochus IV developed out of the Grecian beast as the little horn in the second century B.C. The other main scheme which identifies the second beast as a joint symbol for the combined kingdom of Media and Persia ends one historical step farther down the road with Rome

referred to him in his capacity as king of the Persian empire. Late in 538 B.C., however, the scribes added the title "King of Babylon" to his titulary, and it continued to be in use through the rest of his reign and those of his successors down to the time of Xerxes.

There are only two possibilities here. Either there was an interregnum and the throne of Babylon went unoccupied for a year, or somebody else besides Cyrus occupied the throne for that period of time. In my opinion, the prime candidate for this other king of Babylon is Ugbaru, the general whose troops conquered Babylon for Cyrus. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, he appointed governors in Babylonia (cf Dan 6:1) and he resided in Babylon until he died there a year later, one month before the title "King of Babylon" was added to Cyrus' titulary.

Ugbaru could have been reasonably well advanced in age by the time of his death, a circumstance which would fit with the age of 62 for Darius the Mede (Dan 5:31). Cuneiform sources do not provide us with any information about his father, Ahasuerus, or his ethnic origin as a Mede (Dan 9:1). Darius could have been Ugbaru's throne name, as the use of throne names is known both in Babylon and Persia. The logical explanation why the dates in Daniel progress from the first year of Darius the Mede (9:1) to the third year of Cyrus (10:1) is that Darius died in the interval. This harmonizes satisfactorily with the cuneiform evidence.

While the case has not been proven conclusively for lack of direct reference to Darius the Mede in a cuneiform text, it should be kept in mind that by far the greater portion of Neo-Babylonian contract tablets are still unpublished; 18,000 of them from Sippar, for example, are in the British Museum. Even without the publication of those tablets a reasonable hypothesis for him can be made out of the published tablets.

One must also keep in mind how very fragmentary the picture of the past still is which has been recovered thus far from the ancient Near East. Thus the critical view that the author of Daniel blundered in identifying a Median king of Babylon has not been sustained by the historical sources of the sixth century B.C. On the contrary, the detailed knowledge of the history of Babylon of this period being revealed in this and other passages in the book of Daniel argues strongly that the author was an eyewitness to those events.

Lacking historical support for their interpretation of the second beast of Dan 7, preterists must fall back on the interpretation of the symbols themselves. What has commonly been done here, as in the recent Anchor Bible volume on *Daniel*,<sup>3</sup> is to emend the text by transposing the phrase about the three ribs in the mouth of the bear forward, so that the ribs end up in the mouth of the lion instead. On the other hand, the phrases relating

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<sup>3</sup>*The Anchor Bible*, "The Book of Daniel," a new translation with notes and commentary on chs 1-9 by Louis F. Hartman, C.S.S.R. Introduction and commentary on chs 10-12 by Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M. (Garden City, NY, 1978).

to a change in the lion are transferred to the bear. Thus the bear receives the heart of a man and stands on his hind legs, not on one side. This altered bear is then supposed to refer to the only ruler of the fictitious Median kingdom that the author of Daniel presumably knew—Darius the Mede.

In contrast to this garbling of history and of the text in support of a theory, the historicist interpretation of these symbols seems most reasonable. The raising up of the bear first on one side and then the other, can be seen quite naturally as a reference to the composite nature of the kingdom formed by a fusion of the Medes and Persians. When left in the bear's mouth, the three ribs may reasonably be taken as representing the three major conquests of the combined forces of the Medes and Persians in the sixth century B.C.: Lydia in 547, Babylon in 539, and Egypt in 525.

Support for this interpretation in Dan 7 can be found on the basis of the interpretation of the ram in Dan 8. Its two disproportionate horns are specifically identified as the kings of Media and Persia (v 20), expressing the same duality that is found in the prophet's view of the bear in ch 7. The tripartite nature of the ram's conquests also parallels the three ribs in the mouth of the bear, since it expanded to the north (Lydia), to the west (Babylon), and to the south (Egypt).

The parallels between these two beasts support the interpretation of the former already arrived at from its context in Dan 7, namely, that the bear represents Medo-Persia. This means that the non-descript beast, the fourth in order there, must represent Rome; therefore, the little horn that came from it cannot represent Antiochus IV.

From this conclusion about the little horn in Dan 7, the next main question is, What is its relationship to the little horn in Dan 8? Could the little horn in Dan 8 still be Antiochus Epiphanes even though the little horn in Dan 7 does not represent him?

Among historicist and futurist interpreters there have been a significant number who have opted for different interpretations of these two figures. Virtually all of the pre-Millerite interpreters of the historicist school from the 18th and 19th centuries referred to by L. E. Froom in vols 3 and 4 of *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*<sup>4</sup> identified the little horn of Dan 7 as the papacy. Only half of them identified the little horn in Dan 8 the same way. The other half interpreted it as Mohammedanism.

A similar split can be seen among futurist interpreters of today. Some of them identify the little horn of Dan 7 as the future Antichrist and the little horn of Dan 8 as Antiochus IV. Thus the possibility should be left open and not ruled out *a priori* that these two prophetic symbols could refer to different historical entities.

On the other hand, there are significant arguments in favor of identifying the little horns in these two chapters as the same historical entity. First, the fact that the same symbol was used for both of them, whether in

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<sup>4</sup>LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, DC, 1946, 1954), vols. 3, 4.

explanations given in chs 9-12 elaborate on the visions. Their explanations began already in chs 7 and 8. This is another way of saying that all the prophetic imagery God wished to convey was in place by the time the vision of ch 8 had been received. The final supplement to the basic vision had been given and no further visions in terms of prophetic symbols were necessary.

With the vision of ch 8 standing in this relation to the vision of ch 7, certain details of the basic vision could be further elaborated. It also means that other details did not have to be repeated. The clearest case of this comes from the fact that there is no beast to represent Babylon in Dan 8. The common explanation is that the Neo-Babylonian empire was drawing to a close. Therefore, it did not need to be represented again. This is not entirely accurate from the human point of view.

The Harran inscriptions of Nabonidus state that he spent a decade at Tema in Arabia before returning to Babylon to defend it against the onslaught of Cyrus. The Verse Account of Nabonidus states that he entrusted the kingship of Babylon to his son Belshazzar when he took off on that journey. It was early during this regency of Belshazzar in Babylon that Daniel received both of these visions. The precise date when Nabonidus returned to Babylon is not known, but it could not have been any later than 540 B.C., the year before Babylon fell to the Persians. He could have returned there earlier, but this point cannot be determined with accuracy because of the damaged condition of Nabonidus Chronicle.

We estimate, therefore, that the vision of ch 7 was given to Daniel around 550 B.C., and the vision of ch 8 was given to him about 548 B.C. Even by the time Daniel had received this second vision Nabonidus still felt that his empire was sufficiently safe for him to spend another seven years in Tema. Judging by the situation in Babylon at that time, it is not at all clear that the Neo-Babylonian empire was passing off the scene of action by the time Daniel's vision of ch 8 was given. From the divine perspective, the Neo-Babylonian empire was already doomed, but it was not yet evident in terms of human political circumstances experienced by Daniel and others living in Babylon at that time.

Instead of deleting Babylon from the vision because it was passing off the scene of action, it could equally well have been deleted because there was no further need to elaborate on the prophetic imagery used for Babylon in the first vision. As we follow the order in which God presented the elements of these visions, we may rather say that Babylon was deleted from the second vision not because the human political circumstances had already experienced dramatic changes, but because God desired to elaborate on other parts of the primary vision. Medo-Persia had already been introduced as the successor to Babylon in the first vision, and it was not necessary to repeat this point in the second.

A similar point can be made from the prophecy of ch 11. With respect to the Persian kings, the angel says, "Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia; and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them; and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece" (v 2). It is clear that the fourth king mentioned is Xerxes and his

From the full vision in ch 7 with four beasts and a little horn a reduction down to two beasts and the little horn has taken place. Evidently, further details concerning the two deleted beasts were not considered to be necessary and the details added here concentrate on the little horn.

In a similar manner, in Dan 8 the four horns' expansion to the four winds was considered to be an adequate basis upon which to introduce the same little horn into the scene of action in this supplementary vision. It was not necessary to spell out everything that happened in the interim between the visions.

Once the transition has been made in this way, everything that follows concentrates on elaborating details concerning the little horn. This point is emphasized by the fact that the vision in ch 8 was given a title which is related to the activity of that horn in v 26 ("the vision of the evenings and the mornings").

The information available from Dan 7 bearing on the question as to whether the little horn of Dan 8 should be identified as Antiochus IV Epiphanes may now be summarized. First, the historicist position identifying the fourth beast of Dan 7 as Rome seems to be a sound one. This means that the little horn coming out of Rome cannot be Antiochus IV. If the little horns of Dan 7 and 8 refer to the same historical entity, we must conclude that the little horn of Dan 8 cannot be Antiochus either.

Three important aspects support our conclusions. First, the same symbolic terminology is applied to both powers. Second, both are described as carrying out similar activities. Third, the general consideration that the later prophecies in the book of Daniel amplify his earlier prophecies.

In the light of this evidence it seems reasonable to conclude that the treatment of the little horn in Dan 8 should amplify the statement concerning the little horn in Dan 7 rather than introduce another entity. The third line of evidence noted above also explains why it was unnecessary to repeat in ch 8 all the details of the vision in ch 7.

These three related aspects concerning the little horns in chs 7 and 8 make it probable that both refer to the same historical entity; but they do not prove that point conclusively. In order to reach a more definitive position, we must study the little horn in the context of the ch 8 vision itself. Furthermore, it will be necessary to relate to it information that is available from the later prophecies of Daniel.

## Daniel 8

Since Antiochus IV is commonly identified with the little horn of Dan 8, arguments favoring this identification will be considered first.

### 1. Arguments in favor of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the little horn

**A. Antiochus was a Seleucid king.** As one of this dynasty of kings, he could have proceeded from one of the four horns referred to in Dan 8:8—provided that was the little horn's origin.