

## **Daniel 2 and 7: Are They Equal or Not?**

### **Part 1**

Former President Ronald Reagan made famous the proverb, “Trust, but verify” – at least he did for me. This pearl of cautious wisdom is certainly apropos as it relates to the doctrinal beliefs taught by the founders of the pretrib position. The more I study prophetic passages without assuming what has been taught by these men, the more I discover fewer and fewer passages that really support any aspect of pretribulationism. Other than the promise of believers removal before the wrath of God falls and the distinction between National Israel and the Church, there is very little in the pretrib position that has explicit scriptural basis.

The closer I look at the particular Scriptures many pretribbers use to support their view, the more I see the lack of good Bible study methods demonstrated. Many of their positions are based on assumptions, similarities, presuppositions, and outright false conclusions due to a deficiency of good exegetical skills. Once again I have been forced to reconsider a basic tenant of the pretrib position – because a closer look at the text that supports their conclusion does not explicitly say what they say it says. In this case, they argue that Daniel 2 is the same as Daniel 7 as it relates to the four kings/kingdoms.

It has long been assumed by most conservatives and some liberals that Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 detail the history of four kingdoms: (1) Babylon; (2) Medo-Persia; (3) Greece; and (4) Rome. To reach this conclusion, most must base it on similarities between these two chapters, because there is no explicit basis for this claim. This is very important. Daniel does not explicitly state that the same four kingdoms are represented in both chapters. The reader needs to know that there are truly significant differences between these two chapters. I was alerted to a possible difference by a book soon to be published by another author that Daniel may have meant four entirely different kingdoms in Daniel 7.

The rationale for the belief that Daniel 2 and 7 narrate the same history, although from two different perspectives, is ultimately based on some rather loose and disconnected conclusions. The chart below establishes the points of similarity that ultimately become the basis for those who argue that Daniel 2 and 7 teach the same basic history of four empires.

<b>A Comparison of Prophecies in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7</b>	
<b>Daniel 2</b>	<b>Daniel 7</b>
<b>Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream of a Statue</b>	<b>Daniel’s Dream of Four Beasts</b>
<b>Head – Babylon</b>	<b>-Lion- ?</b>
<b>Breasts and Arms – Medo-Persian</b>	<b>-Bear- ?</b>
<b>Belly and Thighs – Greece</b>	<b>-Leopard- ?</b>
<b>Legs and Feet – Rome</b>	<b>-Diverse Beast- ?</b>

## **Babylon Equals the Lion**

The facts that supposedly support the identification of the “lion” of chapter seven with Nebuchadnezzar/Babylon of chapter 2 are these:

1. Lion/eagle symbolically represent Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold. Lion as king of beasts and eagle as king of birds correspond to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.
2. Winged lions have been recovered from the ancient ruins of Babylon.
3. Other O.T. prophets referred to Nebuchadnezzar as both a lion and an eagle, i.e. Jeremiah 4:7-lion; Ezekiel 17:3-eagle.
4. The physical changes which the lion undergoes correspond to the changes experienced by Nebuchadnezzar.
5. “Wings of an eagle” represent the swiftness of Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest.

It should be immediately clear to the reader that the case for the identification of the lion with Babylon is circumstantial at best. Lion/eagles as respective kings of their domain is a modern concept read back into the text. The finding of winged-lions in the ruin of ancient Babylon does not prove that Nebuchadnezzar saw himself thus or that such images existed during Nebuchadnezzar’s time. The Assyrians used the winged lion as a symbol as well. That the winged lion experienced a transformation from animal to human is similar to what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, but there are significant differences. In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar is depicted first as a tree to be cut down. The fulfillment in that chapter depicts Nebuchadnezzar as “wet with the dew of heaven, until his hair was grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails as the claws of a bird.”

To say that Nebuchadnezzar became a lion is different from saying that a lion became a man. Nebuchadnezzar did not become anything. He was forced to act like an animal, but he did not become an animal. The primary reason I am less inclined to accept the conservative opinion regarding the relationship between Daniel 2 and 7 is this: the vision Daniel records in chapter 7 occurred at least nine years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Daniel would see Nebuchadnezzar “coming up out of the sea.” Daniel 7:3 indicates that “four great beasts come up out of the sea, different from one another.” For Daniel to indicate that Nebuchadnezzar was one of the four beasts breaks with a pattern seen throughout the book.

When a future event involved a king then living, that king received a vision or dream from God. However, when future events did not involve a then living king, God gave such visions or dreams to Daniel. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar received visions from God that concerned them directly. However, all other visions were given to Daniel and they always involved future events that did not include the then ruling king of the particular nation ruling over Daniel at the time.

## **Medo-Persia Equals the Bear**

The case for seeing the “bear” of Daniel 7 as equal with the “breasts and arms” of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue – the latter representing the Medo-Persian empire – is based largely on the idea of conquest. Those who support this conclusion argue that:

1. The bear has one side raised higher than the other. This symbolizes the rise of the Persians over the Median empire.
2. Since the legs are raised, this indicates that the bear is about to attack, which symbolizes the Medo-Persian empire’s desire to conquer.
3. The “three ribs in its mouth” symbolically depict the Medo-Persian desire to conquer as well.
4. The three ribs symbolically depict Medo-Persian conquest of three countries. Which three countries is unknown.
5. The command to “rise, devour much flesh” means that the Medo-Persians should continue to make conquests.

It is critical that you as a reader understand upon what basis those who argue for the identification of the bear of Daniel 7 with the medo-Persia beasts and arms of Daniel 2 arrive at their conclusion. The Medo-Persian empire desired to conquer all the earth. It is true that they did conquer more land mass than any previous kingdom, however, the same could be said for both Greece and Rome. Again, their case is purely circumstantial. Nothing about the bear, symbolically or otherwise, depicts the Medo-Persian empire except in the minds of those who want to make a case for it.

## **Greece Equals the Leopard**

The facts that supposedly support the identification of the “leopard” of chapter seven with Greece of chapter 2 are these:

1. The leopard symbolically depicts swiftness and is blood thirsty. These were characteristics of the Greeks.
2. The four wings of the leopard symbolically represent unusual speed and action for which supposedly Greece was known in conquest.
3. The four heads mentioned after the speedy conquest and symbolical of the leaders represent the four kings of the split empire of Greece after the death of Alexander the Great.

Again, the proof is circumstantial and largely one of similarity. What each animal symbolizes is more about modern notions than the ancient view of these animals. Whether “four wings”

represent unusual speed is a matter of guessing. Whether Daniel intended to suggest something special by referring to the wings before the four heads is pure conjecture. That Daniel would make reference to the four kings who ruled after Alexander the Great without giving any significance to Alexander himself is highly unlikely. In both chapters 2 and 8, Alexander is clearly referenced in connection with Greece.

Four wings and four heads are the only details that are similar to Daniel's depiction of Greece in chapter 2. It is only this similarity that forms the basis of those who argue for compatibility between chapters 2 and 7 of the book of Daniel. That chapter 7 does not clearly identify Alexander the Great in the description of the leopard empire is highly suspect to us.

### **Rome Equals the Diverse Beast**

The facts that supposedly support the identification of the "diverse beast" of chapter seven with Rome of chapter 2 are these:

1. The fourth kingdom is characterized by having great strength, which is also the characteristic of Rome.
2. The amount of space given to the diverse beast matches that given to Rome in chapter 2.
3. The diverse beast had teeth of iron as the statue in Daniel 2 had legs of iron.
4. The diverse beast makes its conquest with decisiveness, fearfulness, and terror-inspiring tactics, which is supposedly characteristic of Rome.
5. The ten horns of the diverse beast require 10 ruling kings at the same time, which did not occur during the Roman empire. This necessitates a revival of the Roman empire at some point in the future.

It is clear that those who want to make Daniel 2 and 7 the same basic history struggle when it comes to the fourth beast of Daniel 7. There is not one note of weakness about the diverse beast of Daniel 7. However, Daniel 2 makes a big deal of the fact that Rome will be both strong and weak at the same time (iron and clay). The amount of space given to both fourth empires does not prove that they are the same empire. It only points to the fact that both are important as the final kingdoms of a historical sequence. While Rome may have inspired terror in the hearts of those they conquered, the same can be said of the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks. The fourth kingdom of Daniel 7 is unparalleled in every sense from all the kingdoms that precede it.

The final events connected with the diverse beast are significantly different from those of the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2. They have no parallel with anything that happened during the Roman empire. That fact has made it absolutely necessary to conceive of a revival of the Roman empire to find any possible fulfillment in connection with Rome. There is no explicit basis for this claim in Daniel 2, 7, or 11; nor is there any indication of this fact in the Revelation given to

John. The necessity of a revival of the Roman empire is only necessary if one attempts to prove or insists that Daniel 2 and 7 are synonymous.

As the reader can see there is no explicit basis for the claim that Daniel 2 and 7 are synonymous. The claim is made on circumstantial evidence at best. Because of similarities and sequencing, this position is put forward. However, there is a better solution. It has grammatical, historical, theological, and contextual support.

**Part Two Coming Soon**