Unsealing DANIEL'S MYSTERIES

WITH MARK FINLEY

Kingdoms in Collision

7



ADVENTURES IN BIBLE PROPHECY



7

Kingdoms in Collision

In Daniel 7, the prophet outlines the rise and fall of kingdoms. These kingdoms in collision battle for world dominion. Armies fight for this earth's throne. Potential leaders aspire to earthly greatness. Kings and emperors wage war. The stakes are high; the rulership of this world hangs in the balance. Finally, a religious-political superpower arises. This power demands the total allegiance of its subjects. God's faithful people, who refuse to give this allegiance, are cruelly persecuted. Changing God's law, this power sets up its own standard of right. The destiny of the world trembles in the balance.

Then the scene switches from earth to heaven. The Almighty declares that He is the rightful ruler of all the world's kingdoms. He pronounces judgment upon the would-be usurpers of the throne. The kingdoms of the world are His. He created our planet, and He redeemed it. "All peoples, nations, and languages" (Daniel 7:14, NKJV) serve and praise Him forever.

Understanding Bible Prophecy

1. What scene does Daniel describe in his dream? What did he see? What did his vision contain? Daniel 7:1–3.

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NOTE: Bible prophecy contains a variety of symbolic representations. Each of these symbols is explained clearly in Scripture.

- A beast represents a kingdom (Daniel 7:17, 23).
- Winds represent strife, war, or conflict (Jeremiah 49:36, 37).
- Water represents multitudes, peoples, and nations (Revelation 17:15).

2. What four beasts did Daniel see in his vision? Daniel 7:4, 5, 6, 7.

a. _____ Verse 4.

A lion, the first beast, is a fitting symbol of Babylon. The Old Testament prophets called Babylon a lion. A lion with eagle's wings was a prominent symbol on Babylonian coins and on Babylon's walls. The lion, the king of beasts, and an eagle, the chief of birds, aptly describes the powerful rule of Babylon from 605 to 539 B.C.

b. _____ Verse 5.

The fierceness of the Medo-Persian soldiers is depicted in the bear of verse 5. When the Medes and Persians overthrew Babylon, they also conquered Lydia and Egypt. The three ribs in the bear's mouth represent these three nations—Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. Medo-Persia ruled the Middle East from 539 to 331 B.C.

c. _____ Verse 6.

The leopard is an appropriate symbol of Alexander the Great's empire, Greece. The Greek king conquered with the swiftness of a leopard flying with eagle's wings. Why does this leopard have four heads? When Alexander died in a drunken stupor at age 33, his four generals—Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy—divided up the empire. Bible prophecy is incredibly accurate. The Greeks ruled from 331 to 168 B.C.

d. _____ Verse 7.

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The Roman empire, "as strong as iron," conquered the world in 168 B.C. by defeating the Greeks at the Battle of Pynda. Under the Caesars, the mighty Roman Empire ruled from 168 B.C. to A.D. 351.

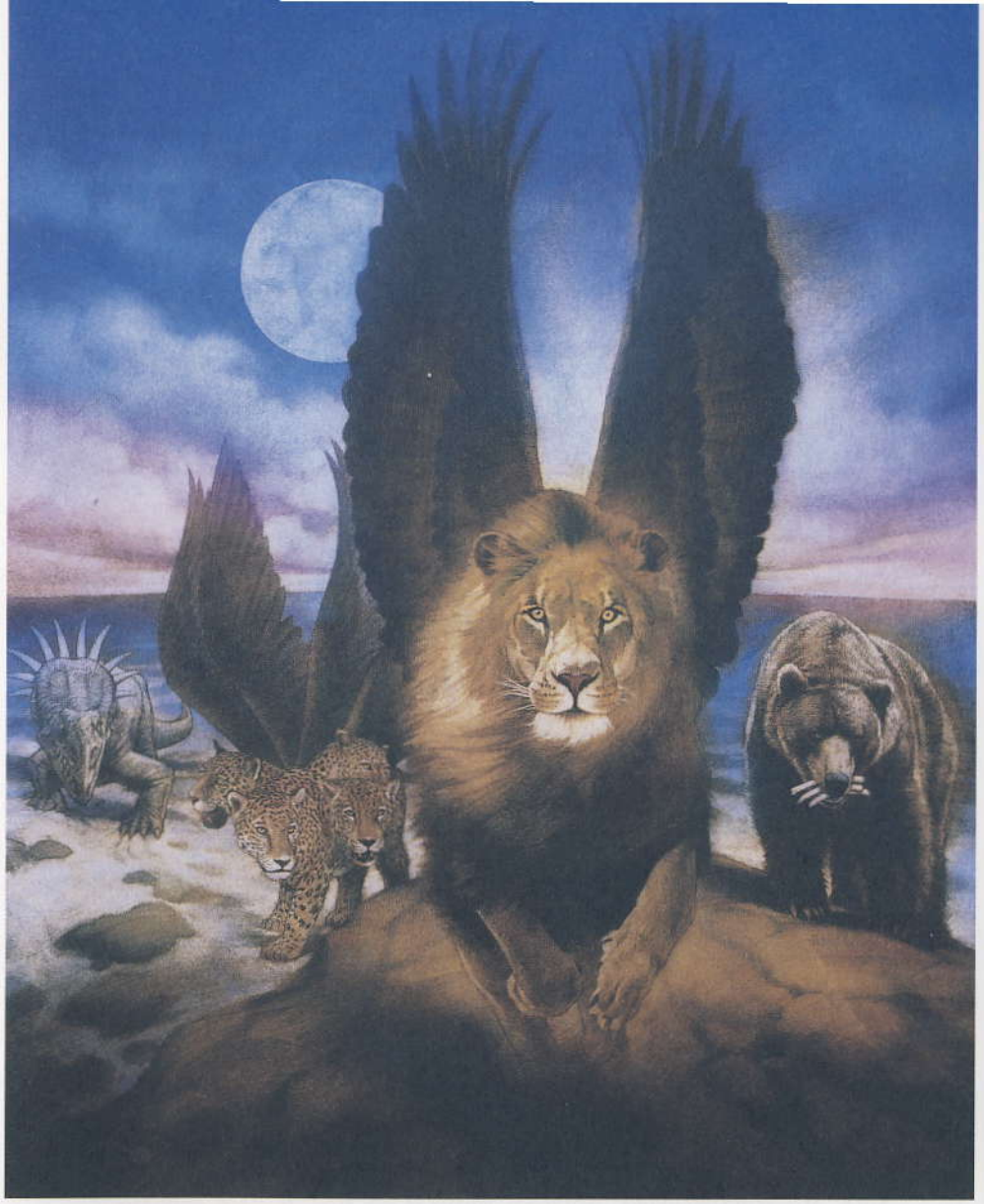
NOTE: The image of Daniel 2 contains four metals—gold, silver, brass, and iron. There are four beasts in chapter 7—a lion, bear, leopard, and a dragon. Just as the four metals represent the four successive world kingdoms beginning with Babylon in Daniel's day and passing to Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, so the four beasts represent the same four kingdoms. You might wonder why God uses metals in chapter 2 and beasts in chapter 7. In the symbolism of the metals in chapter 2, God illustrates that no power on earth can endure. The metals are transitory, but His kingdom—the rock cut out without hands—is permanent.



• *Just as the four metals of chapter 2 represent four successive world kingdoms—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—the four beasts of chapter 7 represent the same four kingdoms.*



ILLUSTRATIONS: NATHAN GREENE, SCULPTURES: JIM PEARSON; PHOTO: ED GUTHERO



In the fierceness of the four beasts in Daniel 7, God describes the vicious conflicts of political kingdoms as they vie for world control.

3. How many horns did the fourth beast have? Daniel 7:7.

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In Daniel 2, the iron legs, representing the Roman Empire, ended in ten toes, depicting the divisions of Rome. In Daniel 7, the fourth beast has ten horns, depicting the same ten divisions of Rome. Rome was not conquered by a fifth world power. It was divided—overrun by barbarian tribes from the north as it decayed from within from A.D. 351 to 476.

4. What new power arose in Daniel 7:8?

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Identifying Characteristics of the Little Horn

5. Where did the little horn rise? Daniel 7:8.

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Since the little horn rose among the ten horns, it must rise in western Europe, out of the pagan Roman Empire.

6. Did the little horn rise before, or after, the division of the Roman Empire? Read Daniel 7:8 and then check the appropriate box.

❑ Before

❑ After

If the little horn rose among the ten divisions of Rome, it had to rise after Rome was divided, or sometime after A.D. 476.

7. How did the prophet Daniel describe the eyes of this power? Daniel 7:8.

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In the Bible, eyes are a symbol of wisdom or understanding (Ephesians 1:18). This earthly power, rising in the early centuries A.D., had human wisdom or understanding—the eyes of a man, not God.

8. How did Daniel compare this little horn to the first ten horns? Daniel 7:24.

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The divisions of Rome were predominantly political powers. This new power is different; therefore, it must not be a political power. It must be a religious power.

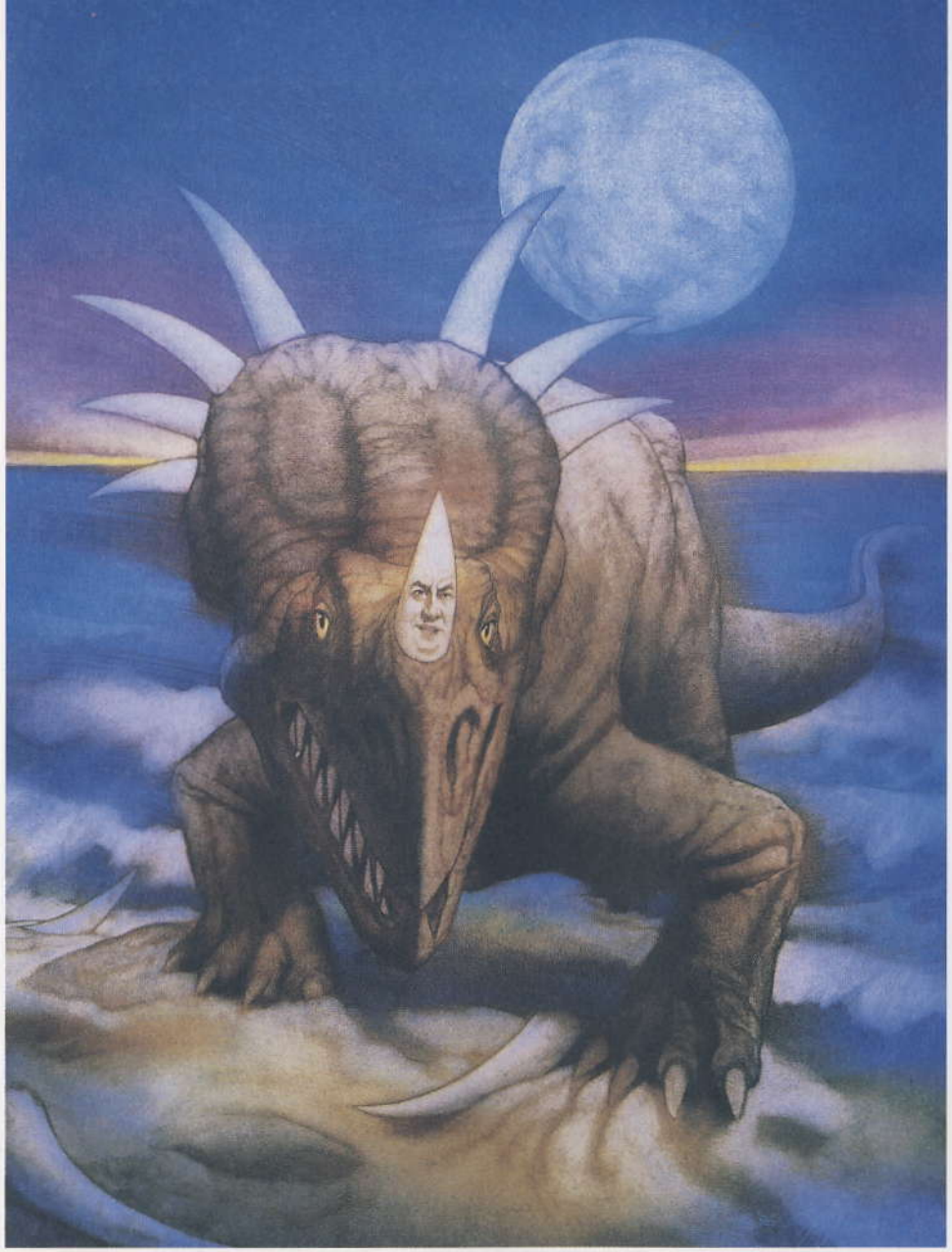
9. What three characteristics of this power did Daniel describe in verse 25?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

This amazing prophecy predicts that a religious-political system would rise out of the old Roman Empire in the early centuries A.D. Based on human wisdom, church councils, and man-made decrees, it would attempt to change the very law of God. The Bible predicted that the early church would enter into a period of apostasy.



• *In Daniel's vision, a little horn speaking great things arises among the ten horns of the fourth beast.*

ILLUSTRATIONS: NATHAN GREENE

A Compromising Church

10. What warning did the apostle Paul give early Christians? Acts 20:28-31.

11. How did the apostle describe this apostasy in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4?



12. What did Daniel declare would happen to truth? Daniel 8:12.

13. How long would this power reign supreme? Daniel 7:25.

This period of a time, times, and half a time, is also mentioned in Revelation 12:14. According to Revelation 12:6, this time period equals 1,260 prophetic days.

Another way to calculate this period is this way. In the Bible,

- a time (year) = 360 prophetic days
- 2 times (2 years) = 720 prophetic days
- 1/2 time (1/2 year) = 180 prophetic days

1260 prophetic days

In Bible prophecy, one prophetic day equals one literal year (see Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). The little horn, or church-state power, would reign supreme for 1,260 years, or throughout the centuries of the Dark Ages. This Roman power—the Medieval church—would substitute human tradition for God's Word, man's law for God's law, and penances and indulgences prescribed by the church for the forgiveness and repentance prescribed by God. Many faithful Christians, who refused to yield to this church-state union, would be persecuted.

Truth Triumphant

14. What is God's answer to the battle for the throne on earth? Daniel 7:9, 10.

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In a magnificent judgment scene in heaven, God sets all things right. Wicked rulers are condemned. Counterfeit systems are exposed. God's name, alone, is exalted.

15. What phrases did Daniel use to tell us that God's kingdom is permanent? Daniel 7:14, 27.

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God's kingdom is eternal—it lasts forever. Human kingdoms rise and fall, but God's kingdom remains forever. Political leaders may attempt to destroy it, but it endures. Counterfeit religious leaders may betray sacred purposes, but it remains. James Russell Lowell put this truth in verse:

"Truth forever on the scaffold.
Wrong forever on the throne.
Yet that scaffold sways the future
and beyond the dim unknown,
standing still within the shadows
God keeps watch above His own."

The kingdom of God — opposed, oppressed, thwarted on every side, and attacked by the enemy — will finally, fully, completely triumph.

