

Manna for Your Soul

The Roman Beast

Friday, December 9, 2005

“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. 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 7:7-8

Looking at the Word:

Daniel's vision here in Chapter 7 has a recurring phrase, “I saw in the night visions,” appearing three times (7:2, 7, 13). Using this phrase as an organizational marker, Daniel's vision could be outlined as follows:

1. The Kingdoms of Man (Daniel 7:2-6)
2. The Kingdom of the Man Who Would Be God (Daniel 7:7-12)
3. The Kingdom of the God-Man (Daniel 7:13-14)

There is a great divide as to the identification of the fourth beast. Critical scholars insist on identification with the Grecian Empire while conservative students of the Bible are nearly universal in their belief that Daniel's fourth dream-creature symbolizes Rome. Since we cannot trace the complete fulfillment of Daniel 7 in history and the Roman Empire is no longer politically extant, most premillenarians believe that God will reconstitute the Roman Empire in the future using a 10-nation confederacy as its formative base.

- **The Ferocious Strength of the Roman Beast (7:7):** Daniel did not attempt to name the dream-creature that represented the final kingdom of man as he had the earlier animals that emerged from the sea. The implication is there is no single animal known to man that could fully capture the brute strength and ferocity which will be displayed by this final world empire. In Revelation 13:1-2 the Apostle John saw a beast that most Bible students identify with Daniel's fourth dream-creature and incorporates features from each of the three previous animals. “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. 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.” As was also true with each of the other dream-creatures, the fourth beast would be deadly in its rise to world domination—but what sets this creature apart from those that came before it is its strength and how that strength is used.
 - **Emotionally Terrifying:** Its strength will bring dread and horror to those who must face it.
 - **Physically Overwhelming:** Daniel described a bionic beast in which the strength of its bite was augmented with iron teeth, perhaps an allusion to the union of human depravity with advanced technology—but if not, the iron teeth still emphasized the extraordinary strength of this beast.
 - **Politically/Spiritually Oppressive:** The earlier dream-creatures were content with eating their prey (conquering their foes). This final beast persisted in devouring, breaking, and stamping (continuative action of participles) until its foes were completely beaten down and crushed in both body and spirit. The picture God gave was one of political and spiritual oppression. John Walvoord describes the Roman Empire as “ruthless in its destruction of civilizations and peoples, killing captives by the thousands and selling them into slavery by the hundreds of thousands” (Daniel, page 161).
- **The Horns of the Roman Beast (7:8):** Because Daniel received help later in chapter 7 understanding the meaning of the symbolism involved with the horns I'll reserve any further comments until then.

Application and Meditation:

People reap what they sow (Galatians 6:7-8). If we sow faith then we will see the harvest of God's blessing in our life. If we sow unbelief then we will be blinded to the reality of God working in the world—and ultimately we will harvest an eternal darkness. God sent a vision to Daniel that he might pass on to us God's blueprint for human history; not to tickle our ears with interesting theories but so that our soul would be transformed and purified by the truth of His Word. If you and I truly believe in a sovereign God who's in control of human destiny then our lives should demonstrate His Lordship in our living. © Mike Davidson