

Daniel, Chapter 7

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.” Daniel 7,1;

The interpretation of the prophecy recorded in the seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel that we present to you is, for now, incomplete, because not all the necessary conditions—that is, the events (Matt. 24:32–35)—have yet occurred, and we do not yet possess the biblical knowledge required for a complete interpretation of this prophecy. We will not speculate, as that would be dangerous for a true interpretation of the prophecy. But even an incomplete interpretation, if correct, can reveal quite a bit to those of you who diligently study God’s Word and can contribute to a better and more timely understanding of it. We can point out connections with other prophetic texts. And we can also place this prophecy of Daniel within a broader biblical framework, which is the [fundamental principle of creation](#).

The Evolution of Humanity in Contrast to God's Plan

The story of humanity today has its origins in what happened at the beginning. It is essential to know this if we are to understand God’s prophecies. At the beginning of human history, which began with the creation of man and woman, God said: *“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the*

fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. ... And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen 1,26-31).

When God completed His work of creation, He declared it to be very good. By doing so, God affirmed that all of His work fulfills the fundamental principle according to which He created everything. All of creation serves life. A detailed explanation can be found in the study “[The Fundamental Principle of Creation](#).” Everything that supports life (not just one’s own; let us understand this selflessly) is good. Human beings were created to bear good fruit and support life. Therefore, when God tells people to “*be fruitful and multiply*,” it is not a synonym for the same meaning in the sense of procreation. The Hebrew word “פָּרָה – pârâh,” translated as “be fruitful,” essentially means: to bear fruit (literally or figuratively), to produce (fruit), to make (something) fruitful. In addition to reproducing, humans were to live in a way that supported life according to God’s fundamental principle and thereby bear good fruit. They were to support the existence and proper functioning of all of God’s creation. The Garden of Eden, which humanity was entrusted to care for as its home, also served as a model according to which humanity was to proceed. That is why Jesus compares a person to a good or bad tree that bears either good or bad fruit (Matthew 7:17–19).

The serpent's temptation of our first parents to disobey God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil caused people to stop striving to bear good fruit. It soon became clear that the intentions of the human heart lead to evil (Gen. 6:5). God's adversary has been deceiving humanity all along, leading us to believe that we do not need the Creator to live. Humanity has refused to honor the covenant with its Creator, just as Adam did (Hos 6:7; Rom 1:19–21). The long-term consequence of humanity's separation from God is the loss of awareness of what true good is and of its significance for life. That is why human governments lead humanity in the wrong direction. It is no wonder that even good discoveries and inventions have been and continue to be misused time and again. The problems plaguing humanity are therefore growing, despite the resources at humanity's disposal. It is evident beyond any doubt that without the Creator and respect for Him, humanity will not solve its problems. The development of human governments, foretold by God's prophets, is proof of this.

Daniel's Prophecies During the Reign of Belshazzar

Belshazzar was the last ruler of Babylon before the fall of the empire. According to some sources, he ruled alongside his father, Nabonidus, who entrusted him with the administration of the country. During his (Belshazzar's) reign, Daniel had two visions. In the second of these, described in chapter 8, it is explicitly stated that Daniel had the dream in the third year of Belshazzar's reign—that is, about 11 years before the fall

of the empire—and that the vision concerns the very end, which is still a long way off (verse 8:19). In Daniel’s time, Babylon was considered invincible, and even at the end of the Babylonian era (in the distant future), a beast will appear that people will also consider invincible (Rev. 13:3–4).

What is the Great Sea, and when might the four beasts emerge from it?

“Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.” Daniel 7,2-3;

In the vision of the four beasts, Daniel describes how four beasts emerge from the Great Sea under the influence of the four winds of heaven. When will this happen, and what is the Great Sea? We will use Daniel’s terminology from his [interpretation of the Babylonian king’s dream](#). In that dream, Daniel describes four kingdoms. The first is made of gold and is the only one specifically identified as Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom; it is followed by one made of silver, then one made of bronze, then one made of iron, and finally a kingdom symbolized by a mixture of iron and clay (Daniel 2). A study of Daniel’s interpretation of the dream about the great statue shows that the great statue King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream represents a long epoch of human rule, consisting of four longer ages and a fifth, shorter one. Details can be found in the aforementioned study. In order to determine which

period might be relevant for the appearance of the four beasts, we need to know what the Great Sea is. We find this in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 13:1; 17:15). There, John is told that “... *The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*”—that is, all of humanity.

When Daniel interpreted the king’s dream about the great statue, no known ruler or civilization had the means to rule the entire world, and humanity at that time—and for a long time afterward—did not form one large, interconnected whole, like the sea. The Babylonian king could not fulfill God’s word to him that He was giving him dominion over every living thing on earth (Dan. 2:37–38). Nebuchadnezzar, however, knew that the dream of the great statue had come from the God of heaven as he pondered what would happen in the future (Dan. 2:29). He likely understood that the right and power God had given him would only be realized by those who would come long after him. He thought beyond his own time.

Further, even clearer evidence that the vision of the four beasts refers to the time approaching the end of the Babylonian era is the fact that God’s kingdom, with its power, follows directly after them. The first three beasts emerging from the Great Sea exist at the end of the age

alongside¹ the fourth beast and will likely be part of it in some form, since it bears their characteristics. The last, fourth beast—unlike anything known in God’s natural order—will be destroyed, and the power of the first three beasts will be taken away. God’s kingdom will take over. There is no doubt that the first three beasts emerge from the Great Sea at a time when humanity is already interconnected through global trade and communication, and the superpowers already have the means to control nations on all continents simultaneously. Just as they do today.

Important information for determining the situation to which the prophecy of the four beasts refers can be found in chapter 11 of the Book of Daniel. In verses 3 and 4: “*And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall*

¹ According to the cited description of the ten-horned beast in the Book of Revelation, the first three beasts will already exist at the time the fourth beast appears, because the fourth beast will take on some of their characteristics. This is evidenced by verse 7:23: “*The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.*” and the text in Revelation 13:2, which completes the picture of the beast: “*And the beast that 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 throne, and great authority.*” We see that the beast in John’s Revelation has ten horns like the beast in the seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel and also bears the characteristics of the three previous beasts—the lion, the bear, and the leopard. Daniel writes that these beasts will survive the destruction of the fourth beast and will be allowed to live for a certain time (Dan. 7:11–12). The prophecy indicates that the first three beasts existed before the coming of the fourth beast and will continue to exist even after its destruction.

stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; but not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides these.” At first glance, the story of Alexander the Great seems to fulfill this prophecy, but the prophecy is written for the end times (Dan. 8:19; 10:14). Earlier, in chapter 10, the man clothed in linen had said that this vision was intended first and foremost for Daniel’s people—that is, God’s people—because no other people existed at that time besides Daniel’s. And this concerns the end of those days about which Daniel had already had a vision of the Ram and the Goat in chapter 8. This means that the four heavenly winds/spirits are involved in the events of the last days. The war between the Medo-Persian Empire and Alexander the Great, as well as the events that followed the collapse of Alexander’s empire, are also used in the prophecy to refer to the end times.

The Four Celestial Winds

Daniel states that the four beasts emerge from the Great Sea as a result of the four winds of heaven. In Aramaic, the word for “wind” is the same as in Hebrew. It is the word *ruah*, which means not only “wind” but also “spirit.” For example, in the second verse of the Bible: *“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the **Spirit of God** moved upon the face of the waters.”* The word “rūah” is translated in some versions as “Spirit” and in others as “wind.” The word “rūah” also appears in the

Book of Daniel, and we will explain why it makes more sense here to translate “rūah” as “heavenly spirits” rather than “heavenly winds.” The word “wind” in the letter is the Greek word *pneuma*, which can mean wind, but also soul or spirit. We assume that in Daniel’s prophecy as well, these are heavenly spiritual beings—angels.

The four heavenly winds (spirits) are mentioned in three places in the Bible: in the Book of Daniel, chapters 7 and 11, and in the prophecy of Zechariah (verse 6:5): *„And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.* “ The King James 2000 Bible correctly translates the word “rúah” as “spirit.” It would be difficult for the four winds to stand before the Lord of all the earth.

Nowadays, it is hard to imagine that events on earth are influenced by heavenly authorities. In chapter 10, Daniel describes how a man dressed in linen—the Son of God, who later came down to earth in human form, known as Jesus Christ—faces difficulties in heaven with the heavenly rulers, the protectors of the great nations of that time, Media-Persia and Greece (Dan. 10:12–13). This paints a picture in which human governments are not left to their own devices, but their actions and direction are being watched in heaven, even if this is not outwardly apparent. This also applies to Satan, who likes to appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14; Rev 12:9) and who still controls the world through his deception. God, who is Spirit (John 4:24), also has the right to intervene to

save His people. The world is not left to its own devices. That is merely one of Satan's many deceptions.

What do Daniel's prophecies have in common?

The Book of Daniel provides information about the development of human governments during the Babylonian era and about their form and characteristics in its final phase. The prophecies describe the fourth beast, which will be the harshest and most destructive government in known human history. The Book of Daniel, together with the Book of Revelation, also provides more detailed information about what will happen in the final period of the Babylonian era before it comes to an end and is replaced by the Kingdom of God. At the same time, Satan's influence on humanity will be brought to an end for a full thousand years, and the trials and sufferings of God's people will cease, before Satan is briefly released from prison after a thousand years to incite humanity to rebel against God's rule once more.

The interpretation of the dream about the great and terrifying statue helps us understand the direction in which human governments are heading. It shows that humanity is heading toward governments that are increasingly worse and more rebellious in their relationship with the Creator, the God of heaven, and His Son, which is subsequently reflected in deteriorating interpersonal relationships (Matthew 24:12), in the value placed on human life in the eyes of the powerful, and in growing injustice and lawlessness at all levels of

society. Human governments and their peoples, controlled by Satan (1 John 5:19), will ultimately reach a point of open rebellion against God and His Anointed One. This, incidentally, was foretold in David's second psalm, more than four centuries before Daniel.

Humanity will establish a global government, but this will not bring about a happy future for humanity. Thus, another prophecy will be fulfilled: we will see efforts to overturn the times and the law (Dan. 7:25; 11:36); evil will be called good and good will be called evil; light will be passed off as darkness and darkness as light (Isa. 5:20).

What is the Bronze Kingdom?

In his interpretation of the Babylonian king's dream about the great statue, Daniel explains to the king that dominion over the earth will be given to the kingdom of bronze (Dan. 2:39). The question is, which kingdom is the kingdom of bronze, and what does bronze represent? *"I have set you for a tester and a fortress among my people, that you may know and test their way. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are bronze and iron; they are all corrupters. The bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed by the fire; the smelter refines in vain: for the wicked are not removed. Rejected silver shall men call them, because the LORD has rejected them."* Jer 6,27-30;

The Hebrew word נְחֹשֶׁת (nechošet) means copper or its alloys, from which various utilitarian objects and weapons

were made. In a figurative sense, it signifies hardness and stubbornness. In the prophecy, God compares copper and tin to smelting slag (Ezekiel 22:18). This confirms the deteriorating relationship between human governments and God, according to the interpretation of the dream about the great statue. From this perspective, a bronze-type kingdom is worse than a silver-type kingdom. Bronze is a hard alloy. Hardness in relation to God manifests as growing defiance toward Him and Christ (Psalm 2). It is certainly not physical elements that shape the relationship of bronze-type governments to God and Christ. This hardness and defiance are manifested in the rulers' attitude toward God and, later, in the social system that replaced feudal rule—a system widespread in Christian Europe and later in the colonies—based on the power of the Church and feudal authority. God, represented by the Church, determined the values by which feudal society was governed. At the pinnacle of the power hierarchy—albeit indirectly—were God and Jesus Christ. Feudal rulers also varied in character, and their relationship with God was often problematic, but they could not ignore God. During the Renaissance, the situation began to change. The plague and the Thirty Years' War weakened the Church's authority, and with the help of ideas born of the Renaissance spirit, secular power became more independent of the Church. Alongside the Church's spiritual power, another spiritual force began to grow. At first, it manifested itself subtly. Doubts about the authority of God and Christ gradually intensified. The revolutions in England and France in the 17th

and 18th centuries were the result of the growing influence of various other spiritual schools of thought. In both countries, dissatisfaction with the rule of the feudal lords and the Church was exploited to strengthen the position of man at the expense of God and Christ. In both countries, as early as the 18th century, the church was weakening and exerting diminishing spiritual influence on the government and the thinking of the people. To use the figurative language of the prophet Ezekiel, the “dregs of silver” took over the government. Governments of the “bronze” type are the result of a change in the perception of God and Christ in human life.

Let's illustrate this with a story from the biblical history of ancient Israel: *“Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, with which they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto you.”* 1Sam 8,4-8; When the Israelites asked for a king, from God's perspective this was a rejection of God Himself, even though it was God who had

chosen the king. In principle, the same thing happened when, following revolutionary changes, citizens began to choose their own government, regardless of their reasons for doing so.

Daniel's words are fitting for today's governments, which he calls "rebels" (Dan. 8:23) (פֶּשַׁע / paw-shah), meaning to transgress or rebel; in a spiritual sense, this refers to the deliberate crossing of boundaries and the breaking of the law. In relation to God, it signifies a breach of relationship, betrayal, and unfaithfulness.