

Daniel 7:15-18

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Daniel asks for an interpretation of this bizarre vision. An Interpreter tells him the four beasts are four kings on the earth who will fade away. But God's people will receive a forever kingdom.

Daniel feels distressed in his spirit. The visions in his mind are alarming him. While he sleeps, he is shown by God a bizarre sequence of events. He has watched four beasts rise out of a stormy sea. Each beast represents a kingdom that will rise and fall. The fourth beast grows a horn that is boastful and blasphemous. A courtroom with many thrones appears. On the judge's throne sits the Ancient of Days, God.

God's throne is surrounded by fire and shoots fire out from it, representing God as the ultimate judge. He judges the beast with many horns, specifically the boastful horn. God kills the beast, destroys its body, and consumes it in the fire. The other beasts are spared, even though their power is taken away.

But then, someone like a Son of Man comes among the clouds and presents Himself before God. God gives Him everlasting rulership over an everlasting kingdom. No other kingdoms will take its place. It will never be destroyed.

So Daniel, witnessing all these strange things, feels frightened. He writes that he *approached one of those who is standing by*. Daniel asks this person *the exact meaning of all this*. It seems likely Daniel speaks with an angel, since there were thousands of angels gathered at the scene. Angels are messengers of God and often deliver interpretation or commands from God. The next chapter shows the angel Gabriel explaining a different vision to Daniel (Daniel 8:16). Within this vision of beasts and thrones and fire, Daniel is overwhelmed. He seeks to understand what he has witnessed. And he is given an answer. The vision was *made known to* Daniel as the angel tells him the *interpretation of these things*.

'These great beasts,' says the Interpreter, 'which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth.'

The winged lion (Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire), the ravenous bear (the Medo-Persian Empire), was followed in turn by the four-headed four-winged leopard (the Grecian Empire). One dominated the other, one after the other, but all eventually fell. Nebuchadnezzar died and the rule of Babylon went to his grandson Belshazzar, who was a bad ruler and was conquered by the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:30). Eventually the Persian empire was conquered by Alexander the Great (of Greece). Each empire had its day in the sun, and each empire was conquered by the next.

Alexander died, and his empire was divided into four territories, each ruled by one of his generals. And these empires fell to Rome. Rome is represented by the legs of iron on the statue in Daniel 2, with feet made of iron and clay. Rome remains, but is brittle, and keeps forming then

breaking into pieces. It will be the Roman era that produces the final ruler who opposes the people of God, the man whom Revelation calls the “beast.” He will be crushed and fall to the kingdom brought in by Jesus Christ coming in glory with His saints.

The Interpreter continues: *‘But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’*

‘Saints’ in this passage literally means “the holy ones.” The holy ones belonging to the *Highest One* (God) will not only be given the kingdom, but will *possess* it *forever*. The matter is closed. There will no longer be war after war, empire after empire. God will establish a kingdom that will never end, and His people will inhabit it and participate in it, and serve it as kings and priests in harmony with Jesus, the Head.

Biblical Text

15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. 16 I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 17 ‘These great beasts, which are four *in number*, are four kings *who* will arise from the earth. 18 But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’