

Daniel 7:7-8

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The fourth beast has iron teeth and destroys whatever it wants. It has many horns on its head. One horn grows larger than the others and is boastful.

Daniel is experiencing a vision while he sleeps. In his vision, he sees four beasts come out of a stormy sea. The first beast is a winged lion (Babylon), the second is a ravenous bear (Medo-Persia), and the third is a leopard with four heads and four wings (Greece).

The fourth beast is more bizarre and terrifying than the others. Daniel writes that he *kept looking into the night visions* and saw a *fourth beast*. This beast makes a powerful impression on Daniel: it is *dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong*. It is much more vicious and alarming than the three other beasts, all impressive in their own right. This fourth beast has *large iron teeth*. It likely represents Rome both in the statue vision and in the current vision.

The swiftness of Greek conquest is replaced by the brutal force of the Roman empire. Daniel sees this fourth beast's violence on full display. It *devoured and crushed* whatever it chose to, and *trampled down the remainder* of its conquests *with its feet*. This is a picture of total destruction and annihilation. Nothing survives its rage. Daniel notes that the beast *was different from all the beasts that were before it*, probably meaning both in appearance and in the way in which it conquered. The iron teeth and bronze claws might indicate Rome's reliance on engineering and technology to apply its might.

The Roman empire was indeed different than all empires prior to it, and its powerful legacy and influence lasts to this day. According to Daniel, the world remains in the Roman era. The description of the beast is increasingly uncommon. Daniel makes no effort to compare it to a real animal (unlike the other beasts: lion, bear, and leopard). Not only does it have iron teeth, but this fourth beast also has *ten horns*. Apparently, ten kingdoms will appear from out of the Roman Empire. The founding of this coalition of kingdoms is likely a future event.

Daniel relates that while he was *contemplating the horns*, distracted by and pondering them, he saw *another horn, a little one*, that grew from the beast *among* the other horns. As the little horn grows, *three of the first horns* are *pulled out by the roots*. So as this horn rises to prominence, three other horns are destroyed. Three kingdoms will be conquered or dissolved as this horn representing a new king figure grows in power.

The beast becomes even more bizarre. This new horn, after uprooting three others, is revealed to have *eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth*. From its mouth, the horn speaks, and Daniel hears it *uttering great boasts*. Presumably about how powerful and wonderful it is (given that it took out three horns in its rise to power).

The next chapter, Chapter 8, also discusses a defiant horn, or king, who will oppress God's people but will ultimately die. The horn of Chapter 8 was probably Antiochus Epiphanes, one of

the kings descended from Alexander's divided Greek empire. We will later see a prediction that is fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes, who became ruler of the Seleucid Empire in 175 BC (one of the four Greek "heads"). This event could presage the event of the boastful horn that occurs during the Roman era. Antiochus Epiphanes' Greek name translates "God Manifest". During his reign, he subdued the Egyptian Ptolemaic Empire. So the Greek/Seleucid Empire that came from one of Alexander's generals became dominant over the other three. In addition to declaring himself a deity, this king outlawed Judaism, and set himself as a direct opponent of God's people. God miraculously intervened to deliver the Jewish people through a priestly family called the Maccabees.

The Bible describes a beast similar to the Roman beast in Revelation 13:1, "Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names." The likely interpretation is that both beasts represent an earthly king or kings who will defy God, who will rule wickedly, empowered by Satan, who will directly oppose God's people, and who declares himself god.

Antiochus seems to be a precursor to a later king that is yet to come. This is made clear by passages such as Matt 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes, this latter king will ultimately be defeated by God.

Both beasts in Daniel and Revelation are described as having ten horns; both beasts are sources of boasts and blasphemy. Arrogant in the extreme, and for a time the greatest ruler the earth has ever seen.

But judgment is coming.

Biblical Text

7 After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great *boasts*.