

Daniel 2 and 7: Equal or Not Equal
Part 4
An Exposition: Daniel 7:1-3

Daniel's First Vision -

In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream filled with visions while he was lying on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream in summary fashion. 2 Daniel explained: "I was watching in my vision during the night as the four winds of the sky were stirring up the great sea. 3 Then four large beasts came up from the sea; they were different from one another (Dan 7:1-3).

Although early chapters of this amazing book record Daniel's interpretation of the dreams and visions of other men, the seventh chapter contains the first vision Daniel *himself* received from God. After chapter 7, all of Daniel's visions and dreams ultimately relate to the end of human history as we know it. Few conservatives would debate this point, especially since chapters 9-12 are clearly eschatological in focus. The importance of chapter 8, which focuses on the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece, is seen in that it is the bridge between Daniel's time and the eschatological period that begins with the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's vision. Thus, the overall significance of chapter 7 is that four kings/kingdoms are given authority over the whole earth, but they will be forced to surrender that authority to the Son of Man when he comes to rule universally. We may summarize as follows:

Chapter 7: transition of authority over the earth from man to the Son of Man (7 years).

Chapter 8: transition of the age of man to the eschatological end (about 353 years).

Chapters 9-12: transition from Israel's reproach to reward (7 years).

Having previously demonstrated that chapters 2 and 7 do not cover the same historical period, we move on to an analysis of Daniel 7 to identify ultimately the four kingdoms detailed there. Daniel begins the second half of his book by giving us a historical reference point. He states that the vision came during the **first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon**, which is just under 10 years after the death of King Nebuchadnezzar. History informs us that Belshazzar became coregent of Babylon during the third year of his father Nabonidus' reign. Thus, both father and son reigned over Babylon at the same time, though Nabonidus spent most of the time living in Tayma in Arabia.

The Babylonian empire lasted an additional 14 years after this vision was given to Daniel. The timing of the vision, in our opinion, argues against the notion that chapter 7 recounts the history of the same four kingdoms in Daniel 2. The whole of Daniel 2 is concerned with King

Nebuchadnezzar to the exclusion of any of the other Babylonian kings who would follow him. Therefore, it would appear strange for Daniel to depict Nebuchadnezzar some ten years after his death as still the most important head of the Babylonian empire. It is also clear that after the death of King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon began a decline that ultimately led to their downfall at the hands of the Medes. We are satisfied that the first kingdom of Daniel 7 is not Babylon for this as well as other reasons.

The text indicates that Daniel was asleep when he received the dreams which consisted of visions about kings/kingdoms. Apparently, Daniel only writes down the **sum of the matter**. In other words, there are details Daniel did not give us.

In verse 2, Daniel continues, **I was watching in my vision during the night as the four winds of the sky were stirring up the great sea**. The phrase **the four winds** is one of several phrases that occur throughout the Bible that refer to the ancient world's understanding of the cosmos. Different expressions occur that have the same basic meaning. For example: (1) the four winds (Jer. 49:32) or (2) the four ends of the earth (Jer. 49:36). The phrase *the four winds* occurs in the NET Bible a total of 10 times, and is implicit in Job 1:19. The chart below also reflects the usage by several other versions of the Bible. However, for our purposes, we shall focus on the passages exclusively reflected in the NET Bible. It would appear that there are two possible nuances for the phrase, "the four winds." Notice the chart.

Bible Version	Passage	Phrase	Context
LXX	1 Chronicles 9:24	The four winds	Toward
NET	Jeremiah 49:32	The four winds	Scatter to
NET	Jeremiah 49:36	The four winds	Scatter to
NLT	Ezekiel 12:14	The four winds	Scatter to
NET	Ezekiel 37:9	The four winds	Come from
Douay-Rheims	Ezekiel 42:20	The four winds	By the
NET	Daniel 7:2	The four winds	Were stirring up
NET	Daniel 8:8	The four winds	Extending toward
NET	Daniel 11:4	The four winds	Distributed toward
NET	Zechariah 2:6	The four winds	Scattered
ESV	Zechariah 6:5	<i>The four spirits</i>	These are going out
NET	Matthew 24:31	The four winds	Gather from
NET	Mark 13:27	The four winds	Gather from
NET	Revelation 7:1	The four winds of the earth	Holding back
KJV Apocrypha	2 Esdras 13:5	The four winds	Gathered from
NET	Job 1:19	A great wind	Struck the four corners of the house

It is clear from our chart that in each case where “the four winds” refer to directions on the compass, there is contextual language which supports such a conclusion. In examples in which people are to “scatter to”, or be “gathered from” or “distributed toward” are used, it is clear that directions are intended. However, in two passages – Daniel 7 and Zechariah 6 – our phrase “the four winds” is the subject of the verb, which indicates the possibility of a significant change in usage.

In connection with our study, Zechariah 6:5 is of interest. The NET Bible follows the Hebrew text in Zechariah 6:5, which states, “The messenger replied, ‘These are the four spirits of heaven that have been presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth...’” Some translations opt to translate the key phrase, “the four winds.” So we have a choice: “spirits” or “winds.” Scholars are not sure of the intended significance of this passage or the correct translation. However, there is a rich tradition that associates “spirits” (angels) with God’s work on earth (Psa. 130:20). In Zechariah 6:5, “**The four spirits** (or “winds”) **of heaven** may refer to angels of divine judgment or to the power of God to accomplish His judicial purposes.¹ What is of importance to us is the fact that this text personifies the “wind.” It is possible that four angels control the four points or quadrants of the compass, thereby indicating that God is the sovereign ruler controlling the earth.

That “four winds” refers figuratively to the entire known world is clear from the use of the same phrase in Jer. 49:36; Dan. 8:8; 11:4...Matt. 24:31; and Mark 13:27; *Targ[um]* Isa. 11:12 renders the MT’s “four corners of the earth” as “four *winds* of the earth.”²

The phrase “the four winds” refers to the four cardinal points of the compass in Daniel 8:8 and 11:4, i.e., South, North, East, and West, in that order. History proves that the expression “the four winds” is typically a figure of speech expressing fragmentation. In the case of Alexander the Great, his kingdom and his successors, the sense is more of fragmentation than that of a literal breakup of the kingdom in the four primary directions of the compass.

It is evident in Daniel 11 that the directions of the compass do serve to designate the kings of the particular regions in question. For example, “the king of South” designates the king/kingdom of Egypt in Daniel 11:5ff. Therefore, in light of the “four winds,” one is able to speak of a king of the South, a king of the North, a king of the East, and a king of the West. This fact is supported in chapters 8 and 11 of Daniel. Significant kings are designated by the direction from which their exploits come. Therefore, if Daniel 7 deals with the end times, and it does, we can expect that the four kingdoms of Daniel 7 are also significantly associated with the compass directions from

¹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Zec 6:4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

MT = Masoretic Text

² Beale, G. K. (1999). *The book of Revelation : A commentary on the Greek text* (406). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

which they come. Clearly, this is God's intent. Prior to the Lord's return, the whole earth will be under the authority of four kings/kingdoms. God will allow these rulers to come forth to initiate the final consummation of all things.

When the Son of Man comes to exercise authority over the earth, He will do so by taking that authority from the kings/kingdoms of the earth. When God sends his four angels/winds/spirits out to stir the waters of the great ocean of humanity to raise up the final four kings/kingdoms who will have authority over the whole earth, it will signal the final phase of earth's rebellion against God's rule and the imminent transition of authority from man to the Son of Man. The idea of a righteous man taking control of the whole earth from four wicked men who exercise authority over all of it is not new with Daniel 7. Rather, Daniel 7 illustrates a fulfillment that follows a pattern seen in Genesis 14. This pattern fulfillment is significant.

Genesis 14 has proven to be a difficult text for those who do not take Scripture at face-value. Liberal scholars almost universally conclude that Genesis 14 is made-up history "invented for the glorification of Abraham long after the Exile, in the Persian or Greek epoch, and devoid of any historical significance."³ In plain speak, liberals believe it never happened except in the mind of the guy[s] who made it all up. However, we believe that God gave this information to Moses, who then recorded the historical realities of Abraham and the individuals and events mentioned in Genesis 14.

The reason liberals take the position detailed above primarily follows from their inability to find any historical proof that the four kings listed in Genesis 14:1 did, in fact, live during Abraham's days in Canaan. Archeologists have found proof for many ancient cities and peoples, but the four kings identified in Genesis 14 have so far not been found in any ancient source or record. Liberals naturally conclude that a writer made it all up 1,000 years after Abraham lived. Parenthetically, one would think liberals would be slow to make these kinds of judgments given the number of times the Bible has been proven correct.

The names of the four kings of Genesis 14:1 are: (1) Amraphel king of Shinar; (2) Arioch king of Ellasar; (3) Chedorlaomer king of Elam; and (4) Tidal king of Goiim. The names of the four countries over which these four kings ruled have a tradition to some extent in the Old Testament. Concerning the name *Shinar*, the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament records that Shinar is the OT designation for southern Mesopotamia – the alluvial plain between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. This area was known by the Sumerians as Sumer and Akkad, but later it

³ "Political and Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis 14 and in Its Babylonian Sources", Michael C. Astour, in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966) p. 65.

became known as Babylonia. In two of the eight passages Shinar is called Babylonia in the LXX (Isa 11:11 and Zech 5:11).⁴

With respect to Canaan (Abraham's new home), Shinar was toward the South of it. The name *Ellasar* does not occur in the OT. Only until recently have scholars had any certainty whatsoever about the exact country in focus. Astour concludes that the term "is easily explained as referring to Assur."⁵ Readers are accustomed to seeing Assyria in the OT. Assyria was

considered the symbol of terror and tyranny in the Near East for more than three centuries. The country received its name from the tiny city-state Asshur on the western bank of the Tigris River in northern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq)...The Hebrew name occurs frequently in the Bible and is translated Assyria (Gen. 2:14; Psa. 83:8; both NET), Assur (Ezra 4:2 KJV, margin), or left as Asshur (Gen. 10:11, KJV).⁶

Relative to Canaan, Assyria was to the North. The name *Elam* refers to

"a province of Persia, in which stood the capital city, Susa (Ezra 4:9; Dan. 8:2); perhaps in ancient writings it included the whole of Persia."⁷

In reference to Canaan, Elam was toward the East. The final name on the list is *Goim*. As to the location and meaning of this geographical designation, Astour concludes that the name of the king removes any doubt that Ḫatti is the intended referent. Ḫatti refers to ancient area that would include modern Turkey (a people referred to as The Hittites in ancient times). In relation to Canaan, Ḫatti was to the West.

The fact that there is no historical evidence of a coalition of the countries of Babylonia, Assyria, Elam, and Ḫatti in ancient history has driven liberals to distraction. Astour concludes that Genesis 14 is not authentic and was written at least 1,000 years after Moses. However, he argues that

[T]he selection of these four countries is by no means accidental. In the neo-Assyrian and the neo-Babylonian time – that is, at the time when Genesis 14 was

LXX The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament in Greek

⁴ Harris, R. L., Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., & Waltke, B. K. (1999). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (943). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁵ Astour, "Symbolism in Genesis 14", p. 77.

⁶ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (219). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House.

⁷ Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (622). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

written – Ḫatti became the equivalent of, or substitute for, the more ancient geographical nation Amurru, which occupied the territory west of the Euphrates, and Assyria became the synonym or substitute for the older term Subartu, which designated Upper Mesopotamia to the north of Babylonia. Now the Babylonians, followed by the Assyrians, had divided from time immemorial the entire earth (imaged as circular) into four quadrants...which bore the names of the correspondingly situated countries. The schema (Figure A) played an enormous role in predictions and astrology.

South --- Akkad
 North --- Subartu,
 East --- Elam,
 West --- Amurru.

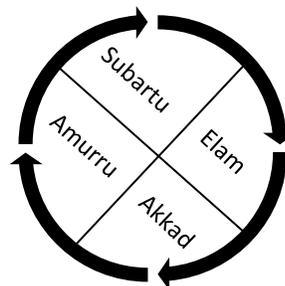


Figure A. The Babylonian Division of the World.

Exactly in this order are the four kings listed the first time (Genesis 14:1)...

Thus, the symbolism of Genesis 14 is not limited to Palestine. Through the introduction of the kings of the four world quadrants, the author widens his symbolism to universal, even cosmic dimensions.⁸

Before we proceed further, let it be clear to the reader that we do not in any way agree with Astour's fundamental conviction that Genesis 14 is history made-up by someone, even a person living 1,000 years after Moses. We believe that Moses wrote Genesis 14 as instructed by God. The events of this chapter serve to highlight God's faithfulness to Abraham. God promised Abraham that upon leaving Ur of the Chaldeans, He would give the land of Canaan to him and his offspring (Gen 12:7). Genesis 14 reports that the land of Canaan was under the immediate control of local kings who were vassals to the ultimate authority of four kings who exercised authority over the whole known world at that time.

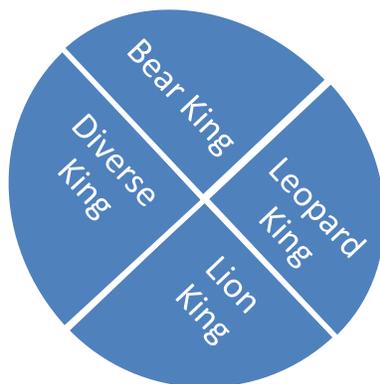
For God to grant Abraham authority over the land of promise, the four kings listed in Genesis 14 had to be defeated. Abraham's victory over the whole world, which was symbolically depicted in the four kings of Genesis 14:1, is a pattern soon to be repeated in connection with the Son of Man's reception of the same authority over the whole world. Abraham's victory over the whole world won him the right to claim the land of Canaan as his own just as God promised. It should

⁸ Astour, "Symbolism in Genesis 14," p. 78-80.

not escape our attention that during the days that Abraham lived in the land of Canaan no nation ruled over him.

That the land of Canaan (now the land of Israel) will once again be caught under the rule of kings/kingdoms is clearly taught in Daniel 11. In Daniel 11:5-35, a perpetual conflict occurs between the “king of the South” and the “king of the North.” Because of the historical allusions referenced in this portion of Daniel 11, scholars generally agree that some aspect of a remnant of Alexander the Great’s empire that was divided among four of his generals is in view. Specifically, “the king of the South” refers to the Ptolemaic throne in Egypt, and the “king of the North” refers to the Seleucid throne in Syria and Babylonia. About 175 years of history is covered in this section of Daniel.

However, in Daniel 11:36-39, a third king is introduced. Unlike in Daniel 11:5-35, this king, who fights with the king of the South and the king of the North, is never tied to a direction on the compass in this chapter. Of interest to the reader should be the fact that he will have problems with both of those kings. And also he will be troubled by “news from the East”. In the Daniel 11:36-45 reference, there is no mention of “the king of the West”; the significance of this fact will become more clear later. It is our conviction that the Lion King is “the king of the South”; the Bear King is “the king of the North”; the Leopard King is “the king of the East”; and the Diverse King is “the king of the West.”



Few would debate the conclusion that the “king of the South” included Egypt and other nations of North Africa in Daniel 11:5-35. There is no good reason to abandon this conclusion for Daniel 11:36-45. The identity of the “king of the North” does not enjoy similar certainty. Most conservative scholars conclude that Russia and her satellites are the referent. However, in an excellent study by J. Paul Tanner, entitled “Daniel’s ‘King of the North’: Do We Owe Russia An

Apology?” he concludes: “To be hermeneutically consistent, the “king of the North” ought to be interpreted in light of the meaning the phrase has had throughout the chapter.”⁹ His investigation of all the occurrences of the term *north* in the Old Testament that refer to nations or peoples when used in connection with the land of Israel is this:

[T]he use of the term “north” in reference to countries outside of Israel is a frequent expression of the prophets for Israel’s neighbors of the Middle East, either Babylon, Assyria, Medo-Persia or the Seleucid empire. The reason why eastern countries such as Babylon would be designated as being “from the north” is to be found in the explanation that an attack upon Israel by these foes always came from the north, whereby the major highways across the Fertile Crescent (along the Euphrates) would take one to the upper regions of Galilee in the northern part of the country. There is not one reference (unless one wants to argue on the basis of Ezekiel 38–39) where a country from “the north” ever means an enemy as far north as present-day Russia. For the prophets, “north” would always refer to a Middle Eastern neighbor of Israel.¹⁰

The Seleucid empire was significant and could prove to be a typological fulfillment for one of the final king/kingdoms to dominate the world. Tanner states,

At times the empire included in addition to Syria the ancient realms of Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Parthia, Bactria, Arachosia, Sogdiana, and much of ancient Anatolia. Translated into terms of today’s national boundaries this would include Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, parts of Pakistan, and some of the central Asian republics (the lower parts of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan).¹¹

Tanner ultimately concludes, “I would like to submit that the “king of the North” is a confederation of northern Arab nations that will attack the Antichrist and his forces in this military conflict centered in the Middle East.”¹²

The details of Daniel 11:36-45 fit and possibly explain Daniel’s vision in chapter 7. As we shall see in this chapter, the fourth king/kingdom is subsequently ruled by Antichrist. However, he only rises after a period of rule by the ten horns. In other words, the fourth king/kingdom does

⁹ . Vol. 35: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 35*. 1992 (3) (327). Lynchburg, VA: The Evangelical Theological Society.

¹⁰ . Vol. 35: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 35*. 1992 (3) (323–324). Lynchburg, VA: The Evangelical Theological Society.

¹¹ . Vol. 35: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 35*. 1992 (3) (327–328). Lynchburg, VA: The Evangelical Theological Society.

¹² . Vol. 35: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 35*. 1992 (3) (328). Lynchburg, VA: The Evangelical Theological Society.

not become evil during the reign of the final horn. It is evil starting from the time Daniel sees it until its destruction by the Son of Man.

The four winds stir up **the great sea**, which many times in the O.T. refers to the Mediterranean Sea. But that does not seem to be the point of verse 2. In the angel's interpretation of the vision, he indicates that the "great sea" is synonymous with the earth (Dan 7:17). The point appears to be that the four kingdoms are of human origin in contrast to the kingdom of the Son of Man who comes down from heaven.

We saw earlier that the phrase "the four winds" indicates the directions in which Alexander the Great's four generals divided his kingdom after his demise. "The four winds" (instruments of God's pleasure) simultaneously produce four kingdoms: one from each direction on the compass. However, a majority of scholars insist that they **came up out of the sea** successively, one at a time.

The decision regarding whether the four beasts ascend from the sea successively or simultaneously can only be made based on one's understanding of the context. If one assumes that Daniel 7 is a rather loose recapitulation of Daniel 2, he or she will immediately assume that the four beasts ascend successively (one after the other over a 400 year period). Nonetheless, this is reading into the text a presupposition from chapter 2 without any exegetical basis. Given Daniel's careful attention to sequencing in chapters 2, 8, 9, and 11, it is strange that he would so generalize verse 3 of Daniel 7 that the reader is left thinking simultaneous ascension when successive ascension is intended.

Daniel explicitly tells the reader that the four beasts are **different from one another**. For Daniel to give the reader this fact seems unnecessary given the description of each kingdom which would naturally follow. If in fact the kingdoms follow one another in time, one would hardly need to be told that they are different. Equally, unlike Daniel 2, there is no indication in Daniel 7 that one kingdom will destroy or bring to an end the other. We personally see that Daniel's failure to give us this detail means that the four beasts ascend simultaneously. Not only do they ascend at the same time, but they reign upon the earth at the same time – each over a quadrant of the earth.

Support for this final point is found in Daniel 7:7 which declares, **A fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped *what was left with its feet*** (Italics added). The importance of the translation of this verse is evident by examining several Bible translations:

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 (NASB).

A fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet (ESV).

a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it (1895-KJV).

a fourth beast – terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left (NIV).

The reader should discern that the translations, with the exception of the NIV, place the final clause as the object of all three verbs. Does “what was left” go with the final verb *to stamp* or with all three verbs: *to devour*, *to break in pieces*, and *to stamp*? The answer to this question along with the question regarding the meaning of the clause “what was left” support our contention that the four kings/kingdoms of Daniel 7 reign upon the earth at the same time.

If the clause “what was left” applies only to the verb *to stamp*, we would have to conclude that the clause refers to the things the beast did not devour or break in pieces. In other words, “what was left” is everything else the beast is not able to devour or break in pieces. If the beast could not “eat” it or “break” it, he stamped on it.

The other option is to take “what was left” as the object of all three verbs: *to devour*, *to break in pieces*, and *to stamp*, which is reflected in most translations. Taken in this sense, “what was left” represents everything the first three beasts do not control. In other words, the four kings/kingdoms divided the world up between them. The lion-king, the bear-king, the leopard-king, and the diverse-king each get a fourth. Perhaps this would explain why in Revelation 6:8 only a “fourth of the earth” falls under the immediate control of “Death and Hades,” which are personifications of “the beasts of the earth.” In context, “what was left” is best taken to refer to that part of the earth that did not fall under the control of the first three beasts/kings/kingdoms.

The four kings/kingdoms (Dan 7:17, 23) produced by the four winds (instruments of God’s pleasure) of the compass are described as “four beasts. Why use the description or designation *beasts*? The reader must keep in mind that Daniel received this vision from God. It was God’s plan to present the four kings/kingdoms as “beasts.” By doing so, God is purposely portraying

these groups as evil and hostile to his programs and peoples. In both the books of Daniel and Revelation, the term *beast* represents evil men or nations bent on the destruction of God's people and/or the willful rebellion of creatures against their creator.

This characterization makes it unlikely that the first beast is Nebuchadnezzar or Babylon. The transformation of Nebuchadnezzar from the beast-like form he temporarily became was an act of mercy on God's part that resulted in good for his people, Israel. This is not the case for the beasts of Daniel 7. There is no redemption for them. Rather, as we shall see, their plans are continually evil and bring only judgment from God.

By way of summary, Daniel 7:1-3 indicates that by means of his four wind instruments God will raise up four kings/kingdoms that will exercise complete dominance over the world. Each king/kingdom will exercise authority over a fourth of the earth. This set of events will mark the beginning of the final phase of man's rule over the earth before it is taken away and given to the Son of Man – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.