

THE STORY OF DANIEL

by

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“Aunt Hattie’s Bible Stories” for Boys and Girls

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CHAPTER EIGHT

DANIEL’S VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS

AFTER the death of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel seems to have retired from active service in the palace until the reign of Darius, the Mede.

He may have lived in his own house by himself, probably near the king’s palace. Here he spent his time pouring over God’s Word, for he must have had the books of Moses, most of the Psalms, and the writings of a number of the prophets.

How thrilled he was as he read again and again the prophecies concerning his own nation, especially the record of the captivity of which he was a part.

Daniel, as we have seen, was a great man of faith. Darius, the Mede, said to him, “**Your God, whom you serve continually.**” Prayer was the secret of Daniel’s righteous life. That was the reason he was able to live midst the scenes of a heathen court and even serve there and yet keep his fellowship with Jehovah, God.

As Daniel studied God’s Word he became more and more concerned about his nation, Israel. The ten tribes had been scattered for nearly two hundred years. The land of Israel was lying desolate. The end of the seventy years of Judah’s captivity was near, and Daniel’s heart turned in prayer to God to know what was in store for them.

It was in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, that God came to Daniel in a dream in the night. It was really four visions linked together. Daniel waited until he heard them all and then asked for the interpretation. I think I’ll give the interpretation to each one as we go along to make it as simple as possible.

First of all, Daniel said that he dreamed he was standing by the sea. I suppose it must have been the Mediterranean Sea, and he saw the winds of heaven in a storm over the waters.

I presume they were the east wind, the west wind, the north wind, and the south wind, and altogether it must have looked like a whirlwind.

As Daniel looked he saw four beasts come up out of the sea, each different one from the other.

The sea, in the Bible, is a symbol of a multitude of people. Have you ever heard a speaker say that he looked into a sea of faces? The sea is never quiet and neither is a mass of people.

“The first (beast) was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings; I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.

“And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it . . . and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

“After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.”

Let us see what these strange things mean. The heavenly one who stood by to explain them to Daniel said the beasts represented kings who should arise out of the earth or from among the people of the earth.

Let us imagine we are standing by while the interpreter continues his explanation, perhaps something like this—

“Daniel, the first beast is a picture of the Babylonian Empire. Do you remember King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image with its head of gold?”

“I well remember that, sir, as though it were but yesterday,” I think Daniel answered.

“Gold,” continued the interpreter, “is the most precious metal, a lion is the king of beasts and an eagle is the king of birds. So Babylon had both beauty and strength. But you see the wings were taken from this beast so Babylon is losing her power. They have given her a man’s heart and made her to stand upon her feet, but she is still a beast.

“The second beast is a bear and represents the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, whom you, Daniel, will live to see conquer Babylon and rule the empire. It raised itself on one side, and you will see that the Persians will be stronger than the Medes. The three ribs in its mouth, held by the teeth, are the three nations they will conquer. It is like the silver of the image, less in value and a bit stronger.

“The third beast, the leopard with four heads and four Wings upon its back, is the Grecian Kingdom which will one day overthrow the Medes and Persians. The wings show how swift it will be, and its four heads, the four kingdoms into which it will be divided. It is like the 1 brass of the image.”

When he was through talking I think Daniel said to himself, “Now I begin to see what it all means. God showed Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen king, how men of earth view these kingdoms—head of gold; chest and arms, silver; body, brass; legs, iron; all of which show earthly power and glory. But now He has taken me behind the scenes and showed me what these kingdoms really are at heart. They are all beastly, and would devour one another. A lion devours, a bear crushes, and a leopard springs upon its prey.”

History reveals all of these characteristics in these world kingdoms that existed so long ago. As I write I am thinking of the nations of the earth today, two thousand years after the coming of the promised Redeemer, our Saviour. Are these nations better than those of early days? Time seems not to have improved them.

What are the symbols represented in our national coat-of-arms of present day governments? An eagle, lion, cobra, tiger and birds of prey, and vicious beasts, but not one do I find with the symbol of a lamb or a dove.

The next part of the vision was about the fourth beast.

“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 broke 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.

“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 saw this beast to be so terrible that he could think of no animal to which to liken it. It was different from all of the other queer creatures and had ten horns and then a little horn popped right up in the midst of the ten horns and pulled three of them out by the roots. Daniel then saw that this little horn had eyes like a man and a mouth speaking boastfully. I'll tell you more about this beast a little later.

In the third vision Daniel said, **“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.**

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

“I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

“As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.”

It seems to me it was as though the angel said, “Daniel, come into my observatory and look through my big telescope. What do you see?”

And Daniel said, “Oh, how wonderful! I see things happening a long, long time ahead.”

The angel continued,

“Ever since Israel was taken captive to Babylon and God made Nebuchadnezzar world ruler, the Gentiles have been in power and they will be until the time of the events you see transpiring as you look through the telescope of time. Now look carefully and tell me what else you see.”

I think Daniel was held spellbound, but at last he said, thoughtfully, “I see thrones being set and the Most High in garments of white, descending and sitting upon the great throne in the midst of the thrones. He has in His hand a book. It is the Judgment Book which He opens.

“Before Him stands the ugly fourth beast with the little horn who is judged for his wickedness and is slain.”

I will tell you more about these scenes a little later.

In the last of the four visions Daniel said,

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.

“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Daniel was greatly grieved for he wanted to know more about the meaning of all of these strange visions and he drew near to the heavenly interpreter and said, “Tell me the truth about all of these visions.”

And it was as though the holy one said, “You have been looking through heaven’s telescope to the end of Gentile rule. Kingdoms will arise, one after another, and will be destroyed and the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom forever and ever.”

Again, I believe Nebuchadnezzar’s image came into Daniel’s mind. He remembered the ten toes and the stone that struck them causing the image to fall and to be ground to powder. Now, he asked particularly about the ten horns of this fourth beast and the little horn which had eyes and a mouth and seemed to prevail against the saints.

The angel answered, **“The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be different from all kingdoms, and shall rule the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.**

“And the ten horns . . . are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be different from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. He shall speak great things against the Most High . . . but the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

The fourth world kingdom that we know in history as the Roman Empire was just such a cruel, merciless power as is described in this horrible beast. It was different from all of the kingdoms that preceded it.

The ten horns, I believe, represent ten kingdoms or nations that will occupy the territory formerly included in the Roman Empire. In the last days these kingdoms will unite to form some kind of a league and then, a dictator, like the little horn, will arise who will take authority upon himself to rule over these united nations. He will overthrow three of them and finally assume world dictatorship.

He will do just as the heavenly interpreter told Daniel. He will blaspheme the Most High God. But his time will be short for when he sets himself up to be worshipped, then the heavens will open and the Lord will come in flaming fire taking vengeance upon them that blaspheme His name. That is the judgment of Daniel’s vision and the smiting stone of Nebuchadnezzar’s image.

Some one has well said, “The Roman Empire rose from out of the agitated sea of the world’s life, and brought territory after territory under its rule until it finally ruled practically the whole world.”

While the Roman Empire, as a world power, fell many hundreds of years ago, according to Daniel’s vision it will be revived, and is now being revived.

“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings—These have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”

What a terrible picture. But you and I have God’s completed Word and need not fear that awful day for, if we have been born again, we shall go when the Lord shall come for His Church. This will be before the manifestation of the dreadful beast.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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