

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The prophet having, in the preceding chapters of this book, related some remarkable events concerning himself and his brethren in the captivity, and given proof of his being enabled, by Divine assistance, to interpret the dreams of others, enters now into a detail of his own visions, returning to a period prior to the transactions recorded in the last chapter. The first in order of the prophet's visions is that of the four beasts, which arose out of a very tempestuous ocean, Daniel 7:1-9; and of one like the Son of man who annihilated the dominion of the fourth beast, because of the proud and blasphemous words of one of its horns, Daniel 7:9-14. An angel deciphers the hieroglyphics contained in this chapter, declaring that the Four beasts, diverse one from another, represent the Four Paramount empires of the habitable globe, which should succeed each other; and are evidently the same which were shadowed forth to Nebuchadnezzar by another set of hieroglyphics, (see the second chapter), Daniel 7:15-26. But for the consolation of the people of God, it is added that, at the time appointed in the counsel of Jehovah, the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High; and that this kingdom shall never be destroyed or transferred to another people, as all the preceding dominations have been, but shall itself stand for ever, Daniel 7:27, Daniel 7:28. It will be proper to remark that the period of a time, times, and a half, mentioned in the twenty-fifth verse as the duration of the dominion of the little horn that made war with the saints, (generally supposed to be a symbolical representation of the papal power), had most probably its commencement in a.d. 755 or 756, when Pepin, king of France, invested the pope with temporal power. This hypothesis will bring the conclusion of the period to about the year of Christ 2000, a time fixed by Jews and Christians for some remarkable revolution; when the world, as they suppose, will be renewed, the wicked cease from troubling the Church, and the saints of the Most High have dominion over the whole habitable globe. But this is all hypothesis.

Verse 1

In the first year of Belshazzar - This is the same Belshazzar who was slain at the taking of Babylon, as we have seen at the conclusion of chap. 5. That chapter should have followed both this and the succeeding. The reason why the fifth chapter was put in an improper place was, that all the historic parts might be together, and the prophetic be by themselves; and, accordingly, the former end with the preceding chapter, and the latter with this. The division therefore is not chronological but merely artificial.

Told the sum of the matters - That he might not forget this extraordinary dream, he wrote down the leading particulars when he awoke.

Verse 2

The four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea - The idea of strife is taken here from the effects that must be produced, were the east, the west, the north, and the south winds to rise tempestuously, and meet on the surface of the sea. By the great sea, the Mediterranean is meant; and is so called to distinguish it from those lakes called seas by the Hebrews; such as the Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea, Sea of Tiberias, etc.; but even that may refer to Asia, the scene of all these contentions. This dream is the same in meaning, under different emblems, as that of Nebuchadnezzar's metallic image; but in Daniel's dream several circumstances are added. It is supposed that Daniel had this dream about forty-eight years after Nebuchadnezzar had the vision of the great image.

Verse 3

Four great beasts came up from the sea - The term sea, in Hebrew יָם (yam), from יָמָה (yamah), to be tumultuous, agitated, etc., seems to be used here to point out the then known terraqueous globe, because of its generally agitated state; and the four winds striving, point out those predatory wars that prevailed almost universally among men, from the days of Nimrod, the founder of the Assyrian or Babylonish monarchy, down to that time, and in the end gave birth to the four great monarchies which are the subject of this vision.

Diverse one from another - The people were different; the laws and customs different; and the administration of each differently executed.

Verse 4

The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings - Bp. Newton well remarks, that these great beasts, as explained by the angel, Daniel 7:17, are kingdoms. They arise out of a stormy and tempestuous sea; that is, out of the wars and commotions of the world; and they are called great in comparison of other states and kingdoms, and are denominated beasts for their tyrannical and cruel oppression.

1.The leopard is remarkable for its swiftness. Alexander and the Macedonians were very rapid in their conquests.

2.The leopard is a spotted animal; a proper emblem of the various nations, with their various customs and languages, which constituted the Macedonian empire. It may refer to the character of Alexander himself, sometimes mild, at others cruel; sober and drunken; continent and lecherous; having a great power of self-government, and at other times being a slave to his passions.

3.The leopard, though small, is not afraid to attack the lion.

Four wings of a fowl - The Babylonian empire was represented with two wings; and they sufficiently marked the rapidity of Nebuchadnezzar's conquests; but the Macedonian has here four wings; for nothing, in the history of the world, was equal to the conquests of Alexander, who ran through all the countries from Illyricum and the Adriatic Sea to the Indian Ocean and the River Ganges; and in twelve years subdued part of Europe, and all Asia.

The beast had also four heads - Signifying the empire after the death of Alexander, divided between his four generals. Cassander reigning over Macedon and Greece; Lysimachus, over Thrace and Bithynia; Ptolemy, over Egypt; and Seleucus, over Syria.

Dominion was given to it - It was not owing to the skill, courage, or valor of Alexander and his troops, that he made those wondrous conquests; the nations were given to him. For, as Bishop Newton says, had he not been assisted by the mighty power of God, how could he, with only thirty thousand men, have overcome Darius with six hundred thousand; and in so short a time have brought the countries from Greece as far as India into subjection?

Verse 7

I saw - a fourth beast - it had great iron teeth - This is allowed, on all hands, to be the Roman empire. It was dreadful, terrible, and exceeding strong: it devoured, and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue, that is, the remains of the former kingdoms, with its feet. It reduced Macedon into a Roman province about one hundred and sixty-eight years before Christ; the kingdom of Pergamos about one hundred and thirty-three years; Syria about sixty-five; and Egypt about thirty years before Christ. And, besides the remains of the Macedonian empire, it subdued many other provinces and kingdoms; so that it might, by a very usual figure, be said to devour the whole earth, to tread it down, and break it to pieces; and became in effect, what the Roman writers delight to call it, the empire of the whole world.

It (the fourth beast) was diverse from all the beasts that were before it - Not only in its republican form of government, but also in power and greatness, extent of dominion, and length of duration.

It had ten horns - The ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was afterwards divided. Calmet says, ten Syrian kings: and he finds them thus: -

1. Seleucus Nicator.
2. Antiochus Soter.
3. Antiochus Theos.
4. Antiochus Callinicus.
5. Seleucus Ceraunus.
6. Antiochus the Great.
7. Seleucus, surnamed Philopater, brother of Antiochus Epiphanes.
8. Laomedon of Mitylene, to whom Syria and Phoenicia had been intrusted.
9. Antigone. And,
10. His son Demetrius, who possessed those provinces, with the title of kings.

This is too much like forced work. There are different opinions concerning these ten kings; or rather which they were that constituted this division of the Roman empire. They are reckoned thus: -

1. The Roman senate.
2. The Greeks, in Ravenna.

- 3.The Lombards in Lombardy.
- 4.The Buns in Hungary.
- 5.The Alemans, in Germany.
- 6.The Franks in France.
- 7.The Burgundians in Burgundy.
- 8.The Saracens in Africa, and a part of Spain.
- 9.The Goths, in other parts of Spain.

10.And the Saxons, in Britain.

Verse 8

Another little horn - Among Protestant writers this is considered to be the popedom.

Before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up - These were probably,

- 1.The exarchate of Ravenna.
- 2.The kingdom of the Lombards. And,
- 3.The state of Rome.

The first was given to the Pope, Stephen II., by Pepin, king of France, a.d. 755; and this constituted the pope's temporal princes. The second was given to St. Peter by Charlemagne, in 774. The third, the state of Rome, was vested in the pope, both in spirituals and temporals, and confirmed to him by Lewis the pious. These are the three horns which were plucked up from the roots before the little horn.

Were eyes like the eyes of a man - Intimating cunning and superintendence; for the pope calls himself *Episcopus episcoporum*, the Overseer of overseers.

And a mouth speaking great things - Full of boasting; pretending to unlimited jurisdiction; binding and loosing at pleasure; promising to absolve from all sins, present, past, and future; and threatening to send to everlasting destruction all kings, kingdoms, and individuals, who would dare to dispute his power and authority.

Verse 9

The thrones were cast down - *שָׁרְפוּ* might be translated erected, so the Vulgate, *positi sunt*, and so all the versions; but that ours is a proper translation, is sufficiently evident from Daniel 3:6, Daniel 3:16, Daniel 3:20; Daniel 6:17, etc.; where the original word can be used in no other sense than that of throwing or casting down. There is a reference here to preparations made for a general assize, or to the convocation of the sanhedrin, where the father of the consistory sat with his assessors on each side in the form of a semicircle, and the people stood before them.

The Ancient of days - God Almighty; and this is the only place in the sacred writings where God the Father is represented in a human form.

Verse 10

A fiery stream issued - This is not spoken of the final judgment; but of that which he was to execute upon this fourth beast, the Roman empire; and the little boasting horn which is a part of the fourth beast, and must fall when the other falls.

Verse 11

I beheld then because of the voice (or, the beast will be destroyed because) of the great words which the horn spake - his body destroyed - When the dominion was taken from the rest of the beasts, their bodies were not destroyed, but suffered to continue still in being; but when the dominion shall be taken away from this beast, his body shall be totally destroyed; because other kingdoms succeeded to those, but no other earthly kingdom shall succeed to this. - Bishop Newton.

Verse 13

One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven - This most certainly points out the Lord Jesus, *בן אדם* (*bar enosh*), the Son of miserable man; who took our nature upon him that he might redeem us unto himself. To prove himself to be the Messiah he applies, before the high priests, these words of the Prophet Daniel to himself Matthew 24:30.

Near before him - The Ancient of days.

Verse 14

And there was given him dominion - This also is applied to our Lord Jesus by himself, after his resurrection, Matthew 28:18.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion - Christianity shall increase, and prevail to the end of the world. See the parallel passages in the margin.

Verse 15

I Daniel was grieved, etc. - The words in the original are uncommonly emphatic. My spirit was grieved, or sickened, x'x'x' x x"x x" (bego nidneh), within its sheath or scabbard. Which I think proves,

1. That the human spirit is different from the body.
2. That it has a proper subsistence independently of the body, which is only its sheath for a certain time.
3. That the spirit may exist independently of its body, as the sword does independently of its sheath.

Verse 17

These great beasts - are four kings - See the preceding verses, where the following explanations are inserted and illustrated.

Verse 18

But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom - I doubt whether this be the true sense of the original Chaldee, x*x™xšx'xœx*xÿ xžxœx›x•xªx• xšx"x©x™ xçxœx™x•x x•xÿ (vikabbelun malcuta kaddishey elyonin), â€œBut the supreme holy ones shall receive the kingdom;â€• or, â€œthey shall receive the kingdom of the supreme saints.â€• Properly translated by Montanus, Et suscipient regnum sanctorum altissimorum. Whatever we may think of the patriarchs and the Jews in their best times, there has never been so much holiness of heart possessed, and so much righteousness practiced, as by the genuine disciples of Christ. Christianity alone has provided a full redemption for man. They are the chief saints, and to them God gives the kingdom: and this Gospel dispensation, called often the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven, shall last for ever, during the whole lapse of time; and for ever and ever - throughout eternity, shall they and its blessings endure.

Verse 19

His nails of brass - This is not mentioned in the seventh verse, where the description of the beast is given. It might be added, for the first time, by the person who is now explaining the fourth beast. Houbigant thinks it has been lost out of the text: but such loss is not intimated by any MS.; nor does any of the ancient Versions acknowledge this addition in the seventh verse.

Verse 21

The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them - Those who make Antiochus the little horn, make the saints the Jewish people. Those who understand the popedom by it, see this as referring to the cruel persecutions of the popes of Rome against the Waldenses and Albigenses, and the Protestant Church in general.

Verse 22

Saints of the Most High - To the supereminent saints; see the note on Daniel 7:18 (note).

Verse 25

He shall speak great words against the Most High - Sermones quasi Deus loquetur; â€œHe shall speak as if he were God.â€• So St. Jerome quotes from Symmachus. To none can this apply so well or so fully as to the popes of Rome. They have assumed infallibility, which belongs only to God. They profess to forgive sins, which belongs only to God. They profess to open and shut heaven, which belongs only to God. They profess to be higher than all the kings of the earth, which belongs only to God. And they go beyond God in pretending to loose whole nations from their oath of allegiance to their kings, when such kings do not please them! And they go against God when they give indulgences for sin. This is the worst of all blasphemies!

And shall wear out the saints - By wars, crusades, massacres, inquisitions, and persecutions of all kinds. What in this way have they not done against all those who have protested against their innovations, and refused to

submit to their idolatrous worship? Witness the exterminating crusades published against the Waldenses and Albinenses. Witness John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. Witness the Smithfield fires in England! Witness God and man against this bloody, persecuting, ruthless, and impure Church!

And think to change times and laws - Appointing fasts and feasts; canonizing persons whom he chooses to call saints; granting pardons and indulgences for sins; instituting new modes of worship utterly unknown to the Christian Church; new articles of faith; new rules of practice; and reversing, with pleasure, the laws both of God and man. - Dodd.

Until a time and times and the dividing of time - In prophetic language a time signifies a year; and a prophetic year has a year for each day. Three years and a half (a day standing for a year, as in John 9:24) will amount to one thousand two hundred and sixty years, if we reckon thirty days to each month, as the Jews do.

If we knew precisely when the papal power began to exert itself in the antichristian way, then we could at once fix the time of its destruction. The end is probably not very distant; it has already been grievously shaken by the French. In 1798 the French republican army under General Berthier took possession of the city of Rome, and entirely superseded the whole papal power. This was a deadly wound, though at present it appears to be healed; but it is but skinned over, and a dreadful cicatrice remains. The Jesuits, not Jesus, are now the Church's doctors.

If the papal power, as a horn or temporal power, be intended here, which is most likely, (and we know that that power was given in 755 to Pope Stephen II. by Pepin, king of France), counting one thousand two hundred and sixty years from that, we are brought to a.d. 2015, about one hundred and ninety years from the present [a.d. 1825]. But I neither lay stress upon nor draw conclusions from these dates. If the Church of Rome will reform itself, it will then be the true Christian Church, and will never be destroyed. Let it throw aside all that is ritually Jewish, all that is heathen; all that which pretends to be of God, and which is only of man, all doctrines that are not in the Bible; and all rites and ceremonies which are not of the appointment of Christ and his apostles; and then, all hail the once Roman, but now, after such a change, the Holy, Catholic Church! Every true Protestant would wish rather the reform than the extinction of this Church.

Verse 27

The kingdom and dominion - The people of the saints of the Most High, or the people who are the supereminent saints, shall have the kingdom. Whatever name they may be distinguished by among men, these are the people, and theirs is the Church, that no lapse of time shall injure, and no power be able to destroy; but shall last as long as time shall endure.

Verse 28

The end of the matter - So said the expounding angel; and he said so because the purpose of God had determined it. In considering these things, and looking at the evils that shall come upon the world before those auspicious times can take place, I may say with Daniel, My cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I keep the matter of my conjectures and consequent feelings in my own heart.