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The First Beast of Dani'el:
A Lion with a Head of Gold
Dani'el 2:37-38 and 7:2-4

The first beast of Dani'el: a lion with a head of gold DIG: What two ways is Babylon pictured in this section? Who were the four great beasts out of the sea? What made this lion different from other lions? When its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it, what did that represent?

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was troubled. **He** had **a dream** that **he** could not interpret. **He** called in the famous magi of **Babylon** and even they could not interpret **his** troubling dream. **The king** was so angry that **he** was about to execute them all when the commander of **his** guard met **Dani'el**, who said that **he** could interpret **the king's** dream. **Dani'el** told **the king** that **he** had seen **a large statue, an enormous dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold (Dani'el 2:31-32a)**.

Dani'el interpreted the meaning of **the head of gold** as being **King Nebuchadnezzar himself, the head of the Babylonian Empire**, or the first Gentile Empire. When **he** destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple in 586 BC, **the Times of the Gentiles** began. As a result, **Babylon** was the first of four Gentile empires to dominate Jerusalem.

Interpreting **the king's dream, Dani'el** said to **him**: **You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory.** Then **Dani'el** pointed out the extent of **his** rule when **he** said: **In your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are the head of gold (2:37-38). God** had given **King Nebuchadnezzar** authority over the whole entire earth, a universal reign and a universal authority. **He** was an absolute monarch and was above the law. The fact that **he** did not proceed to gain

the universal reign is beside the point. If **he** had wanted to **he** could have conquered the whole inhabited world with guaranteed success because that was the power that **ADONAI** had given **him**. Two contemporary prophets of **Dani’el** said the same thing **(Jeremiah 27:5-8; Ezeki’el 26:7-14)**.

God had given **King Nebuchadnezzar** authority over the whole earth. **He** chose not to extend it that far, **but** he could have. **Daniel** affirmed **his** absolute authority when **he** said: **O King, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted humbled, he humbled (Dani’el 5:18-19).**

Many years later, **Dani’el** had **his** first vision during **the first year** of **King** Belshazzar’s reign. It was 553 BC, or fourteen years before the fall of **Babylon (Dani’el 7:1)**. **Nebuchadnezzar** had been dead for nine years. After **him**, three kings followed in quick succession before King Nabonidus assumed the throne. Three years later Nabonidus made his son **Belshazzar** his coregent. Thus, **Belshazzar** was the last **king of Babylon** before the Medes and the Persians overthrew the Babylonians and came to power.

Daniel said: **In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds**, emphasizing **God’s** sovereignty and **God’s** providence, **of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts came up out of the great sea (7:2-3).** Whenever the word **sea** is used symbolically in Scripture, it always refers to the Gentile nations **(Isaiah 17:12-13; Matthew 13:47-50; Revelation 13:1, Ezekiel 26:3).** So these **four great** kingdoms would be Gentile kingdoms, and each kingdom would be distinct from the others. **God**, in **His** sovereign will, was allowing this to happen for **His** own purposes and glory.

The first beast, like **the head of gold**, represented the Babylonian Empire. The **first** Gentile kingdom **was** like **a lion.** The **lion** is the king of the beasts and it was used as a symbol of **Babylon (Jeremiah 4:7, 49:19, 50:17** and **44)**. What makes this **lion** different from other lions was that **it had the wings of an eagle.** The **eagle** is the **king** of the birds and it was also used as a symbol of **Babylon (Jeremiah 48:40, 49:22; Ezeki'el 17:3).** Therefore, **the lion and the eagle** were both used by **Jeremiah** to describe **Nebuchadnezzar**. **I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it (Dani'el 7:4).** This is a description of the proud and self-sufficient **King Nebuchadnezzar** being reduced to a field animal to realize **his** dependence on **God (Dani'el 4:1-37)**. But it also represents both **Nebuchadnezzar** and **his** empire, for as near as a man could become a beast, **he** became one. And as much as a beast can become a man, **Babylon** lost its beast-like nature and its animalistic characteristics and became more humane. This summarizes the experience of **Babylon** changing from the lust of conquest to the building of culture.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How Wise **You** are! We bow in worship of **You**, loving and adoring **You**! We stand in wonder at how wise **You** are to be able to predict with perfect accuracy the future kingdoms of the world. That gives us confidence that when **Your** child **(John 1:12, 3:3; First John 3:1,3)** prays to **You** and the answer is different than what we expected, we can trust that **You** who are all wise and all loving are giving the very best for **Your** child. We love **You**. In the name of **Your Son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*