

Light for My Path Youth Bible Studies

#11: Great Empires of Bible Prophecy



We live in a world that is very uncertain. Looking back in history, we see nations that once were very powerful and held important positions in this world, have either completely disappeared, or are no longer important as they once were.

This same experience can also come to us as individuals. One day we may have health and life may seem full of promise. A sudden sickness, or an accident, can change our situation very quickly and sometimes for the rest of our lives.

God does not leave His people to wander about in confusion with regard to what the future holds. He has spoken through His prophets, giving us waymarks, like road signs, marking out the coming events. As we see how the rise and fall of nations follow God's great plan, and recognize that He has known all the events that have taken place in this world long before they took place, we can gain comfort and strength. We can rest in the knowledge that His Truth will triumph and we can trust Him to guide us through every situation we will ever have to face. We can safely commit our ways to Him.

1. What is God's Word to His people? **Psalms 119:105.** "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

2. To whom does God reveal His secrets? **Amos 3:7.**

"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."

3. How did these men know what to write? **2 Peter 1:21.**

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

4. What promise is made to those who believe God's prophets? **2 Chronicles 20:20.**

"And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

5. By what means was Israel kept safe (preserved)? **Hosea 12:13.**

"And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved."

Note: Through Moses the prophet, God showed His love for Israel by bringing them through many trials to the Promised Land. When Israel followed God's instructions, as they were given them by Moses and the other prophets, they were successful.

6. Why are all these stories recorded in the Bible? **1 Corinthians 10:11.**

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Note: From learning about the experiences of Israel, we may learn that we are blessed when we follow the light God has given us in His Word.

Pictures are good way of putting across a thought or an idea. Many times, a picture can say more than could be said by many words. We are all familiar with symbols used to represent nations. An eagle is a symbol for United States of America; a lion can stand for Great Britain. Other animals are used to represent other countries. Animal symbols are often used to represent political parties, as well as countries.

In some of the visions Daniel was given by God, he saw animals which represented various nations. In the vision of chapter 7, Daniel was shown important world powers that were to rule from his day right down to the end of this world.

7. Who was the king at the time Daniel had this vision? **Daniel 7:1.**

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters."

Note: Daniel received this vision just a few years before Babylon was captured by the armies of the Medes and Persians. Much of the glory and power that Babylon had in its early days was gone.

8. What did Daniel see? **Daniel 7:2.**

"Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea."

9. What does water represent in prophecy? **Revelation 17:15.**

"And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. [Languages]"

Note: The meanings of symbols are not always given in the same place in the Bible as the symbol is used. So we look other places and discover how that symbol was used at other times. As waters represent nations and multitudes of people in this prophecy, we may know that whenever we see the symbol of water in prophecy, it represents nations and multitudes of people. The wind represents war, and so these Beast-Powers came to power through battle.

10. What resulted from the winds blowing on the water? **Daniel 7:3.**

"And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse [different] one from another."

11. What were represented by these beasts? **Daniel 7:17**

"These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, [kingdoms] which shall arise out of the earth."

Note: While there is no text in the Bible that tells us as plainly what wind represents, such as we found to explain what was meant by water, there are quite a number of places that talk about wind. One of these is Jeremiah 49:35-37. When we compare these texts, we find that wind is used to describe war and strife. When we apply this meaning to the verses in Daniel 7, it makes perfect sense. It is by war and force of arms that one nation is overthrown, and another takes its place as a ruling power as is shown by the various beasts coming up out of the sea.

12. What was the first beast to appear out of the sea? **Daniel 7:4.**

"The first 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 stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it."

Note: The King's dream showed there were to be four universal or worldwide empires from the time of Daniel, until the God of heaven sets up His kingdom at the end of time. So these four beasts must represent the four great divisions of the image that the king and Daniel had already seen. The first, the head of gold on the image, was Babylon. Therefore, this lion must represent the nation of Babylon.

13. What was taken from this beast? **Daniel 7:4.**

"The first 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 stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it."

Note: This beast began with wings representing the speed with which Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar conquered the nations. The prophet Habakkuk uses the symbol of a flying eagle to describe the speed with which Babylon attacked her enemies. "For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans (another word for Babylonians), a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; their cavalry comes from afar; they fly as the eagle that hastens to eat." Habakkuk 1:6, 8.

The wings plucked from the lion, shows that it no longer had the strength and speed it once did and the fierce, lion's heart was gone. This is exactly what happened to Babylon. Under

Nebuchadnezzar, God had blessed Babylon, allowing it to conquer other nations. Through His representative Daniel, and his friends, God revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar. The kings who followed did not profit by the things that had been revealed, and went on in their wicked ways. Finally, just 23 years after Nebuchadnezzar's death, his grandson, Belshazzar, during a feast, called for the beautiful golden vessels that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem, and drank from them in honor of his gods. That night Cyrus the Persian attacked and Belshazzar was killed—Babylon fell.

14. What beast appeared after the lion? **Daniel 7:5.**

"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 between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh."

Note: This animal represented the Medo-Persian Empire.

15. What was the third beast like? **Daniel 7:6.**

"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."

Note: This is a very unusual beast. We know that Greece was the third great world empire. Two wings represented the speed with which Babylon moved to conquer its enemies, so four wings represent even greater speed with which Alexander the Great, the first king of Greece, conquered the world. In an amazingly short time, Alexander had conquered the whole then-known world.

This animal has four heads too. No sooner had Alexander conquered the world than he died from drunkenness. For the next twenty years, there was civil war as several of Alexander's most powerful generals fought to gain control of the government. Finally, an agreement was made between the four strongest generals to split the kingdom into four parts, with one of these men ruling over each part. This is what is represented by the four heads on the leopard.

16. What did the fourth beast represent? **Daniel 7:23.**

"Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse [different] from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces."

Note: Though we are not given a name for this fourth beast, history tells us that in the year 168 B.C., the armies of Rome defeated Greece in a great battle.

17. What were represented by the ten horns coming up from the fourth beast? **Daniel 7:24.**

"And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings."

Note: Rome did not fall suddenly in a battle, as did the three great empires before it. For over 100 years the barbarian tribes of northern Europe attacked Rome, striking blow after blow. Slowly the government was broken, the cities destroyed. Finally, in A.D. 476, the fall of Rome was complete, and Europe was divided into various sections, each ruled over by a different

tribe. These divisions later formed the nations of Europe, and are represented by the ten horns.

18. After having seen all these things, who did Daniel see come before the Ancient of days (another name for God the Father)? **Daniel 7:13.**

"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."

19. What did He receive at that time? **Daniel 7:14.**

"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."

20. How long does this kingdom last? **Daniel 7:14.**

"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."

21. How is this kingdom different from all the other kingdoms before it? **Isaiah 11:9.**

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

Note: It is hard to imagine a place where nothing is hurt or destroyed, but our Bible tells of just such a place. Wouldn't you like to live in a place where there is no more pain, or sorrow, where God's people will live forever, free from fear and oppression? This is the kingdom of Jesus, Who is coming soon to gather His faithful people. In the next lessons, we will look at what that kingdom is like, and what we must do if we are to be a part of it.

In God's Word, He has drawn the curtain aside and showed us the future. Isn't it wonderful to have a God who cares about us that way?
