

Daniel 7:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The first beast "like a lion, and had eagle's wings" combines royal authority (lion, king of beasts) with swift dominance (eagle, king of birds). This represents Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, matching Daniel 2's golden head. The lion symbolized Babylon in ancient Near Eastern iconography, and the eagle's wings emphasize rapid conquest. The transformation—"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"—depicts humiliation followed by humanization.

This imagery parallels Nebuchadnezzar's personal experience (Daniel 4) when pride led to beast-like madness, followed by restoration when he acknowledged God's sovereignty. The "plucking" of wings represents loss of imperial power and mobility, while receiving "a man's heart" indicates restored reason and humility. Historically, Babylon's power peaked under Nebuchadnezzar but declined under successors, fulfilling this vision of initial strength diminished.

Theologically, this demonstrates that human empires, however magnificent, remain subject to divine sovereignty. God elevates and humbles kingdoms according to His purposes. The transformation from beast to human also illustrates redemptive possibility—even proud empires can be humbled to acknowledge truth. This points to Christ who humbles the proud and exalts the humble (Luke 1:52), and whose kingdom will outlast all earthly empires (Daniel 2:44).

Historical Context

Babylon (626-539 BC) dominated the ancient Near East under Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC), conquering Egypt, Judah, and surrounding nations with remarkable speed. The lion-eagle combination appeared in Babylonian art and architecture, making the symbol immediately recognizable to Daniel's contemporaries. Babylon's decline under Nebuchadnezzar's successors (Evil-Merodach, Neriglissar, Nabonidus) fulfilled the vision of diminished power.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Nebuchadnezzar's transformation from beast to man illustrate the redemptive possibility when proud rulers acknowledge God's sovereignty?
2. What does Babylon's rise and decline teach about earthly empires' temporary nature compared to God's eternal kingdom?
3. How does this vision encourage believers living under powerful secular authorities that seem invincible?

Interlinear Text

קִדְמִיתָ א	כְּאַרְיֵה ה	גַּפּ יֵה	דִּי	נֶשֶׁר	לֵה	חַיֵּה
The first	was like a lion	the wings	H1768	and had eagle's	H0	H2370
H6933	H744	H1611		H5403		
הִי יֵה	עַד	דִּי	מִיָּטוּ	גַּפּ יֵה	וְנִטְּ יֵלֶת	מִן
I beheld	till	H1768	thereof were plucked	the wings	and it was lifted up	from
H1934	H5705		H4804	H1611	H5191	H4481
אֶרֶץ א	וְעַל	בְּגָל יֵן	אֶנְ שׁ	הִקְיַם ת	וּלְבַב	אֶנְ שׁ
the earth	upon	the feet	and a man's	and made stand	heart	and a man's
H772	H5922	H7271	H606	H6966	H3825	H606
יְהִי יב	לָהּ:					
was given	H0					
H3052						

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 4:7 (Parallel theme): The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

Ezekiel 17:3 (Parallel theme): And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: