

Daniel 7:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The second beast "like a bear" represents Media-Persia, matching Daniel 2's silver chest and arms. The bear, powerful but less majestic than the lion, indicates inferior dignity despite greater extent. The asymmetry—"raised up itself on one side"—reflects Persia's dominance over the Medes in the dual kingdom. The "three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth" symbolizes conquered territories: likely Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt, the three major powers defeated by Persia.

The command "Arise, devour much flesh" indicates divinely permitted conquest. God sovereignly uses pagan empires to accomplish His purposes, including judgment on other nations. Persia's appetite for conquest, though representing imperial ambition, operates within divine permission and purpose. This illustrates the doctrine of divine providence—God's sovereign control extends even over actions flowing from creaturely will and sin.

The bear's methodical, powerful approach contrasts with the lion's swift majesty, matching historical reality: Persia conquered through sustained military campaigns and administrative consolidation rather than Babylon's rapid expansion. Yet both empires remain mere beasts in God's sight—powerful animals serving divine purposes but lacking eternal significance. This points to Christ's eternal kingdom that will crush all beastly empires (Daniel 2:34-35) and establish everlasting righteousness.

Historical Context

The Medo-Persian Empire (539-331 BC) conquered Babylon under Cyrus (539 BC) and expanded through Cambyses (Egypt, 525 BC) and Darius I (northwestern India to Greece). The empire's vastness exceeded Babylon's, stretching from India to Ethiopia, but lacked Babylon's cultural prestige and centralized power, matching the vision's imagery of greater extent but lesser glory.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the "three ribs" imagery illustrate God's sovereignty in permitting and limiting imperial conquest?
2. What does the command to "devour much flesh" teach about God using pagan empires to accomplish His purposes, including judgment?
3. How does the beast imagery for powerful empires challenge modern idolization of political and military power?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵרֶא חַיָּה אֶחָד תְּבִנָה כַּאֲמִתִּי בְּדַבֵּר לְשָׁטָר לְדַבְּרֵי

And behold **beast** another **a second** like **to a bear** **side**
H718 H2423 H317 H8578 H1821 H1678 H7859

בְּפֹה הַעַלְעָם וְתִלְתְּלַת לְקָרְבָּנִי וְתִלְתְּלַת כָּד

itself on one **and it raised up** **and it had three** **ribs** **in the mouth**
H2298 H6966 H8532 H5967 H6433

אֶת לְבָבֵךְ וְאֶת שְׁפָתֵךְ וְאֶת אֶמְרָתֵךְ וְאֶת לְבָבֵךְ וְאֶת שְׁפָתֵךְ וְאֶת אֶמְרָתֵךְ

of it between **the teeth** **thus** **of it and they said** ^{H0} **and it raised up** **devour**
H997 H8128 H3652 H560 H6966 H399

בָשָׂר שְׁגִיאָה:

flesh **much**
H1321 H7690

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 2:39 (Resurrection): And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org