

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

Psalms 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

וְאֵרָא וְ	חַיָּוָה	אֲחֵרִי	תִּנְתֶּנּוּ הַ	דָּמָה הַ	לְדָבָר	וּלְשֵׁטֶר
And behold	beast	another	a second	like	to a bear	side
H718	H2423	H317	H8578	H1821	H1678	H7859
חָדָם	קָוָה וְ	וּתְלָת	עַלֵּה יֵן	בִּפְמֻה		
itself on one	and it raised up	and it had three	ribs	in the mouth		
H2298	H6966	H8532	H5967	H6433		
בֵּין	שֵׁנֵי יָהּ	וְכֵן	אָמַר יֵן	לָהּ	קָוָה וְ	אָכַל לִי
of it between	the teeth	thus	of it and they said	H0	and it raised up	devour
H997	H8128	H3652	H560		H6966	H399
בָּשָׂר	שְׂגִיָּא:					
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.