

the Persians; it could apply to many periods of Roman history. Yet it would be particularly appropriate for the early days of the Medo-Persian empire; its founder, Cyrus, made great conquests in the years that immediately followed the time when Daniel received this vision. When Daniel would hear about these rapid conquests, as Cyrus subdued one nation after another, he would see how precisely these developing events correspond to this part of the vision, and this would give him increased confidence that its later portions were a true picture of God's plan for the future.

This description of Persian power as it would soon appear to Daniel, and also the reference to Nebuchadnezzar's insanity in verse 4, were incidental points included in the vision to give assurance that the following predictions would also be fulfilled.

The three ribs in the mouth of the bear are sometimes said to be Lydia, Babylonia, and Egypt. Cyrus conquered Lydia and Babylonia and many other areas. Egypt was not conquered until the time of his son, Cambyses. Probably the three ribs merely represent an indefinite number of conquered areas.

Little is said about the third animal -- a leopard with four wings and four heads. The occurrence of similar features in symbolic predictions of the Greek empire in later chapters (cf. 8:8, 22; 11:4) suggests an important difference between the Greek kingdom and its predecessors. Very soon after this kingdom was founded it became divided into several sections, each completely independent of the others, yet all so similar in their type of organization, their culture, and the racial makeup of their leadership as to justify their being pictured as one kingdom.

As in Nebuchadnezzar's dream the fourth empire is singled out for special notice. There the fourth kingdom was said to be very strong, like iron that "breaks and smashes everything" (2:40). Here the unnamed fourth animal is called a terrifying and frightening beast with large iron teeth, that "crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left". This is exactly the way the Roman state must have appeared to the people in western