

## **The Vision of the Four Beasts in Daniel 7**

Many years after Nebuchadnezzar had the dream described in chapter 2 Daniel himself had one that was like it in some respects, though using entirely different imagery.

The chapter begins with the statement that Daniel received this vision in the first year of Belshazzar. A century ago there were those who thought that Belshazzar was a mythical figure. Then proof was found that he was a real king of Babylon though he did not reign alone but as an associate of his father Nabonidus. During the latter part of the reign of Nabonidus both men were recognized as kings of Babylon, with Nabonidus living in retirement at Tema in Arabia, while Belshazzar ran the government and directed the army. <sup>^1</sup>

Since Nabonidus himself did not become king until 556 B.C. more than forty years must have passed between the time when Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream in that king's second year and the time when he received the vision described in this chapter. Like the dream in chapter 2, this vision would be extremely difficult to understand if we did not have the divine interpretation, which in this case is included as an integral part of the vision.

Unlike the vision described and interpreted in chapter 2, the events in this dream are not fully described in the order of their occurrence, with the interpretation given as a separate unit. In this chapter the symbolic dream is first described in considerable detail (vv. 2-14). Then there is a very brief interpretation (vv. 17-18). This leaves Daniel