

Daniel 7 – God’s Sovereign Kingdom Over the Beasts of the World

Introduction

Daniel 7 marks a major transition in the book—from historical narrative to apocalyptic prophecy. In this chapter, God reveals the course of Gentile world powers and the ultimate establishment of His eternal kingdom. The vision reassures God’s people that, despite terrifying world empires, God reigns supreme and will judge all human authority.

Key Themes:

- God’s sovereignty over world empires
 - The temporary nature of human kingdoms
 - The rise of blasphemous rulers under God’s control
 - The certainty of divine judgment
 - The eternal reign of the Son of Man
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Historical Background:

- The vision occurs in the **first year of King Belshazzar** (Dan 7:1), before the fall of Babylon.
 - Daniel receives this revelation directly from God, unlike earlier dreams given to pagan kings (Dan 2; 4).
 - The chapter parallels Daniel 2 but presents history from **God’s moral perspective**, not human grandeur.
 - Written in **Aramaic**, emphasizing God’s message to the Gentile nations.
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Point 1 — Daniel 7:1–8: The Vision of the Four Beasts

Scripture (CSB):

1 In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream with visions in his mind as he was lying in his bed. He wrote down the dream, and here is the summary of his account.

2 Daniel said: In my vision at night, I was watching, and suddenly the four winds of heaven stirred up the great sea.

3 Four huge beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

4 The first was like a lion but had eagle’s wings. I continued watching until its wings were torn off. It was lifted up from the ground, set on its feet like a human, and given a human mind.

5 Suddenly another beast appeared, a second one that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, “Get up! Gorge yourself on flesh.”

6 After this, while I was watching, suddenly another beast appeared, one like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. It had four heads, and authority was given to it.

7 After this, while I was watching in the night visions, suddenly a fourth beast appeared, terrifying and dreadful and extremely strong, with large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled whatever was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts before it, and it had ten horns.

8 While I was considering the horns, suddenly another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. Suddenly this horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth that was speaking arrogantly.

Word Study & Notes

- **Beasts** – Symbolic representations of Gentile empires (Dan 7:17).
- **Great sea** – Symbol of chaos and the nations (Isa 17:12–13; Rev 17:15).
- **Four winds** – God’s sovereign activity stirring world events (Jer 49:36).
- **Little horn** – A future ruler marked by arrogance and blasphemy (Dan 7:8, 20–25).

Historical/Cultural Insight

- The four beasts correspond to the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, now viewed as predatory rather than glorious.
- God reveals history from heaven’s perspective—human empires are morally corrupt and destructive.

Theological Insight

- God governs the rise and fall of nations (Dan 2:21).
- Human kingdoms are powerful but temporary; God’s kingdom is eternal.

Dispensational Prophetic Identification

- **Lion with eagle’s wings** – Babylon (Dan 2:38; Jer 4:7).
- **Bear raised on one side** – Medo-Persia (Dan 5:31; 8:3).
- **Leopard with four wings and heads** – Greece (Dan 8:21–22).
- **Terrifying fourth beast** – Rome (Dan 2:40–43).
- **Ten horns** – Future revived Roman confederation.
- **Little horn** – The future Antichrist (2 Thess 2:3–4; Rev 13:1–7).

How/Why Questions

1. Why does God portray empires as beasts rather than glorious statues?
2. How does this vision deepen our understanding of Daniel 2?
3. Why is the little horn emphasized in the vision?

Application

- Do not place ultimate trust in political power or nations.
 - God rules even when the world appears chaotic.
 - Confidence in God’s sovereignty brings stability in uncertain times.
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Point 2 — Daniel 7:9–14: The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

Scripture (CSB):

9 As I watched, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was white like snow, and the hair of his head like whitest wool. His throne was flaming fire; its wheels were blazing fire.

10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from his presence. Thousands upon thousands served him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was convened, and the books were opened.

11 I watched because of the sound of the arrogant words the horn was speaking. As I continued watching, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.

12 As for the rest of the beasts, their authority was removed, but an extension of life was granted to them for a certain period of time.

13 I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him.

14 He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

Word Study & Notes

- **Ancient of Days** – Title emphasizing God’s eternity and authority.
- **Books were opened** – Divine judgment and accountability (Rev 20:11–12).
- **Son of Man** – Messianic title later used by Jesus (Matt 26:64).

Historical/Cultural Insight

- Thrones and court imagery reflect ancient royal judgment scenes.
- Fire symbolizes God’s holiness and judgment (Deut 4:24).

Theological Insight

- God judges arrogant rulers decisively.
- The Son of Man receives universal and eternal authority.

Christological Connection

- Jesus explicitly applies this passage to Himself (Matt 26:63–65).
- The vision anticipates Christ’s second coming and millennial reign (Rev 11:15).

How/Why Questions

1. Why is judgment portrayed as a courtroom scene?
2. How does the Son of Man differ from the beastly rulers?
3. Why is Christ’s kingdom described as everlasting?

Application

- Earthly power will give way to Christ's eternal reign.
 - Believers can endure opposition knowing the final outcome is secure.
 - Worship and allegiance belong to Christ alone.
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Summary of Daniel 7 (Points 1–2)

Key Lessons:

- Human kingdoms are temporary and flawed.
- God is eternal, holy, and sovereign over history.
- Christ will reign with absolute authority and justice.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. How does Daniel 7 reshape our view of world events?
 2. What comfort does the reign of the Son of Man bring to believers today?
 3. How should allegiance to Christ shape our engagement with earthly powers?
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Point 3: Daniel 7:15–28 — Interpretation, Judgment, and End-Time Assurance

Scripture (CSB)

15 I, Daniel, was distressed in spirit, and the visions in my mind terrified me.

16 I approached one of those standing by and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he explained it to me and gave me the interpretation of these things:

17 “These huge beasts, four in number, are four kings who will rise from the earth.

18 But the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever—yes, forever and ever.”

19 Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, extremely terrifying, with iron teeth and bronze claws, devouring, crushing, and trampling with its feet whatever was left.

20 I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three fell—the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly and that looked bigger than the others.

21 As I was watching, this horn waged war against the holy ones and was defeating them

22 until the Ancient of Days arrived and a judgment was given in favor of the holy ones of the Most High, for the time had come, and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom.

23 This is what he said: “The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on earth, different from all the others. It will devour the whole earth, trample it down, and crush it.

24 The ten horns are ten kings who will rise from this kingdom. Another king, different from the previous ones, will rise after them and subdue three kings.

25 He will speak words against the Most High and oppress the holy ones of the Most High. He will

intend to change religious festivals and laws, and the holy ones will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time.

26 But the court will convene, and his dominion will be taken away, to be completely destroyed forever.

27 The kingdom, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be given to the people, the holy ones of the Most High. His kingdom will be an eternal kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey him.

28 This is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts terrified me greatly, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.

Key Interpretive Insights

- God Himself interprets the vision—this is not speculation but revelation.
- The focus narrows on the **fourth beast** and the **little horn**, emphasizing final rebellion before final judgment.
- “Time, times, and half a time” points to a limited, divinely restricted period of persecution (cf. Dan 12:7; Rev 12:14).

Dispensational Theology Notes

- The **holy ones** are faithful believers living during the future tribulation.
- The **little horn** aligns with the Antichrist (2 Thess 2:3–8; Rev 13:5–7).
- God allows persecution temporarily but guarantees final victory and kingdom possession.

Theological Themes

- God limits evil—no beast reigns indefinitely.
- God vindicates His people publicly and eternally.
- Suffering precedes glory, but glory is guaranteed.

Application

- Fear fades when believers remember the end of the story.
- Faithfulness matters, even when evil appears to win temporarily.
- God’s kingdom is not threatened by opposition—it overcomes it.

Teaching Chart: Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 Compared (Summary)

Daniel 2 (Human View) Daniel 7 (God’s View)

Statue of metals	Beasts from the sea
External splendor	Moral corruption
Human-centered power	God-centered judgment
Ends with a stone	Ends with the Son of Man

Summary:

1. **God Reveals the Nature of World Powers** (7:1–8)
2. **God Reigns Above World Powers** (7:9–14)
3. **God Replaces World Powers** (7:15–28)

Big Idea: *Earthly kingdoms rise in chaos, but God's kingdom reigns in righteousness and eternity.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does God describe kingdoms as beasts instead of nations or leaders?
 2. How does knowing the end of history affect how you live today?
 3. Where are you tempted to fear world events more than trust God's sovereignty?
 4. How does Daniel's honesty about fear encourage believers today?
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Final Takeaway

The beasts may roar for a season, but the **Son of Man reigns forever**. History is not spiraling out of control—it is moving steadily toward the kingdom of God.