

# Daniel: The Ancient of Days and a Son of Man

## Daniel 7

**MPS** God is the Ancient of Days who will sovereignly judge the kingdoms of this world to reward His people to rule His kingdom with Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, when He returns.

**OBJ** Every person should trust God's sovereignty to conquer all and rule in Jesus Christ because of Four Truth Matters.

**INTRO** **What matters to you? How do you know or how can you tell when something matters to you?** We can identify values or priorities, but the way you know if something genuinely matters to you is to see how you respond when you don't have it, when it gets attacked, or even when it gets recognized or honored. What matters to us reveals what we truly believe. Today we're going to look at what Daniel calls "matters that matter for life", beliefs that Chris-followers must hold to walk faithfully unto our God in a world of opposition.

### READ Daniel 7:1-14

*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. <sup>2</sup>Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. <sup>3</sup>And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. <sup>4</sup>The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. <sup>5</sup>And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' <sup>6</sup>After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. <sup>7</sup>After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup>I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

*<sup>9</sup>"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.*

*<sup>10</sup>A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.*

*<sup>11</sup>"I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. <sup>12</sup>As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

*<sup>13</sup>"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.*

*<sup>14</sup>And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*

Daniel 7 makes a decisive shift in our study. Most notably, we shift from narrative to an apocalyptic genre, like Revelation. Daniel steps back chronologically from where he left off in chapter 6 to the first year of Belshazzar's reign, Babylon's last king. From there, he paints a picture of world history from an eternal perspective. Daniel writes to strengthen the Israelites dispersed across the whole world, to hold true to the One who is sovereign because He will prove faithful. But Daniel provides a warning for Christians today, too, when verse 1 states, "Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter." Daniel will recall the dream for us, then press the angel for an interpretation (.16) to provide what should be our focus, "the sum of the matter." The warning comes by the all too familiar practice of a wrong focus in apocalyptic literature, when the reader gets caught up in dissecting the minutiae and assigning an interpretation of details to the neglect of the



sum of the matter. Daniel asks for “*the truth*” (.16) because he writes to convey the sum of the matter. When you wrongly prioritize the details, you always get sidetracked. When “*the sum of the matter*” is your aim, Daniel’s true message strengthens even our faith in Jesus to produce fruitfulness now for His Kingdom. [Daniel’s words prove true to strengthen Christ-followers today as we see how the sum of his vision commands the focus of all our faith in Jesus Christ.](#)

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### Daniel’s Dream and Vision

Daniel’s dream occurs in the first year of Belshazzar’s rule, prior to him interpreting the writing on the wall for Belshazzar. In his dream, the four winds of heaven stir up the great sea. The “*great sea*” represents chaos and darkness. And from this chaos arise four beasts, distinctively different from one another. These four beasts represent kingdoms of the earth. The first is one like a lion with eagle’s wings, whose wings were plucked and was stood up to walk like a man. This is the kingdom of Babylon. Jeremiah and Ezekiel compared Nebuchadnezzar to both a lion and eagle.<sup>1</sup> The second beast is like a bear, raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth. This is the Medo-Persian empire, a kingdom known as vicious and cruel that mauled its opposition.<sup>2</sup> The third beast is like a leopard, with four wings on its back and four heads. This represents the Greek empire. The Greeks conquered the world with astounding speed, in only 10 years, led by its most notable king, Alexander the Great, who ruled the whole world by the age of 33.<sup>3</sup> The fourth beast’s description is merely one of its effect, “*terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong*”, with great iron teeth who devoured and destroyed its enemy as it conquered. This beast represents Rome.<sup>4</sup> He records that it was different from the other beasts, with ten horns. Then, from among the ten horns came up another little horn that displaced three of the other horns. And this little horn had eyes and a big mouth that didn’t shut up. The dream is overwhelming, and Daniel is exhausted by his vision of it.

But as he looked his vision was drawn to a larger and greater reality. A throne was placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat upon it. This title denotes the eternal and supreme nature of God. White clothing and hair adorned Him in righteousness, as does the throne’s fiery flames and wheels of burning fire. Fire streamed forth from His throne, and a perfectly complete and whole army surrounded Him. His throne was one of judgment with the books opened. While His throne emerged, the sound of the little horn grew louder and more intense, until suddenly the fourth beast was destroyed and burned up with fire. Then, the rest of the beasts had their dominion removed, but their lives prolonged. Next, Daniel beheld a vision of heaven’s clouds coming with one like a son of man. While not a formal title here, it will be retained as such in the New Testament for Jesus.<sup>5</sup> He was presented to the Ancient of Days, who gave him dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages would serve him. And His dominion was everlasting to not pass away and his kingdom would not be destroyed. And with that we reach the completion of the cast lineup of Daniel’s dream. [Four worldly kingdoms represented, one Ancient of Days who is sovereign over all, and one like a son of man who is given an eternal dominion and kingdom for all peoples, nations, and languages.](#)

<sup>1</sup>Sidney Greidanus, [Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 215. Greidanus states, “The Old Testament prophets compare King Nebuchadnezzar to a lion (e.g., Jer 4:7; 50:17, 44) and to an eagle (e.g., Jer 48:40; Ezek 17:3). There is general agreement, therefore, that the first beast represents Babylon, the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2:38).”

<sup>2</sup>Sidney Greidanus, [Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons](#), 215. Greidanus notes, “In the Old Testament, bears were known as ferocious animals who mauled people (see 2 Kings 2:24) and could weigh “up to 250 kilos.”

<sup>3</sup>Greidanus, 216–217. Greidanus states, “This speedy animal is an apt representation of Alexander the Great of Macedonia and the amazing speed with which he conquered the then-known world. Alexander “invaded Asia Minor in 334 B.C. and within ten short years (by the age of thirty-two) had conquered the entire Medo-Persian Empire to the borders of India.” This third beast, then, is the kingdom of Greece.” Greidanus goes on to note, “This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that when Alexander died at a young age, the Greek Empire did indeed split into “four heads” (7:6), four sections, each governed by one of Alexander’s generals: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus, and Cassander.”

<sup>4</sup>Greidanus, 217. Greidanus states, “Rome showed itself to be the first truly universal empire of antiquity. Rome was characterized by its conquering and crushing power and by its ability to consolidate the territories which it seized.”

<sup>5</sup>Greidanus, 220. Greidanus explains, “In other words, in Daniel it is not a title for a special person, though later it will become precisely that. Still, it is significant that this figure in Daniel is “like a son of man,” “like a human being,” in contrast to the first three characters who were like animals: (vv. 4–6).”



TRANS With the introduction of the cast, Daniel presses to the heart of his vision where things get tense really fast. Daniel 7:15-18

***15**“As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. **16**I approached one of those who stood there and **asked him the truth concerning all this**. So he told me and **made known to me the interpretation of the things**. **17**“These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. **18**But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.”*

[.15-18] **Daniel’s dream and vision unnerve him, leaving him anxious and alarmed.** His whole body is not unlike what happened to Belshazzar, the shock of the dream caused Daniel’s color to change in his face, but his undoing led to a completely opposite outcome! He asks the angel to show him the truth of his dream, so the angel interprets the dream for him. The angel tells him that the four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever. These words bring comfort and strength of confidence to know the truth of all his dream: though the kings rise from the earth, the saints of Almighty God will receive the kingdom and rule forever.

READ Daniel 7:19-28

***19**“Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, **20**and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. **21**As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, **22**until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.*

***23**“Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.*

***24**As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.*

***25**He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.*

***26**But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.*

***27**And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.’*

***28**“Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”*

[.19-28] But Daniel wanted to know more about the fourth beast that was so unnerving. It was so distinctive from the others, “*exceedingly terrifying*”, and the ten horns, particularly the one horn that came up that displaced three others, that “*had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions.*” And here is where we learn what, likely, was so terrifying for Daniel. This little horn “*made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.*”(21-22) Daniel saw how the worldly kingdom represented by fourth beast made war and prevailed over the saints, and this continued until the Ancient of Days came. Daniel saw the suffering of God’s people at the hands of worldly kingdoms, and the severity of it grieved him greatly.



When the angel explains all of this(.23-27), he tells how the fourth beast is distinct by devouring the whole earth. And the little horn that arises will be different, putting down some of his own. He will be distinguished by four characteristics; 1)he will blasphemy against the Most High, 2)he will persecute the saints greatly for a long period, 3)he will establish new festivals that replace holy days, and 4)he will establish a new standard of morality. What Daniel see is a power that overwhelms God's people and completely changes the world as he knows it. This is a very powerful reality when the majority of your life has been lived in a strange land that's already accomplished much of all of this. But he will not get the last word. The court of the Ancient of Days will judge him, his dominion will be taken away, and he will be ultimately and finally destroyed. And the kingdom of greatness will be given to the people of God, and they shall reign forever.

**And with this Daniel records the end of the matter.** His dream had a great effect on him, but he was not undone by it. Instead, the terror and anxiety it brought was accompanied by hope to hold in his heart. For Daniel, the end of the matter(.28) that came by the truth revealed to him(.16) formed the sum of the matter(.1) to consume his focus and hold his heart by the hope that it brought. His message provides the same for us! [The heart of the matter forms the matter for our heart to treasure that will hold us in Christ.](#) The heart of the matter is this, Christian:

[God is the Ancient of Days who will sovereignly judge the kingdoms of this world to reward His people to rule His kingdom with Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, when He returns.](#)

**OBJ** [Four Truth Matters we must treasure in our heart to keep us as we trust in Jesus Christ.](#)

Before I continue, I will return to the warning I gave at the beginning. The “sum of the end” from Daniel will not be a dictionary of every term nor a dissecting to apply every detail. The same end that held Daniel's heart is sufficient for us today. We have ALL we need in the “sum of the end” to know and trust God, and that provides our truth matters.

**1. [God is sovereign over all history and worldly kingdoms, and He is working for His glory.](#)**

God as the Ancient of Days was not dormant in this passage until He judged the little horn. Rather, he was working the whole time. We see His work in the text by what scholars call the “divine passives”, actions of divine power acted upon that characters that steer the narrative in a Godward direction. I will point out two for us here. First, we have already read that God raised up Babylon to conquer Jerusalem. That's how Daniel got to Babylon. A second one can be seen in verse 6, in reference to the third beast, where it records that “*dominion was given to it.*” Here's some broader historical context for you; Alexander the Great was not all that great, he'd just been given a dominion by God's sovereign hand. Just because you don't see God at work doesn't mean He's not working. Like Daniel shows us, know who He is so you can trust His character. When we look at history of the world, and especially the day in which we live, we can be confident that God has not only not lost control, but that He is at work. [Our sovereign God is the Ancient of Days to whom every tongue in heaven and earth shall declare His glory and every knee shall bow at His throne in worship and He will be exalted as all in all!](#)

**2. [The Anti-Christ, and many anti-Christ before him, will persecute Christians, but nothing can separate us from God.](#)**

The one Daniel envisions is the same as Revelation, who ruthlessly persecutes Christians, but that's all he can do. He can persecute us, even to a point that feels as if we are at our end, but that's all he can do. He cannot separate us from God. And even in telling us about him through the dream of Daniel, God is telling us not to worry, but to stay focused on Him. We should not make light of his power to persecute, but neither should be consume ourselves with him. He is not ultimate because our God is sovereign. What he can strip from us will never be greater than what God has placed in us. [Daniel testifies to us that, though you may suffer for Christ, your suffering will never be greater than God's provision for you.](#)

**3. [The Son of Man will return to judge and finally destroy the Evil One and the Anti-Christ, who are already defeated.](#)**

While this phrase in Daniel is not used as a proper title for God's Messiah, we know that's what it is because Jesus tells us it is. Jesus identifies Himself with the Son of Man in Daniel. He came in the time of the fourth beast and introduced the Kingdom of God to us. When He returns in the clouds of heaven, He will usher in the Kingdom for us. He will judge and destroy the Evil One not in a final battle, but in a final declaration, for the battle has already been won. And His dominion and Kingdom will be an everlasting one.



**4. The Ancient of Days will give His Kingdom dominion to His saints to reign with the Son of Man for eternity.**

This, THIS is the end that forms the sum to consume our hearts with now, that will prove sufficient to hold us. Our great reward is our great hope, that God will give us dominion with Jesus Christ to rule His kingdom. No saints persecuted by the Anti-Christ will be lost to the Evil One. All will receive the Kingdom!

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In all of this we know, what God has given to us is sufficient to hold us, as we fill our heart with His truth, through everything!

**CLOSE** These are the matters Daniel kept in his heart because they mattered. When he was afraid, threatened, or attacked, these are the matters he kept in his heart that determined how he lived his life. When he didn't know what to do, he acted according to what was kept in his heart. The end of the matter is the sum of the matter, the truth as revealed by God's agent, and that's the matter that matters for you to keep in your heart to trust and walk with God faithfully in all of life.

Are the matters that matter to you the things that matter for God, that will hold you faithful to Him because they have been held in your heart as from Him?

