



Community Group Discussion Guide

December 7, 2025

Daniel 7:1-14 | Dominion

MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter Question: Can you briefly describe a vivid dream you've had? Was the dream frightening, silly, or eerily realistic?*

The book of Daniel is divided into two main parts. The first six chapters are narratives, such as the fiery furnace and the lions' den. The last six chapters contain four dreams or visions God gave to Daniel of the future. Daniel 7 is the heart of the book of Daniel and one of the most important passages in the Old Testament. It is significant because:

- It marks the turning point of the book, connecting narratives to grander events happening in the world.
- It had an impact upon subsequent Jewish literature.
- It is prophetically significant.

Visions and dreams were not new to Daniel. Twice for King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel had interpreted the king's dreams that had specific spiritual and historical meanings. God gave this gift to Daniel and was the One who supplied Daniel with the understanding needed to interpret the dreams. But in the first year of King Belshazzar, some years before the handwriting on the wall incident, Daniel experienced a dream of his own in Daniel 7:1-14.

Daniel's dream of four beasts representing four powerful kingdoms alarmed him (verse 15), and its interpretation came not from himself but from a being within the dream, likely an angel (verses 16-27). Daniel wrote down what he saw, which is the content of Daniel 7, but he was so disturbed by what he saw that he kept these thoughts to himself on this occasion (verse 28).

⇒ *How do we continue to see God bless Daniel's courage and faithfulness?*

1. Daniel 7:1-8: Though oppressive powers seem unstoppable, they are temporary.

Daniel 7:1-3: ¹ *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.* ² *Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea."* ³ *And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.*

Daniel 7 is the only vision in the book of Daniel that came to him through a dream and the only one that came at night. God sometimes used visions to communicate His messages to people. Daniel 7:1-14 records the vision's primary details, whereas Daniel 7:15-28 records an explanation of the vision's details.

⇒ *Why might God have given Daniel this vision at this particular time?*

The word *saw* translated "watching" is related to the word "vision" and highlights Daniel's careful observation of what he saw. The expression "four winds of heaven" also occurs in Revelation 7:1, where it appears together with the expression "four winds of the earth." The winds "stirring up the great sea," symbolizes that God is preparing to do a great work. Some interpreters have understood

“the great sea” as the Mediterranean Sea; others understand it more symbolically as a vast ocean out of which the kingdoms in Daniel’s vision will arise.

⇒ *What is something that symbolizes to you that God is preparing to do a great work?*

As Daniel watched, he saw “four great beasts” that “came up out of the sea.” At this moment, Daniel did not yet know what his vision meant. He would receive the interpretation later in verses 15-27, but for now, he watched in awe. He would later learn that these four beasts represented four earthly kings and kingdoms, each “different from the other.” Each exhibited distinct features, and each ruled only as God permitted. There has been much discussion about which kingdoms the beasts represent, but the consensus among scholars is that the beasts represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome respectively—all four followed by the Kingdom of God.

⇒ *Why do you think Daniel’s vision represented kingdoms with beasts? How are “kingdoms” like beasts when there is power apart from God?*

a. The first beast:

Daniel 7:4: *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.*

The first beast was like a lion with an eagle’s wings. The word “like” also occurs in verses 5 and 6 in connection with the second and third beasts. We must remember that as Daniel described what he saw, certain aspects of it went beyond anything he had ever seen.

Babylon was characterized as both a lion and an eagle in the Bible (Jeremiah 4:7; 49:19, 22; Lamentations 4:19; Ezekiel 17:3), and statues of winged lions have been discovered in Babylon’s ruins. As the vision progressed, Daniel saw that the beast’s “wings were plucked off.” Earlier, God humbled Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon for his pride and gave him the mind of an animal until he acknowledged God’s sovereignty (Daniel 4:29-37), at which point he was again given “the mind of a man” and his throne.

⇒ *Review and discuss Daniel’s experiences in Babylon. How has God proven His power and character to Daniel?*

b. The second beast:

Daniel 7:5: *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.’*

The second beast looked like a bear on its side, feasting on some previous prey. Someone told it to get up and eat more. Scholars have identified this beast with the blended kingdom of Medo-Persia (539–330 BC), which featured a blending of the kingdoms of Media and Persia, with Persia being the dominant force. The three ribs likely represent the nations of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt that Persia defeated.

⇒ *While Daniel may have been alarmed as he saw each beast, why is it vital that he remember that each kingdom only had sovereignty as God allowed it?*

c. The third beast:

Daniel 7:6: ⁶ *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.*

The third beast was like a leopard with four wings on its backs. The four heads may mean this beast was looking in all directions for prey. Scholars have identified this beast with the kingdom of Greece (330–63 BC), which defeated Persia under Alexander the Great. The kingdom and army of Alexander the Great was certainly as swift as a leopard and as vast as a bird's flight through the air. Some have identified the leopard's four heads as the four generals of Alexander who divided up his empire when he died suddenly without an heir in 323 BC.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: Today's world also has many leaders who oppose God and His ways, but God is still in control. In fact, the apostle Paul encouraged us to pray for our leaders, since God established them in their roles (Romans 13:1-7).*

d. The fourth beast:

Daniel 7:7-8: ⁷ *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. ⁸ 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.*

The final beast was the most terrifying of them all, so much so that it wasn't likened to any animal. This kingdom exceeded all the others. With its incredible strength and large iron teeth, it devoured anything in its path, and anything that escaped the teeth was trampled by its feet.

Daniel also saw that the beast had ten horns. As he pondered the meaning of these horns, suddenly another horn, a little one came up among them. This eleventh horn caused three of the original ten horns to be uprooted. Interestingly, this horn was personified with humanlike eyes and a mouth that communicated human arrogance and rebellion.

⇒ *How have you seen earthly kingdoms and nations devour people and display arrogance?*
 ⇒ *Why must we remember that the most cruel and oppressive regimes of a cruel and oppressive world are still held by the leash of God's power?*

Interpreters have identified this fourth kingdom as the kingdom of Rome, which officially became the dominant power in the ancient world in 63 BC, when Pompey, under the command of Julius Caesar, defeated Jerusalem. The Roman Empire possessed a power and longevity unlike anything the world had ever known. Nations were crushed under the iron boot of the Roman legions, its power was virtually irresistible, and the extent of its influence surpassed the other three kingdoms.

⇒ *How did Jesus' earthly life intersect with the Roman Empire?*
 ⇒ *What would be your perspective on the world and its kingdoms if Daniel's vision ended here?*

The ten horns on the fourth beast are ten kings who arise from the Roman Empire, or its remnant (verse 24), although their identity is uncertain or unknown. Most interpreters today, but not all, understand Daniel's words to represent the last days rather than the first century. The eleventh horn,

the little horn, is often identified as the antichrist, who appears during the great tribulation period at the end of time and opposes God's forces as a great world leader (verse 25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; Revelation 13:1-8). Scriptures also point ahead to a world figure who will embody all that opposes Christ and who is the encapsulation of all such opposition of all ages. However, his power will not last forever, and he will be destroyed (verse 26), defeated by Jesus at His Second Coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:19-20).

- ⇒ *What are your insights into an Old Testament book revealing end times details? How does this demonstrate the sovereignty of God?*
- ⇒ *How is God's kingdom the exact opposite of every earthly kingdom?*

2. Daniel 7:9-14: God alone reigns supreme, and every other kingdom is subject to His will and judgment.

Daniel 7:9-10: ⁹ *"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.¹⁰ 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.*

In verse 9, the focus of Daniel's vision shifted to heaven, God's ultimate kingdom, where "thrones were placed." In the midst of these thrones, the "Ancient of Days" took His seat. The title "Ancient of Days" occurs three times in the Old Testament, all in Daniel 7 (verses 9, 13, 22). The term describes God sitting in judgment over the nations and those who oppose Him. The description of His clothing being snowy white likely represents His purity and holiness. The comparison of His hair to "pure wool" probably signifies great age and the wisdom that comes with it (Psalm 90:2). The reference to God's throne and its wheels as fire perhaps signifies both God's splendor and the wrath of His judgment.

- ⇒ *What differences do you notice between the kingdoms of the earth and God's kingdom?*
- ⇒ *After contemplating the horror of the beastly kingdoms, how are you refreshed through Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days on His supreme throne of judgment?*

The scene then shifted to the great multitude before the throne, described first as "a thousand thousands" and then "ten thousand times ten thousand" who stood before the Ancient of Days and served Him. The words "the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened" confirm that Daniel was seeing a vision of heaven's courtroom, and the Ancient of Days was the judge.

- ⇒ *Discuss the parallels between Daniel 7:10 and Revelation 7:9-10.*

Daniel 7:11-12: ¹¹ *"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. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

Daniel's vision of the heavenly courtroom was interrupted by "the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking." This world leader of an earthly kingdom thought himself above judgment, and his words interrupted a truly majestic courtroom vision. But then Daniel witnessed this beast's destruction without any fanfare or drama.

Earthly kings and kingdoms might seem great in their own eyes or in the eyes of earth's citizens, but God determines their kingdoms, and when the day of their judgment comes, they are done. Their periods of dominance are in His hands, as is their very existence. Those rulers who would speak arrogantly should prepare themselves for God's judgment.

The expression "the rest of the beasts" most likely denotes any kingdoms subordinate to the kingdom of the antichrist. There may be a connection between the imagery here and Revelation 18, where the kingdoms of the earth mourn the destruction of Babylon. At any rate, these kingdoms had their authority to rule taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for a certain period of time. The period of time they had remaining is not stated, but it may refer to the great tribulation at the end of human history.

⇒ *How can the promise of the kingdom of God help you respond faithfully to political turmoil and uncertainty today?*

Daniel 7:13-14: ¹³ "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. ¹⁴ 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 7:1-8 highlighted four earthly kingdoms that ruled only by the permission of the Ancient of Days, the Lord God, the greatest power of all. Now in verses 13-14, God's ultimate, eternal kingdom would begin with the coming of the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. By contrast, His will be a kingdom instituted by the Ancient of Days that will far outweigh all the others.

⇒ *What aspect of Christ and His kingdom is Daniel predicting? How does this compare to the other four kingdoms?*

Here in Daniel 7, we see this kingdom will be ruled by "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven. In its most basic sense, the term denotes a human being. However, Jesus also regularly used the term to describe Himself (Matthew 8:20; 25:31; Mark 10:45). In this passage, the expression clearly designates someone extraordinary—more than merely human—because He is coming with the clouds.

The dominion of the kingdoms was taken from them, but an everlasting and all-encompassing dominion is given to this righteous figure who is able to approach the Ancient of Days. Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus foretold His heavenly enthronement and His coming judgment with the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:64). After His resurrection, He ascended to the Father in the presence of a cloud, fulfilling this vision, and He will return the same way (Acts 1:9,11). For all the glory every beastly kingdom thinks it has, it pales in comparison to the kingdom God is bringing to earth through Jesus.

⇒ *How does your knowledge and understanding of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection affect your view of Daniel's vision? How might this be different from the original readers of Daniel's vision?*

Note that the Son of Man was given dominion and glory. God had given earthly rulers the power to rule, but their dominion and honor did not remotely match what God bestowed upon the Messiah. Furthermore, the Son of Man was given an eternal kingdom. Today, people enter this forever kingdom, this realm of salvation, by grace through faith—trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.

⇒ *Daniel 7 introduces us to two significant figures: "the Ancient of Days" and "one like a son of man." From the rest of Scripture, we can identify these figures as God the Father and God the Son—Jesus—respectively. How do the qualities of "the Ancient of Days" and "the Son of Man" help us in troubled times?*

When we pray for God's kingdom to come we recognize there is more to God's kingdom than what we see today. One day He will establish His kingdom completely. The full consummation of His kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ at the end of human history as we know it. God's desire for the Son of Man was that "those of every people, nation, and language should serve him." Indeed, Jesus, God's Son, fulfills this prophecy, and when this day comes, people of all nations and languages will serve and worship Him.

Every human heart should long for this heavenly kingdom. No matter how bleak things look in one kingdom or the next, there is always hope with God. He has not forgotten His people. His plan is not disrupted by any earthly kingdom nor any demonic spiritual influence. The Ancient of Days rules over them all. The tyrannies of evil will be short lived and the kingdom of God will last forever.

⇒ *How can Daniel 7 help prepare us for the future?*

TRANSFORM

We will encounter evil in our everyday lives. We can turn on the news and see things that cause anxiety, stress, and worry. However, through this vision in Daniel, we see hope. The God we serve is not sitting idly by; He is all-powerful, almighty, and can destroy the evil in this world with a word—the Word. God sent Jesus, His Son, to save and redeem the world. His resulting kingdom will not perish. No amount of evil will ever win against the power and might of Jesus.

1. HEAD: Many Christians get caught up in politics, and politicians on all sides often forget that every earthly kingdom will fail us in some way. But a better kingdom is coming one day, one ruled by Christ and enjoyed by more people than we can count. As we consider world events, let us never forget the King on His throne in heaven. Everything is going His way, and He loves us. Let our minds be fixed there first.

⇒ *How does your thinking about the world's kingdoms need to change considering Daniel 7?*

2. HEART: Just like our heads, our hearts can easily get caught up in the kingdoms of this world. But we have a better hope in Jesus that the kingdom we long for is coming. If we find ourselves oppressed and persecuted like Daniel, we can be comforted by the good news that our hardships are only temporary. Our hearts won't hurt forever. Jesus is coming.

⇒ *How are you comforted knowing Jesus's everlasting kingdom is coming?*

3. HANDS: Social media is a hotbed for fear-mongering and political drama. No matter your political

leanings, you can find something to thrill you and terrify you. As Christians, we should focus chiefly on bringing gospel clarity to people who are searching for hope in this present world. Through our testimony and our actions, we can help them find peace in Christ.

⇒ *How can you help people see the better kingdom of Christ contrasted with the sin-infected kingdoms of this world?*

The Gospel Project®: Adult Commentary
© 2025 Lifeway Christian Resources

The Gospel Project® for Adults
Leader Guide, Unit 16, Session 4
© 2025 Lifeway Christian Resources

Permission granted to reproduce and distribute within the license agreement with purchaser.