Daniel 7

Four Beasts and the Son of Man

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Man's kingdoms look like beasts from God's side of the throne — and they all end at His court, where the Son of Man receives the kingdom and shares it with His saints.

Ed Smith · Started 10 October 2026

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00 The Text

DANIEL 7 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions	Green Command / instruction	Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning	★ Violet Promise / blessing	Amber Time / place / contrast

[1] In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

[2] Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

[3] And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

[4] The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

[5] And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

[6] After this I beheld , and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

[7] After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse 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 little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

[9] I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the ▲ Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was ▲ white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

[10] A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and ▲ the books were opened.

[11] I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

[12] As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

[13] I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the ▲ Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

[14] And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an ★ everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall ★ not be destroyed.

15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

17 These great ⇄ beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and ★ possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth ⇄ beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

20 And of the ten ⇄ horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that ⇄ horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

21 I beheld , and the same ⇄ horn made ⚠ war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

22 Until the Ancient of days came , and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints ★ possessed the kingdom.

23 Thus he said, The fourth ⇄ beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

24 And the ten ⇄ horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.

25 And he shall speak great words ⚠ against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until ◷ a time and times and the dividing of time.

26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is ★ an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall ▮▮ serve and obey him.

28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ◷ first year of Belshazzar
- **v2** ⇄ beast *(every occurrence)*
- **v5** ▮▮ Arise, devour much
- **v7** ⇄ horn *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** ▲ Ancient of Days
- **v9** ▲ white as snow
- **v9** ▲ white snow
- **v10** ▲ the books were opened
- **v13** ▲ Son of Man
- **v13** ◷ clouds of heaven
- **v14** ★ everlasting dominion
- **v14** ★ not be destroyed
- **v14** ▮▮ serve him
- **v18** ★ possess the kingdom
- **v21** ⚠ war with the saints
- **v22** ★ possessed the kingdom
- **v22** ★ possession of the kingdom
- **v25** ⚠ against the Most High
- **v25** ◷ a time
- **v27** ★ an everlasting kingdom
- **v27** ▮▮ serve and obey

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 7:9 (KJV)

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the ▲ Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was ▲ white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

Setting

The first year of Belshazzar (about 553 BC) — so chronologically this vision comes *before* the handwriting on the wall (ch. 5) and the lions' den (ch. 6). Daniel is an old man in Babylon, and the dream comes by night, on his bed (v1). He writes it down and relates a summary of it (KJV: "the sum of the matters").

Language

Daniel 7 is the last chapter of the Aramaic section (2:4b–7:28). The Gentile-world prophecy is written in the Gentile language; chapter 8 returns to Hebrew.

Who / what

- Four winds stirring up the great sea (v2) → four great beasts rise out of the sea, each different (v3).
- Beast 1 — lion with eagle's wings; wings plucked, made to stand like a man, given a human mind (v4).
- Beast 2 — bear, raised up on one side, three ribs in its mouth; told "Arise, devour much" (v5).
- Beast 3 — leopard with four wings and four heads; dominion given to it (v6).
- Beast 4 — dreadful, terrifying, extremely strong, large iron teeth, crushing and trampling; different from all the others; ten horns (v7).
- A little horn comes up among the ten, uproots three, has eyes like a man and a mouth speaking great boasts (v8).
- Thrones set up; the Ancient of Days takes His seat — His vesture like white snow, hair like pure wool, throne of fire, a river of fire; thousands upon thousands serve Him; the court sits and the books are opened (vv9–10).
- The beast is slain and burned; the other beasts lose dominion but live on for a time (vv11–12).
- One like a Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days and is given dominion, glory and a kingdom that will not be destroyed (vv13–14).
- Daniel is distressed and asks an attendant (vv15–16), who interprets: four kings; but the saints of the Highest One receive the kingdom forever (vv17–18).

- Daniel presses about the fourth beast and the horn that wages war with the saints and overpowers them — until the Ancient of Days comes (vv19–22).
- Interpretation of the horn: speaks against the Most High, wears down the saints, intends to change times and law; saints given into his hand "for a time, times, and half a time" (vv23–25). Then the court sits, his dominion is taken, and the kingdom is given to the saints (vv26–27).
- Daniel is greatly alarmed, his face grows pale, he keeps the matter to himself (v28).

Repeated words

beast(s), horn(s), dominion, kingdom, saints of the Highest One, "I kept looking" (KJV: "I beheld"), Ancient of Days.

Contrasts

beasts rising from the sea ⟷ the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. Beasts *seize* dominion ⟷ the Son of Man is *given* dominion. The horn *wars against* the saints ⟷ the saints *receive* the kingdom. Kingdoms that pass ⟷ a kingdom that will not be destroyed.

Time words

first year of Belshazzar; "in the night visions"; "for an appointed period of time" (v12); "until the Ancient of Days came"; "a time, times, and half a time"; "forever, for all ages to come" (v18).

Chapter theme (my words)

Man's kingdoms look like beasts from God's side of the throne — and they all end at His court, where the Son of Man receives the kingdom and shares it with His saints.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 7:13 (KJV)

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the ▲ Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

Context — Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 tell the same story twice

Nebuchadnezzar saw the empires as a magnificent statue of precious metals; Daniel sees the same empires as devouring beasts. Guzik's point: the statue is how man sees his own history; the beasts are how God sees it. Same four kingdoms, same end — a kingdom from heaven that crushes the rest and fills the earth.

The four beasts (Guzik, Enduring Word)

- **Lion with eagle's wings = Babylon.** Lions and eagles both describe Nebuchadnezzar in Jeremiah (Jer 4:7; 49:19–22). The plucked wings and "human mind" fit Daniel 4 — the proud king humbled and restored.

- **Bear raised on one side = Medo-Persia.** The higher side is Persia's dominance in the partnership (compare the ram's higher horn in 8:3). The three ribs are most often read as Lydia, Babylon and Egypt — three major conquests.
- **Leopard with four wings and four heads = Greece.** Speed: Alexander took the Persian world in about a decade (Granicus 334, Issus 333, Gaugamela 331 BC). After his death in 323 BC his empire split four ways — Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus and Ptolemy. Guzik (citing Strauss): the lion devours, the bear crushes, the leopard springs.
- **The fourth beast = Rome** — bigger, longer, harder than all the others, with iron teeth matching the iron legs of Daniel 2. Its ten horns line up with the ten toes of Daniel 2 (Archer). Guzik holds that the ten kings are still future — a final confederation that grows out of the Roman world.

The little horn

He rises after the ten, uproots three, speaks great boasts, wars against the saints, and tries to change times and law (vv8, 20–25). Guzik identifies him with the Antichrist of the last days. That is the same mouth "speaking arrogant words and blasphemies" with authority for forty-two months in Revelation 13:5–6, and the same "man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4. "A time, times, and half a time" = 3½ years, which matches the 1,260 days and 42 months of Revelation 11–13 and the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (9:27). Guzik notes that Calvin spiritualized this as fulfilled before Christ's first coming. Guzik disagrees, because nothing in history answers to a kingdom handed to the saints after a final court of judgment.

"Wear down the saints" (v25)

The Aramaic *bela* (H1080) is used of a garment wearing out by long use. Guzik cites Wood: this is continual harassment, not one blow. Guzik also cites Archer: it is easier to die for the Lord in one moment than to live for Him under constant pressure.

The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

Guzik sees two distinct persons: the Ancient of Days is God the Father, and the Son of Man comes *to* Him (v13). The white garment and white hair speak of eternity and purity, and the fire speaks of judgment. "Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite name for Himself. At His trial He quoted this verse, and the high priest tore his robes because he knew exactly what Jesus was claiming (Mark 14:61–64). Compare Revelation 1:13–14, where Jesus Himself has hair "white like white wool, like snow" — the attributes of the Ancient of Days.

The saints receive the kingdom

Guzik's point on v27: the kingdom is something *received*, not *achieved*. The saints don't build it; it is given at the Lord's return (v22; Rev 20:4; 1 Cor 6:2). He reads it as a literal future reign, not the church slowly improving the world. Strauss (quoted by Guzik): the Bible predicts no peace-loving world ruler for the last days.

Word study (Aramaic — Daniel 7 is Aramaic)

- **beast — *cheva* (H2423):** a wild animal. The empires are not shepherds; they devour.
- **horn — *qeren* (H7162):** a symbol of strength and royal power; a horn = a king (v24).

- **Ancient of Days — *ʿattiq yomin* (H6268 + H3118):** "the One advanced in days" — the Eternal One, seated as Judge.
- **Son of Man — *kebar ʾenash* (H1247 + H606):** "one like a son of man," a truly human figure — yet He rides the clouds, which in the Old Testament only God does (Ps 104:3; Isa 19:1). Divine and human in one person.
- **dominion — *sholtan* (H7985):** rule or sovereignty; used again and again in this chapter. It is taken from the beasts and given to the Son of Man and then to the saints.
- **saints of the Highest One — *qaddishe ʿelyonin* (H6922 + H5946):** the holy ones who belong to the Highest One.
- **wear out — *bela* (H1080):** to wear down slowly, like an old garment.
- **times and law — *zimnin* (H2166) and *dat* (H1882):** set seasons and decrees. He tries to rewrite God's calendar and moral order (Guzik mentions the French Revolution's attempt to impose a ten-day work week).
- **a time — *ʿiddan* (H5732):** a set period (as in 4:16, 23, the "seven periods of time"). Here: 1 + 2 + ½ = 3½.

Cross-references

Dan 2:31–45; Rev 13:1–8; Rev 17:12–14; 2 Thess 2:3–8; Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mark 14:62; Rev 1:7, 13–14; Rev 5:9–10; Rev 20:4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 7:14 (KJV)

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an ★ everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall ★ not be destroyed.

Promise to trust

Every beast in this chapter ends at the same place — the court of the Ancient of Days (vv9–10, 26). No empire, no addiction, no warden, no diagnosis gets the last word. "The court sat, and the books were opened." When the news makes the world look like a sea in a storm, I go back to verse 9: thrones were set up, and Someone took His seat. Heaven isn't anxious, so I don't have to be.

Example to follow

Daniel saw the future and it *troubled* him (vv15, 28). He didn't shrug it off and he didn't fixate on it. He asked for understanding (v16) and kept the matter to himself (v28). That is how I want to handle prophecy and teach it: honest, sober, and prayerful, never sensational.

Sin to confess

The beasts are pride with teeth. The lion was humbled and "made to stand on two feet like a man" (v4), and Nebuchadnezzar learned that lesson the hard way. Where am I building my own little kingdom, trampling and grabbing? Lord, give me a man's heart and not a beast's.

For the men I walk with

"Wear down the saints" (v25) is exactly how the enemy works on men in recovery and men behind the wire. He rarely wins with one big blow; he grinds slowly — the daily drip of shame, temptation and discouragement. The answer in this chapter is not a better grind. It is the Son of Man, who receives the kingdom and *gives* it to His people (vv18, 22, 27). We don't white-knuckle our way into the kingdom; we receive it.

Command to obey

"All the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him" (v14). Today I bow to the Son of Man now, willingly, before every knee bows later.

Prayer

Ancient of Days, You are seated and You are not worried. Lord Jesus, Son of Man, You have the everlasting dominion. When I am worn down, remind me that the kingdom is received, not achieved. Keep me faithful through the long grind, and let me serve You gladly today. Amen.