

# DOMINION

CORE PASSAGE: DANIEL 7:2-14

## CONTEXT

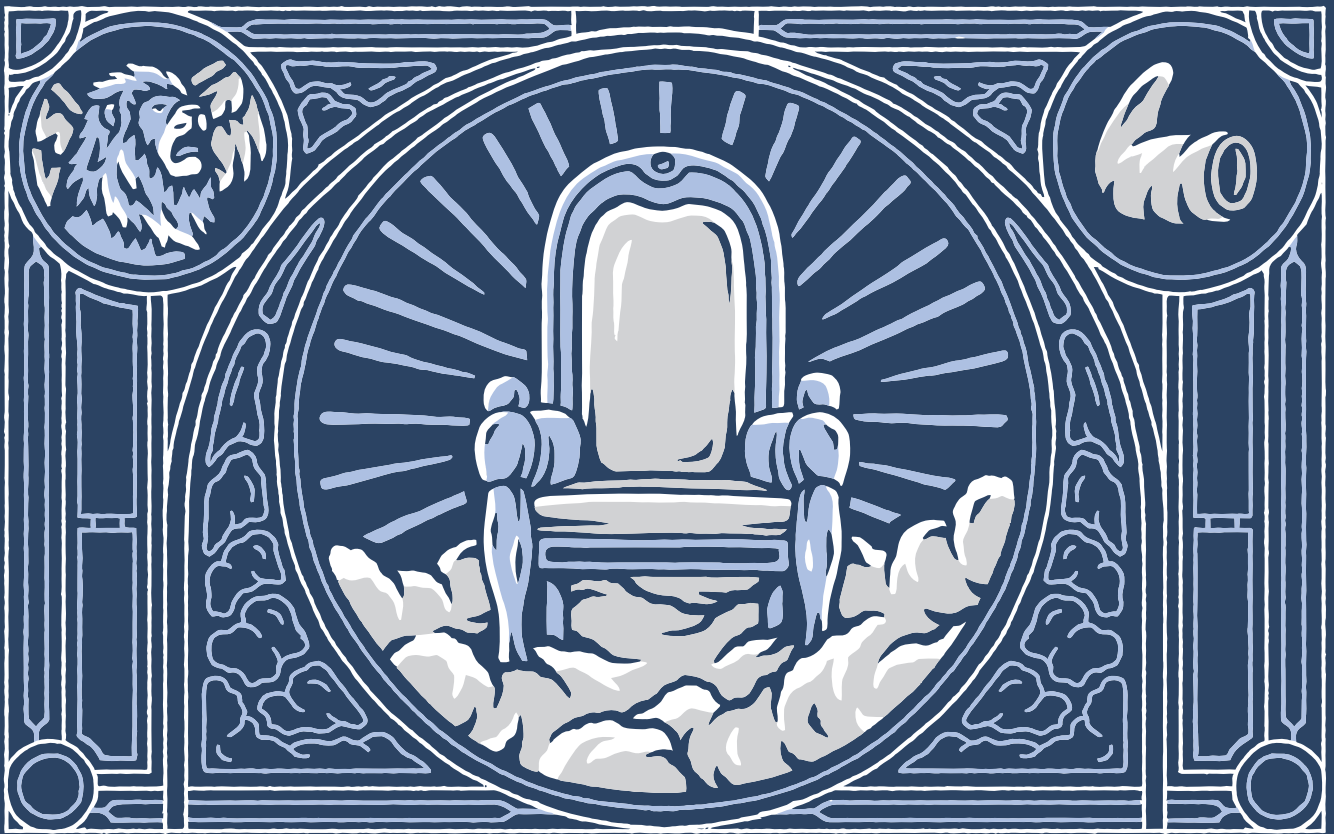
The book of Daniel is divided into two main parts. The first six chapters are narratives, such as the fiery furnace, the writing on the wall, and the lions' den. The last six chapters contain four visions of the future the Lord gave to Daniel as a prophet. Daniel 7 is the pivot point bridging the two halves, connecting the narratives to the grander events happening in the world. In this first vision, which Daniel received in the first year of King Belshazzar's rule over Babylon (7:1), sometime before the writing on the wall, Daniel describes four beasts representing four powerful kingdoms, but above them all is the kingdom of God.

## KEY CONCEPT

**God will establish His forever kingdom through Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.**

As you examine Daniel 7:2-14:

- Recognize that because of sin, human empires will try to establish dominion over this world.
- Rejoice that Christ is reigning and will reign and judge over all people at the end of time.



## TIMELINE

Daniel and His Friends  
Serve Nebuchadnezzar  
(Daniel 1–4)

2: A Ram and a  
Goat (Daniel 8)

Babylon Is Conquered by  
Darius/Cyrus (Daniel 5)

Cyrus Issues Decree  
Allowing the Jews to  
Return to Judah (Ezra 1)

**Daniel's Four Visions:**  
**SESSION STUDY:**  
**1: Four Beasts (Daniel 7)**

Daniel Interprets the  
Writing on the Wall for  
Belshazzar (Daniel 5)

**3: "Seventy Weeks"**  
(Daniel 9)

**4: A Glorious Man  
and the Last Days**  
(Daniel 10–12)

## Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** Daniel 7

☐ **Day 2:** Daniel 8

☐ **Day 3:** Daniel 9

☐ **Day 4:** Daniel 10–11

☐ **Day 5:** Daniel 12

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 93



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

**THOUGH OPPRESSIVE POWERS SEEM UNSTOPPABLE,  
THEY ARE TEMPORARY (DANIEL 7:2-8).**

**Highlight the descriptions of the four beasts using different colored pens.**

**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 man, 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, with 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. It was like a leopard with four wings of a bird on its back. It had four heads, and it was given dominion. **7** After this, while I was watching in the night visions, suddenly a fourth beast appeared, frightening and dreadful, and incredibly strong, with large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and it trampled with its feet whatever was left. 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. And suddenly in this horn there were eyes like the eyes of a human and a mouth that was speaking arrogantly."

Careful readers will notice the similarities between the four beasts in this vision and Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the layered statue in chapter 2. Daniel's vision is divided into four sections, each describing a different beast and kingdom (see Dan. 7:15-28). 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.

**Why do you think Daniel's vision represented kingdoms with beasts?**

**LEADER NOTE:** One reason this vision revealed the various kingdoms as beasts is because God wants us to see the ugliness and horror of power apart from Him. We may be among the oppressed, but we have within us the same evil desire for conflict, conquest, and control that leads to beastly kingdoms. At the micro-level, consider bad bosses and bad parents ruling with an iron fist and without mercy. Humanity without Christ is in an unending cycle of rising and falling kingdoms filled with pride and suffering.

The first beast was like a lion with an eagle's wings. The prophet Jeremiah used these images to describe Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Jer. 49:19-22). The wings were torn off, and later, the beast was lifted up from the ground and restored with a human mind (Dan. 7:4). These events correspond with Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation and restoration in Daniel 4.

The second beast looked like a bear on its side, feasting on some previous prey. Someone told it to get up and eat more. This beast represented the Medo-Persian kingdom of King Cyrus, who conquered the Babylonians.

The third beast was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. This represented Greece. 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. The four heads may mean this beast was looking in all directions for prey.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth and final beast, representing the kingdom of Rome, was the most terrifying of them all, so much so that it wasn't likened to any animal. 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. Significant among its ten horns was one little horn that came up and uprooted three others. It was personified with eyes and a mouth that communicated human arrogance and rebellion.

**LEADER NOTE:** The kingdoms of this world can be impressive but also incredibly oppressive. When control and sovereignty are threatened from without, the viciousness of war breaks out. Yet all kingdoms suffer from within to some degree because humanity is shot through with the sinful desire for power. All earthly kingdoms are defined by the sinful leaders and citizens who comprise them.

**How have you seen earthly kingdoms and nations devour people and display arrogance?**

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**THE KINGDOM:** The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly, the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.

## **GOD ALONE REIGNS SUPREME, AND EVERY OTHER KINGDOM IS SUBJECT TO HIS WILL AND JUDGMENT (DANIEL 7:9-14).**

**Circle the ways the Ancient of Days exercises His supreme authority over the kingdoms of the world.**

**9** “As I kept watching, 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, then, 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 given over to the burning fire. **12** As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion 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.

After contemplating the horror of the beastly kingdoms, we are refreshed through Daniel’s vision of the Ancient of Days on His supreme throne of judgment. 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. The Lord 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.

**LEADER NOTE:** God’s title “Ancient of Days” contrasts Him with the up-and-coming kingdoms of this world. The Lord is forever. He’s not going anywhere, and no kingdom threatens His. God’s sovereign purposes and plans, though not fully understood by us, are paramount, and that is really good news. The almighty God is working all things out for His glory and our good (Rom. 8:28).

**What differences do you notice between the kingdoms of the earth and God’s kingdom?**

The beastly kingdoms of this world may think they are in control, but they are only sandcastles by the shore. God's kingdom is the ocean coming to knock them all down and wipe them all away. Their periods of dominance are in His hands, as is their very existence. And those rulers who would speak arrogantly should prepare themselves for the Lord's judgment. Nebuchadnezzar was brought low and then graciously restored (Dan. 4), but the arrogance of the little horn reaped its death and destruction by fire (7:11).

By contrast, there will be a kingdom instituted by the Ancient of Days that will far outweigh all the others. In Daniel 2, it is pictured as an untouched stone that destroyed the layered statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and then became a mountain filling the whole earth. Here in Daniel 7, we see this kingdom will be ruled by "one like a son of man . . . coming with the clouds of heaven" (v. 13). 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.

This "one like a son of man" is none other than the God-man, Jesus Christ. Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus foretold His heavenly enthronement and His coming judgment with the clouds of heaven (Matt. 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.

**LEADER NOTE:** While searching and studying Daniel 7 for the specifics of who and what each kingdom represents, let us not forget to focus on the main point: God's kingdom is the exact opposite of every earthly kingdom. The kingdoms of this world lead to oppression, conflict, conquest, and all other terrible things, but not God's kingdom. The Lord conquers through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus, and ushers His people into the kingdom by grace, freeing them from slavery to sin and death.

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

#### CHRIST CONNECTION

x

x

God will give Jesus the authority to rule an everlasting kingdom of those who follow Him in faith. The "one like a son of man" (Dan. 7:13) is fulfilled in Jesus, who ascended into heaven in the presence of a cloud after His resurrection (Acts 1:9).

## ARRIVAL

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, ask them to describe the most vivid dream they've ever had. Plan to share a dream that you've experienced that really stood out to you to help break the ice, if necessary. Follow up with volunteers by asking if the dreams mentioned were frightening, silly, or eerily realistic.

## CONTEXT

**SUMMARIZE:** The subject of visions and dreams was not new to Daniel. Twice for King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel had interpreted the king's dreams that had specific spiritual and historical meanings. The Lord had given this gift to Daniel (1:17) and was the One who supplied Daniel with the understanding needed to interpret the dreams (2:19). But in the first year of King Belshazzar, some years before the handwriting on the wall incident, Daniel experienced a dream of his own with visions (7:1). This dream terrified him (v. 15), and its interpretation came not from himself but from a being within the dream, likely an angel (vv. 16-27). Daniel wrote down what he saw, which we have as the content of Daniel chapter 7, but he was so disturbed by what he saw that he didn't share this dream with anyone (vv. 1,28).

**TRANSITION:** Daniel kept these thoughts to himself on this occasion, but we have his account as the inspired Word of God for us to study and to hear from the Lord so that we can be encouraged in our faith.

## RECAP

**ENGAGE:** Invite some bold volunteers to draw on a board their mental image of the beasts as understood from their personal preparation in Daniel 7 this week.

**TRANSITION:** Display **Pack Item 7: The Son of Man**. Say: "Daniel dreamed of four great beasts that came up from the sea, each representing a different kingdom, terrifying and destructive. But Daniel's vision also included a fifth kingdom. When things looked bleak for the earth and God's people, Daniel saw the Ancient of Days take His throne and give an eternal dominion to One like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven."



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**Key Concept:** God will establish His forever kingdom through Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

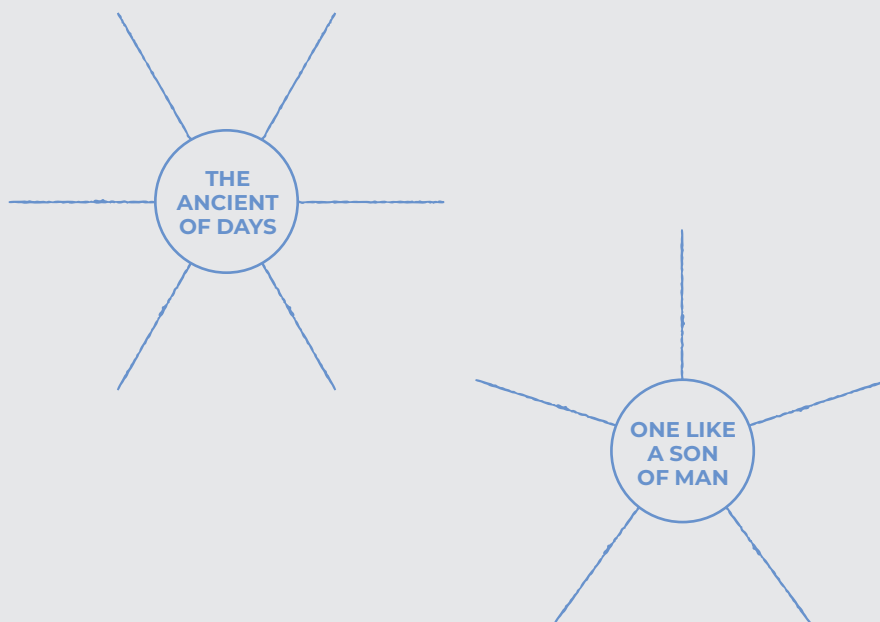
## GROUP ACTIVITY

**DIAGRAM:** Direct your group to page 48 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find an activity titled “The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man.” Recreate this diagram on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses.

Notes

### The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

Read Daniel 7:9-14. Record in the gaps descriptions of “the Ancient of Days” and “one like a son of man,” especially as they contrast with the beasts.



**READ:** Pass out copies of **Pack Item 8: Visions in Daniel**, which summarizes the descriptions of the beasts in this vision, and invite a volunteer to read Daniel 7:2-8.

**DISCUSS:** “What would be your perspective on the world and its kingdoms if Daniel’s vision ended here?” After some discussion, say: “Thankfully, Daniel’s vision continues and gives us hope that rises above the arrogance and wickedness rooted in the kingdoms of this world.”

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read Daniel 7:9-14.

**DISCUSS:** Say: “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.” Lead the group in identifying and recording how this passage speaks of these figures, especially as they contrast with the beastly kingdoms of this world. (*Examples:*

VISIONS IN DANIEL			
	A BEASTLY KINGDOM (DANIEL 2)	THE ANCIENT OF DAYS (DANIEL 7)	ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN (DANIEL 7)
VISION 1 (DANIEL 2)	Four kingdoms (Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece) represented by four beasts (lion, bear, leopard, eagle).	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
VISION 2 (DANIEL 7)	Four kingdoms (Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece) represented by four beasts (lion, bear, leopard, eagle).	The Ancient of Days, seated on a throne, wearing a robe and having hair like wool, with a face like fire.	One like a son of man, coming on the clouds of heaven, with a crown of stars and a sash.
VISION 3 (DANIEL 8)	Two kingdoms (Babylon, Persia) represented by two beasts (goat, ram).	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
VISION 4 (DANIEL 9)	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
VISION 5 (DANIEL 10)	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
VISION 6 (DANIEL 11)	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
VISION 7 (DANIEL 12)	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.



## Notes

*arrogant horn judged/destroyed by Ancient of Days; dominion removed from beasts but an everlasting dominion given to the one like a son of man)* Ask: “How do these descriptions give us hope in this world of sin?”

**SUMMARIZE:** No matter how supreme and strong the kingdoms of this world may be with their oppression, temptations, and sin, they are temporary and passing away. The Lord will judge them and make all things right. And on top of that, He will give to His Son, our Savior, the divine “Son of Man” (Matt. 26:64), an everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace, and all who trust in Him will receive that kingdom as well (Rev. 5).

**DEBRIEF**

**How do the qualities of “the Ancient of Days” and “the Son of Man” help us?**

**SUMMARIZE**

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. He has already won the victory for us over sin and death.

**HEAD, HEART, HANDS**

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 49). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**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?**



**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?**



**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?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- This week, when you encounter a situation that leads you to worry, remind yourself of the power and majesty of Jesus, the divine Son of Man.
- Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Let these verses guide you as you replace your negative thoughts with the truth of Scripture. God has the power to transform your thought life.
- We tell people about the things that excite us. This week, share with someone about the nature and power of Jesus and His kingdom that is coming one day.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 49 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 93 with your group, thanking Him for reigning in holiness, strength, and power. Thank Him that Jesus, the Son of Man, will return one day to establish His kingdom forever.

#### References

1. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 23, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 155.

Notes

