

# Daniel

## Chapter 7

### *Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts*

**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. 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. 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.’ 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. 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.**

**Ch 7 Hipp:** “In distinguishing the kingdoms that are to rise after these things, he showed also the coming of Antichrist in the last times, and the consummation of the whole world.... Now if we set Daniel’s own visions [ch 7] also side by side with this [ch 2], we shall have one exposition to give of the two together, and shall (be able to) show how concordant with each other they are, and how true” (*ANF* 5:208). **Luth:** “In the seventh chapter begin the visions and prophecies of the future kingdoms, especially of the kingdom of Christ, for whose sake all these visions came to pass. To begin with, the four kingdoms, which he pointed out above in chapter 2[:31–43] in the great image, he now sees again in another form, namely in the four beasts” (*AE* 35:299). (TLSB)

**7:1** *first year of Belshazzar.* Probably 553 B.C. The events of ch. 7 preceded those of ch. 5. (CSB)

*dream and visions.* Now Daniel receives revelations instead of interpreting them, in contrast to his previous experiences (chs 2; 4; 5). (TLSB)

Dan 7:1 contains the first direct reference in the book to Daniel’s activity as an author. It clearly states that the account of this dream comes from Daniel’s pen. Moreover, this verse and indeed this entire chapter exhibit literary tendencies that are characteristic of the earlier chapters. The use of the exegetical or explanatory *waw* in connecting phrases such as “saw a dream *and* visions of his head” (7:1) is common throughout Daniel (e.g., 1:3; 2:28; 3:2; 4:13; 6:28) and is used several times in Daniel 7 (also in 7:7, 12). The repetition of thought in *וַיִּכְתֹּב דָּנִיֵּאל אֶת-חֲזוֹן הַחֲזוֹן הַזֶּה*, literally, “he wrote the dream, and he related the head of [main] words” (7:1), is a common thought pattern in Daniel (e.g., 2:23b, 28b; 5:17, 20; 6:4). Therefore, there is ample evidence to conclude that Daniel, the author of this chapter, is the author of the entire book. (CC)

**7:2** *four winds of heaven* – Daniel’s vision begins with “the four winds of heaven . . . churning the great sea” (7:2). While commentators have discussed various proposals about the identity of “the four winds,” throughout Scripture this phrase is used when referring to the entire earth and especially the farthest reaches of the earth. Compare the four angels “standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth” in Rev 7:1. Presumably the number of winds derives from the cardinal compass points (north, south, east, and west), making the number four symbolic of the entire earth. Hence the whole world is in turmoil. (CC)

*out of the great sea.* The world of nations and peoples (see also vv. 3, 17). (CSB)

Often symbolic of chaos and evil (cf Is 27:1). Hipp: “By the great sea he means the whole world” (ANF 5:188). (TLSB)

**7:3** *beasts.* The insignia or symbols of many Gentile nations were beasts (or birds) of prey (see v. 17). (CSB)

Daniel saw strange hybrid creatures whose appearances and actions had symbolic and prophetic meaning. (TLSB)

Daniel sees four beasts ascending from the sea and notes that they are different from one another (7:3). The most obvious difference is that each of the first three is described as resembling a different animal or as composed of parts of different animals, while the last beast does not resemble any natural animal. These differences signify the differences between the various kingdoms the beasts represent. Each represents a dominant world power, but each nation has its own particular character, way of spreading, and method of defeating its foes. (CC)

Revelation contains some rough parallels. In Rev 12:17b–13:10, Satan stands on the shore of the sea and conjures out of the sea a beast that he will use in his warfare against the church. This first beast continues to appear in later chapters of Revelation until it is finally thrown into the lake of fire after the return of Christ; compare its judgment in Rev 19:20 to Dan 7:11 (cf. also Rev 20:10). Then in Rev 13:11–18, Satan conjures a second beast from the earth. Another rough parallel to the four beasts in Daniel 7 is the four symbolic horsemen who are summoned in Rev 6:1–8 and given permission to ravage humanity. However, the horsemen are not kingdoms, but agents of destruction that can range over the entire world throughout history until the return of Christ. (CC)

**7:4–7†** The lion with an eagle’s wings symbolizes the Neo-Babylonian empire. The rest of v. 4 perhaps reflects the humbling experience of Nebuchadnezzar, as recorded in ch. 4. The bear (v. 5), raised up on one of its sides, refers to the superior status of the Persians in the Medo-Persian federation. The three ribs may represent the three principal conquests: Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylon (539) and Egypt (525). The leopard with four wings (v. 6) represents the speedy conquests of Alexander the Great (334–330), and the four heads correspond to the four main divisions into which his empire fell after his untimely death in 323 (see 8:22): Macedon and Greece (under Antipater and Cassander), Thrace and Asia Minor (under Lysimachus), Syria (under Seleucus I), Palestine and Egypt (under Ptolemy I). The fourth, unnamed, beast (v. 7), with its irresistible power and surpassing all its predecessors, points to the Roman Empire. Its ten horns correspond to the ten toes of 2:41–42. (CSB)

**7:7** Whereas the appearances of the other beasts could be associated with various animals, the fourth beast had no natural counterpart. It is a living contrast to the created order. (TLSB)

*iron teeth.* Hybrid of natural and man-made parts, with hideous results. (TLSB)

*ten horns.* Indicative of the comprehensiveness of the beast's sphere of authority. (CSB)

Daniel notes one major difference between this fourth animal and the others: it has horns. A natural horned animal would have only two. The "ten horns" (7:7) mark this beast as exceedingly powerful. Already in 1:20, the number "ten" is used in a symbolic manner to indicate a quality that surpasses all others: the king deems the wisdom of the Judeans to be "ten times" better than that of his occult diviners. The horns of an animal signify its power (Deut 33:17; cf. 1 Ki 22:11; Ps 75:10 just as a "horn" can represent God's power to save his people (e.g., Ps 18:2; 132:17; Lk 1:69). Therefore, the unnatural number of ten horns signifies the unique character of this animal that sets it apart from the others: it surpasses them all in its power. (CC)

**7:8** *another horn, a little one.* The antichrist, or a world power sharing in the characteristics of the antichrist. (CSB)

It pushed up among the 10 horns of the fourth beast. (TLSB)

*were plucked up* – Daniel's attention has shifted from the beast as a whole to its ten horns, which caught his attention because they made the beast different from the others (7:7). As he is contemplating the horns, a little horn arises on the beast, and "three of the previous horns [are] uprooted in front of it" (7:8). The passive verb once again implies divine action. The uprooting is done with God's permission, and it also demonstrates the power of the little horn. Interpreters often assume that by uprooting the three horns, the little horn inherits their former power. However, the fact that only three of the ten horns are uprooted implies that only part of the power of the beast is exercised by the little horn. (CC)

*eyes* – The little horn's eyes and mouth reveal that the horn represents a human institution (just as the other horns represent human kings or kingdoms). The eyes denote the ability to observe and may also imply intelligence. (CC)

*mouth speaking great things.* See 2Th 2:4; Rev 13:5–6. (CSB)

Further hybrid features, with human characteristics. (TLSB)

The "great things" the little horn speaks (7:8) are polemical words against God and his saints according to the subsequent explanation in the vision (see 7:21, 25). This little horn is the only entity in the entire chapter that is depicted as specifically attacking God's people. (CC)

**7:1–8** Daniel has a vision of four beasts coming out of the great sea. Though Daniel does not yet understand his vision, he knows that it is a revelation from God and so records it for us to read as well. We find much that is hard to understand in such visions. Thank God that He "has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb 1:2). In Christ, we have God's fullest and clearest revelation. • Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing all grace and truth in Your Son, Jesus. Deliver us from the beastly evils of this age. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Ancient of Days Reigns*

**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. 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.**

**7:9–10** *thrones ... court.* Daniel next saw a court scene with judgment thrones set up (cf Ps 122:5). (TLSB)

**7:9** *thrones were placed* – Here is the climax of Daniel’s nighttime vision. The succession of earthly kings stopped, and God stepped in, to have the last word. The thrones were set in place because God was about to pronounce judgment. Since the judgment pictured here is the last judgment, it is clear that Daniel’s vision of the fourth beast involves a long time span – beginning with the rise of the Roman Empire and extending to the second coming of Christ. (PBC)

This is an important feature of the vision God gave Daniel. The sea (the political world) and the four beast (four successive world powers) do not have the last word. Daniel was permitted to see that God had placed a limit on their power and influence. In his dream Daniel saw a heavenly courtroom, one that was equipped with thrones, symbols of kingly authority. God will have the last word in history, as He had the first at creation. (PBC)

The thrones themselves will without a doubt have been of rare beauty. The term used is *korse’*, the equivalent of the Hebrew *kisse’*. This term never means anything less than a seat or settle of a very special type which is reserved for very special occasions and personages, here for “the angelic assessors of the judge.” (Leupold)

*Ancient of Days.* God. (CSB)

God the Father. (TLSB)

This unusual title, used only here in the Scripture, refers to the mystery that God is eternal. This title contrasts God’s unchanging permanence with the changeableness and instability of all human power structures. The eternal, majestic God was active long before nations and empires appeared on the world scene. Here the Ancient of Days is pictured pronouncing sentence on His enemies and granting a new and splendid kingdom to the Messiah. (PBC)

This is not one who is marked by the infirmities of old age, but one who has evidently lived for a long time. For it is of moment to emphasize that the judge is the Eternal One who has witnessed all the deeds and acts of men and of kingdoms and is, therefore, well able to pronounce an equitable judgment. (Leupold)

*clothing...white as snow...pure as wool* – Whiteness is symbolic of purity, holiness and righteousness, all of which would fit Christ on the last day. The white hair also suggests wisdom and dignity.

It is eminently fitting that the judge of all mankind be Himself free from every taint of the sin for which he must condemn the sinful among mankind, especially the aggregate of their sins. (Leupold)

Symbolizes God’s eternity and holiness (cf Is 1:18). (TLSB)

*throne was fiery flames* – This suggests nobility and splendor, as well as something transcendent, mysterious, awesome and even dangerous. (CSB)

Throne, wheels, and stream (v 10) were all fiery, as was God’s appearance on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16–18). (TLSB)

The vision of God that Daniel was permitted to see was not only a magnificent one, but an awesome one as well. During the centuries of the OT, when God wanted to appear visibly to His people, He usually chose to do so in the form of fire and cloud and smoke. Think of His appearance to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1ff), or to Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16–18), or to Ezekiel at the time of his call (Ezekiel 1). The biblical term for this phenomenon of Jehovah’s appearance in fire and cloud and smoke is “the glory of the Lord” (Exodus 24:16f; Leviticus 9:23f; Numbers 14:10; 16:19, 42; 1 Kings 8:11). (PBC)

Fire too represents the holiness of God, especially as he reveals himself in theophany. By fire he can mete out judgment upon sinners (Dan 7:11). Yet by fire he can also refine and purify his people (Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2–3; cf. 1 Cor 3:11–15). Once again, this symbolism, drawn at least partially from Daniel, is common in Revelation. Christ has eyes of fire (Rev 1:14; 2:18; 19:12; cf. Rev 10:1), and he can purify his people as if by fire (Rev 3:18; cf. Rev 15:2). Fire characterizes God’s theophany (Rev 4:5) and his judgments. (CC)

*throne ... wheels.* See Eze 1:15–21, 26–27. (CSB)

Ancient royal thrones were sometimes represented as having wheels; and so God’s throne has them, which is to convey the impression of its not being a throne that is bound to one place. For God’s judgment, as it He Himself, is omnipresent. (Leupold)

**7:10** *stream of fire* – This symbolizes Jesus’ burning zeal which would destroy his enemies but rescue his people. (CSB)

To devour the sinful and hostile forces of the world and to purify the children of the Kingdom. (Kretzmann)

*Thousands ... ten thousand.* 1 Clem: “Let us consider the whole multitude of His angels, how they stand ever ready to minister to His will.... Let us therefore, conscientiously gathering together in harmony, cry to Him earnestly, as with one mouth, that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises” (ANF 1:14). Ter: “The Divine Monarchy also is administered by so many legions and hosts of angels; ... it has not from this circumstance ceased to be the rule of one” (ANF 3:599). Cyr Jer: “Not that the multitude is only so great, but because the Prophet could not express more than these. So there will be present at the judgment in that day, God, the Father of all, Jesus Christ being seated with Him, and the Holy Ghost present with Them; and an angel’s trumpet shall summon us all to bring our deeds with us” (NPNF 2 7:112). (TLSB)

Ten is a symbol of completeness. Its multiple extends that to a greater degree.

*Stood before him* – Stand in Scripture is an expression of readiness to serve, the common posture for prayer, and also of worship, the people stand to show their respect for the public reading of God’s Word. (PBC)

*books were opened* – This is like a court of law where books are opened and verdicts read. One book contains those who are saved. Other books are also mentioned in Revelation 20:12 and

have to do and contain the deeds of people like that of Matthew 25. This is not to suggest that the deeds save anyone, they merely the proof of the faith that lives in people and saves them. (PBC)

To have one's name inscribed means to be saved. To have it blotted out means to be lost. So as a figure it implies that God has an accurate record of all that are His own. (Leupold)

**7:11** *great words*. Boasts “against the Most High” (v 25). (TLSB)

*beast was killed* – This scene is expanded in Revelation, where the beast and the false prophet, who corresponds to the little horn who speaks “great things/words” (Dan 7:8, 11), are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20). That scene in Revelation is of the final judgment of Satan’s agents at the end of the world, after the return of Jesus Christ. The judgment scene here can also be compared to the crushing of the four OT worldly kingdoms (2:44–45) by the arrival of God’s kingdom. The crushing of the kingdoms that precedes the first advent of Christ sets the pattern for the final and permanent destruction of Satan and all his minions at the second advent of Jesus Christ. (CC)

Body of the monster beast (vv 7–8) was destroyed and burned. (TLSB)

**7:12** *dominion was taken away* – Daniel now tells us the doom of the three earlier beasts that he saw (7:12). Previously in the vision, he simply told us about the succession of beasts (7:4–7) without telling us what happened to each of them. Some commentators understand 7:12 to be saying that the three other beasts survive the slaying of the fourth beast and its little horn. However, that understanding ignores the force of the verb in its context: *הָעֵרִי*, a Haphel (H) perfect in *וְהָעֵרִי שְׁלֹטְנָהוֹן*, literally, “as for the rest of the beasts, they took away their dominion,” translated as a passive, “their dominion *had been taken away*,” with God as the implied agent of the action. The perfect aspect in Aramaic, as in Hebrew, usually indicates a completed act or state. In this context, it indicates that the dominion of each beast has already been taken away when it is succeeded by the subsequent beast; the first beast has lost its dominion when it is succeeded by the second beast, and so forth. Therefore, in this case, the Aramaic perfect aspect corresponds to the English past perfect (pluperfect) tense. (CC)

However, the verse also states the following about the three earlier beasts: *וְאֶרְבָּה בְּחַיֵּי יְהִיבַת לָהֶוֹן*, literally, “a length/extension in life was given to them” (7:12). After their dominion is taken away, they are allowed to live on for a while—alive but powerless—until the judgment of the heavenly court is handed down and executed. Thus these kingdoms survive in some form, but without dominion, until the fourth beast and its little horn are slain. (CC)

This corresponds to the events in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. In that dream, all four metals of the statue are destroyed simultaneously (2:35, 44). (CC)

One may also compare NT passages such as Mt 13:24–43, where God does not immediately root out the weeds, but allows them to continue to live until the judgment. (CC)

The judgment on the first three beasts is their eventual loss of life at the judgment. The more severe punishment of the fourth beast and its horn corresponds to its actions. None of the first three beasts spoke words for which it had to be judged by the divine court. Further detail about the diabolical words and actions of the fourth beast and its horn will be given in 7:21, 25. Its eternal judgment will be elaborated in 7:26. (CC)

First three beasts lost their power but continued to exist. (TLSB)

*for a season and a time.* Lit, “until a season and a time,” i.e., “for a period of time,” which is not specified. (TLSB)

**7:9–12** The Ancient of Days presides over a court of judgment and condemns the fourth beast to be burned. This judgment scene, repeated in v 26, is a prelude to the final judgment, when all people will appear before the throne of God (Mt 25:32). For those who are in Christ Jesus, the verdict will be “not guilty” (Rm 8:1; 1Jn 2:1–2). • Praise to You, Lord Jesus, for serving as my advocate before God’s throne. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Son of Man Is Given Dominion*

**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.**

**7:13** *like a son of man.* † See Rev 1:13. A title that Jesus applied to himself. He will be enthroned as ruler over the whole earth (previously misruled by the four kingdoms of men), and his kingdom “will never be destroyed” (v. 14), whether on earth or in heaven. (CSB)

Daniel uses comparison as he did with the first three beasts earlier in the vision (“like,” vv 4–6). There is something special about this figure, however. This vision describes the commissioning of the Christ as our Lord and Savior. (TLSB)

He is called “one like a son of man,” a human being, not another in the series of frightful beasts. We know from the NT that Christ, who frequently used OT terminology in speaking of Himself and His work, referred to Himself as “Son of Man.” The humble appearance of Jesus on earth as the lowliest of humans emphasized that it was not His purpose to frighten us or to overwhelm us, but to gain our confidence, to win us by His self-sacrificing love. (PBC)

*with the clouds of heaven.* See Mk 14:62; Rev 1:7. (CSB)

Different origin from the beasts, which came from the sea. (TLSB)

He did not rise out of the sea, as the beasts did, or standing on earth, as we do. Here we think of Jesus’ own words: “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Almighty One and coming on the clouds of heave.” (Mark 14:62) (PBC)

**7:14** In contrast to the beasts whose dominion was taken away (v 12), the Ancient of Days invested the “one like a son of man” with an everlasting reign. Just: “There would be two advents of His,—one in which He was pierced by you; a second, when you shall know Him whom you have pierced” (ANF 1:210). Cyr Jer: “We preach not one advent only of Christ, but a second also, far more glorious than the former. For the former gave a view of His patience; but the latter brings with it the crown of a divine kingdom. For all things, for the most part, are twofold in our Lord Jesus Christ: a twofold generation; one, of God, before the ages; and one, of a Virgin, at the close of the ages: His descents twofold; one, the unobserved, *like rain on a fleece*; and a second His open coming, which is to be. In His former advent, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger; in His second, He *covers Himself with light as with a garment*” (NPNF 2 7:104). (TLSB)

*was given dominion* – He was given absolutely unlimited dominion – over all people, and forever – in contrast to rule over a particular area of the world for a measured period of time. (PBC)

*all peoples...nations and languages should serve him* – Daniel’s vision pictured the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Apostle Paul that “...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...” (Philippians 2:10f) (PBC)

His reign defies all boundaries. (TLSB)

The final goal of all history is described here as Messiah’s taking up His eternal rule among the people whom He has purchased with His life’s blood. (PBC)

*everlasting*. Contrasts with the reigns of others, which are subject to God’s limited plans for them. (TLSB)

**7:13–14** Daniel sees “one like a son of man,” coming with the clouds of heaven, who is given eternal rule over the whole earth. We recognize that this King is Jesus, fully divine and fully human, Son of Mary and Son of the Most High, whose kingdom will never end (Lk 1:32–33). May we ever “live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him.” • Jesus, my King, rule me body and soul as You know best. Amen. (TLSB)

*Daniel's Vision Interpreted*

**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.’ 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.”**



**7:15** *my spirit within me...anxious...alarmed.* Daniel's distress at the vision demonstrates the psychological and physical stress that come with receiving a vision from God. Ezekiel has similar reactions (Ezek 1:28; 3:14–15, 25–26). Daniel also experiences similar things when he receives later visions (Dan 8:27; 10:10–11, 15–18). (CC)

Daniel had interpreted the dreams of others (1:17; 2:36; 4:19) but he was mystified and perplexed by his own dream (cf v 28). (TLSB)

**7:16** Daniel seeks the meaning of the vision even as it unfolds. (TLSB)

*one of those stood there.* An angel. (CSB)

One serving the Ancient of Days (v 10); perhaps Gabriel (8:16). (CSB)

Daniel seeks out “one of those standing” in God's court (7:16), who probably was one of the angelic attendants of the Ancient of Days, since the angels “stood” before God (7:10). Daniel's request for an interpretation of the vision takes place within the vision itself. In visions received by earlier OT prophets, God himself acts as the interpreter (i.e., the visions in Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; or Amos 7–8). Beginning with the exile, God uses angels to serve as guides and interpreters in visions (e.g., Ezekiel 40–48; Zechariah 1–6). Daniel has angelic guides or interpreters in all of his visions (chapters 7–12), beginning with this one. In Revelation, angels interpret various features of the vision shown to the apostle John (e.g., Rev 1:1; 10:5–11; 17:1–18; 21:9–22:6). (CC)

In extrabiblical literature, the angelic interpreter will become a standard figure in Jewish and Christian visionary and apocalyptic texts written during the intertestamental period and beyond. (CC)

This particular angel is not identified, but in later visions “Gabriel” speaks with Daniel (8:16; 9:21). Dan 9:2 (CC)

**7:17** *four great beasts* – The four beasts are said to be “four kings [who] will arise from the earth” (7:17). The concepts of king and kingdom are nearly interchangeable in the dreams and visions in Daniel. Thus in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he, the king, is the head of gold (2:38). However, the head is also his kingdom, and indeed the Babylonian Empire ruled by a succession of kings, since it is succeeded by three consecutive kingdoms (2:39–40). In the visions following Daniel 7, the ram has two horns representing “the kings of Media and Persia” (8:20). From the context, these “kings” obviously represent the Medo-Persian kingdom. The goat seen in the vision in Daniel 8 is “the king of Greece” (8:21a), yet the single horn on its forehead is “the first king” (8:21b), so the goat is not a single king, but a kingdom. (CC)

For this reason, when a beast or a horn is identified as a king, it is best to remember that the king and his kingdom are melded into one. This is also true in Daniel's final vision (chapters 10–12) since in 11:5–35, “the king of the north” and “the king of the south” each represent an entire succession of kings. The same is true in this chapter. While in 7:17 the four beasts are said to represent four kings, in 7:23 the fourth beast is said to be a kingdom. (CC)

Readers should be cautious about unequivocally linking representations in Daniel's visions with specific rulers; they might represent a succession of rulers for a particular kingdom. Because kings of Babylon (1:1), Media and Persia (5:31; 8:20; 10:1), and Greece (8:21) are mentioned in Dn, the first three beasts may be associated with these kingdoms. (TLSB)

**7:18** *saints*. † Exalted privileges will be enjoyed by Christ’s followers in the Messianic kingdom (Mt 19:28–29; Lk 22:29–30). See also Rev 1:6; 20:4–6. (CSB)

Lit, “holy ones.” They will live forever in the kingdom ruled by “one like a son of man” (vv 13–14). (TLSB)

This implies that the Son of Man alone is worthy to receive the kingdom (see Rev 5:9), but he in turn graciously grants membership in the kingdom to all who believe in him (“you have made them a kingdom,” Rev 5:10). (CC)

**7:19** Daniel was less curious about the first three beasts than the terrible fourth beast, which may represent the Roman Empire. (TLSB)

*truth about the fourth beast* – Daniel’s desire for more detailed interpretation centers on the fourth beast and the horns on its head because these parts of the vision directly affect the saints. These verses summarize and comment upon 7:7–14. At first Daniel simply repeats elements of his description of his earlier vision with some abbreviations. He states that the beast is “very frightening” (7:19) without mentioning that it is “terrible” or “exceedingly strong” (7:7). (CC)

Daniel gives one major addition in his description of the fourth beast: the detail that it has “claws ... of bronze” (7:19). This added detail makes the beast even more fierce. We cannot be certain why Daniel did not relay this detail when he first described the vision for his readers. However, he may have left it out of the initial description in 7:7 so that the reader would focus instead on the fourth beast’s “iron teeth” (7:7, repeated in 7:19), which indicates that the fourth beast represents the same kingdom (Rome) as the “iron” section of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2. (CC)

**7:20** *other horn that came up*. Daniel was most interested in the little horn. Some interpreters regard it as a prophetic portrayal of Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC). The apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Macc describe how this king savagely persecuted the Jewish people. However, the fourth kingdom more likely represents the Roman Empire and points forward to the reign of Antichrist. Hipp: “Who, then, are meant by this but the Romans?...” (ANF 5:178). Cyr Jer: “That this kingdom is that of the Romans, has been the tradition of the Church’s interpreters” (NPNF 2 7:108). (TLSB)

*seemed greater* – About halfway through his recapitulation of 7:7–14, Daniel begins to add new information about what he has seen. He also substitutes for words that simply described his vision other words that describe the practical outcome of what he has seen. This begins in 7:20, where the last clause adds that the little horn’s “appearance was greater than its companions” (וְהָיָה גָּדוֹל מִן חֲבֵרָתָהּ), that is, more important or larger than the other horns, even though it was “little” (7:8) in comparison to them. This horn’s prominence was due to its eyes and mouth and its effect on the saints. (CC)

**7:21** Daniel’s vision was expanded, and he foresaw affliction for God’s people. (TLSB)

*made war with the saints* – The effect of the horn speaking “great things” (see the textual note on 7:8) was that it “made war with the saints and prevailed over them” (7:21). This horn’s primary weapon against the saints is its words. It fights against the saints, whose primary weapon is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph 6:17; cf. Heb 4:12). This statement about the verbal warfare waged by the little horn in Daniel 7 is a key indication that it does not

represent Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The historical sources about Antiochus' actions against the Jews, primarily 1 and 2 Maccabees, make abundantly clear that his war against them was conducted with physical force. There is only one passing reference to any speech by Antiochus, and it scarcely figures into his acts against the Jews. (CC)

This horn in Daniel 7 is the Antichrist, who perverts the Gospel by speaking things that contravene the Word of God. He was already present in the apostolic age, as St. Paul reports about “the man of lawlessness,” and he will continue his warfare throughout the church age until the second coming of Christ, who shall slay him “with the breath of his mouth” (2 Thess 2:1–10), that is, with the Word of God (Rev 19:15). This identification of the horned fourth beast, and in particular its little horn, is confirmed by the parallel description of the second beast in Revelation 13. The second beast, which Satan conjures from the earth, had horns like a lamb (a false imitation of the Lamb of God!) but “was speaking like a serpent/dragon” (ἐλάλει ὡς δράκων, Rev 13:11), meaning that he is Satan's mouthpiece or spokesman. This second beast is the one that later in Revelation mutates into the harlot (Rev 17:1, 15–16; 19:2) and into the false prophet (Rev 16:13), which again confirms that he wages war against the church by means of speaking words—false doctrine that leads people away from Christ. This second beast in his disguise as “the false prophet” will finally be cast (together with the first “beast,” from Rev 13:1–10) into the lake of fire after the second coming of Christ (Rev 19:20). Then Satan himself will be cast into the lake containing them (Rev 20:10). (CC)

**7:22** God the Father stepped in to save His people by destroying the beast with its many horns (cf vv 11, 26). (TLSB)

*judgment was given.* Saints were vindicated and possessed the kingdom. (TLSB)

The scene of the Ancient of Days in the vision (7:9–10) is reduced to a clause: “until the Ancient of Days came” (7:22). In the earlier vision, the sequence was the appearance of the Ancient of Days (God the Father) for the purpose of judging the beasts (particularly the fourth beast and its little horn [7:11–12]) and to give the eternal kingdom to the Son of Man, God the Son, who comes on the clouds of heaven (7:13–14). The same basic sequence is present here in 7:22. The advent of “the Ancient of Days” here represents, in NT terms, the appearance of God the Father as Judge immediately after the second advent of Jesus Christ. Rev 19:11–21 and Rev 20:7–10 are parallel accounts of the final battle and defeat of all the forces of evil by Christ at his second advent, and then Rev 20:11–15 pictures the final judgment before the throne of God the Father. (CC)

The slaying of the fourth beast and especially of its little horn according to the divine judgment (Dan 7:11–12) is described here in terms of the authorization for this slaying. “Judgment was given in favor of the saints of the Most High” (7:22) means that the little horn that waged war against the saints is vanquished, together with all forces of evil and all who are outside the kingdom of God. (CC)

Finally, in place of repeating the enthronement of the Son of Man (7:13–14), here Daniel describes the effect on the saints of his enthronement at his second coming: “then the time came, and the saints took possession of the kingdom” (7:22). (CC)

**7:23** *he said.* The interpreter (v 16) elaborated on his previous explanations. (TLSB)

*fourth beast* – In explaining the fourth beast, the angel once again affirms that it represents a kingdom (cf. “kings” in 7:17) and that it is different from the others. This difference was

originally implied by the beast's horns, which no other animal possesses ("different ... in that it had ten horns"; see the commentary on 7:7). The angel also confirms the viciousness of this beast as it devours and tramples the earth (7:7, 19). The angel then focuses on the horns. For the first time, he defines the ten horns as ten kings that come from this beast. This reinforces the unique character of this beast. Whereas the previous three beasts/kingdoms are replaced by other kingdoms, this beast is succeeded by kingdoms that grow out of it. (CC)

This fits well the Roman Empire. Unlike the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, or Greek Empires that dominated the world, the Roman Empire was not replaced by another empire, but it fell and its power was divided among various rulers. The number of horns—ten—points to the surpassing power of the beast, since ten is used metaphorically with this significance elsewhere in Daniel (1:20; see the commentary on 7:7). This surpassing power will be fragmented and passed on to others. (CC)

**7:24** *ten kings*. All the political powers that will arise out of the fourth kingdom—not necessarily simultaneously (but see 2:44). (CSB)

Rather than representing specific rulers, the number may be symbolic of the kingdom's greatness. (TLSB)

In keeping with the general symbolic nature of the features of the beasts in this chapter, and the symbolic meaning of "ten," we ought not look for a literal ten kingdoms to succeed the Roman Empire. In modern times, some dispensational premillennialists have speculated that a ten-member confederacy of nations will arise that will reincarnate the Roman Empire and fulfill Daniel 7 (and other prophecies) in some literal way, but the changing number of nations belonging to the European Common Market and its failure to provide the Antichrist have shown that such interpretations are misguided. (CC)

*another shall arise*. The little horn (vv 8, 20). (TLSB)

*three kings*. Some of the ten. Three often signified a small, indefinite number. (CSB)

The little horn will defeat three kings or kingdoms. (TLSB)

The eleventh horn, the little horn of 7:8, is said to "humble" three kings (7:24). The variation in the verbs used to describe what happens to the three horns, which are "uprooted" (7:8), "fell" (7:20), and now are humbled (7:24), cautions against pressing the meaning of any one of them. Instead the thrust seems to be that some significant portion of the power and influence of the beast will eventually pass to the little horn. (CC)

**7:25** *speak words*. Cf vv 8, 11, 20; 11:36. This ruler's eloquence is emphasized. Cyr Jer: "A blasphemer the man is and lawless, not having received the kingdom from his fathers, but having usurped the power by means of sorcery.... And who is this, and from what sort of working? Interpret to us, O Paul. [2Th 2:9]" (NPNF 2 7:108). (TLSB)

*wear out*. Harass and persecute. (TLSB)

Twice previously the little horn was depicted as "speaking great things" (7:8, 20). The angel now explains the content of the horn's words. The most general characterization is that they are polemical "words against the Most High" (7:25). Moreover, the effect of the words is that they "wear out the saints" like one wears out a garment (see the first textual note on 7:25). The picture

here is not of a short, violent attack on the saints, but of a prolonged campaign of verbal warfare that wears them down like the fabric of a garment breaks down and eventually frays or tears because of constant abuse. The horn's false teachings, heresies, and blasphemies against God have the effect of wearing down the saints until they become exhausted in their attempt to resist and remain steadfast to God's Word. (CC)

The angel then adds a more specific evil purpose: through his words, the little horn "will intend to change times and Law" (7:25). The expression "times" probably refers to the appointed religious festivals of Israel, and "Law" is a reference to God's Law, the OT. This way in which the little horn will attack God and his saints is expressed in terms that Daniel and his readers could readily understand, since the appointed worship occasions and liturgical rituals specified in the Torah and the OT itself were foundational for Israel's faith and life. (CC)

The little horn will seek the prerogatives of God. The horn's words and teaching will usurp God's authority by seeking to change the worship and piety of God's people. The little horn will attempt to replace God's Word with his own "great words" (7:11). This matches what Paul says about "the man of lawlessness ... who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or [above] what is worshiped so that he seats himself in the temple of God, displaying himself as God" (2 Thess 2:3-4). Paul's triple reference to divine worship and God's gracious presence in the divine service (what is "called God ... what is worshiped ... in the temple of God") expands upon "intend to change times and Law" in Dan 7:25. (CC)

The little horn seeks to change the worship life of the saints by corrupting their understanding of God's Word. His sinister method is to substitute human words for God's Word to get the saints to change their faith, worship, and life to match those deceptive words presented as words from God. In the Christian church, the central feature of divine worship is that God works through his proclaimed Word of Law and Gospel and the proper administration of his Sacraments to produce repentance, to forgive sins for Christ's sake, to strengthen faith in Christ as the only and all-sufficient Savior, and to preserve the saints steadfast in this true faith unto life everlasting. The little horn (in NT terms, the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist) seeks to pervert the central message of the Scriptures: the Gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone. He intends to substitute "another gospel" (Gal 1:6) and make his false message the focus of the worship and life of the saints. There can be a great variety of false gospels, but the main feature they all share is that they are forms of works-righteousness that present salvation as something that can be achieved through human effort or ingenuity (human "power" or "wisdom"; see 1 Cor 1:18-31), rather than as the free and gracious gift of God in Christ. (CC)

Show antagonism to the Most High by changing the religious calendar and law. (TLSB)

*a time, times and half a time.* Precise time when the suffering would end is not stated. Symbolically could mean that though the time of affliction for the saints seems like it will go on forever ("a time, times"), there will be a termination point ("half a time"). (TLSB)

Finally, the angel adds a chronological notice about the warfare of the little horn. It will last for three and a half "times" (שְׁנַיִם וְעָצְרוֹן; see the third textual note on 7:25). Both critical scholars and evangelical scholars who adopt millennialist interpretations of Daniel usually assume that this equals three and a half *years*. They often appeal to 4:16, 23, 25, 32, which refer to the "seven times [שִׁבְעִים וְשָׁנִים]" that will pass over Nebuchadnezzar until his sanity is restored, and they assume that the time period in those passages is equal to seven year. However, this is a circular argument, since it assumes that the "times" in Daniel 4 are years and then uses that assumption as support for the same assumption about the "times" in Daniel 7. (CC)

There is no good reason to assume that the “times” in Daniel 4 are years. Neither is there any good reason to make that assumption here. Elsewhere in the Aramaic portion of the book, Daniel the author uses the Aramaic term ܩܘܨܐ, “year” (and not ܩܘܨܐܝܢ, “time”) when he wants to refer to a year or years (Dan 5:31; 7:1). Neither the Old Greek nor Theodotion gives any indication that it understood the “times” to be years; both translate 7:25 using καιρός, “time,” not έτος, “year.” As with the “seven times” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (4:16, 23, 25, 32), the emphasis is not on the word “time” but on the symbolic number. (CC)

In this case, that symbolic number is three and a half. What do these three and a half “times” represent? Already in Daniel the number seven has been used to denote completeness or thoroughness. This probably derives from the creation account in Genesis 1–2, where God created the entire world then rested on the seventh day. This is reemphasized when God commands the weekly and yearly sabbatical observances (Ex 20:8–11; 23:11–12; Lev 25:3–4). Since three and a half is half of seven, *the period of oppression is depicted as one-half of a divinely determined complete period for the world.* (CC)

The Scriptures depict this divine dividing of human history into two great periods by the use of phrases such as “the latter/last days,” which implies an earlier period, “the former/first days.” The latter or last days commence with the (first) coming of the Messiah and his kingdom. The reference to the messianic era as commencing “in the latter days” is also found twice in Daniel (10:14 ,ܩܘܨܐܝܢ ܩܘܨܐܝܢ ܩܘܨܐܝܢ; 2:28 ,ܩܘܨܐܝܢ ܩܘܨܐܝܢ). (CC)

The NT clarifies this. Both Peter and the writer to the Hebrews understood that “the last days” had already begun with the first advent of Christ. They confirm that they and their hearers and readers were already “in the last days” (Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2). The apostles’ use of the phrase “last days” to describe conditions that were already present as they wrote is further confirmation of this (2 Tim 3:1; James 5:3; 2 Pet 3:3). The same is true of their use of equivalent phrases such as “the last hour,” in which antichrists have already arrived (1 Jn 2:18), and “the last time(s),” in which scoffers are present (Jude 18) but also in which God has already revealed his salvation in Christ (1 Pet 1:20). (CC)

Therefore, the three and a half times in Daniel’s vision represent the period from the first coming of the Messiah to the final judgment of the fourth beast’s little horn immediately after the Messiah’s second coming, that is, *from Jesus’ first advent to his triumphant parousia and the final judgment.* It is during this period of time that the little horn, the Antichrist, is attacking God and his people. Paul confirms this when he notes that “the mystery of lawlessness is *already* at work” (2 Thess 2:7). The Antichrist, the little horn of Daniel 7, has been present on earth since the NT age, and he will continue to be present and will wage war against the saints until the second coming of Christ. Though he is present now, he is being restrained and is partially hidden so that he is a “mystery” (2 Thess 2:6–7). But at the return of Christ, the Antichrist will be fully revealed and killed by the Lord Jesus (2 Thess 2:8). (CC)

Matthew 24:22, “If these days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”

7:27 *all dominions shall serve and obey them.* The saints will share in the rule of the “one like a son of man” (vv 13–14; 2Tm 2:12). (TLSB)

*given to the people.* For their benefit. God and the Messiah will rule (see Rev 19–22). (CSB)

The angel’s explanation continues in a brief summary of the convening of the court by the Ancient of Days (7:9–10), followed by the judgment on the fourth beast and its little horn (7:11–12). Neither of these is given expanded explanation, indicating that Daniel already understands that part of the vision. Instead, the angel expands the implications of the enthronement of the Son of Man (7:13–14). When he receives the eternal kingdom and dominion over the entire universe (cf. Phil 2:10–11), the saints will reign with him (cf. Lk 22:30; 2 Tim 2:12), and so “the kingdom ... will be given to the people, the saints of the Most High” (Dan 7:27). (CC)

Note that the language about the kingdom of the Most High is a paraphrase of the dominion given to the Son of Man (7:14). “All dominions will worship” the Most High (7:27), a paraphrase of the worship rendered to the Son of Man by “all peoples, nations, and languages” (7:14). Thus the Son of Man receives the same honor and worship that the Most High receives (see Jn 5:22–23). This is an implicit affirmation of the divinity of the Son of Man—God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. (CC)

**7:28** *alarmed.* The vision’s interpretation did not lessen Daniel’s anxieties. (TLSB)

*color changed.* Due to his alarm, he likely grew pale. (TLSB)

This vision takes a great physical and mental toll on Daniel, an experience that will be repeated with future visions (8:27; 10:10–11, 15–18). Daniel tells us that he kept the matter to himself. He probably was pondering its meaning and fulfillment (1 Pet 1:10–11). Future visions will reveal more details about the matters revealed in this vision. In the meantime, he reveals it to no one. (CC)

Similarly, toward the end of the final vision Daniel is told, “Now you, Daniel, close up the words and seal the scroll until the time of the end” (12:4). It would take over five centuries until the first advent of the Messiah and the inauguration of the last days. From then on, believers would rightly consider the fulfillment of the rest of the vision to be imminent. Therefore, at the end of the last book of the NT canon, John the Seer is told, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near” (Rev 22:10). (CC)

**7:15–28** Daniel’s visions are interpreted to mean that the Ancient of Days will destroy all earthly kingdoms, including that of the little horn, and that the saints of the Most High will possess an everlasting kingdom. Yet Daniel is alarmed and perplexed over what he sees and hears; this may be comforting to us, since we do not fully comprehend God’s ways and purposes either. Though we may understand the basics of what God is teaching us, still an element of mystery surrounds His promises and their future fulfillment. Powerful earthly kingdoms may sometimes persecute God’s people, but we know that God has given us the Kingdom in His dear Son (Lk 12:32). • O Ancient of Days, give me the confidence that You rule all things for my good. Amen. (TLSB)