

Small Group Guide: Daniel 7 — The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

Overview

This week's sermon marked a major transition in our series through Daniel. Moving into chapters 7 through 12, we encounter apocalyptic dreams and visions — a style of writing that can feel strange and unfamiliar. The sermon challenged us to resist two common mistakes: obsessing over prophetic charts and end-times predictions, or dismissing this material altogether. Instead, we were invited to receive apocalyptic literature for what it actually is — an unveiling of a heavenly perspective on our present time, meant to strengthen our faithfulness to God right now.

Key Takeaways

- The word "apocalypse" means an unveiling. Apocalyptic literature is not primarily about predicting the end of the world — it is about helping us see our present moment from God's perspective so that we can live faithfully.
 - The beasts in Daniel 7 represent arrogant earthly kingdoms that reject the rule and reign of God and bring death, disorder, and dysfunction. While they may point to specific historical kingdoms, they can represent any arrogant power in any era.
 - While the beasts rage on earth, heaven is not in crisis. The Ancient of Days sits enthroned, court is convened, and the books are opened. The violence and injustice of arrogant powers has been recorded and will be judged.
 - Jesus identified himself as the Son of Man from Daniel 7. Standing before the very people who were about to crucify him, he declared that they would see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God — the ultimate vindication.
 - The kingdom of God is breaking into the kingdoms of this world. Though God's people may appear crushed at times, God steps in, the beast is defeated, and an everlasting kingdom is given to the Son of Man and to his holy people.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before hearing this sermon, what did the word "apocalypse" bring to mind for you? How has your understanding of it shifted, if at all?
 2. Have you ever avoided or felt intimidated by passages like Daniel 7 or the book of Revelation? What made them feel off-limits or difficult?
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Digging In

3. The sermon described two common responses to apocalyptic literature: obsessing over it to build prophecy charts, or ignoring it entirely. Which tendency do you think is more common in your experience? Which have you personally leaned toward?
 4. The beasts in Daniel 7 rise out of the sea, which in the Bible represents chaos and forces working against God's good creation. What does it mean to you that arrogant, destructive power is described as beastly rather than human? How does that image shape the way you think about corrupt power?
 5. Read Psalm 2 together as a group. What is the posture of God toward rulers and nations who set themselves up in arrogance? What does it mean that God laughs? Does that comfort you or unsettle you? Why?
 6. In Daniel 7, while the beasts are raging on earth, the Ancient of Days calmly takes his seat and opens the books. The sermon asked: "Is heaven in a crisis?" How does that image speak to you when you look at the chaos in the world around you or in your own life?
 7. The sermon pointed out that Jesus' favorite title for himself was Son of Man, drawn directly from Daniel 7. In Matthew 26, standing before the religious leaders who were about to condemn him, Jesus declared that they would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds. What does it mean that Jesus claimed this identity at his most vulnerable moment? What does that say about how God defines power and victory?
 8. The sermon said: "As Jesus gave his life and love, he exposed and defeated the evil powers that held humans in bondage." How does the cross look different to you when seen through the lens of Daniel 7?
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Going Deeper

9. The sermon made the point that we do not need to agree on every specific detail of Daniel's vision in order to receive what it clearly teaches. Are you comfortable sitting with some uncertainty in passages like this? What makes that easy or difficult for you?
10. The sermon closed by saying that the book is open, God is not panicked or defeated, and he is working all things for the good of those who love him. Where in your life right now do you most need to hear that truth? What would it look like to actually live from that perspective this week?

Practical Applications

- **Reframe how you read difficult Scripture.** When you encounter a passage that feels strange or hard to interpret, ask first: what is this revealing about God's perspective on the present moment? What does this call me to do or believe right now?
- **Identify the "beasts" in your context.** Without becoming cynical or paranoid, reflect on where you see arrogant power operating around you — in culture, in institutions, in your own life. How does Daniel 7 shape the way you respond to those realities?
- **Meditate on the image of the Ancient of Days.** This week, when anxiety about the state of the world or your personal circumstances rises, return to the image of God calmly seated on his throne, with court in session. Let that image anchor your prayers.
- **Sit with the Son of Man.** Spend time this week reading through the Gospel accounts where Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man. Notice how he uses that title and what he is claiming about himself. Let Daniel 7 deepen your understanding of who Jesus is and what his kingdom means.
- **Come to the table with intention.** The sermon closed by connecting Daniel 7 to Communion — a declaration that we belong to the one who is truly ruling and reigning. The next time you take Communion, let it be a conscious act of submitting yourself to his kingdom in the midst of whatever chaos you are facing.

Closing Prayer Prompt

Close your group time by praying together. Invite group members to name one area of their life or one situation in the world where they need to trust that God is on his throne. Pray specifically over those things, declaring that the Ancient of Days is not in a crisis and that his kingdom will not be destroyed.