

In Daniel 7, it gives us an understanding on what was foretold by God that leads to the tribulation. Here are explanations for Daniel 7 which will help you in answering the 3 discussion questions.

**The lion with the wings of an eagle (v. 4)** represented the empire of Babylon, which in Nebuchadnezzar's image was the head of gold (2:37–38). In Scripture, Babylon is identified with both the lion and the eagle (Jer. 4:7, 13; 48:40; 49:19–22; 50:17; Ezek. 17:3, 12; see also Hab. 1:6–8). The description of the lion being lifted up to stand like a man, and then given a man's heart, reminds us of how

God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar and made him live like a beast for seven years (Dan. 4:16, 28–34). God told Daniel that the Babylonian Empire would fall. The Babylonian empire lasted for 66 years (636 BC to 539 BC.)

**The bear with three ribs in its mouth (v. 5)** symbolized the empire of the Medes and Persians who defeated Babylon (Dan. 5) and parallels the arms and chest of silver in the great image (2:39). The bear was raised up on one side because the Persians were stronger than the Medes. In the later vision of the ram with two horns (Dan. 8), the higher horn represented the Persians (vv. 3, 20). Interpreters aren't agreed on the meaning of the three ribs that the bear carried in its mouth. The best explanation is that they stand for Lydia, Egypt, and Babylon, nations that the Medes and Persians had conquered. The armies of the Medo-Persian Empire did indeed "devour much flesh" as they marched across the battlefields. The Medo-Persian empire lasted for 208 years (539–330 BC).

**The leopard with four wings (v. 6)** represented Alexander the Great and the swift conquests of his army, resulting in the incredible expansion of the kingdom of Greece. This beast is identified with the number four: four heads and four horns (see 8:8, 21–22). Alexander's untimely death in 323 left him without a successor, and his kingdom was divided into four parts and assigned to his leaders. Palestine and Egypt went to Ptolemy I; Syria was ruled by Seleucus I; Thrace and Asia Minor were assigned to Lysimachus; and Macedon and Greece were governed by Antipater and Cassander. The Grecian Kingdom lasted for 185 years (330–63 BC).

**The "dreadful and terrible" beast (v. 7)** represented the Roman Empire, as strong and enduring as iron and as uncompromising as a beast on the rampage. The Roman armies swept across the ancient world and defeated one nation after another until the empire extended from the Atlantic Ocean east to the Caspian Sea and from North Africa north to the Rhine and Danube Rivers. Egypt, Palestine, and Syria were all under Roman domination. The Roman empire lasted for 500 years (63 BC–ca. AD 475)

This beast corresponds with the legs of iron on Nebuchadnezzar's image (2:40–43), but the ten toes (ten kings, vv. 43–44) are represented by ten horns (7:7, 24). Often in Scripture, a horn is a symbol of a ruler or of royal authority (1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 132:17). (See notes below about the "little horn" of Daniel 7:8.)

In the great movement of ancient history, one empire has replaced another, leading up to the establishing of the Roman Empire. The two visions (chaps. 2 and 7) make it clear that God knows the future and controls the rise and fall of nations and rulers. Daniel was then living in the Babylonian Empire, but he knew that Babylon would be taken by the Medes and Persians, and that Greece would conquer the Medo-Persian Empire, and Rome would eventually conquer all. Prophecy is history written beforehand.

### **The Kingdom of Satan (7:8, 11–12, 21–26)**

The four kingdoms represented by the four beasts have already come and gone; however, verse 12 indicates that each kingdom continues to exist in some way within the succeeding kingdom that "devoured" it. But Daniel saw in his vision something that wasn't revealed to Nebuchadnezzar: the last human kingdom on earth would be a frightful kingdom, unlike any of the previous kingdoms, and it would even declare war on God!

This is the kingdom of Antichrist, described in Revelation 13–19, an evil kingdom that will be destroyed when Jesus Christ returns to earth. This judgment was depicted in Nebuchadnezzar's vision as the "stone cut out without hands" that tumbled down the mountain and destroyed the image (Dan. 2:34–35, 44–45).

**The ten horns (vv. 7–8, 24; Rev. 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16).** These represent ten kings or kingdoms that will exist in the last days. Daniel wrote in language the people of his day could understand, and the concept of nations as we have them today would be

foreign to the ancients. In Daniel's day countries were ruled by kings, but the "kingdoms" spoken of here will be nations as we know them. Some students of prophecy think that a ten-nation "United States of Europe" will emerge in the last days, and recent developments in Europe—the organization of the European Union and the use of the eurodollar—seem to point in that direction. However, there are more than ten nations in the E.U., so we had better not draw hasty conclusions. It is out of this confederation of ten nations, which in some way is an extension of the Roman Empire, that the Antichrist will come and the final world kingdom will be organized and actively oppose God and His people.

**The "little horn" (vv. 8, 11, 24–26).** This represents the last world ruler, the man called Antichrist. The Greek prefix *anti* can mean "against" and "instead of." The final world ruler will be both a counterfeit Christ and an enemy who is against Christ. John described the appearance of this "man of sin" (2 Thess.2:3) in Revelation 13:1–10. According to Daniel, the Antichrist has to overcome the power of three other rulers to be able to do what he wants to do and what Satan has planned for him to do (Dan. 7:24). The mention of his eyes suggests that he has remarkable knowledge and skill in planning his exploits. He will also be a man skilled in using words and able to promote himself so that people follow him (vv. 11, 25; Rev. 13:5–6). He will also blaspheme God and ultimately convince the unbelieving world that he is a god (2 Thess. 2:1–12). He will become the ruler of the world, and will control not only the economy and the religion, but also seek to change the times and the laws.

According to Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:5, his dictatorship will last for three and a half years, a significant period of time in the prophetic Scriptures. It's stated as "time, times and half a time" (Dan. 7:25 NIV; Rev. 12:14), "forty-two months" (11:2; 13:5) and "1,260 days" (11:3; 12:6). This period is half of seven years, another significant time span in prophecy. We shall learn from Daniel 9:24–27 that the Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jewish nation for seven years, but in the midst of that period will break the covenant and begin to persecute God's people.

The scenario seems to look like this. Antichrist will be leading one of ten confederated nations in Europe. He will overcome three other nations and, with the help of Satan, move into becoming a world dictator. At first he will appear to be friendly to the Jews and will sign a seven-year covenant to protect them (v. 27). The signing of that covenant is the signal for the start of the last seven years of Daniel's seventy weeks outlined in verses 24–27. This period is generally known as "the tribulation" and is described in Matthew 24:1–14; Mark 13:1–13; and Revelation 6–19.

After three and a half years, the Antichrist will break the covenant and set up his own image in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, forcing the world to worship him and the devil, who is energizing him. Using the language of Daniel, Jesus called this "the abomination of desolation" (Dan. 11:31; Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:1–4). This signals the last half of the tribulation, a period that is known as "the wrath of God" (Rev. 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; and see Matt.24:15–28; Mark 13:14–23). It will climax with the return of Jesus Christ to the earth and the defeat of Antichrist and his army (Matt. 24:29–44; Mark 13:24–27; Rev. 19:11–21). Jesus Christ will then establish His kingdom on earth (Dan. 7:13–14, 26–27; Rev. 20:1–6).

Daniel doesn't go into all the details that John shares in the book of Revelation, but he does assure us that the kingdom of Satan and his counterfeit Christ will be defeated and destroyed by Jesus Christ (Dan.7:22, 26; see 2 Thess. 1:7–2:10).

**War on the saints (vv. 21–23, 25).** The "saints" are mentioned in verses 18, 21–22, 25, and 27, and refer to the people of God living on the earth during the tribulation period. The apostle John makes it clear that there will be believing Jews and Gentiles on the earth during the seven years of the tribulation (Rev. 7).

If the church is raptured before the tribulation, then these will be Jews and Gentiles who believe on Jesus Christ after the church departs. If the church goes through either part or all of the tribulation, then they will be the "saints" mentioned by Daniel. In either case, some of them will die for their faith (14:9–13).

Three of the texts describe the saints as victorious over their enemies (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27), while two texts inform us that the Lord permits them to be defeated before their enemies (vv. 21, 25). The saints "receive" the kingdom (not "take" as in v. 18), "possess" the kingdom (v. 22), and the kingdom is "given" to them (v.27). All of this is the work of the Most High God. He permits Antichrist to rise to power and rule the world, and even allows him to make war on the saints and temporarily win the victory (v. 21). The phrase "wear out the saints" (v. 25) describes Antichrist's continual oppression of God's people and his blasphemous words against the Lord and His people.

John wrote the book of Revelation at a time when Rome was persecuting the church and trying to force Christians to worship the emperor. To confess "Jesus Christ is Lord" could mean imprisonment and even death. Both the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation brought encouragement and strength to the early church, just as they bring encouragement to suffering believers today.

### **The Kingdom of Christ (7:9–14, 27–28)**

Daniel has seen the rise and fall of five kingdoms: the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the kingdom of Satan headed by the Antichrist. But the most important kingdom of all is the kingdom that Christ shall establish on earth to the glory of God, the kingdom that Christians long for each time they pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). Two aspects of the kingdom are seen in Scripture: "The kingdom of God," which is the spiritual reign of Christ over all who belong

to Him (John 3:1–8; Col. 1:13) and the glorious kingdom on earth, prepared for God’s people (Matt. 16:28; 25:34; 26:29; Luke 22:29).

### **The heavenly throne of the Father (vv. 9–12).**

The thrones were put into place and not “cast down” as in the King James Version. This event takes place before the kingdom of Antichrist is destroyed, so it probably parallels Revelation 4–5, where John describes the throne room of God. “Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9, 13, 22) is a name for God that emphasizes His eternity; He is the God who had existed from eternity past, has planned all things, and is working out His plan. The description of God must not be taken literally, because God doesn’t have a body, wear clothes, or grow white hair. These things are symbolic of His nature and character: He is eternal, holy, and sovereign. In Revelation 1:12–20, these same characteristics are applied to Jesus Christ, thus proving that He is the eternal Son of God.

The vision of God’s throne parallels Ezekiel 1:15–21, 26–27. The fire speaks of His holiness and judgment against sin and the wheels symbolize His providential working in the world in ways we can’t understand. “Our God is a consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29; see Ps. 97:1–4). He is praised by a multitude of saints and angels (Deut. 33:2; Rev. 5:11) as the books are opened and the Lord prepares to judge evil on the earth. No matter what Satan and the Antichrist do on earth, God is still on the throne and He executes judgment.

### **The earthly throne of the Son of God (vv. 13–14, 27).**

“Son of Man” is a familiar title for our Lord Jesus Christ; it is used eighty-two times in the gospels, frequently by Jesus Himself. (See also Rev. 1:13; 14:14.) The phrase “clouds of heaven” reminds us of His promise to return in glory and reign on the earth (Matt. 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Rev. 1:7). The Son of Man is presented before the throne of the Father and given dominion over all nations, an everlasting dominion that will never pass away. This is the prelude to the stone being cut out of the mountain and coming down to destroy the kingdoms of the world (Dan. 2:34–35, 44–45), and it parallels Revelation 5:1–7. The Father promised the Son, “Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession” (Ps. 2:8 NKJV). Unlike the previous four kingdoms, and the kingdom of Antichrist, the kingdom of Jesus Christ can never be removed or destroyed. This is the kingdom that God had in mind when He told David that his throne would never end (2 Sam. 7:13, 16). He will share this kingdom with His people (Dan. 7:27) and they shall reign with Him (Rev. 5:10; 11:15; 20:4).

The kingdom covenant that God made with David (2 Sam. 7) will one day be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God’s promise that David’s seed would have a throne and a kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7:12–13) was certainly not fulfilled in Solomon or any of his successors, but it will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Luke 1:30–33, 68–79).

In Revelation 20:1–8, we are told six times that the kingdom will last for a thousand years, which is why it is called “the millennium,” which is Latin for “thousand years.” During that time, the Lord will fulfil the many kingdom promises made in the Old Testament Scriptures. Nature will be delivered from the bondage of sin and decay (Isa. 35; Rom. 8:18–25) and there will be peace in the world (Isa. 2:1–5; 9:1–7).

In this dramatic vision, Daniel had seen the vast sweep of history, beginning with the Babylonian kingdom and closing with the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.



