



Unit .16

Session .04

God's Promises Sustain His People

Scripture



Daniel 7:1-14

1 In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream with visions in his mind as he was lying in his bed. He wrote down the dream, and here is the summary of his account. **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. **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.

Intro Options



Main Point:
God is forming an eternal kingdom under the reign of Jesus.

Option 1

A TV studio has hired your youth group to help them make their next reality show: Make It Till You Take It. The show will feature people enduring difficult or frightful circumstances for a period of time, after which they will be rewarded. The show wants your group to propose the trials the contestants will endure as well as the prizes they will win. Split your students up into two groups: one to make up the tribulations, one to make up the prizes. Give them some time to make their lists, then have them share them. Talk about which ones you think would be best for the show.

The premise of this show is that people can endure lots of things if they have something great to hope for afterward. Christians endure the hostilities of this present age as many of the world's powers are against God. However, those powers are still under God's ultimate authority, just like the trials are under the power of the show's producers; likewise, God will reward us with a coming kingdom that will far outshine the difficulties of any present earthly kingdom.

Option 2

The United Nations has numerous scales they use to rate the world's countries: how happy the country's population is, how often the country commits human rights violations, how environmentally friendly the country is. Break your students into two or threes; each group is going to research, through their phones or some other means, a particular country of their choosing. Specifically, they are to report two conditions of the country:

How friendly or hostile the country is to Jesus and Christianity (1 is extremely hostile; 2 is super-friendly);

How much of a threat that country is to God's ultimate plan (1 is no threat at all; 10 is an unstoppable threat).

Have students report what they find. Chances are most of the countries will be against Jesus in some way; however, none of the countries should be a threat at all. Point out that this world's powers are almost always hostile to Jesus' authority, but they are all ultimately under His authority.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Daniel 7:1-8.



This chapter is filled with biblical prophecy. Here, we learn how the Messiah will eternally rule the nations and overcome the satanic influences we battle now. To convey God's message, Daniel shared his dream of four beasts, which each represented a nation or empire. This prediction, along with those that follow, was not chronological in nature (they did not follow the events described in chapter 6), but highlighted the previous visions of the prophet throughout his time in Babylon. The nations depicted are the same as those identified in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:31-45), with the beasts symbolizing Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. As before, God revealed that these empires warring against Him are temporary.


▪ What are some ways our society shows hostility toward God?

Under the umbrella of Rome, Daniel revealed that "little horn," which stands for an evil figure often referred to as the antichrist, will rise to power (Dan. 7:8; Rev. 13). Though scholars disagree over many of the details, most agree that the reign of the beast will lead to unparalleled evil in the world. By blaspheming God, this man of lawlessness will wreak havoc during a period of great tribulation (Matt. 24:21). In a second description of hell's beast, Daniel lamented that he seemingly overcomes the saints, wearing them down with his blasphemies and sweeping religious changes (Dan. 7:21,25).

▪ How can we overcome evil influences around us?

Read Daniel 7:9-12.



The magnificent vision of the Ancient of Days is the calming reassurance we need as we look to the future. This description of Yahweh contrasted the awful conduct and malicious intent of the antichrist. The Ancient of Days' white clothing pointed to His absolute purity while His white hair speaks of His eternity. The flaming throne He sat on, the blazing wheels beneath, and the river of fire that flowed from it communicated the swift judgment He intends to execute on the wicked. With the record books open, He will smite the nations who rebelled against Him. Before establishing His kingdom according to its full brilliance, He will rid the earth of the nations' wickedness forever. 

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 40, DDG)

God is Infinite

God's infinity means that there are no boundaries on His qualities and existence (Job 11:7-9; Ps. 147:5). For instance, God is infinite when it comes to space and time, meaning He is not confined by material space nor is He restricted by time since He is timeless (Ps. 90:1-2). God's infinity also extends to His knowledge of things as well as His power to do all things according to His will.

COMMENTARY


Main Point:
God is forming an
eternal kingdom under
the reign of Jesus.

Daniel 7

1-8. We should not assume, however, that the damage of these kingdoms is minimal because they are short-lived. To the contrary, since Adam and Even chose to disobey God, the serpent has masterfully fought to turn mankind against his Creator. Though a remnant of faith has always remained, the overwhelming population of history has lived and died in their sins as enemies of God's kingdom. Each empire mentioned (7:2-4) made a unique contribution to humanity's waywardness, with the ripples of Rome still making waves today. Keep in mind, however, that God allows these atrocities and that He remains in control of human history.

We rest knowing that these wicked kingdoms are temporary and that God will have the final word. Yet, we should not dismiss the great calamity that is coming—and that, indeed, has been here in some form since the days of the early church. The apostle Paul warned, "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction" (2 Thess. 2:3). In other words, things will get much worse before they get better. We should not presume, however, that these tragedies will not begin to unfold in our lifetimes and thus should give us no cause for concern. The mystery of lawlessness is already at work (2 Thess. 2:7) because the spirit of antichrist is already in the world (1 John 4:3), as the apostles stated even during the first century. The satanic characteristics that accelerate in anticipation of Christ's return are already at work.

In Defense (p. 42, DDG)



“‘One like a son of man’ has been interpreted in three primary ways—as an angel (Michael), a personification of the people of God (Israel), and the Messiah. The NT apostles (see John 12:34) and Christ Himself (Mark 14:61–62) confirm the latter view, specifically that the ‘son of man’ is Jesus of Nazareth. Early post-biblical Jewish literature (e.g., 1 Enoch 46:1; 48:10; 4 Ezra 13) also reflects the messianic view. That the ‘son of man’ of verse 13 was considered a divine personage is affirmed by the high priest’s charge of blasphemy (Mark 14:64) when Jesus identified Himself as the One ‘coming with the clouds of heaven’ (Mark 14:62). Jesus’ use of this title for Himself is one of the strongest evidences that He claimed to be the Messiah. ‘Son of man’ is especially common in eschatological passages (see, e.g., Matt. 16:27,28; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31), and the phrase ‘a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven’ is an allusion to the second advent of Christ, as Matthew 24:30 makes clear.”¹

TEACHING PLAN

▪ How should these prophecies motivate us to pray for and serve the nations?

Just when it appears that the antichrist will destroy God's people, he too will face the Ancient of Days (7:22). As the apostle John presented from his visions, the beast, along with the false prophet, will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone that will ultimately house all unbelievers throughout history (Rev. 19:20). Destroyed forever, these sinister enemies will no longer torment the children of God (Dan. 7:11,26). The entire satanic rebellion only exists for as long as God allows; the devil is bound according to whatever limits God set for him until the final crushing of his head (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 20:10).

▪ Why should the future overthrow of all evil be a constant expectation among God's people? How should we live until that happens?

Read Daniel 7:13-14.



These verses not only give us a glimpse into the culmination of Daniel's vision but also of redemptive history. Daniel described the Son of Man's eternal dominion over a vast kingdom and the glory that encompasses it, all of which commences with what the Bible refers to as a new heaven and new earth (Isa. 65:17-25; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). The nations will gather in God's presence, and kings will bow to His glory (Rev. 21:23-24). For the first time since the garden of Eden, creation will function as God intended. Even more importantly, the Lord will once again dwell among His people in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of Man.



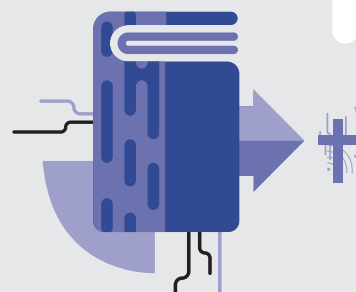
Jesus often referred to Himself as "the Son of Man" in the Gospels. But when He connected this identification to the "one like a son of man" (Dan. 7:13) who would come on the clouds of heaven in Daniel's vision, the high priest began to grasp the depth of Jesus' claim: not only was He a human, but He was the divine "Son of Man" (Matt. 26:63-65).

In Daniel 7, we see the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man as two distinct figures. But this didn't stop the apostle John from using a description of the Ancient of Days for the Son of Man in Revelation 1:13-14: hair like the whitest wool (Dan. 7:9). Because of His substitutionary atonement for sinners, Jesus Christ, the divine Son of Man, received from His Father the promised eternal kingdom of God along with a name above all other names (Dan. 7:13-14; Phil. 2:5-11).

▪ How does the future exaltation of Jesus enhance our worship of Him now?

(p. 41, DDG) Christ Connection

Daniel's vision depicted worldly kingdoms that were set against God and passing away. Daniel also saw the coming of the Son of man who would be given dominion over an everlasting kingdom of every people, nation, and language. Jesus is the Son of man, the King of kings, who purchased a people for God through His life, death, and resurrection.



COMMENTARY

Main Point:
**God is forming an
eternal kingdom under
the reign of Jesus.**

Daniel 7

9. The various interpretations of biblical prophecy can intimidate the most devoted Bible student. Admittedly, biblical scholars who accept the Scripture as God’s inerrant word sometimes disagree over important details regarding the arrival of the Lord’s kingdom. The universal consensus among evangelicals of every stripe, however, is that Jesus Christ will reign eternally over all creation. Regardless of what you might find difficult to understand, do not miss the essential heart that governs this and all prophecy. We win because our Savior has won.

10. Daniel’s prophecy is just as encouraging for contemporary believers as it was for ancient Jews trapped in exile far from their homeland. As our world becomes increasingly chaotic, it is comforting to know that the rampant lawlessness on the evening news, as well as the nonsensical heartache in our own neighborhoods, will one day come to an end. Evil doers will be punished and suffering will end when, at the pleasure of His Father, Christ assumes His place of leadership over the nations. Our world is broken, but it will not always be this way.

27. In addition to enjoying the dominion of our Savior, Daniel’s vision revealed that the greatness of every kingdom will be given to the saints (Dan. 7:27). Conversely, the Bible teaches that, as His joint-heirs, we will reign over creation with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 5:10; 22:5). Free from sin, we will care for the cosmos just as Adam tended to the garden of Eden. These wonderful promises assure us that the quality and duration of Christ’s kingdom will be unlike anything the world has ever known. With every knee bowing and every tongue confessing Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, we will finally enjoy our God as we were created to.

Activity

Your students are tasked with designing “The Soldier-Sojourner’s Field Guide in Enemy Territory” for heaven’s Department of Ministry. They are to design small little tracts that will be given to Christians for quick reference and assurance as they minister under earthly powers opposed to Jesus. The tracts might remind Christians that the nations are often against Jesus but always under His authority; they might offer consolation and exhortation based on Jesus’ present authority and coming kingdom; they might offer “emergency first aid” for “wounded” Christians or for non-believers who want to become Christians. Let them be as creative as they can in implementing Daniel’s message. The tracts should easily fit into someone’s pocket.

Let them make their tracts and share them. Point out what’s good and insightful; offer clarification or correction for areas that might warrant it.

Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What are some lessons we can learn from this account as it applies to Christians living in various parts of the world today?

Specifically, what type of posture should Christians have toward their government in light of this account?

Heart



How has this session challenged or corrected any beliefs you've had about the end times?

What do you most look forward to in Christ's everlasting kingdom?

Hands



What are some ways we can show Jesus our allegiance each day?

What are some tangible ways we can serve others in the Kingdom of God this week?

Main Point: God is forming an eternal kingdom under the reign of Jesus.



Head

We need to be mindful that the kingdoms of earth are passing away. And though it is tempting to anchor our hearts to whichever political group might be useful, it is important to remember that our real citizenship is not of this world. No matter who ruled the ancient world, God was busy behind the scenes building His kingdom. Likewise, regardless of who occupies political power today, the Lord is preparing a place for us to exercise dominion with Him. The moment Christ redeems us out of sin's bondage He guarantees us a place in His family and a role in the age to come.



Heart

Contrary to the fallen empires throughout history, the future kingdom of God will bring joy and blessing to all its inhabitants. While it is true that the kingdom is a present reality in the heart and life of every Christian, the contentment of living for Christ now is but a foretaste of the endless satisfaction that accompanies being with Him forever. As the nations experience healing in His presence (Rev. 22:2), He will wipe away all mourning, tears, and pain (Rev. 21:4). With the curse removed, God will make all things new (21:5).



Hands

Because Christ purchased us with His own blood, we offer Him our only allegiance. Doing so will sometimes require us to resist the ungodly systems and influences that are commonplace today. But always, we are to live for tomorrow as we anticipate a home to which we have never been. His future kingdom is just as certain as our past salvation. Until then, we must actively share our faith in order to make disciples of all people (Matt. 28:18-20). Believing that God will keep His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), we must pray for the nations so that more people will experience the hope that we enjoy.