

# DANIEL DECODED

## 1. THE FUTURE IN IMAX

### Daniel 7

What's the coolest IMAX movie you've ever seen? Or favorite "disaster" movie? Or "monster" movie you saw as a kid?

Can you remember any particular nightmare you might have had? Care to share with the group?

What is your feeling when you read "apocalyptic" literature like this? What do you find interesting or attractive? What do you find off-putting or frustrating?

What do you think of when you think of "the end of the world"? What scares you about it? What might be appealing about it?

*Daniel 7:1 (NIV84)*

*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a **dream**, and **visions** passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.*

Do you ever write your dreams down?

Have you ever had a "strong" dream that you did not understand? How did you feel about it? What thoughts went through your mind?

*Daniel 7:2 (NIV84)*

*Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the **four winds** of heaven **churning** up the **great sea.**"*

Why is this an apt depiction of the nations of the world?

*Daniel 7:3-6 (NIV84)*

*"**Four great beasts**, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. "The **first** was like a **lion**, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the **heart of a man** was given to it.*

*And there before me was a **second** beast, which looked like a **bear**. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'*

*After that, I looked, and there before me was **another** beast, one that looked like a **leopard**. And on its back it had **four wings** like those of a bird. This beast had **four heads**, and it was given authority to rule."*

Which one of these "beasts" so far is the most frightening for you? Puzzling?

*Daniel 7:7 (NIV84)*

*“After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a **fourth** beast — **terrifying** and **frightening** and **very powerful**. It had large **iron teeth**; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was **different** from all the former beasts, and it had **ten horns**.”*

What would you find horrifying about this?

*Daniel 7:8 (NIV84)*

*“While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was **another** horn, a **little** one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a **mouth** that **spoke boastfully**.”*

What questions does this part of the vision raise for you?

*Daniel 7:9 (NIV84)*

*“As I looked,  
thrones were set in place,  
and the **Ancient of Days** took his seat.  
His clothing was as white as snow;  
the hair of his head was white like wool.  
His **throne** was flaming with **fire**,  
and its wheels were all **ablaze**.”*

Compare and contrast this with what has come before. What is the most startling difference?

When you hear “Ancient of Days,” what picture comes to your mind? How does it alter or refine your idea of God?

*Daniel 7:10 (NIV84)*

*A **river of fire** was flowing,  
coming out from before him.  
Thousands upon thousands attended him;  
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.  
The **COURT** was seated,  
and the **books** were opened.*

What do you think is going on when the books are opened? What does that mean?

*Daniel 7:11 (NIV84)*

*“Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was **slain** and its body **destroyed** and thrown into the blazing **fire**.”*

How would you feel as you witnessed this?

*Daniel 7:13 (NIV84)*

*“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one **like** a son of man, coming with the **clouds of heaven**. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.”*

What would you think as this figure was led into the presence of the Ancient of Days?

*Daniel 7:14 (NIV84)*

*He was given **authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an **everlasting** dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.***

NOW what do you think of this “son of man” figure?

If you were in Daniel’s shoes, what questions would this raise for you?

*Daniel 7:15 (NIV84)*

*“I, Daniel, was **troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind **disturbed** me.***

What has been the most troubling thing about this vision so far?

How long would it take you to “shake off” a dream like this?

*Daniel 7:17 (NIV84)*

*The four great beasts are four **kingdoms** that will rise from the earth.*

Put yourself in Daniel’s shoes once again:

What are your feelings about living in Babylon and serving a foreign power?

What would you hope for after the exile?

How would feel when you learned that these horrifying beasts are kingdoms yet to come?

What do you think of the fact that there are four of them?!

*Daniel 7:18,27 (NIV84)*

*But the **saints** of the Most High will **receive** the kingdom and will **possess** it forever — yes, for ever and ever’...*

*Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be **handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.***

What do you think it means to “receive” and “possess” the kingdom?

What is the most fantastic thing you could imagine about living forever?

*Daniel 7:21 (NIV84)*

*As I watched, this horn was waging war **against** the saints and **defeating** them,*

How do you feel about the prospect of actual physical persecution and suffering for God? What does this verse teach us about such persecution?

Where do you see evidence of growing hostility towards Christians today?

**Daniel 7:28 (NIV84)**

***“This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”***

Why do you think Daniel kept the matter to himself?

What would you have done?

**Mark 14:60–62 (NIV84)**

***Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.***

***Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”***

***“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”***

How does Daniel’s vision make more sense out of this exchange at Jesus’ trial?

How do you think Jesus saw himself? What is different about this image and the picture of Jesus you have in your mind?

How does the fact that the one who comes on the clouds of heaven is “like” a son of man? How does the incarnation explain why he would be described that way?

What do you think of the fact that this was revealed 600 years before Jesus even lived?

Does it disappoint you to know that we are not going to be able to make the world a perfect place? Why/not?

Do you agree or disagree with the proposition that our country is experiencing an “ideological civil war” right now?

How would we feel if we knew that “life as we know it” is going to be followed by something even worse!?

How does this vision help answer the question: *Where is God?*

Does this vision make you feel any more courageous?

How does it encourage you?

What will you miss the least when this world comes under judgment and we inherit the Kingdom forever?