

## **Monsters, Inc.**

Daniel 7:1-14

June 18, 2021

*Purpose statement: God not only predicts the future, he controls it.*

**Attention Getter:** In the children’s movie *Monsters, Inc.* monsters that haunt children come to life and are friendly and protective. However, there remain some mean monsters that frighten children.

In today’s text Daniel has a dream of his own that involves strange beasts—monsters, if you will. There was one particularly frightening monster with ten horns that caught Daniel’s attention. He described this fourth monster as “terrifying and dreadful.”

**Introduction:** Daniel 7 is regarded by most scholars as the most important chapter in Daniel, if not in all the OT!<sup>1</sup> Chapter 7 is the hinge-pin of Daniel. Everything that came before is important to understanding it. And it is important to understanding everything that comes after it. Although written in apocalyptic genre (end-time prophetic literature) there’s no reason to fear studying it.

There are two dangerous extremes with apocalyptic Scripture. One danger is to ignore it and pretend like it doesn’t exist. The second danger is to attempt to come up with one’s own interpretation apart from the rest of Scripture. Today’s text will be considered in light of other Scripture and what we know to be historically true.

**Read: Daniel 7:1-8** “...and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong.” (Dan. 7:7a).

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<sup>1</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 191)

**Background:** Chapter 7 begins the prophetic half of Daniel. Chapters 1-6, while containing some prophecy, were basically historical in their content. **Chapter** 1 records the capture of Daniel when Jerusalem fell to Babylon and Daniel's training to stand in counsel to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the first Gentile world power. The rise of Babylon in 605 BC marked the beginning of the *Times of the Gentiles*.

**Chapter** 2 depicted Nebuchadnezzar disturbed by a dream and Daniel's interpretation of the dream. The dream was of an image of a man whose head was made of gold, its arms and chest of silver, its midsection of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet a mixture of iron and clay. Then, suddenly, a stone made without human hands smashed into its feet and destroyed the whole image.

Daniel interpreted the dream. The image represented successive human empires that will eventually be destroyed by a divine kingdom that will be an everlasting kingdom, depicted by the stone.

In **chapter** 3, Nebuchadnezzar created his own image, one made of all gold and commanded everyone to bow down to it. This was Nebuchadnezzar's attempt at controlling the future. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and survived the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar admitted that their God was able to *set aside* the king's command (3:28).

**Chapter** 4 found the proud king boasting about his accomplishments only to be humbled by God, as he was warned of in a dream. After seven years of insanity Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself and acknowledged the sovereignty of the *Most High God* over the affairs of man.

The demise of the Babylonian Empire is recorded in **chapter** 5. Nebuchadnezzar had passed from the scene and Belshazzar was left to rule things in Babylon. While the

Medo-Persian army was camped outside the city, Belshazzar threw a big party in the palace. During the party, he was sobered up by a mysterious hand that wrote an ambiguous message on the wall. An elderly administrator under Nebuchadnezzar was still around, his name was Daniel. Daniel was summoned and gave the interpretation of the handwriting: the Babylonian Empire was at an end; the Medes and the Persians were about to assume world dominance by defeating Babylon. That very night Babylon fell.

In **chapter 6**, we find Daniel still alive and well when Darius the Mede ruled in Babylon. Not only was Daniel alive and well, but he was also granted a high position in the Medo-Persian Empire and was going to be promoted when a couple of his peers tried to destroy him. Darius was tricked into signing a decree that ban prayer to any god for 30 days. Daniel was caught praying and fed to the lions, only to be delivered. Thus ends the historical section of Daniel.

The remainder of the book is prophetic. Daniel recounts four prophetic revelations in the remaining six chapters. Although these revelations overlap what came before they are in chronological sequence; chapter 7 was in the first year of Belshazzar; chapter 8 in the third year of Belshazzar; chapter 9 in the first year of Darius; and chapters 10-12 the third year of Cyrus.<sup>2</sup> Apparently the balance of the book is taken from Daniel's personal journal; as he changes to writing in the first person, with a couple side entries, **Dan. 7:1-2a** and **10:1-2**. The dream of chapter 7 came to Daniel between chapters 4 and 5. He dreamt of four unusual beasts.

## I. **The Four Beasts (7:1-8)**

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<sup>2</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 193)

Daniel's dream was not literal (there really weren't four weird beasts) but they represented what is literal. Also, recall that 2:4 through 7:28 was written in Aramaic, which indicates that this section was specifically written with a Gentile audience in mind. Chapter 7 concludes the section written in Aramaic and is directly linked to the five chapters that come before, especially the dream in chapter 2.

Belshazzar's first year as co-regent would have been around 553 BC.<sup>3</sup> Daniel, in his late sixties at the time,<sup>4</sup> had a dream he knew was significant, so he wrote down what he dreamt, **Dan. 7:1**.

In the dream, Daniel stood on the shore of the "*great sea*" thought to be the Mediterranean Sea when he saw the *four winds of heaven...stirring up the great sea, 7:2*. Later Daniel was told the *great sea* represented the earth (v.17). The Bible uses the term "sea" to refer to the **people** of the earth (Isa. 17:12-13; Rev. 17:15).

The *four winds of heaven* stirring up the sea represent the four directions of the compass and symbolize the universal and constant turmoil of mankind.

Daniel then saw four unusual creatures arise from the troubled sea of humanity, **7:3**. What do these represent? An angel later told Daniel that the four beasts represent four kings or **kingdoms**, **7:17**. We will see these are the same empires Nebuchadnezzar saw in chapter 2.

### **A. The Lion (7:4)**

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<sup>3</sup> (Showers, 1982, p. 74)

<sup>4</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 194)

The four beasts rose from the sea in succession. The first beast looked like a lion with wings, **7:4a**. The lion corresponds to the head of gold, it represents the **Babylonian** Empire. Winged lions were seen in relief throughout Babylon. When Daniel had this dream, Babylon was still the world power.

As a further description is given one cannot miss that this is none other than Nebuchadnezzar who had lost his mind, and after seven years had it restored, **7:4b**. Let's look back, **4:16, 34a**.

### **B. The Bear (7:5)**

The second beast from the sea of humanity Daniel saw was a bear, **7:5**. The bear represents the **Medo-Persian** Empire. It was raised up on one side because the Persians became the dominant power. The three ribs represent the nations subdued by the Medo-Persian Empire: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.

### **C. The Leopard (7:6)**

The third beast was an unusual leopard with four wings and four heads, **7:6**. The leopard represents the **Greek** Empire. A leopard with four wings indicates speed. Alexander the Great conquered the entire Medo-Persian Empire in ten years, finishing at the age of 32.<sup>5</sup> The four heads are the four generals of Alexander's army who took over after his untimely death.

### **D. The Indescribable Beast (7:7,8)**

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<sup>5</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 199)

The fourth, and final creature was indescribable and couldn't be compared to any beast Daniel was familiar with, **7:7**. The indescribable beast represents the **Roman** Empire. This fierce beast had iron teeth that crushed all the preceding beasts in its mouth and trampled all others under foot. It was the cruel Roman Empire that martyred Paul and Peter. It was this empire that burned Christians to light the streets of Rome under Nero. It was this empire that crucified our Lord.

Daniel's attention was drawn to the ten horns on the beast. As he considered them another horn sprang up, uprooting three of the horns, **7:8**. The Little Horn had **human** characteristics and spoke boastful and flattering words.

It must also be noted that there isn't a fifth kingdom, or a "Revived Roman Empire" as depicted in Nebuchadnezzar's image. Daniel didn't see a break between the first Roman Empire and its resurgence years later. Daniel's contemplation of this Little Horn was suddenly interrupted by a vision of God. The scene before him is immediately changed and a glorious throne room appears. The focus is on one called *the Ancient of Days*.

## II. **The Ancient of Days (7:9-12)**

Daniel saw an *elderly one* described as *the Ancient of Days* enter and sit on his throne, **Dan. 7:9a**. Daniel glimpsed the likeness of God. Only here is God referred to as the *Ancient of Days*. Only here is God the Father depicted in human form.<sup>6</sup> Consider the attributes, which are visually manifested to Daniel:

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<sup>6</sup> (Jeremiah, 1992, p. 140)

1. *Ancient of Days*—**eternal** God (Psalm 90:2; Revelation 1:8)
2. *White as snow/pure wool*—**holiness**, **purity** (Isaiah 6:3)
3. *His throne*—**sovereignty** (Isaiah 6:1)
4. *Fiery flames*—**judgment** (Psalm 97:3)

Let's read, **7:9**. Fire is mentioned again in the next verse, once again it indicates judgment. A multitude gathered, court is called into session, and *books were opened*, **7:10**.

The “books” were opened. The books represent God’s memory and his witness of human deeds. God has many books where important things and events are recorded: such as the tears of the saints (Psalm 56:8), those who honored the Lord (Malachi 3:16), and the Book of Life (Revelation 20:15). The books of Daniel’s dream recorded the deeds of the beasts that arose from the sea.

Daniel must have been taken back by what the Little Horn said as he stood before the *Ancient of Days*, **7:11a**. Daniel continued to look until the kingdom of the Little Horn was destroyed and cast into eternal torment, **7:11b**.

The other kingdoms were allowed to remain, for a time, **7:12**. Suddenly, another scene appeared. Now front and center is one referred to as *a son of man*.

### III. **The Son of Man** (7:13-14)

It's important for us to approach this text from Daniel's perspective. Recall this chapter was written with a Gentile audience in mind and provides God's perspective of human government. Four major human empires will rule the earth. At the time of the dream, Daniel was living in the final years

of the first empire. Three more would come; they would come in succession, one after the other. The reign of the last empire is interrupted by judgment from above and destroyed.

The next two verses describe what happens after the last human kingdom is destroyed. In the second scene, Daniel sees someone described as “*a son of man*” presented before the *Ancient of Days*, **Dan. 7:13**.

There are two important things to consider from this verse. First, coming “*with the clouds of heaven*” indicates **deity**. In the OT God is often associated with clouds. Second, the description “*like a son of man*” indicates **humanity**.

The question we must answer is “Who is this *son of man*?” Speculations include that it was Michael, the archangel.<sup>7</sup> But why the allusion to a human being? Another speculation is that this *son of man* represents the Jewish people. Why then didn’t Daniel write *the son of Jacob/Israel*?<sup>8</sup>

The next verse eliminates either of these possibilities; notice the language, **7:14**. The Aramaic word translated *serve* means “to serve, worship, revere, minister for, pay reverence to.”<sup>9</sup> Worship is reserved for God, not angels or people. Who then is this *son of man* to whom is given dominion and an everlasting kingdom?

Remember Jews were looking for their promised Messiah, the Anointed one who would assume David’s throne in Jerusalem. By NT times the term *son of man* was being used as a synonym for Messiah or Christ (Jn. 12:34).

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<sup>7</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 207)

<sup>8</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 208)

<sup>9</sup> (Blue Letter Bible)

Jesus took this title for himself and commonly referred to himself as the Son of Man. In fact, at his trial the high priest understood what Jesus meant when he referred to himself as the Son of Man, **Mark 14:61-64**.

**Conclusion:** From Daniel's perspective he didn't realize the full identity of the one called *the Son of Man*. From our perspective there's no doubt the *Son of Man* is **Jesus**, God the Son. His kingdom is the stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. So, from this dream we can easily see human history unfold. There will be four human world empires, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Three have come and gone. Rome rose, but will rise again only to be destroyed and replaced by an everlasting divine kingdom. Chapter 7 provides a brief overview; next we'll begin looking at the details—**SALVATION!**