

Taming The Monsters Daniel 7:1-28

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Are monsters real? As adults, we have monsters that threaten us like Cancer, Alzheimer's, Being alone.

Then there are monsters that threaten our families like Drugs, Mental illness, Disastrous choices.

There are also monsters that loom in the darkness of our world like the economy, political unrest, moral breakdown, and cultural rot.

Sometimes, in the middle of the night, these "monsters" surface in our dreams or persistent thoughts causing peaceful sleep to elude us.

Remember that little song about Daniel, "*Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone, dare to have a purpose firm, dare to make it known.*"

Well, Daniel demonstrated courage, faith, and trust in God which was not easy since he lived in a very complex world, where only God could rescue him and where only God could make sense of life.

But, like us today, monsters lurked. Below the surface of his calm demeanor, Daniel had strange and troubling dreams and visions.

In fact, the last six chapters of the book of Daniel describe these strange and often puzzling visions.

So, open your Bibles to chapter 7 and let's begin our adventure through Daniel's visions.

And, as we look at these first few verses, we find that it's a flashback to a time before the lion's den, even before the writing on the wall.

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Daniel 7:1-8, *“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. Daniel said: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. 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 human being, and the mind of a human 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. “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. “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 human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.*

These verses are not only frightening for Daniel, but here we see a correlation with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2.

Only Daniel doesn’t see world-governing empires as a statue of a man, but as beasts. What a nightmare! Yet the beasts are not all Daniel sees.

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Daniel sees “The Ancient of Days” and He’s more scary than the beasts, which is a good thing!

In fact, here the book of Daniel and Revelation are running side-by-side in parallel visions.

Daniel 7:9-12, “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. 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. “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. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

God’s throne was flaming with fire and blazing wheels, with a river of fire flowing out from the throne.

Then, surrounding His throne, stood a thousand-thousand or a million attendants ministering to Him and when they sat, books were opened. Are they books of judgment?

But the “little horn,” the outcropping of the fourth beast, is not awed by the Ancient of Days, since he continues to boast of his own power. Finally, the fourth beast is slain, and his body is thrown into the fire.

God handles monsters!

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But then, Daniel receives a beautiful insight into these things. He sees the son of man coming with clouds of heaven.

Coming to the Ancient of days and receiving the authority, the dominion, the glory, the kingdom, and all the world to rule.

Daniel 7:13-14, *“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. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”*

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What you need to understand is that dreams often reveal thoughts below the surface of our conscious mind.

Daniel had many reasons to see the world as a place of beasts, but he knew that God handles monsters!

English writer G.K. Chesterton said, *“Fairytale don’t teach children that monsters exist. They already know that monsters exist. Fairy tales teach children that monsters can be killed.”*

Daniel’s dream serves a similar function. Adults need to know that monsters can be killed!

Regardless that Daniel knew God was in control, when he awoke from his dream in verse 15, he was concerned.

Daniel 7:15, *“I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.”*

So, why was Daniel troubled? For one thing, Daniel had a vision of God and it frightened him. Why?

Well, when Isaiah saw a vision of God, he said, *“Woe to me!... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”* (Isaiah 6:5)

When Ezekiel saw a vision of God, he fell flat on his face, and then sat in silence for 7 days, overwhelmed.

Another reason Daniel was troubled was that he realized he was stuck somewhere in the middle of his dream.

Yes, God’s on His throne in heaven, but on the earth, beasts still roamed. So, Daniel wanted to know, as we want to know, what’s God’s plan for taming these monsters?

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Daniel 7:16-18, *“I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this. “So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ‘The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.’”*

Troubled and disturbed, Daniel finds himself within his own vision as one of the characters.

Now, just as there were 4 kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2, there are 4 kingdoms in Daniel’s dream.

For centuries, people have tried to determine which 4 kingdoms are represented in Daniel’s dream. Some scholars identify them as Babylon, Medea, Persia, and Greece.

If that’s the case, the “little horn” in Daniel’s dream would be the Greek ruler in Palestine, Antioches Epiphanes.

Antioches caused the most havoc among the Jews from 167-164 B.C., which fits with the time frame found in verse 25, “*a time, times, and half a time*” or a year, 2 years, and half a year, about 3 and a half years,

Antioches profaned the temple by sacrificing an unclean animal on its alter and waged war against the Jews.

Finally, the Jews, led by Judas Maccabeus, revolted and defeated him. This victory is still celebrated by Jews today. It’s called Hanukkah.

Other scholars have a different interpretation of the 4 kingdoms. They identify the 4 kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

In 70 A.D., the Romans leveled the temple, but eventually the “*saints of the Most High*,” Christians, “*possessed the kingdom*,” becoming the dominant religion in the Roman Empire.

But Daniel was more concerned about that fourth beast. The one with all those horns.

Daniel 7:19-25, “*Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. “He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it.*”

The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.”

Many identify “*the little horn*” as the Antichrist. The one who’ll wage war against the saints until the Ancient of Days gives them victory.

Another way to look at the dream is to not try to identify “*the little horn*” or “*antichrist*” as a specific historical figure.

1 John 2:18-22 says, “*Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come...Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son.*”

By that definition, there have been many antichrists in history and probably there’re some in our world today. Whatever the interpretation, the final outcome is clear. God wins!

Daniel 7:26-27, “*The court will sit, and the power [of the king who oppresses the saints] will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.*”

The saints, “*the holy people of the Most High,*” rule! God’s kingdom will be everlasting, and “*the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High.*”

God wins and the saints win! Daniel's vision ends on that note. I wonder how he felt about all that? Did he shout "Hallelujah" and rush out to tell his friends to take heart?

No, his reaction was quite different. Daniel 7:28, *"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."*

Daniel was troubled because he couldn't make sense of it all. God had a plan, yes. The saints would win in the end, yes. But the saints must still suffer, in war and oppression, at the hands of the beasts.

Do you get what he was feeling? God wins in the end, but can we believe that when our monsters are not just under the bed, but at the hospital, in the office, in the government, and on the streets?

How can we be strong and courageous when the monsters of our world loom so large?

Yet, Daniel found strength in his dreams and visions of God on the throne of heaven and his glimpses of God's plan in history.

Daniel had a miraculous experience of God's power in interpreting dreams and seeing them fulfilled. And then there was the lion's den, where the monsters were real lions and God shut their mouths.

We might wish for experiences like Daniel's to strengthen our faith. But, we have a greater understanding of God's plan and power than Daniel!

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Listen again to Daniel 7:13-14.

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

Who is this mysterious "one like a son of man?" Daniel doesn't have a clue since, when the meaning of his dream was explained, the meaning of that figure wasn't.

"Son of man," or in the Hebrew "son of a mortal," could simply mean "human being." When God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, He addressed him repeatedly as "son of man."

In fact, in Daniel 8, God also addressed Daniel that way. But this "son of man" is different. He came on the clouds of heaven to reign forever.

Hundreds of years after Daniel, there was someone who came from heaven, becoming "like a son of a mortal." Jesus was a human being Who often referred to Himself as "the son of man."

Yet those who heard Him didn't understand what He meant, but Jesus viewed Himself as the fulfillment of Daniel's vision.

An example of this was when a paralyzed man lay before Him and Jesus declared that his sins were forgiven.

When the teachers of the law objected that only God had the authority to forgive sins, Jesus said, "I want you to know that **THE SON OF MAN** has authority on earth to forgive sins." (Matthew 9:6)

He then healed the paralyzed man, to prove his authority. When the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath, Jesus said, "...**THE SON OF MAN** is Lord of the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:8)

When Jesus spoke of His coming in glory, He said in Matthew 16:27, *“THE SON OF MAN is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.”*

The Son of God didn’t stay safely in heaven, to swoop down at the end of all things, kill all the monsters, and receive His authority, glory, and power as King.

No, He came to earth *“like a son of man,”* where the powers of evil were strong. He became like us, representing us as He faced the monsters of life head-on.

Hebrews 2:14 says, *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil...”*

Monsters are a part of life on earth and Jesus faced them on our behalf.

Matthew 17:22-23 tells us, *“When Jesus and the disciples came together in Galilee, he said to them, ‘The SON OF MAN is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.’ And the disciples were filled with grief.”*

No one understood why the Son of Man had to die, and then be raised to life.

It was only after His death and resurrection that the disciples understood what Jesus did as a human, a mortal man. Jesus joined humanity in death, to handle the last monster—death itself.

Paul said of Christ in Colossians 2:15, *“Having disarmed the powers and authorities [the monsters!], he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”*

What happened then? Ephesians 1:20-22 says, “[God] raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church...”

In Daniel’s vision, authority, glory, and power were given to “one like a son of man.”

Then, in the interpretation, the sovereignty, power, and greatness were given to all the saints! The “one like a son of man” represented all God’s holy people.

Ephesians says the same thing: Christ receives all authority, power and dominion, “to be head over everything for the church.”

Why was Jesus born as a man, suffering and dying, rising and ascending? He was our representative, our “monster-handler!”

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Conclusion

Daniel had amazing faith, the kind of faith that faced kings and lions with confidence. So, how do we face the monsters in our world?

We might think that if we had visions like he did, we could be as strong and courageous as he was. Yet we have a greater vision.

When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was being stoned, Acts 7:55-56 tells us, “Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the SON OF MAN standing at the right hand of God.’”

The Son of Man, our representative, took on the monsters we fear most, even death.

He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where He reigns forever in glory and power. Through Him, Daniel's ultimate hope was assured.

Daniel 7:26-27, "The power [of the evil ruler] will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him."

If that's true, we can be like Daniel, who faced lions with courage and strength.

In fact, we can overcome any monster we face, in the power of the Son of Man, Who lives and reigns forever.