

Daniel 7 Monsters and Heroes

Prayer:

Sermon introduction:

In the movie *Avengers: Infinity War* there are two groups...

There are monsters and there are heroes.

Who are the monsters? Thanos and his evil children. Thanos was born on Saturn's moon Titan. He possesses incredible power and he is very evil (show image).

Who are the heroes? Ironman, the hulk, Doctor Strange, Spider man, Thor, the Guardians of the galaxy, the black panther, the black widow, Falcon, Scarlet Witch, War Machine, and others...

What are the monsters after? The most powerful objects in the universe. The six infinity stones. Once the monsters have all six, they will possess incredible power. Power to rule the universe. Thanos will stop at nothing to get the final stone. Even if that means destroying half of the universe, literally...

The battle over the infinity stones puts the existence of planet earth in Jeopardy.

Who will win this cosmic battle???

This brings us to Daniel chapter 7. This chapter reminds us that there is a cosmic battle taking place in the universe.

Like any cosmic battle there are good guys and bad guys, monsters and heroes.

Daniel 7 was written to remind the exiles in Babylon that the heroes will prevail over the monsters in the end.

We too can take great comfort knowing that someday God will destroy every monster in the universe and after that he will give us the kingdom!

To help us understand the cosmic battle in Daniel 7 we will look at two groups...

The monsters

The heroes

First, the monsters!

Our passage describes four monsters! (1-8)

Daniel 7:1-2 (ESV) — 1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.

It is 550 BC. Daniel has been in Babylon for roughly 50 years. This dream takes place before the events of chapter six.

2 Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

Daniel has a vision. In his vision he sees a mighty wind stirring up the sea. In the Old Testament the sea symbolized chaos, disorder, and rebellion against God (Job 38:8-10, Ps. 89:9, 93:3-4, 104:6-7).

3 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. **4** The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. **5** And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' **6** After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. **7** After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. **8** I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Daniel sees four unnatural beasts or monsters rising from the raging sea.

The first beast is a Lion with eagle's wings. It is given the mind of a man (4). This was an unclean mixture of an animal and a bird.

The second beast is a bear lying on one side with three ribs sticking out of his mouth. It is told to arise and devour much flesh (5). His mouth is full of his victim's flesh, but he wants more, he is not satisfied.

The third beast is a leopard with four wings and four heads. Meaning it was very fast, fierce, and able to see in all four directions. According to verse 6 it was given dominion.

The fourth beast is the most terrifying of them all. So terrifying that it cannot be compared to any human animal. This monster is different from the rest. His great strength is symbolized by the ten horns. He has incredibly sharp teeth. He crushes all of his enemies under his clawed feet.

Then a little horn emerges from the ten horns on his head. This little horn has eyes and a mouth like a man and he spoke great things... (7-8)

Show artists renditions of the beasts.

One scholar writes,

"Here in Daniel's vision the stirred-up sea is producing horrific creatures, one after the other-four in all, each one more frightening than the one that came before it. These enormous, composite, misshapen animals were like nothing you have ever encountered in your worst nightmares." (Duguid, 109)

The same author says these are not PG-13 monsters (crocodiles, grizzly bears, or T- Rexes). These are rated R monsters (vampires, zombies, and aliens). They are rated R because they are so unnatural and fierce.

If you were at the zoo you would not want to fall into the cages of these animals.

You can see why Daniel was so terrified...

Daniel 7:15 (ESV) – 15 "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me.

Daniel 7:28 (ESV) – 28 “Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”

How should we understand these monsters?

The bible utilizes different types of literature to communicate truth (history, poetry, gospels, prophecy, letters, etc...)

Daniel 1-6 is history, but Daniel 7-12 is apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature is highly symbolic. It is meant to be seen and not merely read. It is truth in pictures. In these pictures the curtain that hides God’s cosmic ways is momentarily pulled back.

The key to apocalyptic literature is to read it like it is apocalyptic literature. In other words, we need to remember that these monsters are symbolic of deeper realities.

So, who or what do these monsters symbolize? This brings us back to our passage...

Not only does our passage describes four monsters....

Our passage identifies four monsters! (15-27)

In verses 15-27 an angel explains the vision of verses 1-8 to Daniel...

Daniel 7:15–17 (ESV) – 15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. **16** I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. **17** These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth....

According to verse 17 the four beasts represent four kings or kingdoms, but he does not tell him which ones.

Most scholars think the kingdoms of Daniel 7 are the same kingdoms represented in Daniel 2. The first beast represents Babylon (605-539BC), the second beast represents the Medo-Persian empire (539-331 BC), the third beast represents Greece (331-63BC). The fourth beast probably represents Rome.

Show chart comparing beasts to kingdoms...

There are many reasons to think this. I don’t have time to go into the reasons here. Look them up in a study bible. Fortunately identifying the right kingdoms is not critical for identifying the main point of this passage.

There are four beasts. The number four probably symbolizes completeness. The number four is used again and again in apocalyptic literature to represent fullness. In other words, these four beasts represent all the kingdoms of the world (see footnote 8 on page 111 of Duguid).

In verse 19, Daniel wants to know more about the identity of the fourth beast.

Daniel 7:19–21 (ESV) – 19 “Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, **20** and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. **21** As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,

Again, there are good reasons to think the fourth beast is Rome. Rome was like a beast in many ways...

One Scholar writes, "Rome showed itself to be the first truly universal empire of antiquity. Rome was characterized by its conquering and crushing power and by its ability to consolidate the territories which it seized." (ESVEC, 95)

What about the little horn???

Daniel 7:24–25 (ESV) – 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. **25** He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Ten horns came up out of the monster, representing ten kings. The ten kings may refer to ten specific emperors or they may symbolize a string of emperors over a long period of time since ten was the number of fullness.

Out of these ten horns one horn arose and made war on the saints.

Who is this horn? Oceans of ink have been spilled answering this question.

But... I would like to point out that the Angel interpreting the vision for Daniel did not think Daniel needed to know the name of this leader. If we needed to know the name of this leader to apply this story the angel would have given it to us. Some think it was Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the Roman Emperors, one of the Popes, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, etc...

More than likely the little horn was an anti-Christ...

But according to 1 John there have been many antichrists.

1 John 2:18 (ESV) – 18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

See also 1 John 2:22, 4:3, 2 John 7, 2 Thes. 2:3

Was this *the* antichrist? We don't know... possibly.

The point of Daniel 7 is to remind us that God wins in the end. Many anti-Christ's will come and go. *The* Anti-Christ will come and go. The good news in Daniel 7 is that the little horn's time is limited.

Daniel 7:25 (ESV) – 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Some think that "time, times, and half a time" refers to the great tribulation at the end of the age and will last for approximately 3.5 years. This is possible but unlikely based on how apocalyptic literature uses numbers. Others think that this time period refers to the entire church age. This is possible as well.

It really does not matter...

Illustration:

"Sunday, May 22, 2011 was a day Harold Camping didn't expect to see. Despite being 89 years-old, Camping was remarkably healthy for his age. Still, he believed that the previous day, May 21st, was going to be his last day on Earth.

His rationale was simple: the Rapture was coming and he knew the exact day and time, thanks, in part, to a "mathematical formula" he applied to the dates of Biblical events.

May 21st came and, to his dismay, he and 200 million Christians were not teleported to Heaven.

Such an event would crush one's belief system. It may even force the would-be prophet to reassess his ability to predict the future. However, after more than fifty years of preaching, teaching, and prophesying on matters of the End Times, Camping still believed he could predict the end of the world." (owlocation.com)

Show billboards...

Camping was convinced he understood the details of passages like Daniel 7... he missed the forest for the trees.

Please don't miss the forest for the trees by trying to figure out who the little horn is or how long he will wreak havoc on the saints. This is not the point...

Back to our story in Daniel 7. Daniel sees these ferocious beasts and he is terrified.

Application:

The world is run by monsters, each one fiercer than the next...

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Alexander the Great, Nero, Hitler, Mao, Stalin, Kim Jung III, Pol Pot, etc..

When we see what monsters are doing to Christians around the world, it is terrifying.

One commentator writes,

"As I was writing this chapter, the radio reported that some two hundred unarmed Christians were slaughtered near Jos, Nigeria. Many of them were women and children. Even a four-day-old baby. Ruthlessly cut down with machetes. They are only a small number of the many Christians who are massacred around the world. It has been estimated that since 1990 an average of 160,000 Christians have been killed every year." (Greidanus, 233)

There will be monsters until Christ returns since the great monster is behind all the other monsters.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) — 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Is there any hope for us? Who will rescue us from the monsters in the cosmic battle for the universe? This brings us to the second point.

First, the monsters...

Second, the heroes

Our text describes two heroes.

Who is the first hero? The ancient of days!

Daniel 7:9–10 (ESV) — 9 “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. **10** A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

This is a glorious description of God the Father.

He is given the title “Ancient of Days” which refers to his eternity...

He is seated, which means that he is resting after defeating the forces of darkness.

His clothing and hair are as white as snow, symbolizing supreme purity, holiness, and wisdom.

His throne is on wheels of fire probably highlighting his omnipresence.

The stream of fire that came from His throne symbolizes judgment.

Psalms 50:3–4 (ESV) — 3 Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest. **4** He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

He was surrounded by thousands and thousands of angels... too many to count.

As he sits in his throne of judgment the books are opened. The Books are the record of all the deeds done by every human in the history of the world.

Here is the summary... The Ancient of Days is supreme in wisdom, power, and insight. Therefore, he is the perfect judge of the universe.

Who is the first hero? The Ancient of days.

But **Why is he a hero? He destroys monsters!**

Daniel 7:11 (ESV) — 11 “I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.

The antichrist is saying something, probably blasphemy. This does not last for long. God the Father kills him on the spot and then destroys his body with fire. That’s that...

The same event is described in verses 21-22.

Application:

There is a day coming when the Ancient of days will judge all of his enemies with perfect justice.

To be clear this is not a fair fight... God and Satan are not equals. The monsters have no chance.

God will destroy every monster in the universe.

He will destroy evil rulers.

He will destroy evil governments.

He will also destroy all systemic evil (the sex trade, rampant poverty, racism, slavery, drug trafficking, and the like).

Many of these monsters have faces. They are the persecutors of the faithful in the Sudan, China, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea. They are the evil terrorists who fly planes packed with explosives into buildings, blow up train stations, and send women in children into public places with bombs strapped to their bodies.

God will judge all evil monsters.

This may not seem like good news to us. But I guarantee you that it is good news to Christian boy in the Sudan whose Dad was butchered before his eyes while his mom and sisters were rapped and then stuffed into the back of a truck.

I thought we were supposed to love our enemies. We are... We must pray for them to repent of their sins and follow Jesus. But if they don't, they will be judged, and this brings comfort to the saints.

We all want justice, don't we? Just not for ourselves.

Most importantly God will destroy the great monster, the beast behind all the beasts. He will destroy the devil himself.

Revelation 20:10 (ESV) — 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

If you are not a Christian, you are an enemy of god and God will judge you on that great and awful day. The standard of righteousness will be his own son.

Are you ready for that day?

The first hero is the Ancient of Days!

Who is the second hero? The son of man!

Daniel 7:13 (ESV) — 13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

The identity of this figure probably confused Daniel at first. Why?

In the OT the only being who rode on the clouds was God. (Psa. 68:4, 18:11-14, Isa. 19:1, Ezek 32:7-8, Joel 2:1-2, etc...). Furthermore, when this being arrives in the heavenly throne room of the Ancient of Days the angels bow down and worship him. This being is clearly God, yet he is called the son of man.

He was god and he was man... how do we reconcile this?

This describes Jesus perfectly. He was fully God and fully man. He was divine yet human and he had to be both to save us.

The title "son of man" was Jesus favorite self-designation. When he used this title for himself, which he did often, he was clearly claiming to be God, which got him in trouble (Mark 14).

Who is the second hero? The son of Man.

Why is he a hero? He will reign forever!!!

Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV) – 13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. **14** And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

The son of man comes on the clouds into the heavenly throne room. When he appears before the ancient of days, he is given a kingdom.

Verse 14 tells us a little bit about the kingdom he receives...

It is a glorious kingdom (14a)

It is a universal kingdom (14b) composed of every nation and language...

It is an eternal kingdom (14c) it will last forever....

King N came and went.

King B came and went.

Alexander the great came and went.

Many Roman Emperors have come and gone...

Genghis Khan, Stalin, and Hitler have come and gone... but this kingdom will last forever.

This kingdom is the stone in chapter 2 that struck down the mighty statue and will fill the whole earth.

Application:

When was Jesus given this kingdom?

In other words, when did Daniel 7:14 happen. I think it was right after the ascension...

Jesus died, rose again and ascended to the father...

But just before his ascension he said to the disciples...

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matt. 28:18-20)

Then he ascends in the clouds before the eyes of the disciples and appears before the ancient of days. Then the ancient of days bestows on him the kingdom. Why? Because he suffered and died to purchase subjects from every tribe, tongue, and nation. He earned the right to rule through his life, death, and resurrection from the dead.

Right after the ascension notice what happens in Acts 2... Peter says...

Acts 2:33-36 (ESV) – 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. **34** For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, **35** until I make your enemies your footstool." ' **36** Let all

the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Jesus is the king of kings and lord of lords. Sitting at the father’s right hand he pours out the holy spirit in order to establish his kingdom on earth through the proclamation of God’s word. Nothing can stop this from happening..

You and I get to be a part of this glorious kingdom.

How long will we reign with him? Forever and ever...

Daniel 7:27 (ESV) – 27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.’

See also verse 18, 22...

The kingdom of God was inaugurated by King Jesus, but it will not be consummated until he returns.

When king Jesus returns, he will usher in his perfected kingdom. That kingdom will be absent of all monsters.

It will be a glorious kingdom.

Romans 14:17 (ESV) – 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

If you know king Jesus you will reign with him forever. The hope of his eternal kingdom fuels our perseverance now.

There is a day coming when there will be no more tears, no more sadness, no more pain, no more persecution, no more cancer, no more poverty, no more pornography, no more infidelity, no more lying, no more war, no more loneliness, heart disease, no more monsters...

All we will know in the eternal kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy spirit.

Don’t you want to be a part of that kingdom? You can be if you bow your knee to king Jesus today.

Conclusion:

In this world there are monsters... But there are also heroes.

The ancient of days will judge the monsters.
The son of man will usher in his eternal kingdom.

Lets pray...