

The Son of Man

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Daniel chapter 7, and we'll pick up our reading in verse 13 and read to the end of the chapter. The vision of Daniel.

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

I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things.

[1:02] The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the most high will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever. Yes, forever and ever.

Then I wanted to know the true 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. 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 saints and defeating them.

Until the ancient of days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the most high.

And the time came when they possessed the kingdom. He gave me this explanation.

[2:08] 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 saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

But the court will sit and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. 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. 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.

[3:23] The freshman at Bremen High School just read *The Lord of the Flies*. It's been a number of years since I've read it, but it's an absolutely fascinating story of the breakdown of society and the horror of sin.

In the story, a plane crashes on a deserted island and all the adults are killed and only a small group of teenage boys survive.

And in the beginning, there is order. They decide on a leader. They build a fire and they're going to build shelters and they're going to wait it out. At all costs, they're going to keep this fire going because if there's a fire burning, perhaps a ship will come by and see the fire and rescue the boys. But as time goes on, things begin to break down. The little society that they have breaks down. And by the end, the boys are in two tribes and one is trying to keep the fire going.

And the other has given over to the idea of the promise of hunting and fun and freedom. Along the way, several boys are murdered or die in an accident, one of them.

[4:43] And as the story comes to an end, Ralph, the original leader of the boys who are trying to keep the fire burning, is the only one left who wants to be rescued. Everyone else is either gone, dead, or in this other tribe.

And so the other boys chase him through the jungle, trying to murder him. And as they pursue him, the whole island catches on fire. And that fire attracts the notice, the attention of a naval vessel. A naval boat lands, a British officer gets out, and suddenly everything is over. Ralph is saved, and the whole horrible experience is over.

Now, in some senses, that is what Daniel 7 is like. It tells the story of the breakdown of human cultures. Because the kingdoms that we see, they progressively get worse and worse until this fourth beast arrives.

And then the fourth beast power deteriorates until there's this one man, this little horn, who is the epitome of all evil, and he pursues the saints to the ends of the earth.

[5:52] The whole earth is caught up in this fire of rebellion. And just as things are about at their worst, they cannot get any worse, the Ancient of Days comes into the picture.

He comes into the story, and the beast is killed. The little horn is destroyed. And the whole horrible experience is over. Now, last week, we talked about the identities of these four beasts.

At least, I proposed for what I think are the identities of these four beasts and the little horn. And we don't want to go through that at great length today. But I do want to remind you of what we've seen so far.

In his vision, Daniel saw the sea tossing and turning. It's churning. And remember, the sea is the symbol for chaos and humanity and rebellion against God.

And out of this churning sea of humanity comes these four beasts. And each one corresponds to a different historical kingdom.

[6:55] The first beast is Babylon. And then the Medo-Persian Empire, Greece. And then finally, Rome. And then we saw the little horn and how he's the Antichrist.

And how when things are most bleak, when things are at their absolute worst, the Ancient of Days takes his seat. And he begins to judge. Now, this evening, I want to focus on one last character.

Remember, in Daniel 7, it's the Son of Man. The Son of Man. And after we look at him, I want to look at three lessons that we should learn from the entire chapter. And so, the Son of Man.

Look at your Bibles at verse 13. Daniel 7, verse 13. We're introduced. Just as abruptly as the Ancient of Days is introduced, so the Son of Man comes onto the scene.

In my vision at night, I looked. And there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. And he approached the Ancient of Days, and was led into his presence.

[7:59] And he was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. And all peoples, nations, and men of every language worshipped him. And his dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away.

And his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. So, what can we say about this character, the Son of Man? Or one like a Son of Man?

Well, first of all, he certainly is a divine figure. He's a divine figure. In other words, he's God. He is God. Now, the Ancient of Days is clearly God.

That's obvious. But then, there's this other character, like a Son of Man, but who has these divine characteristics. He comes with the clouds of heaven.

And if you're an Israelite, if you're in tune with the Old Testament and how God portrays himself, this is a clear sign that he is God.

[9:00] So, go back in your mind to the book of Exodus. Now, who or what led Israel out of Egypt and led them through the desert?

Well, it was a cloud. It was a cloud. It was a very special cloud. A cloud by day and a fire by night. And Yahweh himself was in the cloud. And then we come to Mount Sinai.

And remember, the Lord came down in a very thick cloud. He came in great power. And a thick cloud hovered over the mountain. And there was fire.

And there was smoke. And this thick cloud comes down upon the mountain. And the mountain quakes. And the people tremble. Because God is there. So, we fast forward to Solomon's day.

And Solomon is dedicating the temple. And he prays. And after he prays, a cloud fills the temple. The Lord came to his people on the clouds of heaven.

[10:04] In the book of Ezekiel, which is written approximately the same time as Daniel, Ezekiel sees the Lord and he's riding on the clouds of heaven.

Or when we can think about Jesus and the Mount of Transfiguration. Well, remember, everyone's changed. Our Jesus is changed. And Elijah's there.

Moses is there. And Peter is talking. He's jabbering because he's so afraid. He doesn't. He's speaking these nonsensical words. And even as he is talking, it says this.

A bright cloud enveloped them. And a voice from the clouds said, this is my son who I love. With him I am well pleased. Listen to him. So, here's this figure.

One like a son of man. But he comes on the clouds of heaven. He does what God does. And that's a sign that he is divine. He rides upon the clouds.

[11:01] But more than that, look at the kingdom, the kind of kingdom that he receives. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away.

Now, we've been memorizing verses like that in Daniel. We've seen these verses before, these words like that. Just a chapter ago, Darius issued a decree and he said, speaking about God, his kingdom will not be destroyed.

His dominion will never end. And isn't that what Nebuchadnezzar was forced to confess after his humbling? He said his dominion is an eternal dominion.

His kingdom endures from generation to generation. So, this one like the son of man is divine. His kingdom will never end.

But he's also human. He's one like a son of man. He looks like a man. And it's interesting, if you look up this phrase, son of man, its most common use is found in Ezekiel.

[12:10] It's what God calls Ezekiel all the time. Especially when God is highlighting Ezekiel's humanity. So, God is saying, the Lord is saying, I am God, and you, Ezekiel, are a son of man.

You're a man. And so, this figure has these mysterious characteristics that must have been so perplexing and so puzzling to the Old Testament readers. He's both God and he's a man.

Now, it's something very important we need to notice about him. And it's this, how closely related he is to the saints.

This is what this character has to do with you. He's very closely related to the saints. Now, you might have noticed it as Pastor John read this passage.

But the character, the son of man, is introduced. He's described. He's given authority. And he takes this kingdom from the world. He takes his kingdom from the world. But then he disappears in the text.

[13:17] He doesn't show up again. But he's replaced by someone else. It's not God. But by who? Did you see it?

It's the saints. It's the saints. Look at verse 18. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever.

Yes, forever and ever. Verse 22. The ancient of days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High.

And the time came when they possessed the kingdom. And then in verse 27. 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.

But I thought it was the son of man who received the kingdom. Well, it is. But it's also the saints.

The saints do as he does. There's this intimate connection between the son of man and the saints.

[14:24] When he receives the kingdom, they receive the kingdom. And when he takes sovereignty, they take sovereignty. And when he comes to power, they come to power. The son of man is a representative of the saints.

So he goes before them. He goes in front of them. He receives. And through him, they receive. He goes for them. But this relationship is much more than that. And that's why we're going to sing our closing hymn about the saints being married to the Lord Jesus.

The son of man and the saints are united. They're in union. So think of it like this. Now, you remember this spring or summer, don't exactly remember, Kate Middleton, a commoner of England, received a kingdom.

She was a commoner. And now, a whole kingdom calls her your highness. Now, how did she get to that place? Well, it wasn't through rebellion. It wasn't through power. She did something very wonderful.

She married a prince. And she became a princess. And she received a kingdom. And that's how it's going to be for God or for the saints.

[15 : 40] You see how you are going to come to rule? You're in intimate union with the king. And where he goes, you go.

And what he receives, you receive. You lack nothing because he has everything. And so you live in grace.

You live a very rich life. And Paul, remember how many times he prays, I want you to understand the riches of God's grace because they're yours in Christ Jesus. So we need to fit what we've seen so far into this whole picture of chapter 7.

Right now, who has sovereignty in the earth? Well, you know, we could ultimately say God does. But who rules in this world?

Well, it's fallen men. It's fallen men. It's man in rebellion. The beast of the world rule. God gives them authority and they rule. And they exercise their rule. But there's coming a time when the saints will rule the earth.

[16 : 47] And we won't come to that. We won't come to power through force or revolution or political intrigue, but by grace. We'll get there by grace.

the kingdom will come to us from God's hand as a free gift through the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. Now, in many ways, the authority that is exercised in this world by the kingdoms of men, the authority of this world is a usurped authority.

The beast of the earth, the little horn, they take power. They take powers that God never gave them. And they rule in ways that are contradictory to his word.

They're in rebellion. And so they use their authority in ways that are sinful. But God will judge.

That's obviously a key theme in this whole passage.

God is going to judge and when he renders judgment, they lose their power and the saints get power. The meek shall inherit the earth. And so now we need to see the whole arc of this passage, where it begins and now where it ends, because there's gold at the end of this rainbow.

[18 : 02] It doesn't end until the righteous rule the earth. God designed this earth to be ruled not by the wicked, but by righteous men.

He meant it to be ruled by image bearers, his royal sons and daughters. only then will this creation be what God designed her to be, made her to be.

That's why Paul says the whole creation is groaning as in the pains of childbirth. What is she groaning for? She's hurting, she's longing for the eager expectation, an eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

revealed. She is longing, the creation is longing for the sons of God to be revealed because then she will be ruled by the ones that she was meant to be ruled by. Because now she's subject to frustration.

This creation was made for God's children to rule it. Everything else is frustration. It's Havel. It was meant to be fruitful, but it's been ruined.

[19 : 16] She was made to grow and flourish, but now she's stripped and she's ruined. She's abused. Now, maybe some of you think it's heresy to believe in man-made global warming.

I really don't know what's true. I'm not a scientist, and please don't stop me afterwards and convince me of your opinion. I believe what you say, whatever you say, but I will say there is nothing inherently impossible about the idea of sinful man destroying God's good world.

There's nothing inherently impossible about that because that's what sinful men do. They take what is good and they ruin it. And the creation is longing for the sons of God to be revealed.

And beloved, that is God's purpose. That's where this is all going. The world will be restored once again and the creation itself and the nations themselves will be brought back to God.

And everything will be as it was supposed to be in the beginning. What man failed to do in Adam, God is going to do in the second Adam, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

[20 : 38] And then when we are there, we will rule this world as it was meant to be ruled. And it will be a garden to the glory of God once again.

Now, Daniel 7 is promising more than just salvation from evil in this world. It's certainly doing that, but it's a promising a restoration of everything. The destroyers will be destroyed and the righteous will receive the earth.

And all those who have this hope purify themselves. Now, there's three lessons from this passage.

And lesson number one is this, that Jesus Christ is the Son of Man. Jesus Christ is the Son of Man. And of course, I couldn't help but say it before, but we'll make it clear now that Jesus Christ is the Son of Man.

He's the Son of Man of Daniel 7. In the Gospels, Jesus has a favorite name for himself. The Son of Man. That's what he likes to call himself. And I won't multiply examples.

[21:45] You can probably think of several right off the top of your head. But doesn't this enrich your understanding and your reading of the Gospels? When Jesus calls himself the Son of Man, he's not just saying, I'm a man.

Now, a lot of people have been taught when they, when you read that, Jesus is trying to emphasize the fact that he is man. That he is a human. And that's not the point really at all.

He calls himself the Son of Man because he wants to, it's not because he wants to highlight his humanity. He's calling himself that because he wants to say, I am the God man. I'm the one who's come to give the saints the kingdom of God.

I'm the one from Daniel chapter 7. I've come to save God's people and to give them this world. And I've come to be everything this world needed to restore it.

I'm the one Daniel was talking about. I'm God and I'm man and all authority is mine. I'm the Son of Man and I can forgive sins. I'm the Son of Man and I'm the Lord of the Sabbath.

[22:49] I'm the Son of Man and I came from heaven and I'm the Son of Man and I'm going back to my Father. And I'm the Son of Man and I'm going to a cross. I'm going to die, going to suffer and then I will rise.

Jesus wasn't just saying that I'm a human. He's saying, I'm the one the whole world needs. I'm the one that all the plans of God hang on.

The government is on my shoulders and I will reign for my people. And doesn't this make sense why Jesus came preaching the kingdom?

He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Well, where did Jesus get that idea? Partially, he got it from the book of Daniel, chapter 7. The Son of Man's work is to bring the kingdom of God to God's people, to the saints and the holy ones.

And that's why he says, repent, the kingdom of God is near. How near? Well, it's here. It's at hand. I'm here. When the king's here, the kingdom is here. And it's coming in greater power.

[24:00] It's coming in greater authority. So repent and believe the good news that I am bringing this kingdom. So when Jesus died, he rescued his people from the kingdom of darkness and he brought them into the kingdom of light, into his kingdom.

And so when he rose again, he was exalted to the highest throne and he received his kingdom. The ancient of days judged, gave judgment and the little rock started growing.

It started to grow and people started entering into this new kingdom. People started entering into the coming age.

If you think about that, this kingdom is going to last forever and ever. It's part of the forever and ever. God's kingdom. And now we have started to enter into the coming age.

So the old is passing. The new is coming. It is here and it is still coming more and more. And so, brothers and sisters, do you understand what happened to you when you believed?

[25:10] You rose again to new life. The old you, the old kingdom was done away with and there was a new life, a new kingdom. The powers of the age to come, even the Holy Spirit came to life in you.

The Holy Spirit entered you and you took your place at Jesus' side. That's why Paul says, even now, we are seated in heavenly places.

So into this dark world, the kingdom of God is broken in. It broke in with his son and it happened when Christ died and he rose again and it happens again and again and the kingdom of this little stone becomes a mountain more and more as people enter into it and it will keep happening until the last trumpet sounds and then with one fell swoop, the Ancient of Days will give judgment and everything horrible will come to an end.

So Jesus is the Son of Man in Daniel 7. He is our God and Savior and we should worship him.

Lesson 2.

The kingdom comes through death. This kingdom comes through death and this is the hardest part for us to swallow, to believe, to understand.

[26 : 35] How did the Son of Man come to his kingdom? It was through death. On the other side of the cross was a crown.

That's how it worked. And brothers and sisters, you must understand that it will be no different for you. What must come first before the saints begin to reign?

Well, in this world we'll be handed over to the beast. The church will be handed over to the beast. The two witnesses will be slain in the streets. The Antichrist will make war and defeat us.

For time, times, and half a time the saints will be given over to the Antichrist. In short, that means that for a brief, but very intense period of time that seems like it's going to last forever, the church was going to suffer.

We are going to suffer. The saints will be hunted and destroyed until the whole world is on earth with rebellion, is on fire with rebellion and hatred, and then the end will come.

[27 : 48] The Son of Man will return in clouds of glory and the wicked will be overthrown. So if we don't stay faithful through suffering, we will not come into the kingdom.

We will not receive the crown. We will sail through bloody seas if we will make it home. There's no other route. So read Revelation 20.

I've referred to it several times. How do the martyrs come to their kingdom? It's through death.

We've already seen it in Daniel. We're going to see it again.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had to be faithful even to death. Daniel had to be faithful even to death.

And the wonderful thing is that it was through their faithfulness that God's kingdom and authority was seen and recognized.

[28 : 45] It was only after they were faithful to death that Nebuchadnezzar said, oh, God's kingdom is forever and ever. And it's the same for you and I. What will bring the kingdom of God to the ends of this earth?

What will make that mountain grow and fill the whole earth? Well, part of the answer is going to be suffering.

It's not going to be preaching in convenient places. It's not going to be preaching in easy places where there's nothing to lose. It's going to be suffering. And it's going to be death.

Daniel is preparing us for what is going to happen, what does happen, and how God has planned it to happen. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

That's not something old, long time ago. That's true today. It's true in Daniel's day. And it's something that we as American Christians need to see.

[29 : 45] We need to grow up and see that this is what it is. God did not give us the kingdom so that we could play along, play around. Jesus had to suffer many things, and we must suffer many things.

Daniel 7 searches us in the same way that Jesus' words searched us. In Luke 9, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me will save it. Have you wrestled through that? Have you come to terms with that?

Jesus doesn't offer us an easy road to heaven, but he offers us the same road that he took, the same road to the same kingdom. But we will reign.

It will only be through suffering. And the good news is that our suffering is not in vain. The point is not that we suffer for no purpose. It won't be for nothing. The end is that God's kingdom will fill the earth.

[30 : 50] Death is not a loss, it's a gain. And so why should we be afraid? Why should we be afraid? We have entered into the new age. We are seated in heavenly places.

We are not of this age, but of the coming kingdom. If we die, we have not lost anything that we're not going to lose anyways. But we gain a crown.

Now, lesson three. Jesus loves the church despite her weakness. despite her weakness.

And this is comfort to us. If you have the picture right here in Daniel chapter 7, the church is not pretty. She's weak.

She's beat up. She's pushed around. She's under attack. And yet, brothers and sisters, Jesus loves us. Jesus loves us.

[31 : 52] Jesus doesn't love us because we're strong. And we really pull some weight in the political scene. Jesus isn't impressed when the moral majority rules in the United States.

He loves us because he loves us. And he doesn't love us more when we're faithful. He doesn't love us less when we sin and we're afraid and we fail.

Because if we're going to be honest, we are going to fail in many ways. Most of us aren't heroes. Most of us struggle with the fear of men.

And we aren't going to make it into the kingdom of God by our efforts and the abilities that we find in and of ourselves and our strength. And it's not going to be because we overcome this world that we'll enter.

it's because Jesus has overcome for us. And he overcomes in us. And we are going to inherit the earth. We are going to overcome because of God's grace.

[33:00] Because of his grace. Because of his love. Jesus loves the church to make her look beautiful. To make her beautiful and good. He loves you to give you the world.

not for you to present the world to him. You're going to sin and you're going to fail. But if you are in Christ, that doesn't change God's affection and set purpose for you.

And if that comes to rest in you, you won't be saying, well, it doesn't matter what I do then. It doesn't matter what I do. No.

He loves you. He was faithful to death for you. How could you not love him in return? He loves you so graciously and so fully and so unconditionally.

How could you not love him and be faithful to him in return? How could that not he loved you to death? How could that not move you to stand up for him?

[34:06] So you want to be more faithful at work. You want to be more faithful at school or in friendships. There are real pressures.

I know there are real pressures. And you want to be faithful when the Antichrist makes his appearance. And you want to be faithful when the mountains fall into the sea and the earth gives way.

If you want that, remember that Jesus loves you. Remember the gospel that we heard this morning of his dying love, of his taking your punishment and your place because he loves you with a fierce dedication and with grand purpose.

That's the point of Daniel 7 that God loves the saints with this massive love. He's going to give you the greatness of the kingdoms. He's going to give you an everlasting kingdom to rule with him.

You're his bride and he's going to tear down men's kingdoms and give them to you as a present. He loved you when you were a sinner and he loves you even when you struggle to stand up for him and he loves you to make you beautiful.

[35:26] So live in his love. Take hope in what he's already done. Jesus has already come through. It's already been decided so we need to stand in his love and stand faithful to him and we can.

We can have hope. Jesus said it. Take heart. I've overcome the world because he overcame. We too will overcome and he has.

He has overcome and so we will even a seven deaths lay between here and then. He's going to get us home. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you do love us so much.

I pray that your grace would not make us careless, but it would make us careful. That your grace would not make us lackadaisical and lazy, but that it would do what you had intended it to do.

That you would spur us on to love and good deeds. That your goodness would lead us to repentance. We pray, Lord, that your gospel would put steel into our bones and into our backbone and so that we could stand like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego despite of our weakness.

[36:46] May you make us strong in the Lord Jesus. We thank you that our destiny and our eternity is secure. And Lord, I pray that you would give us grace to rest in that.

Rest in your love. Rest in your care. Rest in your purpose. But do more than rest that we would be going all out to stand up for you.

To be courageous when the moment of trial comes that we would stand because Jesus stood. We would stand because Jesus loves us. And Lord, I thank you that you love your people.

And I thank you that you're upholding us. And so I would pray that you would please go on adding to your people. Bring in your elect.

Bring in your chosen people. And Lord, I pray that your kingdom would go on expanding and growing throughout this earth. Thank you that it will. And I pray that that knowledge would drive us to action and not drive us to inaction.

[37 : 58] Thank you for this opportunity that we have to participate with you in building your kingdom, even in suffering. I pray, Lord, that we would embrace your purpose, that we would not be afraid.

There's nothing for us to fear. Will you help us to see past the thorns and to see the joy that is set before us. And so, don't make us run stirred up by fear, afraid of what's going to happen, but help us to run forward looking to the joy that is before us.

And that joy is Jesus, our husband, our bridegroom. And Lord, we will be there with you and we long for that day. And so, we pray, come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Amen.