

THEME: And he (Jesus) will reign forever and ever.

Daniel 7:13-14: In my visions during the night, I saw among the clouds in heaven someone like the Son of Man. He came to the Ancient One, who has lived for endless years, and was presented to him. ¹⁴He was given power, honor, and a kingdom. People from every province, nation, and language were to serve him. His power is an eternal power that will not be taken away. His kingdom will never be destroyed. (GW)

In our country, we think that we are the best, the greatest and that we just cannot fail. We can push our way around the world and we think that everyone must move way before us. All this was a result of World War II. We defeated our enemies in Europe and in the Pacific and we think that no one can stand against us.

Do you really think that our kingdom will last forever? Our kingdom pales in comparison to the kingdoms Daniel saw in Daniel 7. The kingdom of Babylon is pictured as a strong lion. Nebuchadnezer had a kingdom that was beyond compare. He had more power and wealth than any king that has ever lived ... ever. And yet his kingdom only lasted about 70 years. Daniel outlived the kingdom of Babylon! In one night, the Persian Army snuck into Babylon by a water duct and Babylon fell.

The Persians were pictured as a ferocious bear and were feared throughout the Asian world. Xerxes would raise an army of what some said numbered over a million. Maybe it was only half that amount. He attacked Greece and his navy was largely destroyed by a storm at sea. Then 300 Spartans held off his army in a narrow gap called Thermopylae, the "hot gates." An army of 7,000 Greeks defeated this great army, and the Persian kingdom never really recovered.

Then came Alexander the Great, pictured as a leopard, who defeated all the armies from Greece to Egypt and all the way to India with an army of about 50,000 men. He started when he was 23 and campaigned for ten years. Then he died and the kingdom of Alexander was done. How fragile and fleeting power can be!

Then there was a terrifying beast with iron teeth that represented Rome. The Roman Empire would become the greatest kingdom ever and it would last almost a thousand years. The beautiful buildings the Romans built and the roads that connected their empire still remain – in ruins. Not even the Roman Empire could last forever. Do you think that our nation is as great as any of these?

Then Daniel comes to the end of his vision and he sees a king that will be given a throne and a kingdom that will last forever. He looks like an ordinary man. Who is this king? Who is Daniel talking about?

I. The Son of Man takes his place on the throne

Daniel says, **"In my visions during the night, I saw among the clouds in heaven someone like the Son of Man. He came to the Ancient One, who has lived for endless years, and was presented to him."** If you were reading this in Daniel's day, you would probably be scratching your head to figure out what this meant. It is obvious in this chapter that this is something and someone very, very important for

God's people. The reader would have recognized that the ancient one who lives forever is the eternal God. But who is the Son of Man who ascends the throne?

If you are a New Testament reader, and I hope that all of you are, all kinds of lights, bells and whistles should be going off in your head. Jesus calls himself the Son of Man nineteen times in Matthew's gospel. That includes this direct reference where Jesus is speaking to those judging him at his trial before the Sanhedrin. Matthew 26: 64: **"But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."** Do you hear what Jesus said to his enemies? "I am the one Daniel spoke about. You are judging me right now, but there will come a day when I will be the judge and I will be judging you." Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Daniel is talking about Jesus.

Why does Daniel call Jesus the "Son of Man," and why is this the name Jesus used most often for himself? If you read all the passages there are three thoughts that come through. Jesus is the Son of God and he is speaking about his humanity to emphasize that he came into the world to take upon himself our human flesh and our misery. He became fully human to save humanity. He came to seek and to save the lost. That's the purpose of his mission and the reason he took on human flesh. The person who died on the cross was a real human being who suffered real pain, even though he was the almighty God at the same time.

The second truth that is emphasized in those passages is that Jesus asserts that while Jesus is truly human who was born of a woman, he was and is still fully God and possesses the authority of God. When a paralyzed man was let down into the room before him, he said to him, "Your sins are forgiven." When the Pharisees questioned his authority to do that, because only God can forgive sins, Jesus healed the man to show that "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Matthew 9.6 Only God can do that.

So Jesus is truly humane and truly God. The third truth that comes out when you study the "Son of Man" passages is that the Christ will judge the world and separate believers and unbelievers as a man separates the sheep from the goats. Listen to what Jesus says in John 5:24-27: **"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. "**

And did you catch the reference to the Son of Man coming among the clouds? At Jesus' baptism, there was a cloud from which the Father spoke and said, "This is my son." At his transfiguration, Jesus and Moses and Elijah were in the cloud on the mountain. When he ascended into heaven, a cloud hid him from the disciples' eyes. Paul says in Thessalonians that when he comes on the last day, he will come in the clouds with all his holy angels with him.

What else does Daniel say about the coming Christ? **"He was given power, honor, and a kingdom. People from every province, nation, and language were to serve him. His power is an eternal power that will not be taken away. His kingdom will never be destroyed."** Again, if you are a reader of the New Testament, you should see some familiar phrases here. Listen to these passages from the book of Revelation. Revelation 5:13: **"In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"** And again this

verse from Revelation 7:9: **“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”**

Sometimes we stumble at a passage like this and find it hard to understand. The key to understanding the Bible is to read the whole book – and then to read it again, and again. The more often you read it, the easier it is to connect the dots that make the understanding clear. And what is the clear understanding of this passage? It is that the Son of Man who gets to rule an everlasting kingdom and gets to judge the world is the same Son of Man who died on the cross for our sins.

II. **What does this mean for you?**

Can you picture in your mind Jesus's sitting on his throne in heaven? Does that frighten you or comfort you? When you think that you must one day stand in judgment before his throne on the last day, does that give you peace or frighten you?

It depends on whose side you are on – or to whose kingdom you belong. Remember what Pontius Pilate asked Jesus? He asked Jesus if he was really a king, and Jesus said that he was. That must have made Pilate laugh as he saw this man with a crown of thorns and tattered clothing. Pontius Pilate had Roman legions behind him, and Jesus had nothing. What kind of king did Jesus think he was? Then Jesus explained. He said, “My kingdom is not of this world. My kingdom is with those who listen to my voice and hear my word.” Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual kingdom in which he rules in the hearts of his people. And that also makes it a kingdom which will never fail or come to an end.

Someday Pontius Pilate will see Jesus on his throne and he will be terrified. He will try to run but he won't be able to escape the judgment that Jesus will pass on him. The chief priests and leaders of the Jews were warned at Jesus' trial. They didn't listen to Jesus either or believe in him. Someday they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with great glory and they will hide their faces from him to try to escape God's judgment. That day for them will be the worst day ever, because what happens on that day will seal their fate in hell forever.

Friends, should we be frightened when we think of the final judgment? We should be – if we do not know Jesus as our Savior. If you are not listening to his Word and maintaining your faith in him, the thought of meeting the Son of Man face to face should scare the living day lights out of you. And if you have a loved one who is not walking with Jesus or listening to his Word, you should be terrified for them and warn them. On the last day, no one gets a second chance.

But if you know Jesus, then you don't have to be afraid at all. This is what Jesus said. **“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”** Think about it for a moment. The person who died to save you is going to judge you on the last day. The Savior who felt all your sins in his body on the cross is the one who is going to tell you, once and for all time, that your sins are forgiven. The Savior who went to hell to proclaim his victory over the devil is the one who will give you a crown of glory when he comes again. Even if in your old Adam you still carry some fears about that day or harbor some doubts, if you believe in Jesus you will not be afraid when he comes to judge the living and the dead. Because your Savior, Jesus, will reign forever and ever.

In the Old Testament, there was the story of Joseph and his brothers. The brothers had sold Joseph as a slave to the Egyptians when he was only 17. Joseph suffered terribly – first as a slave, and then when he was wrongly accused, as a prisoner in a dungeon with no hope of ever getting out. You know the story, don't you? God gave Joseph the gift of interpreting dreams and he interpreted the dream for Pharaoh that warned him that there would be seven years of famine after seven good years. Pharaoh put him in charge of all of Egypt to reward him. Later, during the famine, Joseph's brothers came down to Egypt to buy grain. At first, they didn't recognize Joseph. When Joseph revealed himself as their brother, they were terrified, *because this was the brother they wanted to kill and sold for a slave*. Only, the brothers didn't have to be afraid, because Joseph forgave his brothers and saved them from the famine. When you were baptized you became God's child and God brought you to faith in Jesus. Jesus' is your brother and you are heirs together with him of eternal life. Don't you see? If your brother is on the throne, **you don't have to be afraid of judgment on the last day.**

There is another reason this gives you hope. Do you remember the story of Esther in the Old Testament? Wicked Haman devised a scheme to kill all the Jews in Xerxes' kingdom. Esther decided to risk her life to intercede for her people. If she came to the king uninvited, the king might put her to death. But he didn't. He extended the scepter to her because he was pleased with her. She listened to her pleading for her people, and God's people were saved.

In Daniel's vision he sees the Son of Man presented to the ancient of days, the God of all the earth. God is pleased with him and extends his scepter to him and gives him all power and authority in heaven and on earth. And do you know what? Jesus has entered into the presence of God to plead your case. Listen to what Paul says about Jesus in Romans 8: ³³**Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.** ³⁴**Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”** Imagine that! The one who came to be your brother, the one to whom God has given all authority in heaven and on earth, stands at the right hand of God and prays for you every moment of every day.

How then can anything go wrong? Sometimes, it may seem as if Jesus is not in charge of everything in our lives. When God takes a loved one away from us in a sudden accident, we might doubt if the Son of Man is really in charge. When the doctor diagnoses us with cancer, we may question his wisdom. When Christians are persecuted in places like Syria and Africa, even to the point of giving up their lives, we may wonder if Jesus is really ruling all things in heaven and on earth. When we look at life in the moment, we sometimes don't see that Jesus is ruling.

But we are so shortsighted, aren't we? Pilate thought he was in charge, but his condemnation of Jesus brought us salvation through the cross. The Romans who persecuted Christians thought they could destroy this religion and wipe it off the face of the earth. Even the Roman Empire could not withstand the persistent march of the gospel and the growth of Jesus' kingdom. Think about it. If Christ were not ruling, would his Word have survived to today? How many regimes and kingdoms have tried to snuff out Christianity, have held book burning parties of the Bible, have persecuted and killed Christians? If Christ truly were not in control, his Word would have disappeared because of the wickedness of earthly kings or sadly, because of our own neglect of his Word.

Thank God that Jesus Christ is King and not ourselves or any human institution. If you were in charge of your own life, you would have made a mess of it altogether, even more than you have. You would have abandoned your faith. You would have given in to despair. That has not happened to you

because Jesus rules from the right hand of God. He is the King of kings. He has made all things work out for your good and he will not allow anything to separate you from his love. You are safe with Jesus, and so is his Church.

This is why we honor Christ as King. His kingdom will never fade away because he is in control. He has been given the authority and power and he uses it to preserve us, his Church. So no matter how boastful the kingdoms of this world get, Christ the King remains King. No one can take his rule from him. To him be glory and honor and praise forever. Amen.