

The Victory of the Son of Man

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 November 2024

Preacher: James Ross

[0 : 00] Now again, if you have a Bible, it would be helpful for you to have it open, Daniel 7, page 893, if you're using a church Bible. As we think together about the victory of the Son of Man, I want to suggest that we have in our hands this morning in Daniel 7 the key to history.

That's a big claim, isn't it? For many people today, it's a great reality that we live and experience the age of anxiety.

Here's a very typical example. At Schoolgate this week, the chat moved very quickly from, well, it's unseasonably warm weather this week to talking about climate change to the reflection, well, our generation will be okay, but I don't know about our children.

That's the kind of the mindset for many people. I was reminded this week, in 1938, I wasn't around, but Orson Welles had this radio broadcast of H.G.

Welles' War of the Worlds, and he designed it to sound exactly as you would expect a radio broadcast to sound.

[1 : 16] So the story began, and then there was this interruption. We interrupt this broadcast to let you know that Jersey City has fallen and the Martians have come.

It was fiction. But Orson Welles, in 1955, was giving an interview. He didn't realize the extent of the panic that he caused. Five, six weeks after this fictional broadcast, there were still people living in the hills, the black hills of America, so frightened were they about the alien invasion.

I introduced that because now we will know this, the end of the world panic is in our real news cycle. Will it be climate change? Will it be some catastrophic virus? Will it be global war that will wipe us out?

There is panic and a real sense of urgency because there is no planet B. And I want to suggest that as Christians, this time that we live in gives us a great opportunity to speak hope into fear, to present the truth that there is the promise of ultimate peace.

[2 : 34] There is the reality of a coming kingdom unlike this one. Our topic today in Daniel 7 reminds us that when the world seems full of chaos and suffering, and it often does, we can trust God who is on His throne.

We can look to and trust in the Lord Jesus who is building an everlasting kingdom of peace and love, and we are invited to come to Him and to be part of that.

It's also important at the outset to say that what we have in our hands is a particular type of writing. It's such a hard word to say, apocalyptic writing.

This is really setting us up for this Revelation series. Apocalyptic writing is an unveiling. It's like the curtains are pulled back so that we are able to see beyond the here and now, to see future reality. We can see beyond the end of the present age when all conflict will give way to eternal peace for the people of God. We are invited to see beyond the end of present kingdoms and rulers, some good, many evil, to be replaced by the perfect kingdom of God and of Christ.

[4 : 05] And we're given this really vivid imagery that helps us to paint the story of spiritual battle and of the certain victory of Christ Jesus.

So apocalyptic writing is designed to encourage and comfort. Sometimes we have to work hard to find that.

But let me just say before we get into the text, because many people are anxious and because we're about to think about the book of Revelation, this is actually a great time to be inviting people to come to church.

Because the message of Revelation is a message that people are actually looking for and need to hear. But we're in Daniel 7, and we've got this wonderful message.

There's three separate parts to this vision. There's the four beasts, and we'll think about them. There's the Ancient of Days on his throne, and we'll think about God. And there is the Son of Man, and we'll think together about Jesus.

[5 : 06] But let's begin with the first vision, this focus on the four beasts. You know, back to H.G. Wells, the War of the Worlds, this invasion of the aliens, that terror that was caused in 1938 by those imagined visitors.

I would suggest it's nothing compared to the horror and the terror that the words and the imagery of Daniel captures for us. Just think briefly with me about this description of the four beasts.

In verses 2 and 3, we're reminded that these are beasts that come up out of the sea. Lots of symbolism in apocalyptic writing. The sea is always a symbol of chaos, a symbol of rebellion against God's rule and authority.

And so these beasts are associated with that. They're associated with evil and with danger. In verse 4, we meet the first beast. He's like a lion.

He's got the wings of an eagle and becomes like a human. The king of beasts, the king of the air, the king over the earth.

[6 : 17] Here is a beast with mighty power, but a mighty power that is not designed to be used for good. Beast 2, verse 5, is the one that looks like a bear with that horrible picture of the ribs in its mouth, and it's hungry for its fill of flesh.

Here is a beast. Here is a kingdom and empire where there is an appetite for destruction. You've got beast 3. It gets more bizarre and wonderful.

In verse 6, this beast looks like a leopard, but it's got four wings and it's got four heads. It's fast. It's ferocious. It's been given authority to establish an evil empire.

So it seems, and it's looking around to see how it can expand its power. And then we get to beast 4, the most terrifying of them all.

Verse 7, verse 8, it almost sounds part animal, part machine. It's got metal claws and iron teeth. There are these ten horns.

[7 : 27] Horns in the Bible become a symbol of power. To have ten horns, symbol of extreme power. It's also a picture of a long rule and reign of one particular empire. And then you get that one horn that uproots the other three.

And this speaks to us, I think, of the chaos that comes when there's civil war. But there's one thing in particular about that last horn. It speaks boastfully, and it speaks and acts against God and the rule of God.

And so these images are reminding us that there are nations, kingdoms, empires that are set up in deliberate, direct opposition and hatred towards God.

So there's a question that's often asked, well, who do these beasts represent? What empires? And some scholars would suggest you can trace Babylon and Persia and Greece and Rome.

And that may be true. But in another way, I think, Daniel has deliberately been led to keep the details vague so that we understand that every age and era of history is going to be marked by realities such as these.

[8 : 41] And so you flip open your history books. And you'll meet Alexander the Great. And you'll meet Nero. And you'll meet Hitler. And you'll meet Stalin. And you'll meet any number of evil emperors and empires.

So, so far, I think this vision is realistic. Switch on our news. We see it's realistic.

But so far, not so comforting or encouraging. But we'll get there. But I think it's important for us to recognize the Bible doesn't hide away from the reality of a broken world.

It has an ability to explain the 20th century known as the murder century.

We have a God who is big enough, who is on His throne even when there are terrible things, awful things happening because of extremists.

[9 : 46] When innocent civilians are caught up in the brutalities of war, when we see devastating disaster after disaster.

It's part of life ever since sin came and breakdown came. But again, if this is all we had, if all we had was this reality, I think it would be absolutely right to live in the age of anxiety, to have panic and to have despair.

But there's so much more in here. So, we need to move from the description of the beasts to the promise of the destruction of the beasts. So, we find that in a few different verses.

But first, in the October holidays, maybe some of you have read Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. It's a really interesting book. Dr. Victor Frankenstein is the main character.

He's living in an age when science is all about possibility and no limits, and he finds the secret to life. And so, he creates this eight-foot monster, which he then cannot control or appropriately care for.

[10:54] And this beast, it goes on a rampage, getting his revenge on Frankenstein. And that story ends without a happy ending. And Frankenstein lives with that sense of ongoing terror and despair.

And so, we may look around at the world and ask, is this cycle of evil and suffering just on constant repeat? Is there a way out?

And the Bible's answer is, yes, there is, because history is moving towards God's intended climax. And that's why Daniel includes the destruction of the beasts.

So, for example, we can read in verse 11, 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.

Or verse 17, 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, forever and ever.

[12:03] So, here is the hope. These beasts will all in the end be destroyed. Their power will be broken. God's judgment will come.

It will be final and complete. There will be no contest when God sets the day for judgment that God, who is on His throne, rules. And God is so powerful and so sovereign that evil is limited and evil in the end will be finally judged and defeated.

And so, the hope for a world in our anxiety is genuinely to pray, Your kingdom come and Your will be done.

Daniel 7 reminds us that we need to adjust our vision. To look beyond present realities to a certain future reality.

And I think it reminds us with a sense of urgency that we need to act today to ensure peace and hope on that day when judgment comes, when the kingdom of God is finally established.

[13:27] You know, nowadays, we hear on so many issues how important it is to be on the right side of history. Any number of debates about what's happening in society or politics.

We want to be on the right side of history. Well, it is never more important than when it comes to our own eternal future. There is certainty that God will come.

Judgment will come. He will establish a never-ending kingdom. But to be in that kingdom. We need to trust the one who rules above and beyond the chaos that we see.

We need to trust the one who will bring an end to all evil. To trust the one who will establish that world that we all want.

That He promises will come and will last forever. So, we need to turn our attention from the vision of the four beasts to consider the Ancient of Days.

[14:32] This wonderful description of God. So, remember that idea with the apocalyptic. We've got the curtains being pulled back. And Daniel allows us to see another reality beyond what we see with our physical eyes.

Beyond the here and now. We see the Ancient of Days. We see God Himself. And we're given a description of God's throne room.

Verse 9 and 10. As I looked, thrones were set in place. And the Ancient of Days took His seat. So, God's court is in session.

And here is how He is described. His clothing was as white as snow. White is associated with purity and holiness.

Here is the perfectly pure God who is on the throne. The hair of His head was white like wool. In the Bible, white hair is associated with wisdom.

[15:38] True wisdom in our God. His throne was flaming with fire. And its wheels were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before Him. So, we've got this throne and it's moving. And it's on fire. And it reminds us of the reality of the presence of God.

That His judgment will cover all the earth. That He comes bringing His presence and bringing His judgment. And in this court, He has attended by thousands upon thousand and 10,000 times 10,000.

Here is a glory that we have never seen before. And then, the court was seated and the books were opened.

So, the idea that the books being opened, that's imagery that, again, we find throughout the Bible. Here is this record. It's as if God has a book containing all of the acts of all the people who have ever lived.

[16:49] And it's a solemn reminder, I think, that all of our lives lie open to God. Our actions, our thoughts, our words, our emotions, nothing is hidden from His sight.

It's all here in the book. Now, I don't know everyone's view on politics and on government. It may be some of us here have great faith in our political leaders. Whereas, on the other spectrum, there may be some who are utterly cynical. And maybe many of us find ourselves somewhere in between.

But I would suggest when we come to a chapter like Daniel 7, and when we're invited to consider the throne room of God, that we take it as good news.

That there is an authority that is perfect, that is just, that is wise. That there is a God who does rule over all.

[17:53] That actually, it's a basis for solid hope that His power and wisdom is unlimited. That He is utterly unique in His glory. The world, of course, has lots of spectacular places, grand places, centers of government and rule.

You know, you go to Buckingham Palace, you go to the White House. But all of those are nothing compared to the glory and grandeur of God's throne room and the God who sits on the throne. It is good news that God rules. Especially when we take that into the wider story of the Bible. That this God who rules and reigns, our Creator and our Judge, is the same one who has sent the Lord Jesus to come to be one of us.

To live a life of perfect obedience. To die a sacrificial death. To rise in victory. To be our Savior and to show the love of God.

So we see the glory of God in His throne room. But we also see it in the description of God's judgment. Just to hear some more of that.

[19:07] Verse 21. As I watched, this last horn that came up 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. So again, the imagery is clear. There is battle. But when God sets the day for judgment, when He comes in decisive judgment, that victory, that judgment is dramatic, it's complete, it's final.

When the Ancient of Days delivers his sentence, when the hammer comes down, it is the end of history and the setting up of the kingdom of God that will last forever. And so our challenge today, and it is a challenge, is to see and to believe and to find hope in the reality that the rule of God, the coming judgment of the Lord Jesus, is more real than the world that we see.

This world that we see will pass away, will be renewed. But God on His throne, the kingdom of Christ, that endures forever.

But the challenge that we have is that the world has a power over us. The world has an ability to either kind of dazzle us and to captivate us, and so we find ourselves seeking our best life now, and we lose sight of the eternal, what's of infinite worth and glory, or the world disgusts us.

[20:46] And we find ourselves horrified and haunted by the beastly, and we can just give up in despair. And so we need to remind ourselves of the greater power of our God, to recognize how, in the end, the stuff of this life is weak and temporary, compared to the reality of God and His kingdom.

And so this vision that we have in Daniel actually gives us hope when and if we are living under the rule of the right king, who is Jesus.

And that takes us to the third aspect of this vision, where we encounter the Son of Man. Now, some of us, on a Monday, we've been having an international Bible study, and I said, there's a spoiler alert, because we were in John chapter 9.

And John chapter 9 is a wonderful chapter of the Bible. So, Jesus meets a blind man, and He heals this blind man, and there's a growing understanding in this man's life as to who Jesus is.

First, he seems to really not know much about Him, but then he begins to understand, well, Jesus certainly can't be sinful, and He must be sent from God. And by the end, he's worshipping Jesus,

because he understands when Jesus says, I am the Son of Man, that means He is someone worthy of worship.

[22 : 12] So, when we come to this vision of the Son of Man, we need to understand that this is the favorite title Jesus took for Himself, and He took it for a very important reason. And I hope we'll see it, and I hope we'll understand why it's good news and real hope for all of us.

So, again, let's look at the description that we have in verse 13 and 14. And one thing to see is in this vision of one like a Son of Man, we're going to see that He's got traits and qualities both of a man, but also of God.

In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. Who comes on the clouds of heaven? It's God Himself. And it continues, He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence.

So, here is Jesus, and He is standing in the presence of God, His Father. Verse 14, He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

The Jesus we meet in the Gospels is the Jesus who has been appointed and sent to operate, to rule with the power and glory of God. And all nations and peoples of every language worshipped Him.

[23 : 33] He receives worship. Worship, of course, is only due to God, but this worship is given to Jesus, the Son of Man, because He is the Son of God.

Not just one nation or some nations, but all nations are to acknowledge that Jesus is God and worthy of worship. And His kingdom, His dominion, is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Jesus has come to establish His eternal, unbreakable kingdom of God, the kingdom of righteousness. So, when Jesus talks about Himself as the Son of Man, it's not a tame title.

You know, I'm really one of you. That's not what Jesus is saying at all. Jesus is claiming, I am true God, and I am the true King.

I am the one that your hopes must rest on. My kingdom will be established, that Jesus has come, and in His coming, and in His work on the cross, there is the defeat of sin, and death, and evil, and the devil, and there is the promise in the resurrection of perfect life, and joy, and peace for all who come to Him.

[25 : 03] One who's like a son of man, but has the glory of God. And we see that in the Gospels. You know, Jesus, he was conceived in a supernatural way by the power of the Spirit, but he had a normal birth, and a normal childhood.

We read about his human life. He got hungry and thirsty. He had a full range of human emotions. He had family and friends. He experienced hardship and suffering, betrayal, rejection.

He lived with the presence of the beastly, the Roman Empire, and even religious leaders who were turning people away from Jesus. And ultimately, this son of man would die on a Roman cross, dying for the sake of his people to forgive sins.

But we also see Jesus' life with the glory of God. Every miracle that he performed stands as a signpost. This is an ordinary man.

This is the son of God. And we see the glory of God, too, in Jesus' perfect life, the only one who ever lived, fully loving God, fully loving his neighbor, always obeying, always keeping the law.

[26 : 15] And we see the glory of God, in God's grace, in that his own son, the son whom he loves, was given and came gladly to fulfill God's plan of salvation, to suffer and die in the place of sinners, to deal with our sin and our guilt and our shame, to pay the price in full.

And then we see his glory as he rises again the third day and then returns to the throne of heaven. And we have this promise here that there will be a day when he returns and his kingdom is established and it will never end.

And that takes us to the second aspect of the vision as it refers to the Son of Man. We've thought about the description, but we also need to think about the destiny of the Son of Man and of the saints.

So one of the things part of the reality of the apocalyptic writing, it pulls the curtains back so we see more of the glory of God, but we also see the reality of suffering for Christians and for the church.

Verse 25 is a verse that can help us to hear this. Here is that horn again. He will speak against the Most High and oppress His holy people and try to change the set times and the laws.

[27 : 39] The holy people will be delivered into His hands for a time, times and half a time. So here is some empire. Here is some human authority that speaks and acts against God, blasphemy against God, persecution of the church for a prolonged period, setting up an alternative religious system, an alternative place of worship, a rejection of God's law in place of a new morality, a new kind of law.

And all of this brings hardship for the church. Now we here in the West, we are largely spared that by God's mercy.

But if we could go to North Korea or Eritrea, Iran, Afghanistan, parts of India, we would understand this to be an ongoing daily reality for hundreds of millions of Christians today.

But there is hope for us and there is hope for them too. Verse 26, but the court will sit and the beast's power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.

Here is real hope for suffering believers, that the return of King Jesus will bring about the final judgment, the final destruction of evil, oppression, injustice.

[29 : 08] And at the same time, there will be a bringing in. Verse 27, 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, the kingdom of the Son of Man, will be an everlasting kingdom and all rulers will worship and obey Him. There is the promise of a future kingdom. A place of true justice, of perfect love, an end to sorrow and suffering and sadness and death.

A place of life. And it's wonderful in Daniel's vision how the rule of the Son of Man becomes connected to the rule of the saints, the people of God.

What's Daniel saying to us? What's true for Jesus will be true for His people. That's wonderful. Just as Jesus has been raised and glorified and rules, so we too, in the fullness of God's timing, if we are trusting Him, will be raised and glorified and we will rule and reign with Him.

So that Christ is our hope in life and in death. So Daniel's vision in chapter 7 is a vision that we all need to keep hold of.

[30 : 28] And it is designed to be an encouragement, reminding us, yes, we live in beastly days of personal pain and hardships, of evil and abuse and violence on a national and a global scale.

But God's Word says this will not last forever. The King will come. He will establish that world we long for. So fix your eyes on God's throne.

Fix your eyes on Jesus the Son who will return. Because we wait for a certain return. This is not wishful thinking.

This is not science fiction imagination. This is God's rock solid truth. And because of that, your most urgent need, my most pressing need, is to be ready for this day.

To be ready to meet with Jesus, the judge to welcome Him as King, to be welcomed into His kingdom. Now how is it that we are to be ready today for that day?

[31 : 38] We need to come to Him as Savior. To confess that we have sinned against God. That we have shame and guilt and that we have made a mess of our lives and we need His forgiveness.

And we need eternal life and we want Him to be Lord and Savior. We need to come to Him with trust. Trust Him, the Son of Man who faced judgment for you.

So that you and I can live with the promise of a perfect world still to come. There is an urgency. And so there is that call not to put it off, but to come to Jesus today to make sure that His return is our hope and our joy.