

Daniel 7:9-14

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Preacher: Rev. Mike Stewart

[0 : 0 0] As we remain standing, let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your presence here among us, and we thank you for the gift of your holy word, and we ask that by your spirit you would still our hearts and minds, that together we would hear your voice.

Help us to understand the scriptures and how they point to your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is found our salvation, and in whose name we pray.

Amen. Would you please be seated? Good morning, everyone. Such a joy to be with you today, and as Ben said a few moments ago, it's been a joy for me to serve you at St. John's in this capacity, as I have been as interim rector, as you were between two rectors.

It's been a joy for me, particularly to get to know the staff, as I've been coming in on Wednesday and part of the staff meetings, and I can say with all confidence, beloved, that you are served very well here at St. John's by a very gifted, hardworking, and talented staff team.

And I'm very happy to announce that your new rector will be in place as of September 1st, officially, which of course is tomorrow. And next Sunday, Jordan will be preaching at all three services at St. John's.

[1 : 3 3] I'm very thankful for you all, deeply grateful for the important central place that St. John's Vancouver has in the life and ministry of our diocese and beyond.

I'm very grateful for your 100 years faithful service in the gospel. And as we remain thankful for the past, caring for the present, and focusing on the future, we welcome a new era here of leadership and ministry.

Please keep Jordan, your new rector, in your prayers. Get behind him, pray for his family as he transitions into this new role, officially, as of tomorrow.

And brothers and sisters, over these past few weeks in the months of August, we've really seen, haven't we, how Daniel is a man for our times. We've been reminded throughout the book of Daniel thus far of God's sovereignty over history, over kingdoms, and over empires.

Yes, truly, as the prophet foretold, the government is on his shoulders, then, now, and always. All the kingdoms of the world will pass away.

[3 : 0 1] But God's kingdom will never pass away. Trials and difficulties will surely come to God's faithful ones in this world.

But those who, like Daniel, remain faithful will be granted a place in God's eternal kingdom. And we've seen in Daniel a fine example, indeed, of faithful living in exile.

Loyalty to temporary governments and earthly rulers, but not without compromising ultimate loyalty to God, the true king.

And as followers of Jesus Christ, we know that we too are in exile in this world, because this world is not our home.

We are dual citizens. Citizens of earth, but ultimately, citizens of heaven, from which we await our saviour.

[4 : 13] Now, the events of Daniel chapter 7, which we just heard read to us, take place, we're told, in verse 1, in the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon.

That's 522 BC. So the events recorded in Daniel chapter 7, that Daniel sees, happen in the year 522 BC.

And it's in this year, that Daniel receives, amongst other things, a vision of the heavenly courtroom. Yes, Daniel is seeing heaven.

And the centrepiece of the heavenly courtroom is the central throne upon which the Ancient of Days sits.

We read in verses 9 and 10 of Daniel chapter 7, And the ancient of days took his seat.

[5 : 31] 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.

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. My friends, let me assure you, this is not a vacant chair.

This seat that lies as the centrepiece of the heavenly courtroom is occupied well and truly. Order and beauty surround the one who sits on the throne, as opposed to the chaos and its beasts that Daniel saw earlier.

What we're seeing in these verses then, my friends, is the supreme headquarters of the cosmos. There God sits, ruling over the affairs of men, infinite calm, radiant purity, everlasting wisdom and absolute power.

[7 : 08] An innumerable multitude, representing all the kingdoms of the earth, stand before God, and the books are opened. This is God's record of the deeds of mankind.

The only record that matters. Because when the books are opened, judgment begins. The ancient of days, the ancient of days, sets the times and the seasons for all earthly kingdoms, and all will stand before him who sits on the throne.

For this heavenly judge is sovereign. And then Daniel sees something that becomes central to his book and central to the New Testament also.

In verses 13 and 14 of Daniel chapter 7, we read, 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. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people's nations and languages should serve him.

[8 : 36] His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. Daniel sees one like a son of man who is given all dominion, glory, and an eternal kingdom.

This figure is both human and divine. We may recall our Lord Jesus Christ shortly before his crucifixion in the court of the high priest claims that he will fulfill this role.

And it's ultimately fulfilled in the vision that the beloved apostle John saw on the island of Patmos recorded in the book of Revelation when Jesus Christ returns at the end of the age set by the ancient of days and will, as we have just professed in the creed, come again in glory to judge both the living and the dead whose kingdom shall have no end.

The son of man we know from the gospels is Jesus' favorite self-designation used by him more than any other title, including in what we might call his mission statement recorded in the gospel of Mark, chapter 10, verse 45, where we read Jesus as saying, even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

That's what the son of man that Daniel saw is to do for the salvation of the world. And so, friends, in conclusion, everything in Daniel, chapter 7, is on a cosmic scale.

[10 : 53] The empires of history represented as beasts, the final judgment, all the nations of the earth where all distinctions of nationality, race, or color are stripped away, and who worship and serve one like a son of man who is given a kingdom that shall not be destroyed for his dominion is an everlasting dominion.

In this chapter, we are given a glimpse of the whole backdrop to human history as it unfolds.

Indeed, of all that is visible and invisible, visible. And mankind is steadily being drawn to that day where, as the Apostle Paul said, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Father, this is the message entrusted to the church for the world today. Jesus Christ is Lord, fully man, fully God.

My brothers and sisters, let us keep the faith that has been entrusted to us. Amen. And there's no idea And there's no idea